

## VELSAO'S HOLY WEEK DESPAIR: UPHILL BATTLE AGAINST RLY ENCROACHMENT

As villagers prepare for Easter, double tracking has cut off hundreds of residents from church access

KARSTEN MIRANDA

**MARGAO:** As Goa prepares to solemnly observe Holy Week and celebrate Easter Sunday, the residents of Velsao find themselves trapped in a modern-day crucifixion of their own - caught between age-old religious traditions and the relentless advance of railway construction that has left them physically and spiritually landlocked.

On Palm Sunday, the faithful of Primeiro Vaddo conducted their annual Way of the Cross procession along the same path their ancestors have walked for generations - now transformed into an obstacle course of mud mounds and construction debris dumped by South Western Railway (SWR). What was once a solemn 350-metre walk to the Assumption of Our Lady Church has become a dangerous trek,

### THIS IS OUR PEOPLE'S NEW STATIONS OF THE CROSS: LOCAL RESIDENT



Mountains of mud dumped by South Western Railway block the entrances to homes in Velsao, leaving residents in the confines of their homes



People praying on Palm Sunday despite all the obstacles

with worshippers forced to navigate steep, unstable slopes where the railway has elevated the land up to 4 metres in some places. "We risk our lives to practice our faith," said one elderly parishioner, struggling to climb the

makeshift path. "This is their new Stations of the Cross," remarked another local resident, watching the congregation struggle through the debris-strewn path. "Each mound of dirt represents another station in

their passion." As the community prepares for Easter, their resurrection hope lies not in Sunday celebrations, but in the April 21 hearing at the Inspector of Survey and Land Records court - possibly their last chance to reclaim what the railways

have taken allegedly with tacit support of the authorities.

Even as that date approaches, for over 75% of the church's parishioners who reside west of the tracks, this Holy Week has laid bare their growing

isolation. The impending permanent closure of the northern level crossing - meant to facilitate express coal trains - will leave hundreds of residents with only one southern access point near St Anne's Convent on the

Velsao-Cansaulim border. What was once a simple crossing now requires a 1,700 metre detour, turning routine church visits into punishing journeys.

Orville Dourado Rodrigues, founder of Goencho Ekvott (GE), points to the cruel irony: "The (alleged) illegal occupier of our land, SWR, has put up notices warning against trespassing on what they falsely claim as their property. This is our ancestral land they've laid claim through fraudulent means without a single legal document." His words echo the pain of a community that has watched helplessly as the railway barricaded traditional crossing points at 'Bhavteakode' - named after the now-destroyed railway signal that once stood as a neighbourhood landmark.

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## Indian student sues Trump admin over deportation threat

**PTI, NEW YORK:** An Indian was among four students at Michigan public universities who have filed a lawsuit against their possible deportation after their student immigration status was terminated 'unlawfully'.

Chinmay Deore from Inida, Xiangyun Bu and Qiuyi Yang from China, and Yogesh Joshi from Nepal on Friday filed the lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and immigration officials, saying their student immigration status in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was illegally terminated "without sufficient notice and explanation".

SEVIS is a database that tracks information about non-immigrant students and exchange visitors in the US. The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan, which is representing the students, on Thursday, said they "filed a federal lawsuit along with a request for an emergency injunction on behalf of the students who had their F-1 student immigration status unlawfully and abruptly terminated by the Trump administration for no valid reason and without notice".

"The lawsuit asks the court to reinstate the status of these students so that they will be able to complete their studies and avoid facing the risk of detention and deportation," it said.

"None of them has been charged with, let alone convicted of, any crime in the US. None has violated any immigration law. Nor have they been active in on-campus protests regarding any political issue," said a complaint in the court, naming DHS Secretary Kristi Noem, acting ICE Director Todd Lyons and ICE Detroit Field Office Director Robert Lynch.

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## Waqf Act: SC lens on contentious provisions

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** In a significant development, the Supreme Court on Wednesday proposed to stay certain key provisions of the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, including the power to de-notify properties declared as waqf by courts and inclusion of non-Muslims in central Waqf councils and boards.

The top court proposed to pass the order, which was opposed by the Centre as it sought a detailed hearing before any such interim order.

The hearing relating to

72 petitions against the constitutionality of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 took place before a bench of Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan.

The bench, which will continue with the hearing on Thursday, was miffed over the inclusion of non-Muslims in the central waqf councils and boards and asked the Centre whether it was willing to include Muslims in Hindu religious trusts.

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## POLITICAL COLOUR



Delhi Congress President Devender Yadav with other party members being detained during a protest after the Enforcement Directorate filed a chargesheet against Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and LoP in the Lok Sabha and party leader Rahul Gandhi in the National Herald case in New Delhi, on Wednesday

## WILL MUSLIMS BE ALLOWED TO BE PART OF HINDU TRUSTS: SC ASKS CENTRE



**NEW DELHI:** The hearing saw sharp exchanges between the bench and the solicitor general when the judges questioned the logic behind permitting non-Muslims in waqf governance, while a similar reciprocity did not apply to Hindu religious endowments.

"Are you suggesting that Muslims could now be part of Hindu endowment boards as well? Please state it openly," it told Mehta. The law officer said not more than two non-Muslim members, apart from ex officio ones, would be included in the waqf council, and offered to state it in an affidavit.

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## Where are the body cams? Cop caught extorting motorist

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** Barely two weeks after Chief Minister Pramod Sawant announced that only Inspectors or Police Sub-Inspectors (PSIs) equipped with body cameras are authorised to issue challans for traffic violations, a constable attached to the Old Goa Police Station is facing serious allegations of extortion.

