

Indian Navy trying to rule Goa by proxy, says BJP Minister

Indian Navy has made a zoning proposal to deter and regulate real estate development within a 20 km radius of Goa's only airport.

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For representational purposes. (File | EPS)

By IANS

PANAJI: Transport Minister in the BJP-led coalition government in Goa, Mauvin Godinho, lashed out at the Indian Navy accusing its officials of trying to "rule" Goa by proxy, by cornering large chunks of prime real estate and depriving civilians from use of land resources.

Godinho late on Tuesday also described a zoning proposal made by the Indian Navy to deter and regulate real estate development within a 20 km radius of Goa's only airport, which functions out of a naval base INS Hansa, located near the port town of Vasco, as "ridiculous".

Following Godinho's opposition to the proposal, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has convened a meeting on October 22, when all stakeholders of the state government as well as the Indian Navy, are scheduled to discuss the latter's zoning proposal aimed at enhancing the security of the semi-military aviation facility.

"What will Goans do? Where will they go and build? Is it an effort of the Navy or their ploy to come and rule Goans? We have an elected

government here. We are in a democracy... (Only) anybody out of their mind will recommend that 20 km around the radius of the airport there cannot be developed or you can have development only with one storey buildings," Godinho said.

Land tracts owned by the Defence Ministry have been a cause of concern for Goa's political class, across parties, who have accused the Indian Navy, as well as the Indian Army of hogging land tracts in the state, while arguing that Goa has limited land resources for development.

The recent move by the Indian Navy, as the authority in charge of the Goa airport, to put together a colour-coded zoning map for the facility with stipulated height restrictions, has sparked outrage from the political class, including those like Godinho, in whose legislative assembly constituency the airport is located.

"We cannot allow us to be ruled by the Navy... Just because we salute them, respect them, we worship them literally for protecting the country, it does not mean that they should consider themselves holy cow and totally go against civilian interest," Godinho said.

The Transport Minister also said, if development activity was not allowed within the 20 km radius around the airport, large tracts of land including the prime Dona Paula area near Panaji, would be impacted by the norm.

He also urged the Indian Navy to make a concession for Goa, which is India's smallest state, and whose landmass was in many cases smaller than the size of districts in bigger states like Maharashtra or Karnataka.

"There is mounting population everywhere, we do not have land to build houses and they (Navy) want to say you cannot build anything. In what world are they living," Godinho said