

## LAND, DEVELOPMENT AND RESISTANCE: AN ISSUE OF MOPA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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### ABSTRACT

*The changing development paradigm in the post-reform period brought along with growth new challenges and concerns. The pressure on land, the question of rehabilitation and resettlement, environmental degradation, growing inequalities are some such concerns. The mega projects initiated by both Central as well as State government are putting pressure on land and threatening the livelihood of people and environment. Goa is not immune to such developments. The article is concerned with the process of land acquisition to build international airport in Goa and in the course of action affecting environment and livelihood of people. The article argues while such acquisition is necessary for development, its success depends upon consultation with stakeholders prior to such decisions and well thought out compensation and rehabilitation packages which are lacking in the process of land acquisition.*

Development discourse in the post reform period brought along with growth host of challenges. One of the major issue in the development discourse revolves around land acquisition and displacement. The increasing number of mega projects are putting pressure on the existing land and environment resulting in protest against such projects throughout the country. Goa being very small the stakes are high. In recent years Goa also witnessed number of protests against the planning and development of projects which risked the land, livelihood and environment. One such protest is the protest against construction of Mopa International Airport in Pernem Taluka of Goa. While people of Goa succeeded in scrapping of Regional Plan 2011 and Special Economic Zones in Goa they failed to put a halt on Mopa

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projects. The paper tries to highlight on the origin of the issue, divergent opinions expressed, peoples protest and the present status of the issue.

The issue emerged with the government decision to acquire land for the construction of international airport at Mopa (North Goa). The land acquisition process not only affected the villages in North Goa but also create heated debates and agitations among the people as well as the politicians of South Goa as it was believed that with the coming of Mopa airport the existing international airport at Dabolim in South Goa will be closed down. The taxi operators and hotel industries in south Goa feared losing their business if Dabolim airport is closed down. Thus the major questions in the whole issue were opposition to Mopa airport, retaining Dablim airport and opposition to land acquisition.

During the course of the research when visited Mopa village in the month of January 2011, most of the people in the village were unaware of the whole issue. The notices to acquire land had been issued to them since from 2003 which were in English. To those people who knew only Konkani/Marathi the notice hardly meant anything. Only thing they knew after hearing from others that, their land is being acquired by the government for constructing airport. According to the earlier notices which they had received the amount of compensation they are supposed to get was meagre which they wanted to increase. The land owners from this area formed a committee under the leadership of RupeshParab and met their local MLA who promised to look into the matter. The MLA later expressed his helplessness over the matter saying that it cannot be increased to more the Rs. 58 which is the government compensation for any land acquisition in Goa and the only option for people is to appeal in the court if they are not happy with the compensation. Before going into the details of the agitation by the people it would be relevant to know the background of the issue.

### **Emergence of the Issue:**

In 2000, the Union government came up with a plan to build a greenfield airport at Mopa in North Goa. By mid-2005, the mounting opposition to the issue by the people as well as by some political leaders, it became difficult for the state government to deal with the issue. The government has proposed to acquire 1 crore sq. mts. land in three phases, while in the phase two the total land of 86 lakh sq.mt. would have been acquired (TNT, 2006). The

government had issued notification under section 4 of Land Acquisition Act on January 5, 2005, for acquiring land in the first phase.

In August 2005, after returning from a meeting with the Planning Commission in Delhi, Chief Minister Pratap Singh Rane disclosed that Mopa Airport was one of the many projects to be taken up under the Rs. 1025 crore outlay approved by the Planning Commission (Herald, 2005). This created division within the ruling Congress with Churchill Alemao Congress MP from South Goa opposing it under the pretext that coming up of a new airport will lead to closure of one at Dabolim (South Goa). Being a MP from South Goa he was representing and trying to protect the interest of people of South Goa who are going to be affected by the closure of Dabolim airport. The issue created clear divide among the Congress leaders with Churchill Alemao demanding for scrapping of Mopa airport project. Both the MPs of Goa were also divided over the issue while North Goa MP Shantaram Naik supported the project and South Goa MP Churchill Alemao was asking for scrapping it. Churchill Alemao revealed that "Contrary to the stand adopted by local politicians that Goa would have two airports at Dabolim and Mopa, records reveal that the Union Cabinet had on March 29, 2000 taken a decision to close Dabolim airport after Mopa becomes a reality. The Union Civil Aviation Ministry had communicated this decision to Goa Chief Secretary on May 1, 2005" (Herald, 2005). He warned that Goans may revolt against the Congress government. He also called for urgent meeting of people at Balsco Executive Hall on 26<sup>th</sup> November to finalise the future course of action.

