

Save Mollem campaign goes pan India

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PANJIM: Goa's fight to save the Mollem National Park from being bulldozed to pave the way for three commercial infrastructure projects – railway double tracking, laying of power transmission line and expansion of National Highway – is gaining momentum across India, with several politicians and Bollywood stars extending support to the 'Save Mollem' campaign.

Over 1.12 lakh people have so far signed the online petition started by Akshay, demanding cancellation of the three projects. The petition, to be submitted to Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) Prakash Javdekar and eleven others, aims to get 1.50 lakh signatures.

The campaign, that saw wide support on social media, is now been backed by former Union Environment Minister and Congress MP Jairam Ramesh, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Film star Randeep Hooda, comedian Vir Das and Fridays For Future India (FFFI) – a people's movement for climate justice.

In a tweet, Ramesh said, "The Prime Minister waxed eloquent on his love for nature while at the same time making moves to destroy the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park. This is sheer hypocrisy. The green lungs of Goa must be saved."

The Goa Congress unit, which has also launched "OnlyGoaSayNoToCoal" campaign, has thanked Ramesh for his support to Save Mollem.

Kejriwal also took to the social media to say that the government should not implement projects against the wishes of people. "Goans camping day and night to #SaveMollem and stop #coalprojects. FIRs done against many Goans including AAP volunteers," he said.

The AAP supremo said that muzzling protests and lodging FIRs will not dampen the spirit of Goans to save Goa from being a coal hub.

Hooda's tweet appeals to people to stand with Goans protesting the proposed loss of 70,000 trees and destruction of biodiversity hub in Mollem, a tiger habitat, for doubling the railway line to make Goa into a coal transport hub instead.

"Late Manohar Parrikar was against this thoughtless expansion. State government of Assam, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra have stopped infra projects from destroying #biodiversity hubs. Why can't the Goa Govt follow their late leader and hero?" he questioned.

He said that as endorsed by Modi (Prime Minister), the world and India is moving away from coal energy and is looking for alternatives. "We are not energy deficit country. The proposed #MPT is till 2035. We will not be using this huge amount of coal then by the damage done now will be permanent," he tweeted.

Thousands of Goans had gathered at Guirdolim and Chandor, the former Capital of Goa on November 1 night to oppose the projects planned in Goa. The protestors gathered at the railway track and sat there until dawn to prevent the railways from starting the work. A sea of people, politicians and groups, etc, marched through the darkness of the night with candles. The police have filed FIR against the protestors.

Source: <https://www.heraldgoa.in/Goa/Save-Mollem-campaign-goes-pan-India/167437>