

REVIEW

GOA HERALD

Panjim, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16/16,

DUST, DANGER, DELAYS

Poor planning turns Porvorim's flyover project into a mess

Even as Panjim chokes under never-ending Smart City roadwork, Porvorim has descended into chaos with the reckless execution of the NH-66 elevated corridor project. Crumbling roads, suffocating dust, and daily accidents have turned the thriving suburb into a death trap, while authorities look the other way. With at least two more years of turmoil ahead, residents tell ANIL KUMAR MISHRA that they feel abandoned, and left to fend for themselves

Porvorim, once a scenic village with grazing lands on its plateau, has turned into a battlefield for commuters due to the ongoing construction of the Porvorim elevated corridor on National Highway 66 (NH-66). The project, being executed by Rajasthan-based Rajendra Singh Bhamboo Infra Pvt Ltd (RSBIPL), has led to severe dust and noise pollution, traffic congestion, and unsafe conditions for residents and motorists alike. While the elevated corridor aims to ease traffic in the long run, residents are struggling to cope with the poor planning and haphazard execution of the project. The daily commute has become a nightmare, with roads in a deplorable condition, making it especially dangerous for two-wheeler riders and pedestrians.

Accidents, both minor and major, have become a regular occurrence, with activists pointing out that the absence of proper pedestrian pathways, traffic management, and safety measures has turned Porvorim into a death trap. Crossing roads, accessing bus stops, or even reaching shops and markets has become an ordeal, with traffic dangerously close to pedestrians and no provisions for footbridges or safe walkways. Local resident and social activist Soter D'Souza criticised the way the project is being executed, pointing out the lack of proper planning before starting such a massive infrastructure development.

"The work itself is not the issue; the way it is being done is completely unplanned and chaotic. There should have been proper preparation before starting

the construction. Right now, the elevated corridor is being built while, at the same time, a temporary road has been constructed to allow traffic movement between Mapusa and Panjim. On top of that, there is ongoing work for laying water pipelines, electricity cables, and even sewage lines. It's all happening simultaneously, leaving people with no choice but to suffer through this mess," he said. D'Souza also highlighted the terrible condition of the roads, emphasising how dangerous they have become for two-wheeler riders.

"The roads are in a pathetic state. They are simply not motorable. Two-wheelers are particularly at risk—just recently, two foreign tourists fell off their bikes due to the condition of the roads. The authorities had assured us that goods carriers and heavy vehicles would be diverted, but they are still freely moving through the area, making things worse. Nobody seems to care about the safety of

With the project expected to continue for another two years, residents are demanding urgent intervention from the authorities.

Their key concerns include:

- Proper traffic management to prevent accidents
- Strict enforcement of dust control measures
- Creation of safe pedestrian pathways
- Better quality roads to withstand traffic burden
- Strict compliance with High Court directives

the people," he added.

He alleged that neither the contractor nor the government is concerned about public safety, despite multiple complaints from residents. "This is not a highway in the middle of nowhere; this is a densely populated residential and commercial area. People need to access bus stops, markets, banks, post offices, and other essential services. But with no dedicated pedestrian space, everyone—both people and vehicles—are forced to use the same narrow routes.



This is a major safety hazard. Accidents are bound to happen, but authorities seem to be only focused on keeping traffic moving. What about the residents? What are they supposed to do? It feels like nobody cares," he said.

He also raised concerns about dust pollution and its impact on public health, questioning how construction permissions were granted. "There is a huge amount of dust in the air, and we are being forced to inhale it every single day. Who will take responsibility if people develop lung infections? Are we just supposed to suffer in silence because of the irresponsible decisions of a few? Earlier, these areas were excluded from the Outline Development Plan (ODP). So how did they suddenly get permission for construction? Was it done just to allow big builders to develop mega projects along the road? This flyover was not even needed in the first place," he said.

Advocate Moses Pinto, who has filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the High Court regarding the project, pointed out multiple violations and failures to comply with court directives. "The High Court has issued several directives to the Goa government and the contractor to address the dust pollution and improve traffic management. The Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) has been impleaded in my petition. However, despite these legal interventions, many violations continue. The contractor was supposed to ensure proper barricading, but barricades are constantly misplaced, making road safety unpredictable. Traffic signals are barely visible due to the heavy dust in the air, reducing visibility, especially during early morning and evening hours," he said.

Pinto also highlighted serious incon-

sistencies in the construction work, calling out the poor quality of road repairs. "While some areas have been hot-mixed, the contractor claims that almost all roads have been repaired—this is simply not true. The asphalt used is of very poor quality, and it has already started deteriorating under the pressure of heavy vehicles. The ground reality is far from what the contractor has claimed in court," he said. The advocate further pointed out that promised safety measures are completely missing. "The contractor had assured the court that they would deploy 15 traffic marshals to guide vehicles and pedestrians along the project site. But not a single marshal is visible anywhere. The result? Road users are left to figure out their own rules, leading to confusion and chaos. This is not just irresponsible—it is a violation of the right to life and the rule of law. Strict action needs to be taken to ensure compliance with the High Court's directives and traffic regulations," he said.

