

## OLD GOA: Call for FIR on 'unauthorised' excavation

Activists ask how digging work was allowed at the ancient site, brand it a 'robbery of historical artefacts'

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** First the Se Old Goa Panchayat said it was "clueless" about the project. Now with the Church clarifying that it had not issued a no-objection certificate (NOC) to the controversial construction project under the central PRASAD scheme in the heritage area, the activists protesting against the tourism department initiative have asserted that an FIR should be lodged against the workers and contractors who had excavated the area and carried away suspected historical artefacts.

Speaking to O Herald, Peter Viegas, Coordinator of the Save Old Goa Action Committee (SOGAC), demanded a full investigation into the matter.



Citizens from across the State protested at Old Goa to stop the proposed construction close to the UNESCO World Heritage Site

"The government claims that the police will look into the rumours about a mall being built, but the real issue is the excavation of the area without permission from local bodies. An FIR should be filed against those who dug up the site and took away historical material

– Peter Viegas, Coordinator of the Save Old Goa Action Committee

"The authorities are making plans and consulting local bodies only afterwards. This government is pushing forward with its plans, and when people oppose them, they shift the blame onto the citizens

– Glean Cabral, local resident and activist

"The government claims that the police will look into the rumours about a mall being built, but the real issue is the excavation of the area without permission from local bodies. An FIR should be filed against those who dug up the site and took away historical material," Viegas stated.

Viegas also emphasised the need to identify who authorised the excavation. "Whether they had permission or not is secondary. The key question is who allowed the excavation to occur at an ancient site? A robbery of historical artefacts has taken place, and we cannot remain silent until

those items are recovered," he added.

Criticizing the role of the tourism department, Viegas claimed that local institutions were being bypassed, while the tourism department sought permissions from central bodies.

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### SOUTH GOA MP URGES CENTRE TO SCRAP OLD GOA WORK

**MARGAO:** South Goa MP Capt Viriato Fernandes has urged the Union Minister for Tourism and Culture to halt construction activity in the Old Goa heritage zone and scrap the PRASAD scheme project.

In a letter dated March 27, 2025, Fernandes highlighted large-scale excavation at the UNESCO World Heritage site without adhering to regulations in the No Development Buffer Zone under the ASI.

Expressing concern over the distress caused to heritage lovers, villagers, and citizens, Fernandes demanded that the missing historically valuable material be located and returned to the site and that ASI restore the area and initiate an inquiry into those responsible for violating ASI regulations.

He attached letters from the Village Panchayat of Se-Old-Goa and the Save Old Goa Action Committee, along with photographs documenting the destruction at the site, to support his appeal.

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### THE ROAD NOT TAKEN



### SMART CITY DEADLINE



With only three days left to meet the deadline set by the High Court for completing the Smart City works, Mahatma Gandhi Road, near Hotel Vinanti stands closed on account of digging being carried out by the contractor Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited

## Immigration and Foreigners Bill gets Lok Sabha nod

**PTI NEW DELHI:** Despite Opposition concerns about the "arbitrary powers" that would pass into the hands of immigration officials, the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025, was passed in the Lok Sabha on Thursday by a voice vote. The various amendments moved by Opposition members were negated.

Replying to the debate on the bill, Home Minister Amit Shah said those who come to India for business, education and investment are welcome, but those who pose a threat to security will face stringent action while declaring that the country is

**Opposition MPs claimed that some provisions of the bill seeking to streamline various services related to immigration and foreigners give "arbitrary powers" to immigration authorities and demanded it should be sent to a joint parliamentary committee for detailed scrutiny**

not a "dharamshala".

One of the key provisions in the bill is that anyone found to be using a forged passport or visa for entering India or staying in or exiting from the

country will be punishable with a jail term of up to seven years and a fine which could extend to Rs 10 lakh. The bill also seeks to ensure a close monitoring of everyone who visits India, Shah said.

Shah said the bill is necessary to strengthen the country's security and economy, promote manufacturing and trade, get global recognition for the education system and help universities earn international repute. It will ensure that the country gets up-to-date information about every foreigner visiting India, he added.

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