

SCIENCE AS SHIELD TO STOP LAND SHARKS

Village gram sabhas in South Goa push for carrying capacity studies to address mega project concerns

Team Herald

MARGAO: As realty space shrinks in North Goa and land sharks turn their gaze southwards, coastal villages in Salcete are advocating a new approach to manage and regulate development in their respective communities. As opposition to mega projects grows – whether luxury hotels or large housing developments – an emerging demand has taken shape: village panchayats are being asked to conduct carrying capacity studies to scientifically evaluate what their communities can sustain.

In Varca, where gram sabha meetings have frequently featured debates against large-scale developments, the panchayat has committed to working with consultants on such a study. The initiative comes as villagers face challenges in blocking projects through traditional means, as developers often secure approvals directly from departments like Town and Country Planning (TCP), Power, or PWD Water Supply, bypassing local governance structures.

Many cases throughout Goa have demonstrated

WHAT IS A CARRYING CAPACITY STUDY?

A carrying capacity study is an overall environmental assessment that indicates the maximum number of people a piece of land can sustain when things like water supply, roads, electricity and other aspects are taken into account. Such studies are a good way of understanding if large housing/ hospitality projects can be allowed in a rural area

WHERE HAVE CARRYING CAPACITY STUDIES BEEN DONE OR PROPOSED?

In Varca, the panchayat has committed to working with consultants on such a study. Similar concerns were raised during a recent extraordinary gram sabha in Benaulim, and residents recalled passing a resolution for a carrying capacity study last year. The Colva Civic and Consumer Forum (CCCCF) has highlighted that government instructions already mandate carrying capacity studies for each village

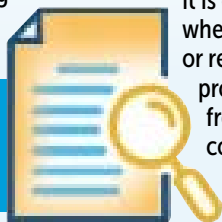
that when panchayats delay or refuse permissions, project developers frequently prevail in court on technical grounds, despite strong opposition from village gram sabhas. Local concerns are often overshadowed by technical considerations that form the basis of permit approvals, though some projects have been rejected for specific violations.

The carrying capacity studies aim to provide panchayats with scientific

evidence to argue against overwhelming development, demonstrating how new projects might strain existing infrastructure including water supply, roads, and electrical systems. Similar concerns were raised during a recent extraordinary gram sabha in Benaulim village, where residents opposed a multi-housing project citing infrastructure limitations, inadequate waste management, lack of proper sewer-

WHY ARE MANY GRAM SABHAS DEMANDING THESE STUDIES?

It is often seen that when panchayats delay or refuse permissions, project developers frequently prevail in court on technical grounds, despite strong opposition from village gram sabhas. The carrying capacity studies aim to provide panchayats with scientific evidence to argue against overwhelming development



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France: Marine Le Pen banned from public office

AP, PARIS: A French court on Monday barred Marine Le Pen from seeking public office for five years, with immediate effect, for embezzlement – a hammer blow to the far-right leader's presidential hopes and an earthquake for French politics.

Although Le Pen can appeal the verdict, such a move won't suspend her ineligibility, which could rule her out of the 2027 presidential race.

The court ruling was a political as well as a judicial temblor for France, hobbling one of the leading contenders to succeed President Emmanuel Macron at the end of his second and final term, scheduled to last into 2027.

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So broad were the political implications that even some of Le Pen's political opponents reacted by saying that court had gone too far.

Le Pen herself wasn't around to hear the chief judge pronounce the sentence that threw her career into a tailspin. By then, she'd already strode out of the courtroom, when the judge first indicated that Le Pen would be barred from office, without saying straight away for how long.

Although Le Pen didn't immediately comment, her supporters were quick to express disapproval.

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NOTHING SMART ABOUT IT

As the **March 31 deadline** for the **Smart City Mission/AMRUT 1.0** has passed, we take stock of the progress of key infrastructure projects by the Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Ltd (IPSCDL), launched in Goa in 2016



ST INEZ

WHAT'S DONE

- TB Cunha Road (18th June Road Junction to D B Road Junction, 320 metres)
- 18th June Road (Culvert near old NGPDA Office to Caculo Island, 140 metres)
- Cunha Rivara Road (Vinanti Restaurant to D B Road Junction, 40 metres)



M G ROAD

- M G Road (UCO Bank to Vinanti Restaurant, 380 metres)
- Internal Road (Tom Liquor Shop to D B Road, 200 metres)
- Vithal Mandir Road (Interconnections)
- Smart Road (St Inez Junction to Adarsh Colony Junction, Miramar)

WHAT'S NOT DONE



ANTAO DE NORONHA ROAD

- General Bernardo Guedes Road (Geeta Bakery to D B Road Junction, 535 metres)
- General Costa Alvares Road (Panjim Market to D B Road, 200 metres)
- Two Internal Lanes (General Costa Alvares Road, 100 metres)
- Antao de Noronha Road (Cafe Bhonsle, 70 metres)
- Adjacent Road (Chai Comer) (30 metres)
- Sewerage Works (Bhatlem, Altinho, Miramar, Rua de Ourem)
- Footpath and Utility Laying (Cafe Bhonsle Square)
- Landscape and Plantation of Trees (Cafe Bhonsle Square)
- Smart Road (Old Patto Bridge to Four Pillars Junction, 1.4 km)

Myanmar quake toll crosses 2,000

AFP, MANDALAY, MYANMAR: Myanmar declared a week of national mourning on Monday over the country's devastating earthquake, as the death toll passed 2,000 and hopes faded of finding more survivors in the rubble of ruined buildings.

