

Sao Jose de Areal locals reject railway station plan

Say absolutely no justification for another station, moot for alternative development projects instead

Team Herald

MARGAO: Upset over the proposed railway station, the villagers of São José de Areal have raised serious concerns, questioning the government's priorities, especially considering the severe lack of basic facilities in the area.

The villagers have presented a series of questions to both the government and the local panchayat, highlighting various issues that need urgent attention.

Villagers suggested alternative development projects, such as sports academy, shopping complex or health centre that would cater to the needs of the community.

Peter Viegas, a resident, emphasized that São José de Areal lacks essential services such as a police

“There is no reason for building a new station at Areal, except for the transportation of coal and goods. The government must provide us with a valid reason why the Konkan Railway needs another station so close to Margao

– Freddy Travasso, Activist

“The ongoing devastation of the area's verdant hills due to unregulated metal quarrying and stone crushing activities, as well as the environmental damage caused by untreated effluents discharged into local water bodies has destroyed the village biodiversity

– Peter Viegas, Local resident

station, a fire station, and a health centre to cater to the needs of the villagers, who are suffering from air and water pollution.

He also expressed frustration over the lack of response regarding the village's basic infrastructure needs, asking, “Why is there a need for a railway station when the government has not addressed these basic necessities?”

The village, which hosts around 600 industrial units and scrap yards, is grap-

pling with the adverse effects of pollution.

“The ongoing devastation of the area's verdant hills due to unregulated metal quarrying and stone crushing activities, as well as the environmental damage caused by untreated effluents discharged into local water bodies has destroyed the village biodiversity,” said Viegas and alleged that there have been repeated attempts to set up large housing projects in the area.

Viegas also pointed out the ongoing devastation of the area's verdant hills due to unregulated quarrying and stone crushing activities, as well as the environmental damage caused by untreated effluents discharged into local water bodies. Additionally, there have been repeated attempts to set up large housing projects in the area.

In light of these concerns, the villagers have strongly opposed the proposed rail-

way station. Activist Freddy Travasso questioned the necessity of building another railway station at Sao Jose de Areal when the Konkan Railway already has a major terminus at Margao, just 2 to 2.5 kilometres away from the village.

He argued, “There is no reason for building a new station at Areal, except for the transportation of coal and goods. The government must provide us with a valid reason why the Konkan Railway needs another station so close to Margao.”

Travasso and the villagers are convinced that the proposed railway station is primarily meant to facilitate coal and goods transportation, something they vehemently oppose. “We will never allow the station to handle coal in our backyard,” he added.

Benaulim villagers flay illegal filling of waterbodies

Demand action against wrongdoers

Team Herald

MARGAO: On Monday, the citizens of Benaulim strongly condemned illegal filling of low-lying areas and water bodies near Umya Marcado shopping mall, located along the Western Bypass, demanding immediate intervention from the authorities.

Local residents expressed their frustration, calling on their MLA, Venzy Viegas, to take swift action.

A large machine was spotted dumping mud in a traditional water body along the Western Bypass on Monday, sparking public outrage. Santan Pereira, a concerned local resident, immediately intervened and halted the work.

“We have been raising concerns about the filling of water bodies and the destruction of agricultural land for the construction of the Western Bypass. Workers involved in constructing the culvert have illegally dumped mud into this traditional water body, which is completely unacceptable,” said Pereira.



He further criticized the ongoing destruction and the inaction of the authorities. In response, Pereira contacted the Biodiversity Committee of the local panchayat, urging them to look into the matter.

Pereira also expressed concerns over the culvert's construction, claiming that it is being done improperly.

Additionally, Pereira turned his attention to the ongoing pollution of the River Sal, accusing the government of negligence. He pointed out that despite six years passing since the High Court issued directives, the government has yet to implement the river restoration plan proposed by a Pune-based consultancy firm.

Concerns raised over Monti Dongor rehab plan

MARGAO: Margao Congress has questioned the recent proposal for rehabilitating Monti Dongor residents, describing it as an attempt to mislead the community.

