

HC verdict turns clock back to Regional Plan '21

Relief for petitioners fighting against Outline Development Plans in five North Goa villages; but all eyes on govt to see if it moves SC

Team Herald

PANJIM: The High Court of Bombay at Goa proved again on Monday that when it comes to saving Goa's soil from the clutches of land-grabbers, the people's biggest hope and faith lie in the court's affirmative action. When the 118-page landmark verdict striking down Outline Development Plans (ODPs) in the five North Goa villages of Calangute, Candolim, Parra, Arpora and Nagoa came into the public domain on Monday, it became clear that the state government had no choice but to strictly adhere to the Regional Plan 2021 (RP 2021). All zoning certificates and construction permissions granted under the now-scrapped ODPs stand cancelled.

The ruling effectively means that any development inconsistent with RP 2021 is now illegal and subject to demolition — a position also backed by an interim order from the Supreme Court in the same matter.

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HC ORDER A HAMMER BLOW TO UNCHECKED LAND CONVERSION

The Court refrained from delving into individual zone change challenges within the ODPs, as it found the very preparation of the ODPs to be illegal, firmly stating that executive actions cannot override statutory provisions.

The judgment came in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by NGO Goa Foundation, Roshan Mathias, the Calangute Constituency Forum, and the Calangute Village Panchayat. The petitioners argued that the ODPs violated provisions of the TCP Act, 1974.

The High Court also struck down a circular dated December 22, 2022, issued by the Chief Town Planner, which had controversially kept the defunct ODPs op-

erational, despite the five villages having been de-notified as planning areas under the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act. The Court noted that the State government attempted to override the Court's stay on the circular through an Ordinance, which later lapsed. An executive order issued under Article 162 of the Constitution to protect ODP-based permissions was also declared void.

Reacting to the judgment, Goa Foundation Director Claude Alvares welcomed the decision, stating: "The High Court has categorically declared that the Regional Plan and its ecological zones are sacrosanct. Constructions that do not conform to the Regional Plan must be demolished. The judgment

"The High Court has declared that the Regional Plan and its ecological zones are sacrosanct. Constructions that do not conform to the Regional Plan must be demolished. The judgment invalidates the circular, the executive order, and all zoning certificates based on ODPs

— Claude Alvares, Goa Foundation Director

"This judgment makes it clear that the government's actions were unconstitutional and procedurally dishonest. The judiciary has rejected the use of 'public interest' as a cover for illegality

— Swapnesh Sherlekar, environmental activist

invalidates the circular, the executive order, and all zoning certificates based on the ODPs. These ODPs were designed to circumvent the Regional Plan. The Court has restored the sanctity of the RP, which was meant to protect eco-sensitive zones."

Environmental activist Swapnesh Sherlekar also hailed the verdict, saying, "This judgment makes it clear that the government's actions were unconstitutional and procedurally dishonest. The judiciary has rejected the use of 'public interest' as a cover for illegality. We once again

demand the immediate removal of the Minister. Goa deserves officials who respect the law and environmental responsibility."

The State government has already indicated its intention to appeal the ruling before the Supreme Court and is seeking a stay on the High Court's judgment.

As of now, all development in the affected villages must align strictly with the provisions of the Regional Plan 2021, signalling a major shift in Goa's planning framework and a stern warning against attempts to dilute environmental safeguards through administrative means.

5 dead in Himachal cloudbursts, flash floods

PTI, SHIMLA: Cloudbursts and flash floods triggered by heavy overnight rains battered Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district, leaving five people dead, five injured and 16 missing, officials said on Tuesday.

The state witnessed 11 cloudburst incidents, four flash floods and a major landslide on Tuesday, most of them in Mandi district, disrupting normal life.

Mandi received extensively high rainfall of 253.8 mm since Monday evening.

Ten houses, 12 cattle sheds, one bridge and several roads have been damaged, 26 cattle perished and efforts are on to rescue stranded nine people in Mandi district, the officials said.

A total of 287 people including 233 in Mandi, 51 in Hamirpur and three in Chamba have been rescued safely, according to the state emergency operation centre.

In Mandi district, cloudbursts were reported in four places in Gohar, three in Karsog, two in Dharampur and one place in Thunag.

Two deaths were reported in Bada and one in Talwara, both in Gohar area, one in old Bazaar in Karsog while one body was recovered at Neri-Kotla in Jogindernagar.

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FLOOD AFTERMATH



Vehicles damaged due to uprooted trees after cloudburst-triggered flash floods in Himachal Pradesh, on Tuesday

Curchorem sewage plant built without environmental clearance

Goa Pollution Board admits STP bypassed required EIA; activists allege mangrove destruction, illegal riverbed filling

GAURESH SATTARKAR

CURCHOREM: The Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) has confirmed that no mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out before constructing a sewage treatment plant (STP) in Curchorem. This was revealed in a Right to Information (RTI) reply to local resident Sushant Vast, dated June 25.

According to the response, the GSPCB holds no record of an EIA for the STP being developed at Survey No 505 in Cacora, under the jurisdiction of the Curchorem-Cacora Municipal Council (CMC).

Environmental activists say this is a clear violation of the EIA Notification, 2006, and a ruling by the National Green Tribunal (Application No 124 of 2013), both of which mandate environmental clearance before starting such infrastructure projects.

The NGT ruling refers to a guidance manual from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, which states that any construction, expansion, or upgrade



The sewage plant being built without the mandatory environmental clearance at Curchorem

of combined effluent treatment plants (CETPs) must get prior environmental clearance. It further notes that any plant handling effluents with more than 10% industrial waste by volume qualifies as a CETP.

Environmental activist Aditya Dessai said the sewage line connected to the Curchorem STP runs through the Cacora Industrial Estate and is expected to carry mixed effluents, including industrial discharge. "This clearly brings the project within the ambit of mandatory environmental clearance," he said.

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ACID ATTACK

Daughter's death drove me on, says accused

Accused remanded to police custody, vital evidence gathered

Team Herald

PANJIM: In a shocking revelation, Nilesh Desai (46), accused of hurling acid at a 17-year-old boy, has reportedly confessed to the police that he committed the crime after the victim ended a relationship with his daughter, who later died.

According to police, Desai's daughter and the victim studied at a higher secondary school in Mapusa and had been in a relationship. The accused claimed the breakup had a devastating impact on his daughter, ultimately leading to her death — a tragedy that allegedly drove him to commit the act.

Detailing the sequence of events, police said Desai stole a five-litre can of acid from a glass manufacturing unit in the Karaswada Industrial Estate, where he had been employed as a gardener for just eight days. He concealed the can in his scooter, covering it with a raincoat.

The attack, which has shocked the State, has prompted swift action. Police have seized the accused's scooter, helmet and raincoat. Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) teams have examined the vehicle for traces of acid or other chemicals. A separate FIR will be registered at Mapusa Police Station for the theft of the acid can.

Meanwhile, Desai underwent a medical examination at Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMC) to check for traces of acid on his body. The Pernem Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) has remanded him to two days of police custody.

Given that the victim is a minor, the court also directed the police to produce Desai before the President of the Children's Court in Panjim.

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MAX. TEMP 31.6 °C
MIN. TEMP 24.9 °C

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Sir! Bulletproof won't help. Get us acid-proof vests!

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