

Despite political push, flyover projects at Davorlim, Nessai trapped in red tape

Villagers grow frustrated; recent inspection throws spotlight back on decade-old problems with crossings; in Davorlim, rail crossing shuts over 80 times due to passing trains

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Amid renewed political attention and a recent site inspection, the long-pending flyover projects at Davorlim and Nessai railway crossings in Salcete continue to remain mired in land acquisition hurdles, with little sign of actual progress on the ground.

The inspection of the Davorlim railway crossing by Rajya Sabha MP Sadanand Tanavade, accompanied by Navelim MLA Ulhas Tuenkar and Davorlim Sarpanch Saish Rajadax, once again threw a spotlight on the decade-old project that has seen foundation stones laid, promises made, but no real movement since.

While Tanavade assured that he would press the State government to expedite land acquisition, officials and residents alike are sceptical, given the history of stalled efforts under successive administrations.



The government is yet to acquire land around the Davorlim railway crossing, to build the flyover

The Davorlim flyover was first proposed nearly a decade ago, when then Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu laid the foundation stone during the tenure of a previous BJP-led government in Goa and Delhi. Yet, despite initial momentum, the project ground to a halt after it became clear that the Goa government had

not acquired the required land for the approaches to the flyover. Konkarn Railway officials had confirmed even then that funding was not the issue — rather, it was the failure to secure land that derailed the plan. The current push by Tanavade and local BJP leaders comes against this backdrop of inaction.

Speaking after the recent inspection, the Rajya Sabha MP acknowledged that the construction would not be possible without the Goa government taking proactive steps to acquire land on both sides of the crossing. For residents of Davorlim, where the crossing shuts for traffic over 80 times a day due to train

movements, the flyover remains an urgent necessity, but also a symbol of broken promises.

Meanwhile, the neighboring village of Sao Jose de Areal faces a similar predicament at the Nessai railway crossing. Almost five years after the Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd (RVNL) rushed through the double tracking work at Nessai under police protection, assurances of a corresponding flyover have yet to materialize. Although a foundation stone for the Nessai flyover was laid over a year ago, construction has not commenced, leaving locals increasingly frustrated.

Confusion over jurisdiction has added to delays at Nessai, with RVNL recently clarifying that the responsibility for building the flyover rests with a division of the South Western Railway, not with RVNL itself. This bureaucratic buck-passing has done little to reassure residents, who feel betrayed after years of assurances.

Velim MLA Cruz Silva, voicing the concerns of the Areal villagers, questioned the government's priorities. He pointed out that while authorities have been pushing forward with plans to develop a new railway station at Sao Jose de Areal, they have failed to deliver on the more basic promise of a flyover at the Nessai crossing to mitigate traffic woes. Silva demanded that the government treat the Davorlim and Nessai flyovers with equal urgency, especially given the increased train frequency that has made waiting at crossings a daily ordeal.

As Salcete's villagers wait for action rather than yet another round of inspections and speeches, the stalled flyover projects at Davorlim and Nessai stand as reminders that political attention alone is no guarantee of development unless backed by administrative resolve and swift land acquisition.

NGT admits plea against nine jetties near Chorao's bird sanctuary

Team Herald

MARGAO: The The National Green Tribunal (NGT), Western Zone, has admitted a petition that questions the legality of nine jetties operating close to the Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary at Chorao along the Mandovi River.

Filed by two environmentalists, Dikshay Phadte and Ajit Volvoikar, the petition targets the Captain of Ports, the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA), and five other respondents. The petition seeks a declaration that jetties intended for non-fishing purposes cannot be permitted in tidal water bodies designated as fish breeding areas or ecologically sensitive zones under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification of 2011.

The petitioners have also urged the tribunal to direct authorities to bar the setting up of such jetties within CRZ areas in Goa's fishing villages. They further pressed for the preparation of a Zonal Master Plan to safeguard the eco-sensitive zone surrounding the bird sanctuary. At the preliminary hearing held recently, the NGT bench comprising Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh and expert

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member Dr Vijay Kulkarni ordered that all nine jetty landowners must be added as respondents within a week. According to the bench, including the landowners in the case is crucial to ensure that appropriate reliefs can be granted, such as prohibiting any commercial activity on these jetties unless specifically allowed under current regulations.

