

'Safeguard Old Goa, stop illegal constructions'

Citizens for Democracy rue violations despite presence of ASI, Goa Archaeology Department and demand a comprehensive heritage protection policy

Team Herald

PANJIM: Citizens for Democracy Goa on Monday called for urgent and decisive action to protect Old Goa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, from the increasing threat posed by illegal construction and poor regulatory enforcement.

At a press conference, former bureaucrat Elvis Gomes and historian Prof Prajal Sakhardande announced that they had submitted recommendations to the Government of India, emphasising the need for a concerted, multi-pronged approach to safeguard Old Goa's invaluable cultural and historical legacy.

They highlighted that, over the past two decades, there has been a disturbing rise in unauthorised buildings in and around Old Goa — an area celebrated for its unique architecture, religious significance, and Portuguese heritage. This unchecked development has significantly damaged its character and heritage value.

Reports suggest there are now over 70 illegal structures within the protected



A permanent toilet within the UNESCO World Heritage Site in clear violation of the rules

WHAT THEY WANT

- Formation of a heritage Master Plan to identify protected zones and buffer areas

- Strong enforcement of heritage protection laws to address illegal constructions

- Relocation of the solid waste management facility from the Kadamba plateau

- Call for greater collaboration between the State government, local communities, heritage experts and UNESCO

site. Despite the oversight responsibilities of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Goa Circle, and the Goa Archaeology Department, these violations persist, further eroding the site's integrity.

To address this, they urged the State government and the ASI to jointly formulate and strictly im-

plement a comprehensive heritage protection policy. This framework should safeguard both Portuguese-era and pre-Portuguese sites while promoting sustainable tourism practices that respect Old Goa's authenticity.

They also recommended preparing a Heritage Master Plan to clearly identify protected zones and buffer

areas, preventing further encroachments that threaten the site's visual and cultural landscape.

Further, they demanded strong action against illegal constructions and proposed the relocation of the planned solid waste management (SWM) facility from the Kadamba plateau to a more environmentally appropriate site to avoid any harm to the heritage surroundings.

Stronger collaboration among the state government, local communities, heritage experts, and UNESCO was emphasised as essential for raising awareness and ensuring responsible site management.

Citizens for Democracy Goa, along with other heritage enthusiasts and experts, appealed to the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, to intervene immediately. They stressed that enforcing existing protection laws, preserving all layers of Old Goa's history, and fostering sustainable tourism are crucial to prevent irreversible damage.

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GOA'S PRIDE



President Droupadi Murmu confers the Padma Shri on freedom fighter Libia Lobo Sardesai during the Civil Investiture Ceremony-I at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, on Monday

India, France ink Rs 63,000-cr deal for advanced Rafale-M jets

Pact includes setting up of production facility for fuselage, MRO for jet engines

PTI, NEW DELHI: India and France on Monday inked an intergovernmental agreement sealing a mega deal to procure 26 Rafale marine jets at a cost of Rs 64,000 crore (Euro 7 billion) for deployment on board Indian Navy's aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

The ambitious pact provides for the setting up of a production facility for Rafale fuselage as well as



maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities for aircraft engines, sensors and weapons in India, accord-

ing to the defence ministry. The agreement will also facilitate the transfer of technology for the integration of indigenous weapons in India.

The delivery of the aircraft will begin in 2028 and will be completed by 2030, with the crew undergoing training in France and India.

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Suryavanshi youngest to score IPL ton

PTI, JAIPUR: Rajasthan Royal's Vaibhav Suryavanshi created history on Monday when he became the youngest batter ever to score an IPL century at the age of 14 years and 32 days.

Suryavanshi needed only 35 balls, with 11 sixes and seven fours, to record the second fastest century in IPL. He was finally out for 101 off 37 balls, becoming the youngest ever to score a ton in men's T20 cricket.



The record of fastest century in IPL belongs to former West Indies batter Chris Gayle, who had brought up his ton in 30 balls for Royal Challengers Bengaluru against Pune Warriors in April 2013.

His stunning knock came against IPL 2022 winners Gujarat Titans, who had set a target of 210 for Rajasthan Royals to win.

Foul-smelling drinking water raises alarm in Taleigao

Team Herald

PANJIM: Residents of Vodlem Bhat and Bhorhat in Taleigao are facing a serious health crisis after sewage allegedly seeped into the potable water pipelines. For nearly a month, Public Works Department (PWD) officials have been excavating various points in the area in a bid to identify the source of contamination, but without success.

Locals report that tap water has a foul odour, making it unsafe for consumption. Speaking to O Herald, resident Fedlix Almeida said, "We are not getting water for the last four days. Even if do get water, it has a foul smell. Earlier, we were getting clean water. It appears that sewage water is getting mixed with the drinking water."

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Betalbatim signboard sparks Salcete-wide movement

Initiative against unchecked development gains widespread support in neighbouring panchayats

Team Herald

MARGAO: A modest signboard put up by the gram sabha members of Betalbatim village panchayat, cautioning potential developers about purchasing land in the village, has triggered a powerful ripple effect across Salcete taluka.

What began as a local initiative is now snowballing into a wider grassroots movement, with



panchayats from across the region rallying behind the call to safeguard

Goa's rural identity and demand a long-overdue assessment of the State's carrying capacity.

At the heart of this growing resistance are fundamental concerns: depletion of water resources, unreliable power supply, unsustainable land sales to outsiders and the approval of mega housing projects that are beyond the control and planning capacity of local panchayats.

Betalbatim village panchayat sarpanch Anthony Fernandes shared the origin of their initiative: "Recently in the gram sabha, a proposal came up stating that all the properties are being purchased by outsiders, so boards should be put up at all the borders saying those buying properties should do so at their own risk."

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Conclave to elect new pope set to start on May 7

Cardinals hope for courageous leader in an era of great uncertainty

AFP, VATICAN CITY, HOLY SEE: Catholic cardinals agreed on Monday to begin a conclave on May 7 to elect a new pope, and highlighted clerical sexual abuse as one of the key challenges facing Pope Francis's successor.

So-called 'Princes of the Church' under the age of 80 will meet in the Sistine Chapel to choose a new religious leader for the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

The date was decided at a meeting of cardinals of all ages early on Monday, two days after the funeral of Francis, who died on April 21 aged 88.

The cardinals outlined the



Cardinals during the fifth congregation meeting in The Vatican

most pressing Church challenges including "evangelisation, the relationship with other faiths (and) the issue of abuse", the Vatican said.

"There was talk of the qualities that the new pontiff must possess to respond effectively to these challenges," it added.

The Church's 252 cardinals were recalled to Rome after the Argentine's death, although only 135 are eligible to vote in the conclave.

They hail from all corners of the globe and many of them do not know each other.

But they already had four meetings last week, so-called "general congregations", where they began to become better acquainted.

Cardinal Gualtiero Basseti, 83, a former head of the Italian bishops' conference, said there was a "beautiful fraternal atmosphere".

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