

Stop-work order likely for culvert construction along Western Bypass

Villagers cry foul over landfilling of low-lying fields that serve as catchment areas during the rains; work halted but P'yat's order awaited; locals demand better culvert design to mitigate flooding

Team Herald

MARGAO: Authorities are expected to issue a stop-work order to contractors involved in the construction of a culvert and the damaging of a water body along the Western Bypass in Benaulim, following complaints from local residents.

Santan Pereira, a resident, informed Oheraldo that he had lodged a formal complaint with the Panchayat and other relevant authorities, urging immediate action to prevent further destruction of biodiversity and to mitigate potential accidents.

This comes just a day after Benaulim residents strongly opposed the illegal filling of low-lying areas and water bodies near the Umiya Mercado shopping mall along the bypass. They had demanded



immediate intervention from authorities to halt the environmental damage. Frustrated with the inaction, locals also sought the intervention of their MLA, Venzy Viegas.

Currently, the ongoing culvert construction and land-filling work have been halted. Pereira confirmed, "Following my com-

plaint, the Panchayat is in the process of issuing a stop-work order to the contractor, as the destruction of water bodies and biodiversity has already been reported."

Pereira has also urged the South Goa Collector's office and the Traffic Cell to review the culvert's design along the Western

Benaulim villagers flay illegal filling of waterbodies Demand action against wrongdoers

Benaulim The residents of Benaulim strongly opposed the illegal filling of low-lying areas and water bodies near Umiya Mercado shopping mall, located along the Western Bypass, demanding immediate intervention from authorities. A large machine was spotted dumping and as a traditional water body along the Western Bypass in Benaulim, Santan Pereira, a resident, informed Oheraldo that he had lodged a formal complaint with the Panchayat and other relevant authorities, urging immediate action to prevent further destruction of biodiversity and to mitigate potential accidents.

Bypass at Benaulim.

"It is evident that the current design is flawed, leading to the filling of water bodies and accidents. It is high time that the Panchayat's biodiversity committee and the Goa State Biodiversity Board take serious note of the destruction happening in the name of development," Pereira said.

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He further pointed out that residents have long been raising concerns over the filling of water bodies and the destruction of agricultural land due to the construction of the Western Bypass. "It is high time that the Panchayat's biodiversity committee and the Goa State Biodiversity Board take serious note of the destruction happening in the name of development," Pereira said.

Lack of traffic signboards along new bypass causes confusion

Team Herald

MARGAO: Even as discussions continue over the issues surrounding the Western Bypass—particularly the filling of a water body at Benaulim—a new problem has emerged: the absence of proper signboards, leading to significant traffic confusion.

Despite the recent opening of the bypass at Benaulim, poor traffic management has left commuters struggling. The diversion of heavy vehicular traffic onto the bypass has only worsened the situation, with motorists complaining about the lack of

clear directional signage at key junctions.

At major intersections near the bypass, there are no visible signboards guiding vehicles onto the highway. Instead, an outdated sign reading "Service Road Starts" remains in place, misleading drivers and failing to direct national highway traffic onto the new bypass. This has resulted in unnecessary congestion and uncertainty for commuters.

Adding to the issue, interstate highway traffic—including LPG gas tankers and vehicles carrying hazardous goods—continues to use the old, narrow,

and congested highway through Navelim to access the eastern bypass at Rawanfond. The lack of proper signage at the Bellem-Navelim traffic junction has contributed to this problem, as northbound traffic from the south is still using the older route instead of the bypass.

Sources from the Traffic Cell have confirmed that signboards have already been prepared but are yet to be installed. Officials have assured that work on their installation is expected to begin soon, aiming to resolve the confusion and improve traffic flow on the Western Bypass.

PARADISE LOST



Picnickers have left piles of garbage strewn around an otherwise picture-perfect wooded spot at Betailatim beach, a stretch known for its tranquil charm sans shacks or water sports activities

Experts warn of 'commodification' of Goan land, call on youth to step up, protect their inheritance

Team Herald

MARGAO: The recently concluded youth seminar, "Preserving Goa's Rich Legacy: Our Responsibility," delivered a strong message of empowerment and civic duty. Organised jointly by Goyche Fuddle Pillge Khatri (GFPK) and The Council for Social Justice and Peace (CSJP), the event saw an enthusiastic gathering of young minds eager to engage in discussions on sustainable development and environmental preservation, at the Rosary School Hall, Navelim.

