

After Sao Jose de Areal, now Sarzora fights back against railway station

Villagers say unwanted and unplanned projects will disturb peace, destroy biodiversity

Team Herald

MARGAO: After Sao Jose de Areal locals rebuffed the railway station plan, the residents of Sarzora have now followed suit and strongly opposed the proposed railway station in their village raising concerns about biodiversity loss, environmental damage and the lack of infrastructure.

The village panchayat gram sabha chaired by Leona Fernandes on Sunday saw a large turnout of villagers vociferously opposing moves for a proposed railway station at Sarzora.

It is important to note that this is not the first time the community has opposed the project. In the

A resolution was passed demanding unrestricted access to the traditional Sarzora Lake. The villagers claimed that the lake has been blocked by the Water Resources Department (WRD), restricting their access. They urged the WRD to allow local residents to visit the lake between 4 and 6 pm for recreation and relaxation

past, they had submitted formal objections to the relevant authorities.

The villagers raised several issues regarding the proposed station, including the fear that it would attract migrants, disrupt their cultural identity, promote unregulated commerce, and potentially increase crime.



They also highlighted the potential threat the station posed to the Sarzora Lake, which has been officially designated as a wetland by the Goa State Wetland Authority.

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Furthermore, the villagers resolved to preserve

POINT OF VIEW

- Villagers fear it would attract migrants
- Disrupt their cultural identity
- Promote unregulated commerce
- Potentially increase crime
- Destroy biodiversity

their agricultural lands and prevent their conversion into settlement zones. They emphasized their commitment to protecting these lands for future generations and urged the Town and Country Planning Department to ensure no further conversion of agricultural fields into urban areas.

Special drive regularises 96 structures in South Goa

Team Herald

MARGAO: A special drive initiated by the South Goa district administration to regularise unauthorised structures in the region led to the disposal of 96 applications and the highest number of applications, 45, were disposed of at Sanguem taluka.

According to South Goa Additional Collector, Srinet Kothwale, a total of approximately 183 applicants or their representatives participated in the camps held at the taluka level, resulting in 96 applications being processed.

The highest number of applications, 45, were disposed of at Sanguem taluka, followed by Ponda with 42, Mormugao (31), Quepem (25), and Salcete (27). Of the applications processed, approximately 34 were approved, and 26 regularisation orders were issued.

Nuvem locals oppose expansion of NH66, claim will serve no practical purpose



Team Herald

MARGAO: Residents of Nuvem have once again voiced their opposition to the proposed expansion of the old stretch of National Highway 66, expressing concerns over the potential impact on the local community.

A meeting was held on Saturday to discuss the issue, particularly in light of recent statements made by local MLA and Minister Aleixo Sequiera, who asserted that he intends to complete the stretch expansion, "somehow."

The residents have long been apprehensive about the expansion, particularly since a new highway was constructed about 50 meters away from the old route. With most traffic now shifting to this new highway, they believe that expanding the old stretch could lead to an increase in accidents and pose further challenges for the local residents and students attending nearby educational institutions.

Several meetings and inspections have already been held, involving both authorities and Nuvem residents, including South Goa Member of Parliament Captain Viriato Fernandes.

Everson Valles, a local leader from Nuvem, pointed out that the western bypass is fully operational and has significantly reduced traffic on the old highway. "There are several educational institutions,

schools, higher secondaries besides professional and undergraduate colleges in this area and widening of the road will be a safety hazard both to the parents and students due to the increase in vehicular traffic," said Valles.

Valles also highlighted concerns about the potential disruption of existing infrastructure, such as electricity and telecommunication cables, as well as public water pipelines, which are already laid in the portion of the road that would be widened. Expanding the road further could require utilizing space closer to residents' homes, creating additional concerns.

In previous inspections, traffic department officials had identified black spots and noted that accidents had decreased since the western bypass opened to traffic. Furthermore, the residents argue that the lack of a plan to expand the road beyond Carmel College will only result in further congestion and create a bottleneck at the Nuvem Church junction.

With the recent statements from the MLA, the residents are more vocal in their opposition, reiterating that the proposed expansion would be unnecessary and serve no practical purpose. They are determined to continue voicing their concerns against the expansion of the old national highway.

Goa introduces new rules for Comunidade Land Development and Regulation

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa government has introduced the Goa Comunidade Land Development and Regulation Rules, 2025, allowing financially insecure comunidades to develop their land by partnering with private agencies.

According to gazette notification, the rules mandate a minimum land area of 10,000 square meters for development.

The comunidade must invite bids from developers, ensuring they retain at least 50% of the plots, with 20% reserved for affordable housing for Gaunkars/Jonoeiros.

"The comunidade shall invite bids for the development of land from the developers in proportion such that the comunidade shall retain at least 50 per

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cent of the plots of which 20 per shall be reserved for affordable housing to Gaunkar/Jonoeiros, after deducting the area used to develop amenities and the remaining plots shall be transferred to the developer on payment of the financial bid value to the comunidade," the notification read.

"After the selection of the successful bidder through competitive bidding, the Comunidade shall grant the permission/ work order to the developer for the development of Comunidade land, with the prior approval of the government," it added.

CARNIVAL SPIRIT



'King Momo' greets his 'subjects' as he leads the Carnival float parade down the streets of Margao, on Sunday. Hundreds of locals and tourists, many in vibrant costumes and headgear, lined the streets to watch the floats

Sacorda residents warn of agitation over 20-year-long incomplete road work

Team Herald

PONDA: Residents of Sacorda have warned of a protest if the long-pending construction of the Nave-Kharwat road is not completed by March. The roadwork has been stalled for the past 20 years, causing severe inconvenience to locals and farmers.

