

## Long neglected church in Goa gets official attention

The Goa government is renovating the 430-year-old Santa Anna Church in Talaulim that has long been a victim of neglect.

Also known as the Church of St. Ann or Santana at Talaulim (Santa is the Portuguese word for 'saint'), some 10 km from here, it is known to be an impressive church in central Goa, built on the banks of the Siridao river amid picturesque settings.

'The renovation work of the church will be taken up by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (Intach) at a cost of Rs.4.88 crore (Rs.48.8 million),' says the Department of Information and Publicity.

Some two-thirds of the amount to be incurred on the church renovation work will be borne by the state government and the rest will be funded by the World Monument Fund.

'The entire work of renovating and restoring this important monument to its former glory is expected to be completed in two-and-a-half years' time.'

The Santana church was built in 1570 and it became a parish after its extension was carried out in 1695.

According to the local monthly Goa Today: 'Talaulim's Church of Sta Ana is one of the oldest and biggest and stands 110 feet tall, 147 feet long and 105 feet broad...Intricate architecture can be noticed on its rounded roof. A tiled ceiling covers the roof which can be walked upon if approached via the staircase that leads to the belfry.'

Artist, writer and expatriate Goan, US-based Dom Martin, who is credited with taking up a crucial campaign to save the church in 1974, has called this 'an architectural gem abandoned by god'.

'Among the portraits of god in Indian baroque, the Church of St. Anne is the only one of its kind not only in India but throughout Asia. It is a masterpiece of Indian baroque architecture - the finest!' Martin argues in a tribute penned to the impressive church on his website [dommartin.cc](http://dommartin.cc)

Writing some years ago, Martin noted that the 1577-founded church was declared a National Monument by the colonial Portuguese regime in March 1931.

In that year, repairs were carried out at the expense of the state. After Portuguese rule in Goa ended, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), upon surveying and assessing its merits, also recommended that the church be declared a national monument.

Martin says, 'But the official baptism has been pending following a dispute between the church and the ASI over the issue of ownership...The monument is now in the custody of the state, which unfortunately, is as helpless as the church on the matter of prioritising a full scale restoration drive. Only the ASI has the workshop and the means...'

The ASI, a body under the Indian government's ministry of culture, undertakes archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.

The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage is a nationwide non-profit membership organisation set up in 1984 to 'protect and conserve India's vast natural and cultural heritage.'

The World Monument Fund, online at [wmf.org](http://wmf.org), is a prominent private non-profit working to preserve the endangered architectural and cultural sites around the world.

Since 1965, WMF says it 'has worked tirelessly to stem the loss of historic structures at more than 500 sites in 91 countries.' From its headquarters in New York City - and offices and affiliates in Paris, London, Madrid, and Lisbon - WMF works with local partners and communities.

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