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## Goa the new retirement destination?

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PANAJI: In a trend that is catching up, retirement colonies for senior citizens are coming up in Siridao near Bambolim and Nachinola near Mapusa. Touted as "luxury retirement homes" and "a retirement village", on offer are independent and assisted living quarters for 60 plus individuals.

Says Michael Lobo, director, Bougainvilla Hermitage Pvt Ltd, "People like me and my wife who have the money do not want to live in lonely old age homes. So we are providing retirement homes like those offered in the UK, US and Japan, but to suit the Goan budget."

Vinay Bhasin, co-founder of the Palacio group, adds, "The pace of life and the infrastructure in Goa make it a desirable destination for retirement homes."

Pointing to similar set ups in Pune, Lavasa and other parts of the country, he says, "It is not an old age home. It's one that gives senior citizens an opportunity to live life as they want." And at what cost? Bougainvilla's offers of one- and two-bedroom apartments come at Rs 30,000 per sq m, while Palacio's offers start at Rs 24 lakh. Lobo says the amenities include fully air-conditioned quarters, 24-hour security and power back-up, medical services, senior-friendly modular kitchens and wheelchair accessibility "inside and outside the house".

Bhasin insists that the homes, conceptualized on the lines of such homes in the west, are affordable "even by middle class standards". Both groups insist that the projects currently target Goans working abroad "who want a decent "luxury" home for their parents", as well as senior citizens from other parts of the country. "We expect a good response from Mumbai and Delhi which have good access to Goa. Besides, we are also targeting non-resident Goans and Indians who are working abroad and want to be relaxed that their parents are being taken care of," says Bhasin.

Both the retirement colonies lay stress on eco-friendly homes and facilities that allow senior citizens to live independently. Nooksar Velijee, a real estate agent, says, "A lot of people already flock to Goa to buy holiday homes and the state draws tourists for its peaceful environment and natural beauty. Building a retirement home here is fusing the two. Obviously, there will be a huge market and many takers."

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