

Standing tall for 200 yrs, banyan tree has to move

High Court orders translocation in March; activists mull filing review petition or moving SC

Team Herald

PANJIM: Dashing the hopes of environmentalists fighting to preserve it where it stands, the High Court of Bombay at Goa on Tuesday approved the translocation of a 200-year-old banyan tree on National Highway 66 to make way for the construction of a six-lane elevated corridor.

The court order came as it disposed of miscellaneous civil application (MCA) and recommended that the tree be translocated between March 5 and 10, strictly following the guidelines and precautionary measures provided by landscape designer and ecological consultant Parag Mody.

While the ruling may have come as a relief to the PWD and the contractor of the elevated corridor project, environmentalists expressed concerns over the survival of the tree, citing previous unsuccessful tree translocations. They pointed to the poor condition of five trees transplanted in Socorro, which are now reportedly struggling to survive.

Environmentalist Avertino Miranda expressed his concerns, stating, "Past tree



The 200-year-old banyan tree at Porvorim fighting for survival

translocations have been unsuccessful, and we fear that this one will meet the same fate. The expert report by Parag Mody highlights that regrowth of the tree could take ages. We are exploring options to either file a review petition or challenge the decision in the Supreme Court."

Advocate General Devidas Pangam confirmed that the government's minutes of the order, which outlined the

necessary precautions and expert recommendations, were accepted by the Court. "All the recommendations from the expert have been endorsed, and the detailed procedure for the tree's translocation has been agreed upon. The Forest Department will supervise the process to ensure that all precautions are followed," Pangam said.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

"Past tree translocations have been unsuccessful, and we fear that this one will meet the same fate. The expert report by Parag Mody highlights that regrowth of the tree could take ages. We are exploring options to either file a review petition or challenge the decision in the Supreme Court" - Avertino Miranda, environmentalist

"We must learn from our past mistakes. Banyan tree cannot be planted in low-lying areas. I suggest that the tree be cut in two parts, which will make it more easy to translocate it. Since summer is approaching, we have to make sure that the trees has a proper canopy" - Daniel D'Souza, landscape designer

POWER PLAY



A carnival float showing US President Donald Trump keeping the Statue of Liberty and Justice on a leash is pictured during a presentation of this year's carnival floats of Cologne's carnival committee in Cologne, Germany, on Tuesday

Crusader in noise panel, but music fest shows big fight ahead

Anjuna-Vagator locals happy with Janie Crasto's nomination, say govt will find it tough to mislead court from now on

AUGUSTO RODRIGUES

VAGATOR/PORVORIM: There was a huge sense of relief for the long-suffering villagers of Anjuna and Vagator on Tuesday as the name of Janie Crasto was accepted as a member of the new Noise Monitoring Committee (NMC). Crasto has been a crusader against party venues that rampantly flout decibel norms in the beach belt.

However, this good news

"The news of Janie's selection and the five-day party are a double-edged sword. That they have decided to have a party in a residential area where many children are preparing for their final exams shows the involvement of someone powerful" - Avelin Fernandes, Anjuna resident

"It is now clear that the government is hell bent on nominating its own person to the committee to keep providing wrong information. With Crasto in as one member, things are not going to be that easy for them now" - Wayne Pereira, local villager

was tempered by the announcement of a five-day music festival has been planned at 9 Bar in Ozzant, Vagator, which is slated

to continue from 4 pm till 4 am from Wednesday to March 2, with the organisers boasting of after-parties from 4 am to 11 am. "We

have given no permission for any such party," stated Anjuna PI Suraj Gawas.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

COVID shot side-effect: SC seeks Centre's reply on framing compensation policy

PTI, NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Centre to respond on the possibility of framing a policy over the adverse effects, including deaths, of COVID-19 vaccination after being informed about the absence of any such scheme on compensation.

A bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta was informed by the Centre, represented by additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati, that the pandemic was declared a disaster and the adverse effects following immunisation (AEFI) including

the deaths were not covered under it and there was no policy for compensation in such cases. The bench, however, said that COVID-19 deaths and vaccine-related deaths should not be viewed in isolation. "Ultimately, the entire vaccination drive was a response to the pandemic. You cannot say they are not inter-linked," it said.

The law officer said there was no policy under the Disaster Management Act to deal with the AEFI following the COVID-19 immunisation.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

CBSE recommends Class 10 board exams twice a year

PTI, NEW DELHI: From 2026, class 10 students will be able to take CBSE board exams twice in an academic session or choose between the two editions - one in February and another in May, officials said.



STRESS BUSTER FORMAT

- Two exam sessions - First session from February 17 to March 6; second session from May 5 to 20
- Students can choose to appear in either or both sessions
- Full syllabus in both attempts
- No special supplementary exams, the May session will serve as the supplementary exam
- Students can skip subjects in the first exam and take them in the second session

However, if they attempt all subjects in February, they must repeat the same subjects in May if they reappear.

- Only one mark sheet will be issued after the May session. It will display marks from both attempts and consider the best score for each subject
- Practical & Internal Assessments to be conducted only once per academic year

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Tuesday approved draft norms which will now be put in the public domain and the stakeholders can submit their feedback by March 9 following which the policy will be finalised, they said.

