

DOUBLE-TRACKING DISASTER PLAYS OUT AT ISSORCIM

Locals accuse rail officials of adopting faulty construction methods, which left their fields buried and century-old drainage system in ruins

Team Herald

MARGAO: Call it a man-made disaster. South Western Railway's (SWR) double-tracking project has caused widespread environmental destruction in Issorcim, with residents alleging that unseasonal rain exposed the catastrophic impact of faulty construction methods which left their paddy fields buried under mud and the century-old drainage system in ruins.

It is pertinent to note that Issorcim falls in the Velsao-Pale-Issorcim Panchayat jurisdiction.

According to affected residents, the disaster stems from the Railway authorities destroying the century-old storm water tunnels that were built by British engineers beneath the existing single railway track. These tunnels, the locals say, were connected to an ancient drainage network that had effectively channelled rainwater from East to West for over a century, preventing landslides and soil erosion in the ecologically-sensitive forest areas.

They alleged that Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL), executing the project for SWR, buried the ecologically tenable drainage system while constructing the second track



(Left) Widespread environmental destruction in Issorcim due to SWR double-tracking project. (Right) A local stands near the century-old stormwater tunnel built by British engineers under the single track lying in ruins



“This is totally heartbreaking for me personally as I have seen Bruno Pereira toiling away in these paddy fields last season – Orville Dourado Rodrigues, founder of Goencho Ekvott

“The storm water tunnel erected by the British engineers and which was totally buried in mud by RVNL has ‘opened’ up with the first unseasonal rains with the mud having been washed away to the nearby bay of the Arabian Sea. People used to easily pass on to the other side, but now there is sludge of at least 40cms – Issorcim locals

through what residents describe as “most unprofessional methods”.

When rains arrived, the affected residents claim that the blocked tunnels burst open with tremen-

dous force, unleashing what they estimate to be close to 1,000 truckloads of mud sludge into the valley below, as well the Arabia Sea to the West.

The residents alleged that

the worst damage occurred near Guadalupe Chapel, where they say a unique double tunnel system had been completely buried by RVNL contractors. The tunnel has now reopened, but

residents report that sludge deposits of at least 40 centimetres where people once walked easily between both sides.

Cont on Pg 13 >>

MAN-MADE MAYHEM

Locals alleged the rail authorities destroyed century-old stormwater tunnels built by British engineers under the single track

Say these tunnels connected to an old drainage network that channelled rainwater & prevented landslides

Accuse RVNL of burying this drainage system while constructing the second track using unprofessional methods

Claim when rains arrived, the blocked tunnels reportedly burst open, releasing 1,000 truckloads of mud sludge into the valley and the Arabian Sea

Complain that the worst damage occurred near Guadalupe Chapel, where a unique double tunnel system was completely buried by RVNL contractors

Although the tunnel has reopened, sludge deposits of at least 40 centimetres remain

Ragging row: Activist says pressure on arch students to back off

Demands inquiry by retired judge or SP; principal says he's following due process

Team Herald

PANJIM: The alleged ragging incident involving Goa College of Architecture students that took place in September last year has seen a further twist, with social worker John Nazareth claiming on Saturday that the college authorities are now pressuring first-year students to give in writing that they are not willing to pursue the matter.

Nazareth, who is also the Goa Government Employees' Association president, demanded an impartial inquiry by a retired Judge or a retired Superintendent of Police (SP) and has challenged the college principal's order before the State Information Commissioner. The matter is fixed on June 17.

As many as 24 first year students had complained about ragging which occurred during a freshers' party held in a private hall in Panjim, but no stern action was taken against the senior students involved in ragging and were let off while the probe was closed after reportedly asking the victims to withdraw their complaint.

Nazareth further alleged that the students were harassed and the incident came to light only after he

“I have now challenged the order of the college principal, who is the first appellate authority before the State Information Commissioner. The matter is fixed on June 17. Truth has to come to light

– John Nazareth, ex-Goa Government Employees Association president

“As Principal of the College, ensuring the safety and respecting the choices of my students is paramount. We have followed due process and will continue to do so

– Leon Morenas, Principal of Goa College of Architecture



flagged it. A visiting faculty member who had attended the freshers' party was asked to quit after first year students opposed his continuation.

The event is now being described as a “private party” to deflect the matter and avoid institutional responsibility, he said, reiterating his demand for an impartial probe.

He said after **O Herald** highlighted the ragging, the first year students are reportedly pressured to give in writing that they are not interested in pursuing their complaint.

Nazareth stated that the college authorities are denying him information sought under Right To Information (RTI) Act, saying that he is an ‘outsider’ and by using Section 8 (exemption from disclosure of information) of the Act.

“I have now challenged the order of the college principal, who is the first appellate authority before the State Information Commissioner. The matter is fixed on June 17. Truth has to come to light,” he said.

When contacted, Goa College of Architecture Principal Leon Morenas said, “As Principal of the College, ensuring the safety and respecting the choices of my students is paramount. We have followed due process and will continue to do so.”

Shubman Gill to lead India in Tests

AGENCIES, MUMBAI: Battering star Shubman Gill has been appointed as India's Test captain, leading the team through what is described as a “massive transition” phase.