GFPK President Jack Mascarenhas opened the seminar with a compelling presentation highlighting Goa's growing environmental crisis, from the pollution of water bodies to the destruction of hills and depletion of natural resources. Quoting Professor Mariano Pinheiro, Mascarenhas spoke about Goa's lost opportunities due to leadership challenges and envisioned a future where the state thrives with world-class education, healthcare, and industries—a vision that, he asserted, can be realised through collective action. He stressed the importance of responsible leadership and called on young people to actively shape the future instead of watching their inheritance erode.

CSJP Executive Secretary Fr Savio Fernandes welcomed the attendees, while the keynote address was delivered by Professor Kenneth Bo Nielsen, Associate Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo, Norway, and an expert on land and environmental conflicts in India.



Professor Kenneth Bo Nielsen speaking at the seminar "Preserving Goa's Rich Legacy: Our Responsibility"

Professor Nielsen spoke on the commodification of land in Goa, citing an anecdote about a child questioning a "THIS PROPERTY IS NOT FOR SALE" sign. He emphasised that land is a finite natural resource, and treating it purely as a market commodity has long-term environmental consequences. He detailed the damage caused by mining, coal transportation, real estate speculation, and infrastructure projects like the Mopa airport, warning that unsustainable development could lead to irreversible harm. Drawing from his research in "The Great Goa Land Grab," he provided a data-backed overview of land acquisitions and their social and environmental impacts.

Despite these concerns, Nielsen offered a message of hope, highlighting the persistence of Goan activists, NGOs, and researchers in documenting these issues. He

encouraged youth to leverage available data and research to push for change and to recognize the power of collective action.

Nielsen also spoke about global movements in environmental conservation, including the growing involvement of major world religions in climate advocacy. He pointed to Goa's rising ecological farming initiatives and organisations like the Goa Foundation and the Goenchi Mati Movement, which promote community-driven environmental stewardship. "We must rethink our relationship with land and nature," he urged, stressing the need for community-oriented, rather than profit-driven, approaches to sustainability.

Another speaker, Dr Jorson, emphasised the need for long-term planning in Goa's development rather than reactive decision-making. Using Goa's tourism industry as an example, he noted how inadequate planning had led to unregulated growth, environmental stress, and infrastructure deficiencies.

Fr Bolmax delivered an impassioned address on the power of individual resolve, encouraging the youth to believe that determination and sustained effort can overcome even the most formidable challenges.

The seminar concluded with a dynamic Q&A session, where young attendees shared their thoughts, raised concerns, and discussed potential solutions. Many participants expressed a renewed sense of purpose, vowing to take tangible steps in their communities to protect Goa's environment and culture.



The audience at the Rosary School Hall, Navelim

GRLA slams CM for Devanagari-only job policy, calls it discriminatory

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan (GRLA) has strongly opposed Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's announcement making Konkani mandatory for government jobs, alleging that the policy unfairly discriminates against thousands of citizens who use the Roman script.

At a function on Tuesday, Sawant stated that the decision was made to protect the interests of locals, clarifying that it does not mean injustice to Marathi speakers. However, GRLA contends that limiting Konkani to the Devanagari script in recruitment exams effectively excludes a large section of Goans who have traditionally used the Roman script in education and daily life.

GRLA President Kennedy Afonso, argued that the government should have ensured question papers were available

Many job aspirants failed the recent Goa Staff Selection Commission examination set in Devanagari script. This means govt jobs will overwhelmingly go to the majority community, creating an unfair advantage and institutionalising discrimination – Kennedy Afonso, President, GRLA

in both Devanagari and Roman scripts. He pointed out that while the chief minister has expressed concern about Marathi writers, there has been no acknowledgment of the decades-long demand for justice for Roman-script Konkani users.

GRLA highlighted the recent Goa Staff Selection Commission examination, where a significant number of minority applicants reportedly failed the Konkani paper set in Devanagari, with many receiving zero marks.

"This means that government jobs will overwhelmingly go to the majority community, creating an unfair advantage and institutionalising discrimination," Afonso stated.

GRLA warned that such exclusionary measures are forcing more Goan youth to seek employment overseas. The organisation also accused BJP legislators from the minority community of betraying their voters by remaining silent on the issue.

"They use minority votes to gain power but fail to raise their voices against such unjust policies," the GRLA president said. "This is precisely why the Official Language Act must be amended to include Roman script alongside Devanagari," Afonso emphasized, stating that allowing candidates to write in their preferred script would ensure equal opportunity for all communities in Goa.