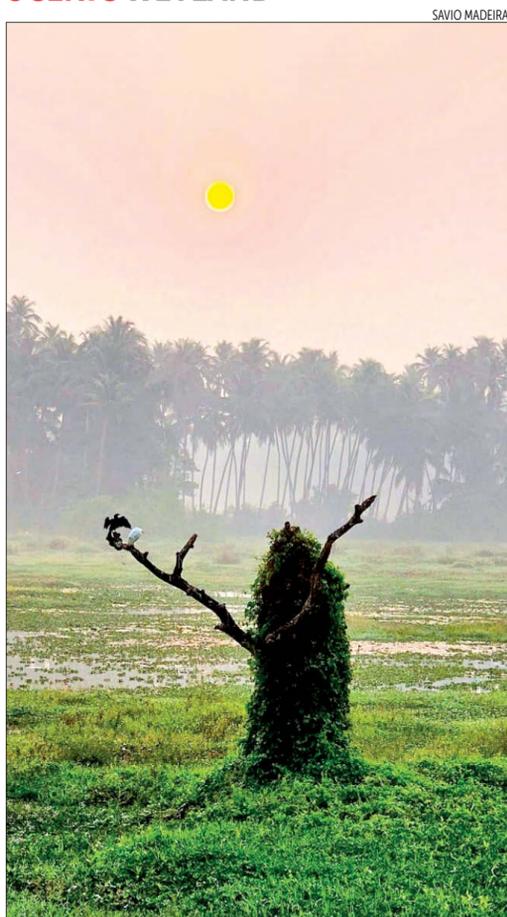
Spearheading the agitation, Savio Coutinho alleged that the move is aimed at regaining political ground rather than providing genuine relief.

Coutinho's remarks follow reports about the formation of a committee to oversee the rehabilitation process. He cautioned residents against placing faith in the plan, citing past committees that failed to resolve city issues.

He recalled that over two decades ago, Margao MLA Digambar Kamat had set up a Project Identification Committee, which proposed three flyovers to ease traffic congestion. However, none materialised, including a bridge over the railway track at Comba.

Similarly, Coutinho pointed to the failed efforts to clear the Sonsodo waste dump. The Goa Foundation proposal was approved when Kamat was chief minister, but the committee formed to implement it struggled with procedural hurdles, leading to inaction. He further noted that the High-Powered Coordination Committee (HPCC) was later introduced to oversee waste management at Sonsodo, but the outcome was financial losses and an unresolved waste crisis.

SCENIC WETLAND



Birds begin the day's hunt as the sun rises over picturesque fields in Gaunsavaddo, Siolim

Velim gram sabha urges TCP to denotify MDR road over safety concerns

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Velim gram sabha has resolved to approach the government, including the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department, to push for the denotification of the MDR road passing through Cumbheabhat and Baradi. Residents of the densely populated area have raised concerns over persistent hardships caused by the notified road.

The issue took center stage at the gram sabha, chaired by Sarpanch Veena Cardozo, where members pointed

out that despite past resolutions seeking the road's denotification, the situation on the ground remains unchanged.

Residents highlighted that without official denotification, the narrow internal road continues to be used by large numbers of tourists heading to Cabo de Rama and other attractions in South Goa. Many travelers, relying on Google navigation, unknowingly take this route, leading to frequent accidents.

Fears were also raised that if the government proceeds with road expansion

to meet MDR specifications, numerous residential houses could face demolition. Members urged immediate action to prevent displacement and further risks to the community.

Speaking after the meeting, Sarpanch Veena Cardozo confirmed that the panchayat would formally write to the TCP, urging swift denotification of the road. She also noted that Velim MLA Cruz Silva, who attended the gram sabha, had assured residents that he would take up the matter with the government.

Seraulim villagers seek restoration of land below Western bypass

Team Herald

MARGAO: Expressing concerns over the looming threat of disaster, the citizens of Seraulim have called for the restoration of the land below the Western bypass that runs through their village to its original condition before the monsoons arrive.

In addition, the residents have urged for proper demarcation and marking of areas acquired by the railways prior to the commencement of any

expansion project along the stretch that passes through Seraulim.

Kevin D'Souza emphasized the urgent need for the restoration of the Western Bypass area.

He stated, “With the commissioning of the Western bypass, it is imperative that the haphazard filling done by the PWD to accommodate the contractor's equipment is restored to its original state.”

He further stressed that this restoration must be com-

pleted before the monsoons to mitigate potential crop damage. D'Souza expressed concern that any delay in clearing the debris may obstruct the flow of water, exacerbating the risk of flooding.

In addition to the restoration issue, villagers have raised alarms about the unresolved drainage problem at the railway underpass. They reiterated that this issue requires immediate attention before the monsoon season sets in.

BMM condemns Goa's 'springtime of arrests'

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Bharat Mukti Morcha (BMM) has strongly condemned the recent wave of arrests targeting political dissenters in Goa, calling it a 'springtime of arrests' and demanding the immediate quashing of criminal cases against activist Rama Kankonkar and others. While Kankonkar has since been released on bail, his arrest triggered widespread criticism from the opposition and the public, who view these actions as an assault on democratic freedoms.

In its statement, BMM convenor Sebastiao Rodrigues accused the state of engaging in “economic terrorism” and “psychological warfare” to suppress dissent. “The arrests of Adv Pratima Coutinho, Sanjay Barde, and Rama Kankonkar are a clear attempt to silence those fighting against corruption and vested interests,” Rodrigues said. He also highlighted the misuse of laws, including the filing of frivolous cases under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, against Kankonkar—a law rarely invoked in Goa.

