

Jairam hails SC role in fight to save Goa's forests

Says Apex Court's order is only a 'temporary respite', as there is a 'single-minded focus' on freeing up forest lands for real estate

MARCH 4, 2025

Apex Court says 'forests being destroyed in Goa'

Team Herald

PANJIM: The battle to save Goa's precious lands from the claws of the land-grabbers got a huge boost on Wednesday when former Environment Minister and Congress leader Jairam Ramesh hailed the Supreme Court directive halting the conversion of Goa's private forest land and said bigger battles lie ahead given the 'single-minded focus' of the Goa Chief Minister to

free up forest lands for real estate purposes.

His sharp criticism comes close on the heels of the March 3 Supreme Court order he referenced in his post on X. On that day, the Apex Court passed an order granting interim relief against the conversion of large tracts identified as forest land by two expert committees.

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“The Supreme Court has very recently halted the conversion of Goa's private forest land at least for the time being. Much earlier, the National Green Tribunal too had prohibited development of denotified forest land until physical verification of all plots was completed. This was never done. The Supreme Court's order is a temporary respite. Bigger battles lie ahead given the single-minded focus of the Goa CM to free up forest lands for real estate purposes



– Jairam Ramesh, on X

“We are happy that Jairam Ramesh is endorsing our concern about the destruction of Goa's forest. The Supreme Court had to step in to stop felling of trees on 855 survey numbers. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant should take responsibility for this and the Goa government should say that it will protect the forests



– Claude Alvares, Director, Goa Foundation

Bandora locals 'breathing and eating dust', thanks to shipyard

Pollution Board officials visit the spot three months after complaint even as Udir locals battle respiratory problems

SANTOSH NAIK

PONDA: With dust in their food, their homes and their lungs, the residents of Udir in Bandora are living a life that has turned into an unending struggle. Dust pollution due to sand blasting at a nearby ship-building site threatens to upend their lives, leaving their health in peril.

Ironically, local residents had filed a complaint with Goa State Pollution Control Board on December 9, 2024, but officials visited the area only on Tuesday, stating after an inspection that the shipbuilding company had been ordered to take precautionary measures to prevent dust pollution.

The shipbuilding activities have been going on for over a year at a dock on the Zuari River, where a large ship is being constructed. The sandblasting process to remove rust from metal is leading to billowing dust



Houses coated in dust near the shipbuilding site at Udir, Bandora

“We are not opposed to shipbuilding, but the sand blasting is creating a lot of dust pollution. I conceived after 12 years of marriage, and now my seven-month-old is constantly falling ill and had to be admitted to hospital four times recently

– Priyanka Naik, local resident

that covers every surface, complain locals. The elderly, children, and newborns are suffering from itching, dry cough, and overall discomfort.

Many locals are demanding that the company move

its operations to a more isolated location. The affected residents stress that they are not opposed to the shipbuilding company but are calling for stronger measures to control the dust pollution. Some have even ex-

pressed concern about the contamination of well water, raising fears of a water crisis when taps eventually run dry.

Priyanka Naik, a local resident, said that the shipbuilding dock is located directly across from her home. “We are not opposed to shipbuilding, but the sand blasting is creating a lot of dust pollution,” Priyanka said.

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GU EXAM PAPER 'THEFT'

Probe panel submits report, but cops still in wait-and-watch mode

Report is with VC and Chancellor; but varsity yet to file complaint, say cops

Team Herald

PANJIM: The two-member fact-finding committee probing the allegation of question paper theft at Goa University submitted its report to Vice-Chancellor Harilal B Menon on Wednesday, who then sent it to the Chancellor, Governor P S Sreedharan Pillai. But curiously, till the evening the police maintained that they had not received a copy, which was apparently preventing them from pushing ahead with their investigation.

The report is supposed to be placed before the university's Executive Committee meeting scheduled on March 28.

The controversy erupted

on Sunday when a complaint was submitted to the Agassaim Police Station, which claimed that an Assistant Professor of the university's School of Physical and Applied Sciences had stolen a Physics question paper to help a girl student in the exams. While the teacher was suspended the next day, police have neither lodged an FIR in the case nor actively sought out the accused teacher or the girl for questioning, stating that they will wait for the report of the fact-finding committee to take their probe forward.

Now, even three days after their complaint was submitted to police by activists lead by Kashinath Shetye, police seem to be

in wait-and-watch mode. A police officer pointed out that Goa University has yet to file a complaint. According to the officer, as per BNSS, the police have 14 days to conduct a preliminary enquiry before registering the FIR.

On the other hand, Shetye said that they have now written to SP North to investigate chats of WhatsApp between professors, assistant professor and the said girl student and to get details of call records. He alleged that the university wants to cover up the issue to save the institution's face. He also demanded that a copy of the fact-finding committee report be given to them.

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NAGPUR VIOLENCE

8 Bajrang Dal, VHP activists surrender; released on bail

PTI, NAGPUR: Eight functionaries of Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal on Wednesday surrendered before the Nagpur Police investigating charges of hurting religious sentiments and illegal protest that triggered violence two days back, a senior officer said.

The accused were produced in court, which granted them bail.

The accused have been identified as Amol Thakre, Mantri, VHP, Nagpur city; Lakhan Kuril, Goraksha Pramukh, Vidarbha Prant; Mukesh Barapatre, President of Central Nagpur, VHP; Rishabh Arkhel, Co-convenor of Bajrang Dal, Vidarbha; Shubham Arkhel, Co-convenor of Bajrang Dal, Nagpur City; Sushil Chaurasiya, VHP worker; Ramacharan Dubey, and Kamal Haryani, Convenor of Bajrang Dal, Nagpur City.

THE COSMIC JOURNEY TO HOME SWEET HOME

UNDocking AND DEPARTURE

March 18, 6:35 am: NASA astronauts SUNITA WILLIAMS and BARRY 'BUTCH' WILMORE undock from the International Space Station (ISS) aboard the Dragon spacecraft

They are joined by NASA's Nick Hague and Russia's Aleksandr Gorbunov

8.50 am: Hatch of SpaceX Dragon capsule sealed, marking the start of their return to Earth



Sunita and Butch smiling and waving for the cameras before taken away in reclining stretchers

JOURNEY HOME

Minor snag:

Before takeoff, a minor issue arises when dust particles are noticed on the hatch seals between the spacecraft and the space station. Takuya Onishi, one of the four new astronauts replacing Williams and Wilmore, clears the dust particles

17-hour journey: The Crew-9 team travel through space for 17 hours

POST-SPLASHDOWN

Recovery procedures: After splashdown, NASA personnel begin recovery procedures, including a 45-day rehab programme for the astronauts as they readjust to Earth's gravity

DESCENT AND SPLASHDOWN

March 19, 2.41 am: Deorbit burn reduces the capsule's speed for re-entry

3.14 am: Temporary loss of communication due to atmospheric heating during re-entry

3.24 am: Parachutes deployed and capsule

slows down in preparation for splashdown

3:27 am: The Dragon spacecraft splashes down off the coast of Florida, bringing a successful end to the astronauts' nine-month mission



SUNI'S FATHER'S VILLAGE REJOICES

As the SpaceX capsule carrying the astronauts was travelling towards Earth, the villagers of Jhulasan in Gujarat's Mehsana district performed a yagna and lit up *akhand jyoti* (eternal flame). Once the capsule splashed down off Florida, the villagers, who were watching the event live on TV at a local temple, went berserk, burst crackers, danced and chanted *Har Har Mahadev*.



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