



'A TICKING TIME BOMB': Taleigao cracks under pressures of rampant 'development'

Once a scenic village of fields and fresh air, Taleigao is now grappling with the consequences of unchecked urbanisation. Residents say the transformation into a concrete sprawl has outpaced infrastructure and ignored environmental limits. With sewage in the fields and water shortages becoming routine, many fear the damage is already done. **ANIL KUMAR MISHRA** reports

Once a tranquil village on the outskirts of the capital city, Taleigao was renowned for its serene atmosphere, lush green fields, and proximity to the Arabian Sea. Today, those very attributes are under threat, with locals warning that the unchecked pace of construction has transformed the village into a ticking time bomb that demands urgent intervention.

Speaking to **O Heraldo**, Taleigao resident Dattaprasad Naik expressed the growing concern among villagers, saying the area is being rapidly urbanised under the guise of development. While the initial roadworks were welcomed as necessary improvements, it has now become evident that these were merely precursors to facilitate large-scale real estate projects, many of which, he alleged, have been approved without adequate planning for basic infrastructure.

As a result, residents are grappling with severe challenges—chief among them, the shortage of drinking water, inconsistent electricity supply, and poor waste management.

Naik pointed out that several housing societies receive no piped water at all and rely solely on water tankers. Moreover, the absence of a local garbage treatment facility means all waste must be transported to Saligao. A particularly disturbing development is the contamination of water in parts of the village. This problem persists even as a new sewage treatment plant has recently commenced operations—though it serves merely around 15 percent of the Taleigao panchayat area. Residents fear the implications of future sewage treatment facilities if the current one already presents such issues.

He also took aim at the North Goa Planning and Development Authority (NGPDA), accusing it of granting questionable permissions and jeopardising agricultural land in the village.

Naik asked, "Will the government continue to issue construction permissions without ensuring basic amenities are in place?" He called for a halt to further development until proper infrastructure is provided.

Cecille Rodrigues, another resident, voiced similar concerns. "Taleigao is a ticking time bomb," she said, sharply criticising elected representatives for failing to address these growing issues. She believes that public officials should prioritise sustainable development and safeguard the welfare of villagers, yet what

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she sees instead is "destruction."

Rodrigues recounted that her housing society had gone without water from the Public Works Department (PWD) for the past 40 days due to sewage contamination. "While tankers are being arranged, this is not a sustainable solution. These incidents are becoming more frequent," she said.

She also highlighted the lack of basic infrastructure even as new construction projects continue unabated, lamenting that Taleigao has become a "concrete jungle."

New constructions, she explained, are often approved without connections to the PWD water supply—an unpleasant surprise for many property buyers. She noted a worrying drop in groundwater levels due to over-extraction, erratic power supply, and worsening pollution in the Taleigao creek. Additionally, residents have been frustrated by roads being dug up without any prior notice—a sign, she said, of disorganisation and indifference from both departments and elected representatives.

The unregulated sale and conversion of agricultural land was another key concern for Rodrigues. She questioned, "If citizens are expected to follow the rules, shouldn't elected representatives do the same?" She reflected sadly on how lifelong residents are now struggling with basic necessities like water. "And when problems arise, the MLA is nowhere to be seen," she added.

Rodrigues warned that unless residents unite and demand change, the village could soon face disaster.

Devidas Amonkar echoed these fears. "Taleigao is being turned into a city without any proper plan. It's become a concrete jungle. There are no proper amenities. Basic facilities are missing," he said.

Francis Coelho, another local, was even



QUOTEROOM

Buildings with 200 to 300 flats are coming up in nearly every ward. Who will provide them with water and electricity? Where will their sewage go? And let's stop blaming migrants. These flats are being bought by wealthy families and rented out. Builders are investing crores. Recently, two new high-end buildings were cleared, with flats costing Rs 4.5 to Rs 5 crore. Where will their sewage be released? If it's dumped into agricultural land, won't landowners be forced to sell or convert it?

