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## Indian state fears development will destroy identity, environment

by Brian Roewe

Eco Catholic

Development projects in Goa, India have many of its citizens concerned their state will lose its unique identity at the expense of growth.

Bosco de Sousa Eremita writes at [CathNewsIndia.com](http://CathNewsIndia.com), a division of Catholic News Asia, that a plan for the region's land use over the next decade will violate environment regulations, while stripping the village-feel culture of an area once known for its beauty and serenity.

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Eremita reports that the plan paves the way for "unbridled construction activity" in Goa, which has become an international tourism hotspot in recent years. He states that the area's population has grown by nearly 14 million people since its liberation from Portuguese rule in 1961.

Despite the growth and demand among tourists, many of the houses built in the last decade remain vacant most of the year, seen more as a status symbol than a place of living.

Church officials have denounced the proposed plan, joining villagers in demanding the protection of Goa's land and environment. In the Times of India newspaper, the archbishop of Goa, Filipe Neri Ferrao, said that the duty of civic leaders is "to tend the earth and be responsible stewards of God's creation."

Ferrao continued, saying it is "the responsibility of those in authority to see that our land and other natural resources are wisely made use of and capitalized upon for the common good of our people and are not allowed to be plundered by unscrupulous elements."

One of their key issues with the development plan was its omission of paddy fields, orchard lands, ponds, creeks and fish farming from the protection of Eco-Sensitive Zone 1 jurisdiction, instead designating much of those areas as settlement zones.

In the CathNewsIndia article, Fr. Maverick Fernandes, a spokesperson the archdiocesan Council of Social Justice and Peace, expressed outrage at the plan, saying it was "a threat to ecology and the existence of the Goan people."

In other environmental news:

A joint statement by 50 New Hampshire scientists urge all candidates for public office "including Republican presidential candidates" to "acknowledge the overwhelming balance of evidence for the underlying causes of climate change," and to develop strategies to react, reported The Hill's energy and environment blog.

The New York Times reported yesterday that California's efforts to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions have hit a roadblock, as a federal court ruled against a state regulation favoring fuel producers using cleaner methods in production and transportation.

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A Philippine project that uses improvements in sanitation, food security and biodiversity to combat climate change and poverty has received an international award in a competition run by an Israeli group, says GMA News of the Philippines.

Amy Westervelt of Forbes.com examines how Hawaii "which imports 90 percent of its energy needs and has the highest energy prices in the country" is looking to connect its islands with a renewable energy grid through underwater cables, in an effort to become more self-sufficient and cut its dependence on imported energy.

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