

## CABLES CUT, INTERNET BLACKOUT SPARKS MAJOR DISRUPTION IN CAPITAL

**Schools, banks, offices go dark as Electricity Dept axe falls on cable mess; leads to bigger mess at work and home**

Team Herald

PANJIM: Schools, banks, commercial establishments, co-working spaces, media offices – large parts of the Capital were crippled without internet all through Tuesday as the Electricity Department's axe fell on the cables that had left a tangled mess on power poles, creating an eyesore in the 'Smart City'.

However, the cutting of cables – the electricity department says only 43 of them were snipped – left an equally big mess on the roads and the internet highway, as commercial establishments and home connections went kaput. The chaos this created finally forced the government to appoint North and South Goa Electricity Department Nodal Officers to oversee the cable-laying process, relieving Executive Engineer Kashinath Shetye from his duties as the nodal officer. Earlier in the day, he had insisted to the media that only 43 cables were cut and work at Goa Medical College had not got affected.

The cable-cutting was a result of an order on Monday from the High Court of Bombay at Goa, which refused to give relief to internet service providers (ISPs) who had approached the court seeking a halt to the cable-cutting activities.

However, the move has sparked widespread criticism from ISPs. Raghu Shetye, a representative from DNA Goa, criticised the electricity department's actions, claiming it had issued an inflated bill of Rs 1.80 crore for the use of their poles.

**“Bundles upon bundles of tangled wires hanging off poles. And then, one day, action is taken! The mess must be cleared. The poles must be freed. The internet providers must learn a lesson. Down come the cables. Result? No internet at home. No internet at work**

– Anish Albuquerque, Panjim resident

**SERVICES AFFECTED AT**

**Panjim Head Post Office, State Bank of India (SBI), prominent schools, offices**



Electricity Department personnel cut the internet cables tied on an electric pole

**“This disruption is affecting vital services, including educational institutions, banks, insurance companies, and the media. The situation must be addressed swiftly**

– Mangirish Salelkar, President of the Goa Technology Association

**“A collaborative approach involving all stakeholders is essential to develop a balanced solution that ensures regulatory compliance while safeguarding the interests of IT businesses and the continuity of essential services**

– Goa IT Professionals (GITP) statement

“There should be a clear basis for such bills. There is none,” Shetye asserted. He also raised concerns over the impact of the cable removals on local residents.

Mangirish Salelkar, President of the Goa Technology Association, called for intervention from Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, urging him to resolve the ongoing disputes between ISPs and the relevant departments. “This disruption is affecting vital

services, including educational institutions, banks, insurance companies, and the media. The situation must be addressed swiftly,” Salelkar said.

Molly Fernandes, President of the Cable Operators Association, encouraged operators to cooperate and make necessary payments to the Electricity Department and Public Works Department (PWD) for the underground fibre installation. Residents affected by the

outage took to social media to voice their frustrations. Anish Albuquerque shared his displeasure, saying, “Bundles upon bundles of tangled wires hanging off poles. And then, one day, action is taken! The mess must be cleared. The poles must be freed. The internet providers must learn a lesson. Down come the cables. Result? No internet at home. No internet at work.”

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## Wangchuk urges PM to preserve Himalayan glaciers

PTI, NEW DELHI: Fresh from his tour to the US where he carried a piece of ice from a glacier in Ladakh to flag their fast melting, climate activist Sonam Wangchuk has written an open letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi stating that India should take a lead in addressing the issue.

Drawing attention to the gravity of the situation in the Himalayas, Wangchuk told a press conference in the capital that if steps are not taken to restore these glaciers which are the source of our perennial rivers, the next Maha Kumbh after 144 years may be held on sand as the rivers may dry up.

Wangchuk, who has been working on preserving Himalayan glaciers, travelled from Ladakh to Delhi, and then to the US with a piece of ice from a glacier in Khardung La. The ice was placed in a container wrapped in Ladakh's iconic Pashmina wool for insulation.

The ice was taken to the UN office in Delhi, before he flew to the US where it travelled along with the climate activist to the Harvard Kennedy School, MIT, at Boston and to the UN headquarters in New York, before being immersed at the confluence of Hudson River and East River in New York on February 21, a month ahead of The World Day for Glaciers which will be observed on March 21.



Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk addresses a press conference, in New Delhi, on Tuesday

**“As we all know, the glaciers of the Himalayas are melting very fast and if this and the accompanying deforestation continues at the current rate, in few decades our sacred rivers like Ganga, Bhramaputra and Indus might become seasonal rivers. This may also mean that the next Maha Kumbh might only happen on the sandy remains of the sacred river**

– Sonam Wangchuk, climate activist

delivered his talks with the glacial ice melting next to him, symbolising how glaciers are receding as talks go on.

Back in India, the climate activist recounted how they had to trek a few kilometres to get the ice from the glacier at Khardung La, the highest motorable pass in the world at 5,359 metres in Leh district.

Wangchuk rued that over the years, glacial ice has been receding but action remains delayed.

In his open letter to the Prime Minister, Wangchuk stressed that India should take a lead in the year of glaciers, as the Himalayas have the third largest deposit of ice and snow on Earth after the Arctic and Antarctica, fetching it the name ‘Third Pole’.

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## Pope carries out duties despite critical condition

AP, ROME: Pope Francis was well enough to meet with the Vatican secretary of state to approve new decrees for possible saints and make some major governing decisions that suggest he is getting essential work done and looking ahead despite being hospitalised in critical condition with double pneumonia.

The audience, which occurred Monday, signalled that the machinery of the Vatican is still grinding on even though doctors have warned the prognosis for the 88-year-old Francis is guarded.

The Vatican's Tuesday noon bulletin contained a series of significant decisions, most importantly that Francis had met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, the so-called Vatican “substitute” or chief of staff. It was the first known time the pope had met with Parolin, who is essentially the Vatican prime minister, since his February 14 hospitalisation.

Francis approved decrees for two new saints and five people for beatification – the first step toward sainthood.

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