— Francis Coelho, resident

In Taleigao, no more construction licences should be issued. The village has already exceeded its carrying capacity. Groundwater levels are dropping, water is getting contaminated. When problems come up in gram sabhas, authorities pass the buck to the TCP and PDA. But we all know decisions are made in one person's office. There's a serious conflict of interest at play, and the people of Taleigao are the ones suffering

— Xavier De Almeida, farmer and social activist

Taleigao is a ticking time bomb. We're heading for a major disaster if no one intervenes. Our elected representatives should be working to ensure basic amenities, sustainable development, and environmental protection, but all we see is destruction

— Cecille Rodrigues, resident

Taleigao is being converted into a city without having a proper plan. It has become a concrete jungle with no proper amenities in place. Basic facilities like water and electricity are missing, and nobody seems to care

— Devidas Amonkar, resident

it's in shambles. Construction licences are handed out without any consideration for the village's carrying capacity. Twenty years ago, the population was 20,000 to 25,000. Today, it's between 40,000 and 45,000 as per the voter list—but the actual figure is closer to 90,000 to 1,00,000.

He asked, "If the population is so high, where are the proper amenities? There must be a steady electricity supply, drinking water, sewage treatment, and proper garbage disposal—but nothing is done. In fact, sewage is being discharged into agricultural fields."

Taleigao is located at the tail end of the water supply line from the Opa Water Treatment Plant, he explained. "By the time the water reaches Taleigao and Dona Paula, the pressure is too low."

Coelho also criticised the state of the sewage system. "Eleven years ago, the sewage line was planned. Work began—but it's still incomplete. Now, sewage ends up in fields, wells, or the sea."

Power supply issues are also frequent, he said, citing blackouts during their recent feast. "Voltage is inconsistent. Transformers don't function properly. We've raised these concerns repeatedly, but our MLA seems only interested in winning elections."

"Taleigao is a mess because of our elected representatives," he concluded. "Once, this village was a green paradise with countless trees. There's a saying, 'Where there's a will, there's a way,' but that doesn't apply to Taleigao. The MLA has no interest in preserving agricultural land. Massive buildings with hundreds of flats are coming up in these fields. How is this being allowed? Who is giving the permissions?"

Coelho further argued, "The process of buying and selling land should be made more difficult, but instead it's being facilitated—especially by the MLA and his family. This benefits the real estate lobby. Just recently, water contamination was discovered in some wards. Bacteria were found, and the PWD had to stop the water supply. They issued notices to residents, demanding that repairs be done at their own cost. It felt more like a threat than a solution."

He continued, "Buildings with 200 to 300 flats are coming up in nearly every ward. Who will provide them with water and electricity? Where will their sewage go? And let's stop blaming migrants. These flats are being bought by wealthy families and rented out. Builders are investing crores. Recently,

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two new high-end buildings were cleared, with flats costing Rs 4.5 to Rs 5 crore. Where will their sewage be released? If it's dumped into agricultural land, won't landowners be forced to sell or convert it?"

Xavier De Almeida, a farmer and social activist, criticised the one-directional nature of Taleigao's so-called development. "It's all geared towards the real estate business," he said. He has raised the issue repeatedly at gram sabhas, suggesting fines for anyone—rich or poor—found releasing sewage into fields.

"I proposed a committee with the Sarpanch, Secretary, and health officials to inspect complaints and penalise offenders. Fines can start low, then increase over time, even leading to disconnection of water supply. But none of this is happening. They're only interested in votes," he said.

"In many areas, raw sewage is being openly discharged, contaminating drinking water. Is this what we call development?" he asked. "Construction is being encouraged in every corner. When the issue is raised, authorities blame the Town and Country Planning Department or the Planning and Development Authority."

De Almeida believes this blame-shifting is disingenuous. "We all know the decisions are taken in one person's office. There's a clear conflict of interest—the ministry, municipal corporation, planning authority, and panchayat are all controlled by one family. Why have a panchayat if it can't take decisions?"

He called for an immediate halt to all construction permissions in Taleigao. "The population has already exceeded the village's carrying capacity. Even the groundwater table is depleting rapidly—and it's getting contaminated."



more scathing. "For the last 20 years, one family has ruled the constituency, and now