National flags will fly at half-mast until April 6 'in sympathy for the loss of life and damages' from Friday's massive quake, the ruling junta said in a statement.

The junta also announced a minute's silence on Tuesday, to begin at 0621 GMT – the precise time the quake struck. People should stop where they are to pay tribute to the victims, the junta said, while media should halt broadcasting and show mourning symbols, and prayers will be offered at temples and pagodas.

The announcement came as the tempo and urgency of rescue efforts wound down in Mandalay, one of the worst-affected cities and



A child takes rest on a bed in the compound of Mandalay General Hospital, on Monday

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the country's second-largest, with more than 1.7 million inhabitants.

"The situation is so dire that it's hard to express what is happening," said Aung Myint Hussein, chief administrator of Mandalay's Sajja North mosque. People prepared to camp

out in the streets across Mandalay for a fourth successive night, either unable to return to ruined homes or nervous about the repeated aftershocks that rattled the city over the weekend.

Some have tents but many, including young children, have been bedding down on blankets in the middle of roads, trying to keep as far from buildings as possible for fear of falling masonry.

The junta said Monday that 2,056 have now been confirmed, with more than 3,900 people injured and 270 still missing, but the toll is expected to rise significantly.

Three Chinese nationals are among the dead, China's state media said, along with two French people, according to the foreign ministry in Paris.

At least 19 deaths have been confirmed hundreds of kilometres away in Thailand's capital Bangkok.

Noida Lambo crash: Driver gets bail

PTI, NOIDA: A district court on Monday granted bail to a man accused of hitting two pedestrians with his Lamborghini sports car in Noida.

Deepak Kumar, a resident of Ajmer in Rajasthan, was arrested on Sunday following the accident near an under-construction building in

Sector 94 here, police said. Reportedly, the Lamborghini involved in the accident belongs to 24-year-old You-Tuber Mridul Tiwari.

The two labourers have been identified as Dijen Ravidas and Rambhu Kumar.

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OBSERVING FAITH



A boy observes the proceedings of Namaz being offered on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr at Bicholim, on Monday

Bombay HC nod to terminate pregnancy with foetal anomalies

PTI, MUMBAI: The Bombay High Court has granted a 32-year-old woman's plea to terminate her 26-week pregnancy over foetal anomalies at a private hospital of her choice, emphasising her right to reproductive freedom, bodily autonomy, and the right to choice.

A division bench comprising Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Neela Gokhale allowed the termination to be carried out at a private hospital of the woman's choosing, provided the hospital submits an affidavit affirming it meets all the requirements under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act.

The provisions of the MTP Act don't allow termination of pregnancy beyond the 24-week gestation to be conducted in private hospitals without the court's permission.

"Conscious of the right of the petitioner to reproductive freedom, her autonomy over the body and her right to choice and having considered the medical condition of the petitioner, we permit the petitioner to terminate the pregnancy medically," the high court stated in its order dated March 28.

The court's decision followed the woman's appeal to ensure that the procedure involved foetal heartbeat reduction to prevent the baby from being born alive.

The bench, however,

WOMAN CAN'T BE FORCED TO DO VIRGINITY TEST: HC

PTI, BILASPUR: A woman cannot be forced to undergo a virginity test as it violates Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees her fundamental right to protection of life and liberty, including the right to dignity, the Chhattisgarh High Court has said. Emphasising that Article 21 is the 'heart of fundamental rights', the HC said granting permission for a virginity test would be against the "fundamental rights, cardinal principles of natural justice and secret modesty of a female". Justice Arvind Kumar Verma made the observation in response to a criminal petition filed by a man who demanded his wife's virginity test.

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directed that the medical board at the state-run J J Hospital offer an opinion on the most suitable method to carry out the termination.

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MAX. TEMP 33.6 °C
MIN. TEMP 26.5 °C

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Thousands will be jobless if we meet the deadline.

Assagao's lone crusader fighting to protect natural spring in village

Patrick Rodrigues fears the mix of garbage slurry with water poses a threat to fields downstream

ERWIN FONSECA

ASSAGAO: Springs and water bodies are vital for maintaining a village's ecological balance, supporting both flora and fauna. However, poor maintenance—especially of canals—can make them hazardous during the monsoons.

Despite frequent government discussions on disaster management, progress remains slow, often derailing just before the rainy season. This is evident in Assagao, where a local resident is striving to protect an age-old spring-cum-nullah.

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"I initiated the process in January last year after obtaining NOC from the St Anne Chapel property, to which this land belongs. I wrote to the panchayat, which forwarded the matter to the WRD. For over a year, the file is stuck with the govt. This just shows how serious the authorities are about such critical issues – Patrick Rodrigues, Assagao resident

"From our side, all formalities have been completed. Once we receive administrative approval, the project will be tendered and work will commence – Vinoo Nayak, WRD Assistant Engineer

– Vinoo Nayak, WRD Assistant Engineer



Assagao resident Patrick Rodrigues next to a damaged portion of the canal carrying the spring water