

São José de Areal villagers urge halt to coal transport, railway station plans

Team Herald

MARGAO: Upset that the government is pressing ahead with the railway project in São José de Areal, villagers have voiced strong opposition to the proposed Konknan Railway station, yard, and goods shed in their agrarian village.

Residents have also called for an immediate halt to the transportation of coal by both road and rail. They further demanded the cessation of all ongoing coal-related projects in São José de Areal and across Goa.

On Wednesday, the villagers made a heartfelt appeal to South Goa MP Captain Viriato Fernandes and handed over a memorandum outlining several concerns affecting both their village and the State.

The MP assured the villagers that he would raise the issue with the Chairman and Managing Director of the Konknan Railway Cor-

- KEY DEMANDS
- **Opposition to Konknan Railway project** – Reject the proposed station, yard, and goods shed.
 - **Stop coal transport** – Call for an immediate halt to coal transportation by road and rail.
 - **No land conversions** – Demand protection of forests, agricultural land, water bodies, and mountains
 - **Infra development** – Seek a market complex, community center, and sports academy
 - **Security & monitoring** – Request installation of CCTV cameras in key locations and at the panchayat office
 - **Heritage protection** – Call for the beautification of the Portuguese-era bridge.
 - **Address water crisis** – Urge authorities to find solutions to the village's water issues
 - **Support for people with disabilities** – Requests assistance in accessing MPLAD Fund benefits

poration next week.

The memorandum also highlighted the Railways' heedless treatment of the projects planned here, pointing out that the proposed station on the South Central Railway line was incorrectly labelled as

“SAN JUJE DA AREYAL” instead of its correct name, ‘São José de Areal.’

Additionally, the villagers reiterated their long-standing demand for Goa to be granted special status, as previously assured by the Prime Minister.

After Sarzora, Sao Jose de Areal villagers oppose railway station



MARGAO: The São José de Areal villagers have strongly opposed the proposed railway station in their village, citing concerns over environmental damage, loss of agricultural land, and threats to their way of life. A special Gram Sabha meeting was held where villagers voiced their opposition, calling the project unviable and harmful to the predominantly agrarian community.

Residents argued that the railway station would destroy water bodies, green spaces, and disturb the peace in a village where Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities and farmers rely on agriculture. They pointed out that the village has already lost significant land to new railway lines and the Margao Industrial Estate. Additionally, they highlighted safety concerns, with frequent accidents involving humans and animals along the proposed tracks.

The proposed station would be located just 500 metres from the South Western Railway line and 2 km from Margao railway station, raising questions about its necessity. Villagers at the gram sabha said their fear increased noise pollution, traffic

The memorandum listed several other demands, including the establishment of a market complex, a community centre, and a sports academy. The villagers also requested that a programme be organised to educate them about various schemes available through the MPLAD Fund, as well as employment opportunities for the youth under the Central Government of India.

Further, the villagers urged authorities to install CCTV cameras at key locations in the village and at the panchayat office. They also called for the beautification of the heritage Portuguese-era bridge. Addressing another pressing concern, the villagers sought solutions to the ongoing water crisis affecting both their village and the state. Additionally, they requested assistance for persons with disabilities in accessing amenities available under the MPLAD Fund.

Activists celebrate OCI battle win with litany

Team Herald

MARGAO: Goans for Goa (GFG) recently held a thanksgiving litany at Miramar Circle to express gratitude for the resolution of struggles faced by Goans in obtaining Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) status.

A large number of citizens participated in the litany to St. Anthony, marking the success of a long battle against the Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) circulars that had rendered many Goans ineligible for OCI.

The issue arose when the MEA declared that those who renewed

their Indian passports after registering their birth (Assento) in Portugal would have their passports revoked, making them foreigners in their own land. GFG, alongside affected individuals, fought the matter in court, ultimately securing justice.

Kennedy Afonso, GFG president, thanked key organisers, including Clive Sequira, Fortune, Venancio, Bevinda, and Christine, for making the event possible. The litany was followed by a fellowship gathering, bringing together those who had campaigned for OCI.

GRATITUDE AND FELLOWSHIP



Members of the group Goans for Goa pray and sing hymns thanking St Anthony for helping citizens obtain Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) status at the shrine at Miramar Circle

Five arrested for forging entry pass at Dabolim airport

Team Herald

VASCO: The Dabolim Airport police arrested five persons for allegedly forging an Airport Entry Pass (AEP) and using it to enter the restricted area of the Goa International Airport, Dabolim.

The incident occurred on Monday between 4 pm and pm. The accused, identi-

fied as Sahiel Khan from Vaddem, Vasco, Rakesh D Kekane from Maharashtra and Rakesh Kumar, Nasib Ansari, and Ashok Kumar Patel, all hailing from Bihar, were caught by Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel.

They were later handed over to the police. All have been remanded to two days of police custody.

India's first heritage stitched ship launched on Divar island

The vessel will dock at Karwar port, from where a Navy Captain will mentor the crew on subsequent voyages

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a step towards reviving India's maritime heritage, the country's first ancient stitched ship was officially launched at the Hodi Innovation shipyard on Divar Island. The event, held on Wednesday, was attended by senior Indian Navy officials, including Rear Admiral KM Ramakrishnan, VSM, Flag Officer Commanding Karnataka Naval Area (FOK), who was the chief guest.

Designed and built entirely in Goa, the ship is a tribute to India's traditional shipbuilding techniques. The vessel has been crafted using coconut fibre stitching, traditional wooden joinery, and natural resins, methods historically used in ancient Indian maritime construction. The project brought together expert artisans from across India, including a skilled team led by master craftsman Babu Shankaran from Kerala.