Drawing historical parallels, Rodrigues likened the crackdown to the British colonial regime's repression of Mahatma Gandhi, stating, “Such arrests only elevate dissenters to greater moral heights.” He also referenced Nelson Mandela's struggle against apartheid, emphasizing that “no police action can extinguish the spirit of those fighting for justice.”

GKL vows to continue its fight, reverse injustice meted to Romi lipi

Forms panels to provide momentum to ongoing script movement

Team Herald

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

LITERARY COMMITTEE: To developing learning materials in Konknni Roman script, to be introduced in schools from Std I

CULTURAL COMMITTEE: To organise cultural programs in villages to raise awareness and garner support for the cause of Konknni in Roman script; to protect, promote Goa's rich cultural heritage

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE COMMITTEE: To enrol members especially those passionate about cause of Roman script.

OVERSEAS REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE: To recruit individuals from Goan diaspora

MARGAO: In its ongoing fight to reverse the injustice meted out to Konknni in Roman Script under the Official Language Act (OLA), the Global Konknni Forum (GKF) has outlined plans to continue its work, furthering the movement for the recognition of Roman script.

In a recent meeting, the Forum announced the formation of various committees to further its objectives and provide momentum to the ongoing script movement.

The newly formed committees include a Literary Committee, headed by Jasmine Rodrigues, a Cultural Committee led by Luis Xavier Mascarenhas (Xavier de Maina), a Membership Drive Committee led by Cruz Mario Pereira, an Overseas Representatives Committee led by Domnic

Fernandes, and a Legal Affairs Committee under the leadership of Forum President Antonio Alvares.

With the New Education Policy (NEP) in mind, the Literary Committee will focus on developing much-needed academic learning materials in Konknni Roman script, to be introduced in schools starting from the first standard. The committee will also take steps to

promote different literary genres in Roman script, along with other linguistic works.

Understanding that language and culture are intertwined, the Cultural Committee will organise cultural programs in villages to raise awareness and garner support for the cause of Konknni in Roman script. These initiatives will also aim to protect and promote Goa's rich cultural

heritage, as explained by Jose Salvador Fernandes, Secretary of the GKF.

The Membership Drive Committee will focus on strengthening the Konknni movement by enrolling members both in Goa and among Goans living in neighbouring states, especially those who are passionate about the cause of the Roman script.

To ensure the movement goes global, the Overseas Representatives Committee will recruit individuals from the Goan diaspora around the world, creating a network of committed and dedicated people under the GKF banner.

The issue stems from the Official Language Act of 1987, which designated Devanagari as the official script of Konknni, deliberately excluding Roman script due to a conspiracy by Nagari proponents.



IS GOVT 'TARGETING' ACTIVISTS SINCE THEY ARE TAKING UP PEOPLE'S ISSUES?

In recent days, there has been uproar in the city over the arrest of activist Rama Kankonkar. Many see this as a blunder. Activists have vowed to stay united and fight for Goa. Herald Media asked people, “Is the government ‘targeting’ activists since they are taking up people's issues, in the wake of a weak Opposition?”

“All of us know that Rama Kankonkar was arrested. Thereafter he went on hunger strike. The next day when his father came for the press conference, the father cried for his son. Generally, we don't see fathers crying, but Rama's dad cried. From this, one can see the love that exists between father and son. Fathers from across Goa were teary-eyed and this is due to the things done by the government. Wherever the government makes mistakes, there the activists point it out. This hurts the government. Then they file cases on the activists and jail them. If today they government is scared of anyone, it is the activists. The government knows that activists will not be bought over

– Xencor Polji, social activist

“When you get involved in public life, whether as an activist or as a politician or a member of civil society, come what may, the price to be paid is the harassment from the government. I say that because as a politician, I have taken up issues against the Electronic Dance Music festival. At that point of time, there was no activism and I took it to its logical conclusion. I also took on the then Tourism Minister for usurping Comunidade land. There too, the matter went to the Supreme Court and I got an order. Therefore, you travel along the CHOGM road, those shops are still closed. There are definitely sincere activists. But are there activists with a political agenda? People are saying that some activists, not all, have a political agenda. So unless this is cleared, activists will not get that public support required for taking up genuine issues

– Trajano D'Mello, political commentator

“I don't feel that anyone is targeting anyone else. Similarly, the Opposition is really raising the issues of the people. There are few of them, but they raise the issues. I don't believe that the Opposition is weak. I don't understand what is targeting?”

– Shailesh Gawas, Advocate



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