Benaulim Congress workers oppose alliance for 2027 polls

Team Herald

MARGAO: Congress party workers in Benaulim expressed a strong resentment to an alliance in the constituency during the Assembly elections in 2027.

Congress South Goa MP Captain Viriato Fernandes engaged with party workers in Benaulim village but refrained from making a definitive statement regarding political alliances, stressing that such decisions lie with the party leadership.

Fernandes's visit to the AamAadmi Party (AAP) stronghold in Benaulim was closely monitored by local Congress members, many of whom sought a clear stance against any alliance. However, he reiterated that discussions on alliances would occur at the appropriate time, guided by Congress leaders at both the state and national levels. South Goa District Congress

Congress workers should focus on strengthening the party's base in Benaulim. I am confident of the party's prospects, Congress will field a strong candidate for the MLA seat in 2027. Our Goa Desk Secretary, Dr Anjali Nimbalkar, has made it clear that there will be no alliance in Goa. The people of Benaulim will have the opportunity to elect a Congress candidate of their choice –Savio D'Silva, South Goa District Congress Committee President

Committee President SavioD'Silva urged party workers to focus on strengthening the party's base in Benaulim. Expressing confidence in the party's prospects, D'Silva stated, "Congress will field a strong candidate for the MLA seat in 2027. Our Goa Desk

HC orders govt to act on Salpem Lake pollution

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Bombay High Court at Goa has directed authorities to take immediate action on sewage contamination in River Sal and Salpem Lake, even as Navelim MLA Ulhas Tuenkar laid the foundation stone for a Rs 5 crore rejuvenation and beautification project for the lake on Tuesday.

During the hearing on Tuesday, petitioner Antonio Alvares appeared via video conferencing, reiterating concerns about continued pollution. Amicus Curiae Neha Shirodkar, who had conducted an inspection of multiple locations in Margao, submitted a short report highlighting ongoing violations. The court directed all respondents to examine the report and take necessary action, ordering them to file an action-taken report before the next hearing on March 12. The Sewerage and Infrastructural Development Corporation of Goa Limited (SIDCGL) was granted four weeks to submit its report. Meanwhile, the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) informed the court that the construction of a soak pit was underway and would be completed in 15 days, with a status report to follow. The Water Resources Department (WRD), recently added as a respondent, was also

instructed to submit a report on the condition of nullahs within four weeks.

Amicus Curiae Adv Gauravardhan objected to the delay by the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) in sealing approximately 40 establishments responsible for sewage discharge. In response, Justice Makarand Karnik ordered the immediate sealing of these establishments, directing the Mamlatdar and the South Goa District Collector to execute the action, with the GSPCB required to submit a report at the next hearing. Despite being a respondent in the case for over a year, the Navelim village panchayat has yet to file its reply, a matter that remains pending before the court.

At the site, independent of court proceedings, MLA Ulhas Tuenkar initiated the rejuvenation and beautification project for Salpem Lake, aiming to address the persistent pollution affecting local water bodies. He assured that he would collaborate with the sewage department to find a permanent solution to the issue of raw sewage discharge into the nullah and the lake. Responding to concerns raised by local farmers, Tuenkar urged them to meet with senior WRD engineers and instructed the department to assist in resolving their grievances.

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Charging panel glitch grounds KTC's EV buses in Margao

Team Herald

MARGAO: Several electric buses remained non-operational at the Kadamba Transport Corporation (KTC) depot in Margao after a technical fault in the charging panel disrupted their power supply. The snag caused service interruptions across multiple routes in South Goa, raised concerns among commuters and transport users.

Given that the majority of shuttle services are operated by EV buses and thousands rely on them daily, such disruptions significantly impact passengers. Passengers on some routes experienced delays, with a shuttle bus reportedly slowing down en route from Cortalim to Margao due to a low battery charge.

Social activist and GOA-CAN coordinator Roland Martins, who was on the affected bus, recounted how it gradually lost speed upon reaching Cortalim. "When I inquired with the staff, they informed me that the battery was running low," he said.

Following further inquiries at the Margao depot, Martins learned that the charging issue stemmed from a power supply problem, leading to disruptions in EV bus services to Canacona, Karwar, and the shuttle service to Panjim.

KTC Chairman and MLA Ulhas Tuenkar acknowledged that a fault in an electrical panel had caused the disruption. However, he assured that the issue had been addressed by the evening, restoring normal operations.