Avertino Miranda, convenor of Green Brigade, called the project a disaster for motorists and pedestrians alike. "This construction site is completely unsafe. There is absolutely no space left for pedestrians. How are elderly people and children supposed to move around? Even for vehicles, movement is extremely difficult. The road surface is rough and filled with loose gravel and dust, making it nearly impossible for two-wheelers to drive safely. The entire area has turned into a death trap," he said.

He also raised concerns about non-compliance with High Court orders regarding environmental hazards. "The contractor was instructed to fill up dug-up areas, but this has not been done. As a result, vehicles are constantly throwing up dust, making it impossible to breathe. Trucks carrying mud and debris are moving without any cover, creating massive dust clouds along the entire stretch. Despite multiple assurances given to the High Court, nothing is happening on the ground. It's frustrating for the residents who have to endure this nightmare every day," he said.

A sacred banyan tree at the crossroads of development and conservation

Protests, candlelight vigils, legal battles, and appeals to political leaders have marked their fight to preserve the tree where it stands

The highway's last remaining banyan tree, a religious icon estimated to be over 200 years old, has become the focal point of an intense battle between infrastructure development and environmental preservation. Activists, residents, and environmentalists are fighting to prevent its translocation to make way for the six-lane elevated corridor along NH66.

Green Brigade convenor Avertino Miranda highlighted the ecological destruction already caused by the project, stating, "Over 600 trees have already been cut. Five rainforest trees were translocated, but they

are dead. Now, we are trying to ensure that no more trees are touched. The last banyan tree must be saved. We will not allow anyone to touch it and the only solution is now, the realignment of the corridor. We are in talks with the engineers. We are trying to redesign the whole elevated corridor. We hope that the government offi-

cial, Public Works Department (PWD) and the contractor will have better sense and the banyan tree will be saved." He emphasised that realigning the



"This is not just about one tree. It represents the choices we make as a society. We claim to be a land of culture and tradition, yet we are willing to erase our natural heritage in the name of progress"
— Xencor Polgi, activist

cial, Public Works Department (PWD) and the contractor will have better sense and the banyan tree will be saved." He emphasised that realigning the

corridor is the only viable solution and urged authorities to prioritise conservation. "Throughout the world, elevated corridors are built around trees, not by cutting them. You cannot replace

a 200-year-old tree with 100 new ones and expect the same ecological balance."

The movement to save the tree has gained momentum, with protests, legal interventions, and public outcry. Activist Cecille Rodrigues questioned the cost of development, saying, "This tree is sacred, a part of our identity. What kind of future are we leaving for our children if we continue to destroy our environment?"

The Bombay High Court at Goa has issued an interim stay on the translocation, instructing Hyderabad-based Doctor Trees India Pvt Ltd to submit a detailed affidavit on their methods. Petitioner Aaron Victor E Fernandes criticised the initial affidavit as inadequate, demanding closer scrutiny of the process.

A court-appointed report by

ecological consultant Parag Mody further cast doubt on the translocation's feasibility. The report pointed out flaws in previous tree relocations, including improper handling, inadequate canopy preservation, and waterlogging at relocation sites. It recommended stricter adherence to arboricultural best practices and a reassessment of the project's environmental impact.

With activists now engaging in discussions with engineers and pushing for a redesign of the elevated corridor, the banyan tree's fate remains uncertain. As the legal and public battle continues, the question remains: will development triumph over conservation, or will authorities rethink their approach and allow the ancient tree to remain rooted in history?



“Our business has gone down. Customers don't want to visit the shop as there is no road reaching my shop. There are a lot of problems. Traffic now passes too close to the shop. There is no space to walk on the road”
—Uday Tendulkar, hardware shop owner

“Water is sprinkled but not daily. The water dries up fast and dust starts flying again. People are refusing to visit my shop; they say that furniture kept in the shop is old. I think, only after the flyover work gets over will we start getting customers”
—Azharuddin Alam, employee of a furniture store

“Despite multiple assurances by the contractor in court, nothing is changing on the ground. The negligence is frustrating for residents, and the entire stretch of Porvorim has become an unlivable dust cloud”
—Avertino Miranda, convenor, Green Brigade

“The High Court has directed the Goa government and the contractor to address the dust pollution and ensure better traffic management. The Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) has also been impleaded in my petition. However, despite these orders, barricades are being misplaced, causing unpredictability and road safety issues. Traffic signals are barely visible due to the heavy dust, making driving dangerous, especially at night and in the early morning hours”
—Moses Pinto, advocate