Speaking at the launch, Prathamesh Dandekar, Managing Director of Hodi Innovations, described the ship as a "living testament to India's shipbuilding legacy." He credited the artisans for their dedication and expressed gratitude to the Indian Navy and the Ministry of Culture for their support in bringing



the project to fruition.

Rear Admiral Ramakrishnan highlighted the historical significance of stitched ships, emphasizing their deep-rooted connection to India's ancient seafaring traditions. He announced that the vessel would be docked at Karwar port, where Captain Dilip Donde, India's first solo global circumnavigator, would mentor a Navy team undertaking ocean voyages aboard the ship. "Captain Donde's expertise will be invaluable in this historic

initiative," he added.

The project was conceptualised by economist and historian Sanjeev Sanyal and is being executed through a tripartite agreement between Hodi Innovations, the Indian Navy, and the Ministry of Culture.

The Goa-based Hodi Innovations has built a range of vessels, including sailing boats, motorboats, and patrol boats for the Indian defence forces, with expertise in steel, aluminum, and FRP (fibre-reinforced plastic) construction.

Moti Dongor homes safe from demolition, assures Margao MLA

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Aquem Comunidade has reiterated its opposition to the proposed police outpost and health centre in Moti Dongor, even as concerns persist over the potential demolition of homes in the area.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Urban Ayushman Arogya Mandir at Moti Dongor on Tuesday, Margao MLA Digambar Kamat assured residents that their homes would remain untouched as long as he was in office. His statement comes just days after the government set up a panel to examine rehabilitation options for slum dwellers in the migrant-dominated locality.

"There are messages circulating on WhatsApp about the demolition of structures in Moti Dongor. Those spreading such rumours are unaware of the history and

There are messages circulating on WhatsApp about the demolition of structures in Moti Dongor. Those spreading such rumours are unaware of the history and background of this settlement," Kamat declared. "Let me make it clear—while I am here, no one will dare to touch these structures."

The newly inaugurated wellness center marks the second public facility introduced in Moti Dongor within four months, following the establishment of a police outpost.

"Young people spreading messages about demolition must understand the his-

tory here. The government had planned to demolish these houses years ago, and a proposal was made to relocate 280 families to Housing Board accommodations with instalment-based payments. However, the local leadership chose to stay in Moti Dongor due to its proximity to the city," Kamat explained.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Rane insisted that healthcare should remain above politics and urged residents not to be misled by baseless speculation about demolitions. "There are people spreading rumours that homes will be razed. Do not believe them. Kamat has assured that a government notification safeguards these structures," Rane stated. "We are committed to making healthcare accessible to every resident of Moti Dongor, and all necessary facilities will be provided here."

Benaulim Carnival Committee names King Momo

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Benaulim Carnival Committee has announced Rocatho Gomes as King Momo for the Benaulim Bem-Vindo de Carnival Float Parade 2025, set to take place on March 1, starting at 3 pm. The parade will follow a route from Voltar to Holy Trinity, Maria Hall, and conclude at the Benaulim Beach parking area.

At a separate function, Khell tiatrists from the Benaulim constituency were felicitated for their contributions to the art form. The event saw enthusiastic praise for the role of Tiatr and the Church in preserving the Konkani Romi script.

Benaulim MLA Captain Venzy Viegas emphasized the importance of keeping

Konkani alive by strengthening its foundations. He urged parents to take an active role in ensuring the language's survival.

"Two pillars of Konkani Romi Lipi—our vibrant churches and iconic Khell Tiatr artists—have kept our language thriving. Now, it's time for us parents to build the third pillar by speaking Konkani at home," Viegas said, calling for a united effort to preserve Goa's linguistic and cultural heritage.

He further highlighted the significance of traditional Khell Tiatr, describing its performers as the "true brand ambassadors of Konkani Romi Lipi."

The Benaulim Carnival, themed "Carnival the Local Way," aims to celebrate Goan traditions while showcasing local talent.



If India is moving ahead as digital India, why is care not taken to ensure that proper provisions are made to provide continued internet services? Although the use of electricity poles by internet and cable providers without paying dues may have been illegal, was the rash manner in which the cables were cut, justified?

DID POOR COORDINATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT DEPTS LEAD TO THE INTERNET SHUTDOWN?

It is a disgrace that two government departments cannot coordinate on a fundamental infrastructure issue like internet connectivity. In 2025, when the world is digitized and the Prime Minister speaks about digitization driving India forward, two departments under the same ruling party are failing to coordinate on this critical matter. Is this incompetence on the part of ministers, bureaucrats, and those involved, or is it a case of egos clashing? Are we waiting for someone to die due to a medical emergency before this issue is addressed? Just as in the developed world, internet cables should be laid underground with proper ducting

We were affected by the disruption of internet services. However, those with Jio wireless connectivity had no issues, which helped to some extent. On the other hand, people using wired services faced significant problems. Many switched to Jio wireless as an alternative. The disruption impacted a lot of people, especially students—it's not as if it went unnoticed. Even business owners were affected

I believe the cable operators are at fault. The electricity department had previously issued them a warning, yet they neither heeded it nor made the necessary payments. If they were required to pay the government, they should have done so. Now, we are operating from St. Cruz using BSNL, and we haven't faced any issues. The Executive Engineer (EE) who was recently removed had stated that only cables in Panjim were cut. But if that's the case, how did internet services across Goa go down? Everyone was complaining. How did this happen? I strongly feel that the cable operators themselves deliberately disrupted services. The electricity department is not to blame for this situation

– Rennie Azavedo, founder, Fabcoders

– Nilesch Shah, ex-president, TTAG



Scan the QR code to watch Street Voices, or tune into our English news bulletins at 8 pm and the Konkani bulletin at 9 pm on Herald TV