Speaking on the issue, residents highlighted that the absence of a proper road has made commuting extremely difficult, especially for farmers engaged in Bagayat (horticulture) activities.

According to locals, two decades ago, there was no road in the area, only a narrow footpath. Initial excavation and stone-laying efforts were made, but the road remains incomplete. Due to the hilly terrain, the existing rough road is located on a slope, making it dangerous for residents to traverse. The ward has approximately 80 houses and the road serves as a crucial link for



those living there. However, residents are forced to navigate through rocky, muddy, and uneven paths, posing a significant risk.

Additionally, every year,

villagers travel to Kharwat along the Ragda River to immerse Ganesh idols during Visarjan. However, the steep and rocky descent makes this journey particu-

larly hazardous.

Concerned citizens had previously brought the issue to the attention of local MLA Ganesh Gaonkar, who had taken it seriously and directed the relevant department to complete the roadwork. Following this, tenders were issued, and a foundation ceremony was held last year. However, despite a year passing since the event, no progress has been made.

Panchayat member Mahadev Shetkar recently met with engineers from the Public Works Department (PWD) and conducted an inspection of the site. The officials assured him that the road would be completed by March.

Expressing frustration over the repeated delays, Shetkar warned that if the road is not completed within the promised time frame, locals will stage an agitation to demand their long-overdue right to a proper road.

Bandora locals relieved as underpass nears completion



Team Herald

BANDORA: The much-awaited construction of the underpass (flyover) at the KTC Bus Stand near the Nageshi-Bandora junction on the Ponda-Panjim four-lane National Highway (NH) is nearing completion, bringing relief to Bandora locals. The ongoing work, which began last year, had posed a traffic hazard due to diversions, causing inconvenience to commuters.

Residents of Chirputem faced significant difficulties due to the lack of an underpass at both the Safa Masjid Junction and Bandora KTC Bus Stand Junction, forcing them to travel an extra two kilometres to reach their localities. With the project now in its final stages, this issue is expected to be resolved soon.

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Additionally, passenger buses had been reluctant to cover the extra distance to the KTC Bus Stand due to the absence of an access road or underpass at Safa Masjid. However, according to NH authorities, the underpass and approach road work is almost complete, ensuring smoother connectivity for buses and commuters.

Fifty per cent of the underpass had been completed and in use for vehicular traffic a few months ago, while the remaining work is now in its final stage.

Goa Government notifies witness protection scheme

PANJIM: Goa Government has notified the Witness Protection Scheme, under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 for strengthening witness safety in criminal cases.

According to Gazette notification, a dedicated protection fund will be financed through state budgets, court costs, donations, and CSR contributions. Witnesses can seek protection online or offline, with authorities required to process requests within five days of a police threat report.

Key measures include preventing face-to-face encounters, monitoring communications, identity concealment, temporary relocation, and financial aid.

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Family budgets and diets take a hit as leafy green veggies become dearer

Farmers struggle with unreliable water supply; say unprecedented heat causing delicate greens to wilt

Team Herald

MARGAO: The prices of locally grown leafy vegetables (gauvti bhaji) have risen in the Margao market, disrupting the monthly budgets of middle-class families.

Pedrina Fernandes, a vegetable vendor at Davorlim, said that the current water shortage has affected the availability of leafy vegetables. "The season for growing local leafy vegetables is nearly over, and the high prices are due to supply and demand issues. Farmers are unable to bring large quantities of leafy greens to the market or roadside stalls. We mostly grow seasonal vegetables and fruits for domestic consumption and do not engage in large-scale farming," she explained.

She added that many varieties of vegetables, including leafy greens, are supplied from neighbouring Karnataka. However, during this season, supply disruptions often lead to price hikes. Local Goan farmers, who cultivate small patches of these vegetables, are bringing in limited stock.

A large number of farmers in Borda, Davorlim, Sao Jose de Areal, Nuvem, and other places cultivate leafy greens and fruits, but production shortages have led to price revisions. "The prices of gauvti vegetables have not skyrocketed, but they have increased by Rs 5 to Rs 10. Earlier, we sold two bundles of leafy greens for Rs 30, but now we sell three bundles for Rs 50. Similarly, sweet potato (vatta) that was earlier Rs 50 is now Rs 100, with a slightly larger

portion," Fernandes added.

Laximan Naik, a resident of Margao, pointed out that the poor supply of greens from Karnataka has made it difficult for families to maintain a balanced diet, especially for children who rely on iron-rich vegetables. "Fruits like apples, oranges, watermelons, and grapes have also become expensive, which is affecting the budgets of low- and middle-income groups. Grapes are sold at Rs 150 per kg by roadside vendors, while in the city, they are priced between Rs 160 and Rs 180 per kg," he noted.

Farmers traditionally grow vegetables such as lady's fingers, brinjal, chilli, long beans, cluster beans, radish, cucumber, and tambdi bhaji in places like Dicarpale, Fatorda, Nuvem, Agalli, Mungul, and Sao Jose de Areal.

At the Margao market, five to seven radishes cost around Rs 25, while tambdi bhaji is sold in bunches priced at Rs 20, or three bunches for Rs 50. A batch of 25 large lady's fingers is Rs 100. Long beans are priced at Rs 50 per bunch, while cluster beans cost Rs 40 per portion.

Naik also noted that prices vary from place to place. "In the Margao market, the same quantity of vegetables is priced higher than what we buy from roadside vendors," he said.

Other vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, peaches, plums, melons, green beans, spinach, beets, onions, bananas, and mushrooms remain available but at revised prices.

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