Drawing attention to Clause 3 of the CRZ Notification, the petitioners' counsel further argued that coastal construction is restricted only to facilities essential for fishing and related activities. They contended that the nine jetties, identified as A to I in maps placed before the tribunal, are being used for commercial operations that breach the permitted uses outlined in the CRZ rules.



CAN PREPARING FOR NATURAL DISASTERS SAVE PANJIM FROM SMART CITY'S MAN-MADE DISASTER?

PANJIM: Various disaster management authorities conducted a mock drill along the coast in Panjim this week. Herald Media asked people if they believed that being prepared for natural calamities would also help them combat disasters that arise due to Smart City's shoddy and incomplete works

I think a fullfledged disaster management team may have to take care of the Smart City of Panjim this monsoon with whatever equipment they have. They will have to be on standby. The way the over smart city works are progressing, the slabs installed, today, cave in tomorrow. Water is overflowing from the gutters. We don't know if this is sewage or grey water. However, there is not enough noise from the Panjim people or businessmen. However, just as the KTC is purchasing buses, this monsoon they will have to purchase boats since residents will not be able to move within Panjim with their two and four-wheelers

– Mariano Ferrao, Social Activist

While the government must be appreciated for its natural disaster management drills, on the other side officials who are incharge of the Smart City project in Panjim are working overtime to see that they carve out potholes and ditches, that are going to put every pedestrian, two wheeler rider and motorist's life in danger. With this a clear possibility today, the health minister should take note of this and prepare two extra wards in the Goa Medical College that will deal with casualties, especially of orthopaedic nature – Trajano D'Mello, Political Commentator



Watch Street Voices on Herald Media on YouTube by scanning the QR code

Whether the government can prepare itself for natural disasters which may come in the near future, is a far off dream. Just below their nose is a man-made disaster which they are unable to handle till today and the completion dates are being postponed. It has gone beyond their control. The primary reason is corruption; secondly, there is nobody who has the authority to get the work done properly. It is only because there is an inbuilt solution – You don't scratch my back, I don't scratch your back – Anthony D'Silva, Social Activist

Goans deported from US seek action against dodgy agents

Team Herald

MARGAO: A group of Goans, along with local leaders from Benaullim and Navelim, met BJP State president Damu Naik seeking assistance in recovering nearly Rs 7 crore paid to agents for their migration to the US.

The youths, who were recently forced to return to Goa from the USA, alleged

that fraudulent agents cheated them with false promises. Around 25 returnees shared their ordeal and urged the State government to take action against the scamsters. Naik assured them he would escalate the matter. The incident has sparked demands for stricter measures against illegal immigration rackets exploiting job seekers.

Tides of change: Documenting the Sal's disappearing traditions

Team Herald

MARGAO: Growing up on the sandy banks of the Sal River in Mobor, Ryan Bhengra's childhood was a happy mix of tides, fishing nets, and the quiet rhythms of a community shaped by water. Decades later, this deeply personal connection would form the heart of his research for Goa Water Stories – The Sal River Project—an artistic and archival effort to capture the changing relationship between river and humans.

Bhengra's project, replete with stunning visuals, oral histories, and a nifty interactive map, traces the Sal from its origin in Verna-Loutolim and documents it as it shapeshifts through urban settlements, floodplains, mangroves, prawn farms, salt pans, and nearly all the villages of Salcete—until it meets the sea at Betul.

"I spent countless hours exploring the Sal's waters as a child," says Bhengra, who holds a Master's in Art History and Aesthetics. "Over the years, I watched the landscape change—development slowly gnawing away at the river's ecosystem and the livelihoods tied to it."

His research took him deep into the memories of the Sal's fishing community, where he found resilience and



the fading of instinctive knowledge of tides, and the destruction of mangroves that once sheltered marine life.

"He wasn't just talking about environmental loss," Bhengra recalls. "He was sharing a personal history—a story of resilience, adaptation, and heartbreak. It made me realise that this project isn't just about documenting change; it's about giving voice to those who have lived through it."