The constable allegedly demanded and collected Rs

2,000 from a two-wheeler rider for not wearing a helmet—an action in direct violation of the Chief Minister's directive. Sawant had earlier made it clear that any police officer below the rank of Police Inspector (PI) found stopping motorists or demanding money for traffic offences would face immediate suspension.

However, implementation on the ground appears to be lagging. Superin-

tendent of Police (North) Akshat Kaushal, IPS, confirmed that Panjim Dy SP Sudesh Naik has been tasked with conducting an inquiry and submitting a report, based on which appropriate action will be taken.

The incident came to light after social activist Adv Aires Rodrigues posted about it on social media.

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## Justice B R Gavai to be next CJI To take oath on May 14

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna on Wednesday recommended to the Centre the name of Justice **Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai** as the next CJI.

Justice Gavai, the second senior-most Supreme Court judge after the incumbent CJI Khanna, is set to become the 52nd CJI on May 14 after the retirement of CJI Khanna on May 13.

Justice Gavai, who was elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court on May 24, 2019, would have a tenure of over six months as the

CJI. He is due to retire on November 23, 2025.

CJI Khanna, who was sworn in as the 51st CJI on November 11 last year, recommended to the Union law ministry to appoint Justice Gavai as the next CJI. The retirement age of Supreme Court judges is 65 years.

Born on November 24, 1960 at Amravati, Justice Gavai was elevated as an additional judge of the Bombay High Court on November 14, 2003.

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## Will Bhoma's Sati shrine be relocated for highway? PWD has no clear answer

Team Herald

**PONDA:** Amid ongoing protests by Bhoma residents opposing the National Highway expansion project, the Public Works Department (PWD) has reiterated that minimal structures will be affected in the village, and key cultural landmarks will remain untouched. However, one PWD official clarified that the Sati Devi shrine may have to be relocated if necessary.

The agitation stems from concerns that the expansion will disrupt the village's natural beauty, cultural fabric, and religious heritage. However, PWD officials have clarified that only four houses and 16 shops in Bhoma will be impacted by the project. A similar situation is expected at Corlim, where a few residential structures may also be affected.

Speaking to reporters, PWD Executive Engineer (National Highways) Sattendra Bhohe stated that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) and land acquisition plans were presented during the Bhoma gram sabha in 2023. According to Bhohe, the project includes an elevated flyover stretching from Vaishali Hotel in

### THE EXPANSION IN QUESTION

■ PWD Executive Engineer (National Highways) Sattendra Bhohe stated that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) and land acquisition plans were presented during the Bhoma gram sabha in 2023

■ The project includes an elevated flyover stretching from Vaishali Hotel in Bhoma to Muslimwada, with a four-lane highway extending to Corlim and Old Goa

■ The Rs 1,060 crore project received financial sanction this fiscal year and includes the construction of a new bridge at Banastarim

■ The elevated section in Bhoma will not impact local temples or the nearby lake. Only four houses and 16 shops will be affected. The affected residents will be either compensated or rehabilitated, said Bhohe

■ Expansion work between Ponda and Bhoma is scheduled to begin post-monsoon

Bhoma to Muslimwada, with a four-lane highway extending to Corlim and Old Goa.

The Rs 1,060 crore project received financial sanction this fiscal year and includes the construction of a new bridge at Banastarim. Bhohe emphasised that the elevated section in Bhoma will not impact local temples or the nearby lake. "Only four houses and 16 shops will be affected. The affected residents will be either compensated or rehabilitated. The lakeside will also be preserved during construction," he said.

When questioned about

the roadside Sati Devi shrine, Assistant Engineer Chandra Pawar clarified that it lies on the road's edge and is unlikely to be affected. "However, if necessary, it will be relocated," he added. The widening will be confined to a 25-metre-wide corridor, and construction will commence once tenders are floated and work orders are issued. Additionally, expansion work between Ponda and Bhoma is scheduled to begin post-monsoon, with the government already sanctioning the required funds.

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## Maradona's daughter says doctors could have prevented his death

**AFP, SAN ISIDRO, ARGENTINA:** Argentine football legend Diego Maradona's daughter told a court Tuesday his death 'would have been avoided' if doctors caring for him after surgery had done their jobs.

Maradona died on November 25, 2020, aged 60, while recovering at home from brain surgery for a blood clot. He had battled cocaine and alcohol addiction for decades.

His seven-person medical team is on trial for what prosecutors have called the "horror theater" of the final days of his life, and risk up to 25 years in prison if found guilty.

“If they (the medical team) had done their job, this would have been avoided. They deceived us in the cruelest way

—Dalma Maradona, Diego Maradona's daughter and a plaintiff in the case



Maradona was found to have died of heart failure and acute pulmonary edema - a condition where fluid accumulates in the lungs - two weeks after going under the knife.

"If they had done their job, this would have been avoided," his daughter Dalma Maradona, a plaintiff in the case, told a court in San Isidro in the north of Buenos Aires.

"They deceived us in the cruelest way," she said of the medical team.

Dalma Maradona, 38, testified that physician Leopoldo Luque, one of the accused, had assured the family that home hospitalization was "the only option."

She was told her father would have everything he needed, including 24-hour care and an ambulance at the ready.

"This 'never happened,' she said. "It was a house where, occasionally, a doctor would come to see him." After her father's death, she said she found the house "disgusting, and it

smelled like urine."

She claimed she had tried to visit the ex-footballer days before his death, but was denied entry to the house by Maradona's lawyer and an assistant.

The defendants in the case are accused of "homicide with possible intent" -- pursuing a course of action despite knowing it can lead to their patient's death.

Prosecutors allege the former footballer was abandoned to his fate for a "prolonged, agonizing period" before his death.

Nearly 120 witnesses are expected to testify in the long-delayed trial, which is expected to run until July.