

HERALD ON THE GROUND

'The next blast could spell disaster for Tillari'

Protesters against stone quarrying fight to save village and dam, urge stakeholder Goa to join battle



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KHANYALE, DODAMARG: For six consecutive days, the villagers of Khanyale, Dodamarg in neighbouring Maharashtra have been protesting against relentless quarry blasting near the Tillari Dam—a joint project between the governments of Goa and Maharashtra that serves as a crucial source of



(Top) Villagers sitting in tents on Day 6 of the protest at Khanyale in Dodamarg; (below) Vasant Naik showing the detonator fuse used at the quarry

drinking water and irrigation for both States. O Heraldo visited the protest site to assess the ground reality, which poses potential risks of flooding and threatens Goa's water security. Upon reaching the remote protest site deep within the village, locals expressed frustration over the authorities' inaction. They

highlighted that frequent quarry blasts have caused cracks in their homes and widespread dust pollution. Villagers fear that continued blasting could damage the dam, potentially triggering a catastrophic disaster for their village and surrounding areas, including parts of Goa. Despite their ongoing efforts, no significant inter-

VILLAGERS SPEAK

"We are not just fighting for our village, we are trying to prevent a disaster that could affect thousands"

"We have no faith that our (Maharashtra) government will take action — so far, they have done nothing"

"Any problem here will also impact Goa. If we don't stop this now, the future of both our village and neighbouring areas will be at risk"

vention has taken place.

Vasant Naik, a local resident, voiced concerns about the risks. "The next blast could spell disaster for the entire region," he warned. He emphasised that the villagers would not end their protest until they received a written assurance that quarry operations would cease. "Any problem here will also impact Goa. If we don't stop this now, the future of both our village and neighbouring areas will be at risk," he warned.

Residents accused their local MLA of siding with the quarry project despite publicly claiming to oppose it. Many believe vested interests are influencing his stance.

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MIND YOUR LANGUAGE!

War of words between TN CM and Union minister over the Centre's educational policy continues to snowball



"They (DMK) are dishonest. They are not committed to the students of Tamil Nadu. They are ruining the future of Tamil Nadu students..."
— Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Education Minister

"The Union Education Minister, who thinks of himself as a king and speaks arrogantly, needs to be disciplined"
— M K Stalin, TN CM

HOW IT BEGAN

DMK MPT Sumathy claimed in Parliament that Rs 2,000 crore meant for TN was diverted to other states because of the state's opposition to the National Education Policy (NEP). Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan accused the DMK government of doing a volte face on its implementation

DMK'S SHARP REBUTTAL

DMK MPs including Kanimozhi protested the minister's remarks strongly while TN CM Stalin took to X to describe the minister's remarks an insult to the people of Tamil Nadu. He dismissed the minister's claim that his government changed its stand

BONE OF CONTENTION

Pradhan wrote to Stalin in August 2024, expressing surprise that TN modified the PM-SHRI MoU (a centrally sponsored scheme) by dropping a key paragraph with regard to the implementation of NEP 2020. Pradhan has been asserting that NEP would not impose Hindi on the states

THREE LANGUAGES OR TWO?

The roots of TN's opposition to the three-language formula trace back to the anti-Hindi agitations of the 1930s and 1960s. The three-language policy mandated teaching Hindi, English and a regional language in schools. In 1968, the state adopted a two-language policy, teaching only Tamil and English in schools

NEP 2020 IN A NUTSHELL

- NEP 2020 which replaces the previous education policy of 1986 does advocate a three-language scheme but offers flexibility in the choice of languages
- It recommends using mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction till at least Grade 5
- It promotes Sanskrit in a big way and other classical Indian languages
- It also proposes introducing foreign languages (Korean, Japanese, French, etc), allowing one Indian and one foreign language at Plus 2 level

"I request Chief Minister Stalin to introduce MBBS and engineering courses in Tamil"
— Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

"Tamil Nadu will not implement a three-language policy"
— Kanimozhi, DMK MP

"The people of Tamil Nadu clearly know who is playing politics with the education of poor and simple students. Your true colours have been exposed, Mr Stalin"
— K Annamalai, TN BJP President

Airtel strikes deal with Musk's SpaceX for Starlink in India

PTI, NEW DELHI: Bharti Airtel on Tuesday said it has signed an agreement with Elon Musk-led SpaceX to offer the US-based company's high-speed internet services under Starlink to its customers in India.

The development assumes significance as Mittal-led Bharti Airtel was at loggerheads with Starlink over issues related to licence fees and spectrum pricing for satellite-based internet service providers. Airtel is also the single-largest shareholder with a 21.2% share in Starlink's rival firm Eutelsat OneWeb. OneWeb has received permission to start operations in India and is waiting for spectrum allocation to roll out services.

"This collaboration enhances our ability to bring world-class high-speed broadband to even the most remote parts of India, ensuring that every individual, business, and community has reliable internet. Starlink will complement and enhance Airtel's suite of products to ensure reliable and affordable broadband for our Indian customers — wherever they live and work"

— Gopal Vittal, Bharti Airtel MD and Vice Chairman

Bharti Airtel MD and Vice Chairman Gopal Vittal said that working with SpaceX to offer Starlink services to Airtel customers in India is a significant milestone and further demonstrates the company's commitment to next-gen satellite connectivity. "This collaboration enhances our ability to bring world-class high-speed broadband to even the

most remote parts of India, ensuring that every individual, business, and community has reliable internet. Starlink will complement and enhance Airtel's suite of products to ensure reliable and affordable broadband for our Indian customers — wherever they live and work," Vittal said.