While his multimedia documentation transports the viewer to the banks of the river, thanks to its aesthetics and crafty flow, it is also packed with information—statistics, interviews, local biodiversity, and a deep understanding of the problems plaguing the 'lifeline of Salcete' at every juncture. Bhengra's research also expanded his own understanding of water. What once seemed a simple, life-giving resource now



Scan the QR code to experience Ryan Bhengra's 'The Sal River Project'



heartbreak in equal measure. One encounter left a lasting mark: an elderly fisherman, who had spent over five decades on the river, described the loss of abundant fish,

reveals itself as a living archive, holding layers of human history and tradition, he quips. "Water is not just about availability. It's about relationships—between



people, ecosystems, and knowledge systems," he says.

Through The Sal River Project, Bhengra has been experimenting with inks made from river-sourced organic materials and developing paper from local foliage. These artistic investigations form part of a broader mission: to use art as a bridge between research, community memory, and conservation.

"This research has also made me more aware of how water management is often dictated by policies that overlook local knowledge. The people who have

■ The river originates near Verna and flows in a south-western direction for approximately 35 kilometres, passing through numerous villages and draining into the sea at Betul

■ The river has multiple sources of origination: a small stream from the ancient site of the Mahalsa temple at Verna, the Udear Springs, and the catchment areas of Amboulour Lake and Loutolim

■ The Sal river was a region for trade and cultural exchange with fishing and salt production being the primary form of occupation for many

■ With the decrease in profits and demand for salt almost all of these salt pans (which are part of the river's khazan lands) have been converted into fish farms called Agor, which are now in disrepair and polluted

lived by the river for generations understand its rhythms better than any official report, yet their voices are rarely included in decision-making. That realisation reinforced my belief in the need for a more community-driven approach to conservation—one that values traditional wisdom alongside scientific data," says Bhengra.

"If my work can spark even a small shift in awareness, inspiring people to value the Sal River and everything it represents, then I'll know I've done something meaningful."

Goa Water Stories is a collaboration with the Living Waters Museum, the Centre for Public Policy and Governance at the Goa Institute of Management, the Goa University and the Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts

Raia Sarpanch, P'yat Secy turn on each other, boils into row

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Raia village panchayat has been mired in controversy following a clash between the Raia sarpanch and the panchayat secretary, and later, allegations leveled by opposition panchayat members against the sarpanch.

The controversy began after the Raia sarpanch held a press briefing, during which he accused the panchayat secretary of alleged wrongdoings, including deliberately blocking or slowing down development works in the village.

The secretary promptly responded, speaking to the

media to deny the allegations and instead pointing to serious procedural lapses in the opening of tender documents for various development projects.

Subsequently, opposition members of the panchayat, including former sarpanch Xavier Fernandes, Judas Quadros, and others, held their own press briefing. They alleged that there were indeed procedural irregularities in the tendering process and further claimed that some of these proposed works failed to adhere to the guidelines of the Finance Commission, under which central funds had been allocated.

The opposition members

also questioned why the Raia sarpanch chose to go public with his accusations instead of formally writing to the Directorate of Panchayats if he believed there were wrongdoings by the secretary. They alleged that the press conference was an attempt by the sarpanch to push forward the disputed projects despite the irregularities.

They noted that at a recent panchayat body meeting, they had demanded that the matter be referred to the Block Development Office (BDO) for scrutiny, stressing the need for greater transparency and accountability in the panchayat's functioning.

Workers set fire to mound of garbage at SGPDA market

Team Herald

MARGAO: In yet another incident highlighting poor waste management practices in the town, activists have alleged that workers either from the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) or the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) were seen setting fire to a garbage dump next to the SGPDA market in the morning.

While speaking to reporters, Shadow Council of Margao (SCM) Convenor Savio Coutinho, said that concerned citizens had previously drawn attention to the issue, but no preventive action had been taken. "We witnessed workers setting fire to the garbage dump, but we cannot confirm whether they were from the MMC or the SGPDA," Coutinho said. He alleged that such prac-



tices appeared to be part of the government's agenda to create the impression that garbage was being managed efficiently, when in fact it was being disposed of by illegal burning. Coutinho also called upon the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) to investigate the matter thoroughly, stressing the need to hold those responsible accountable. The fire services department confirmed receiving a distress call at around

8.40am regarding the fire. Firefighters were immediately dispatched to the site to bring the blaze under control.

The burning of waste in a densely populated commercial area has sparked fresh concerns among activists and residents about the dangers of air pollution and the risks it poses to public health. They have urged the GSPCB to step in and ensure that such harmful practices are stopped.