This new era begins with next month's tour of England, a challenging five-match series that will test the mettle of the relatively inexperienced 18-member squad.

At 25 years old, Gill becomes one of India's youngest Test captains, following in the footsteps of Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, Sachin Tendulkar, Kapil Dev, and Ravi Shastri. He

will be supported by the dynamic Rishabh Pant, who will serve as his deputy for the series commencing on June 20 in Leeds.

A significant omission from the squad is pacer Mohammed Shami, who was deemed unfit for the lengthy series concluding in the first week of August.

Among the notable inclusions were young left-hander B Sai Sudharsan and left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh, who earned their maiden Test call-up.

The squad also features Karun Nair, who returns after 8 years.

More on Pg 18 >>

Monsoon reaches Kerala, earliest since 2009: IMD

PTI, NEW DELHI: The southwest monsoon hit Kerala on Saturday, marking its earliest arrival over the Indian mainland since 2009 when it reached the southern state on May 23, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Normally, the southwest monsoon makes its onset over Kerala by June 1 and covers the entire country by July 8. It starts retreating from north-west India around September 17 and withdraws completely by October 15.

The monsoon had set in over the southern State on May 30 last year; June 8 in 2023; May 29 in 2022; June 3 in 2021; June 1 in 2020; June 8 in 2019; and May 29 in 2018, IMD data showed.

Data available since 1975 showed that the monsoon reached Kerala the earliest in 1990 (on May 19), 13 days before the usual date.

Cont on Pg 13 >>

MONSOON HAVOC



People walk past a tree uprooted by strong winds and rainfall in Thiruvananthapuram, on Saturday

Justice Nagarathna set to be first woman CJI

PTI, NEW DELHI: Justice BV Nagarathna, in line to become the first woman Chief Justice of India, is set to become a member of the Supreme Court Collegium after the retirement of Justice Abhay S Oka.

Being the fifth senior-most judge now, Justice Nagarathna will officially become part of the collegium on May 25 and will be part of it until she retires as Chief Justice of India on October 29, 2027.

The Collegium will now comprise Chief Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai, Justice Surya Kant, Justice Vikram Nath, Justice J K Maheshwari, and Justice Nagarathna.

According to apex court sources, CJI Gavai is likely to convene his inaugural collegium meeting on Monday to address vacancies in the top court and make crucial appointments in several high courts.

After Justice Oka's retirement, there will be a vacancy of three judges in the top court.

Under the collegium system, which came into existence in 1993 after a Supreme Court judgement, five top judges of the apex court recommend the appointment, transfer and elevation of judges to the Supreme Court and the 25 high courts.

The government can return the recommendation to the collegium under this system.

Cont on Pg 13 >>

MAX. TEMP 29°C
MIN. TEMP 25°C

idharudhar



They're back with the road quality report.

Road-digging ban can't hide mess on streets

North Collector's two-month ban on road digging with monsoon just days away makes citizens ask: what will happen to the roads already dug up?

Team Herald

PANJIM: The North Goa District Collector's order on Saturday prohibiting the digging of roads without written permission has evoked anger, irritation and plain ridicule from the long-suffering residents of the district.

The order that came into force with immediate effect will remain in operation for two months up to July 24. But a ban on digging will not stifle the question on everyone's lips: what about the roads that have been dug up already? With the rains, they are now either open pits for mosquitoes to breed or are covered in rubble that pose a threat to vehicles on water-

“This is like bolting the door after the horse has fled the stable. Panjim city has grid architecture and connecting roads and drainages lead to river front. At many places due to removal of iron mesh, plastic bags, bottles, gutkha packets, biscuit wrappers have now entered into the open drains. Where is the effect of the order when digging is going on? It is a face-saving measure of all the mess already caused

– Adv Rui Ferreira, Panjim resident

logged streets.

The order issued by North Goa Collector Yashaswini B states that only applications or requests of road cutting of public, government department and others which are emergent

or urgent in nature for the purpose of water, sewerage, electrical connection and others will have to be addressed to the concerned departments, and forwarded to the Collector's office along with the recom-

mendation and justification for action.

It will also be published for the information of the public through press and also by affixing on the notice boards of all the Sub-Divisional Magistrates

“There is no objection to allow digging in emergency and urgent cases. But what I have noticed is that after digging, repairs are done in a haphazard manner and many times left in a state of neglect during monsoon causing inconvenience to motorists and particularly to two-wheeler riders. The authorities should tell people why road is being dug during monsoon

– Sanjay Sarmalkar, local

(SDMs), all the taluka Mamlatdars and all the police stations of North Goa district.

Reacting to the order banning digging of roads for two months, Panjim resident Adv Rui Ferreira said, “This is like bolting the door after the horse has fled the stable. Panjim city has grid architecture and connecting roads and drainages lead to river front. At many places due to removal of iron mesh, plastic bags, bottles, gutkha packets, biscuit wrappers have now entered into the open drains. Where is the effect of the order when digging is going on? It is a face-saving measure of all the mess already caused.”

Cont on Pg 13 >>