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ISPs move court over rental dispute

Team Herald

PANJIM: The All Goa Internet Service Providers Association (ISPA) has filed a fresh petition in the High Court of Bombay at Goa, challenging the authority of the Electricity Department's executive engineer to issue demand notices for rental dues. This action comes in response to the Electricity Department cutting cables, which has aggrieved local Internet operators.

The operators informed the court that they are willing to pay 10% of the outstanding amount, provided the govt refrains from imposing penalties on them. The matter is scheduled for a hearing next week.

India home to 13 of world's 20 most polluted cities

AGENCY, NEW DELHI: As many as 13 of the world's top 20 most polluted cities last year were in India, according to a new study by IQAir, a Swiss company that tracks global air quality. The study specifically looked at fine particulate matter, or PM2.5, one of the smallest but most dangerous pollutants. With an average PM 2.5 concentration of 91.8 µg/m3, Delhi continues to be the most polluted Capital city in the world, according to the 2024 World Air Quality Report.

However, the dubious distinction of being the most polluted city went to Byrnhat on the Assam-Meghalaya border. The other cities include Faridabad, Loni (Ghaziabad), Gurgaon,

MOST POLLUTED CITIES IN THE WORLD IN 2024	
1. Byrnhat, India	11. Peshawar, Pakistan
2. Delhi, India	12. Sialkot, Pakistan
3. Karaganda, Kazakhstan	13. Gurugram, India
4. Mullanpur, India	14. Ganganagar, India
5. Lahore, Pakistan	15. Hotan, China
6. Faridabad, India	16. Greater Noida, India
7. N'Djamena, Chad	17. Bhiwadi, India
8. Loni, India	18. Muzaffarnagar, India
9. New Delhi, India	19. Hanumangarh, India
10. Multan, Pakistan	20. Noida, India

Greater Noida, Bhiwadi, Noida, Muzaffarnagar, New Delhi (Central Delhi) and Delhi (taking the average from the rest of the city).

Four of Pakistan's cities also figure in the 'Top 20' with China and Kazakhstan also getting into it once each. Overall, while Pakistan ranks third in the most polluted countries, India is not far behind at fifth place with an average Air Quality Index (AQI) of 50.6 µg/m3 — 10 times higher than the World Health Organization's (WHO) annual PM2.5 guideline value of 5 µg/m3.

New noise panel members say 'action is the magic'

The two citizen panellists meet SDPO and N Goa Collector, vow to engage with suffering locals

AUGUSTO RODRIGUES

VAGATOR: The two newly appointed citizen members of the Noise Monitoring Committee (NMC), Gerald Fernandes and Kamlakar Naik, are optimistic that despite the dismal record on curbing the decibel demon in the Anjuna-Vagator belt, things can change for the better. However, 'action is the magic', they opined after a meeting on Tuesday with SDPO Vishwesh Karpe and North Goa Collector Sneha Gitte.

Fernandes and Naik have joined the NMC after the Bombay High Court at Goa recently broke the deadlock over the new inductees to the committee and brought them in.

Following Tuesday's meeting, Karpe outlined the committee's approach. "We will first engage with stakeholders and listen to what they have to say. Afterwards, we will make them understand the importance of adhering to the Supreme Court's judgment on noise regulations," he explained. When it was pointed out that noise-making party spots have got away with little or no punitive action so far, Karpe asserted that if violators continue to disregard the law, the committee will push the panchayat to seal the establishments in question.

Fernandes, who was recommended by citizens to the position, emphasized the support received from local authori-

"We need to work as a team. Affected residents should continue filing complaints with the police, as we are not authorised to act individually without an identity card"
— Kamlakar Naik, NMC member

"The North Goa Collector has promised to facilitate us. We will soon meet with the SP of North Goa and the DGP to discuss our plans moving forward"
— Gerald Fernandes, NMC member

ties. "The North Goa Collector has promised to facilitate us," he said. Despite numerous attempts, Gitte did not respond to requests for comment from O Heraldo regarding her meeting with the NMC members.

Naik, another new member of the NMC, clarified the role

of citizens in the process. "We need to work as a team. Affected residents should continue filing complaints with the police, as we are not authorised to act individually without an identity card," he explained. Naik was recommended for the role by the government.

Fernandes, who has been actively engaging with locals from Anjuna and Vagator, said, "We will soon meet with the SP of North Goa and the DGP to discuss our plans moving forward," he stated.

Naik also highlighted the widespread issue of noise pollution in the Anjuna-Vagator belt. "After the pandemic, if one throws a stone, it is likely to fall at a place where locals are complaining of noise. There are restaurants all over the place. Those running these places should be made aware that the Supreme Court judgment can't be violated and that locals have the right to sleep peacefully," he assured Naik.

When asked to react to lo-

cals' complaints that his phone was not reachable, Naik responded, saying, "Maybe my phone battery was low, but I am always accessible."

Local residents, like senior citizen Pelegrin Fernandes, shared mixed reactions to the changes. "I've heard that there is a new committee, but the noise persists. Some days the music is loud, while other days it's tolerable. My wife and I can still hear the music during our morning walks," he said.

Student Stacy D'Souza, meanwhile, noted that after the formation of the new committee, noise levels from venues like Hill Top had reduced. "We should give it more time, but at least something is being done," she commented.

MAX. TEMP 36.7 °C
MIN. TEMP 23.5 °C

idharudhar



Forget the aisle or window — can I get a toilet seat instead?