Candidates will also have the option to appear for both examinations if they wish. Additionally, students will be allowed to skip specific subjects in the second attempt if they are already satisfied with the scores they have achieved in the first examination as well as particular subjects in the first attempt as well.

As per the draft norms, the first phase of the exams will be held from February 17 to March 6, while the second phase will be conducted from May 5 to 20.

"Both the examinations will be conducted on full

syllabus and the candidates will be allotted the same examination centres in the two editions. Exam fees will be enhanced and collected for both exams at the time of application filing," a senior board official said.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

Verdict in high-profile K'taka mining 'scam' on Friday

Team Herald

BENGALURU: The City Civil and Sessions Court in Bengaluru is set to pronounce its verdict in the high-profile Karnataka illegal mining scam on Friday, February 28. The case, which involves a Goa Cabinet Minister, his brother, and other accused, has drawn significant attention due to the alleged illegal transportation of iron ore from a mining lease in Karnataka.

The court had initially scheduled the judgment for February 24. However, the proceedings were delayed after two of the 16 accused submitted a memo with citations. The counsels for the two defendants argued that recent developments in the Supreme Court could influence the case's legal aspects and requested permission to submit additional information.

During the hearing, another accused clarified matters regarding the permits and other documents related to the case.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

Fate of Mollem forest tract to be decided today

Goa govt pushes for rly double-tracking that will kill trees for coal transport, claim activists

Team Herald

MARGAO: The fate of a virgin tract of forest land in Mollem will be decided today in faraway Bangalore, and the decision may become a pointer to whether the ecologically fragile Western Ghats can be saved for future generations.

The land in question is 15.6077 hectares of forest tract in the Kulem-Kalem section that has been earmarked for a controversial railway double tracking

project, which has been on hold due to an abeyance order from 2022. However, the Goa government has urged the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to revoke the abeyance order. The Regional Empowered Committee (REC) chaired by the Deputy Director General of Forests (Central), will decide on this request at its meeting in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

The Goa government has pointed to previous

approvals, including clearance from the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) in December 2019, to support its case. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has also cited an environmental impact assessment (EIA) conducted by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, which recommended mitigation measures, such as electronically controlled gates at tunnel entrances to prevent animals from becoming trapped.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

"This project threatens not only the fragile ecosystems of the Western Ghats but also the livelihoods and well-being of local communities that depend on these ecosystems. Upholding the CEC's recommendation is essential for protecting both the ecological integrity and societal welfare of the region" - Anushka Rege, scientist specializing in landscape ecology

"The people of Goa have continuously voiced their concerns against this project because they see the harm it will bring. If the people understand the dangers, why is the government unable to do so?" - Sinead D'Silva, researcher at University of Leeds

MAX. TEMP 36.5 °C
MIN. TEMP 21.6 °C

idharudhar



Uncle, I'm safer here - no bail needed!

British musicians use wall of silence to protest plans to let AI use their work

AP, LONDON: A new album called 'Is This What We Want?' features a stellar list of more than 1,000 musicians - and the sound of silence.

With contributions from artists including Kate Bush, Annie Lennox, Cat Stevens and Damon Albarn, the album was released Tuesday to protest proposed British changes to artificial intelligence laws that artists fear will erode their creative control.

The UK government is consulting on whether to let tech firms use copyrighted material to help train AI models unless the creators explicitly opt out.

Critics of the idea fear that will make it harder for artists to retain control of their work and will undermine Britain's creative industries. Elton John

"The government's proposal would hand the life's work of the country's musicians to AI companies, for free, letting those companies exploit musicians' work to out compete them" - Ed Newton-Rex, composer and AI developer who organised the album

and Paul McCartney are among those who have spoken out against the plan.

The protest album features recordings of empty studios and performance spaces, to show what they fear will be the fate of creative venues if the plan goes through. The titles of the 12 tracks spell out: "The British government must not legalise music

theft to benefit AI companies." Profits will be donated to the musicians' charity Help Musicians.

"The government's proposal would hand the life's work of the country's musicians to AI companies, for free, letting those companies exploit musicians' work to out compete them," said composer and AI developer Ed Newton-Rex, who organised the album.

"It is a plan that would not only be disastrous for musicians, but that is totally unnecessary," Newton-Rex said. "The UK can be leaders in AI without throwing our world-leading creative industries under the bus."

Britain's centre-left Labour Party government says it wants to make the UK a world leader in AI. In December, it announced a

consultation into how copyright law can "enable creators and right holders to exercise control over, and seek remuneration for, the use of their works for AI training" while also ensuring "AI developers have easy access to a broad range of high-quality creative content". The consultation closes on Tuesday.

Publishers, artists' organisations and media companies, including The Associated Press, have banded together as the Creative Rights in AI Coalition to oppose weakening copyright protections.

Several UK newspapers ran wraparounds over their front pages on Tuesday, criticising the government consultation and saying: "Let's protect the creative industries - it's only fair."