John Fernandes, former member of Parliamentary Committee who also worked for the expansion of Dabolim airport with an intention of gaining international airport status for it during his tenure is of the opinion that there is no question of having another airport and shutting the Dabolim airport. According to him Union government had never asked for a new international airport in Goa and therefore the controversy surrounding Mopa airport is a bogey raised by vested interests. In the article *Politics and Genesis of Mopa*, Valmiki Faleiro (2005) stated that:

After embarking on an ambitious Economic Liberalization Policy aimed at catapulting a sluggish India into an Asian Tiger economy, to shore up infrastructure necessity for spurring growth, an "Open Skies" policy was unveiled. The prime export air gateway, Mumbai airport,

was congested and a committee was appointed to study remedial steps. The committee recommended that an international airport be set up *midway* between Mumbai and Goa, as a measure to decongest Mumbai.

Faleiro (2005) also mentioned that the proposal was sent by Goa government to have international airport at Mopa. Similar views were expressed by Industrial Minister. Calling for a detailed study to ascertain the viability of having two airports in Goa. The Industries Minister, Luizinho Faleiro has said that he do not want the Mopa airport if it comes at the cost of the existing Dabolim airport (Herald, 2005). He was of the opinion that the members of steering committees on Mopa instead of touring abroad to study international airports, there is a need to study the viability of having two airports in the State. But when Jitendra Deshprabhu, the Prenem MLA and also the Vice-Chairman of Steering Committee on Mopa, disclosed that the decision to locate Goa's civilian airport at Mopa was taken during Luizinho's tenure, the very next day in a press release Luizinho denied of having done that. Addressing a press conference, along with Jitendra Deshprabhu he said: "The decision at that time (in 1999) was to make Dabolim the 11<sup>th</sup> International airport (Herald, 2005)." While Deshprabhu maintained that, "Mopa was never in the picture in 1999, till it came into focus only in 2000 (Herald, 2005)". To justify his point he circulated the copy of the minutes of the meeting which took place between him and P.V. Jaykrishnan, the Secretary, Civil Aviation in Delhi in August 1999 where he claimed to make Dabolim as the 11<sup>th</sup> international airport and the idea was welcomed by Jaykrishnan. Later on Luizinho continued his demand for scrapping of Mopa. In April 2006 referring to the feasibility report prepared by the International Civil Aviation Authority he said, "several points of the report shows the proposed project in poor light. The final feasibility study says that the airport would not generate the cash flow to sustain the project capital investment thereby raising doubts over the economic and financial feasibility of the proposed airport (Herald, 2006)." In his letter addressed to Congress President Sonia Gandhi he demanded that, "in view of the economic unavailability of the proposed Mopa airport and the political rift it has caused between North Goa it is wise to give clear assurance to retain Dabolim airport and cancelling Mopa project (Herald, 2006)".

Opposition of Alemao to Mopa airport caused ripples in the Pratap Singh Rane government. Raising the issue of Mopa in Parliament M.P. Churchill Alemao demanded to scrap the proposed Mopa airport and continue Dabolim airport as international airport of Goa with up-gradation and renovations. His growing support base on the issue became the cause of worry to Congress party in the state. Hotel lobby and the Tourist taxi operators in the southern coastal belt of Goa also strongly opposed the proposed international airport at Mopa. Politicians elected from the coastal belt of South Goa had no option than to join the opposition to Mopa airport as their constituencies being tourism dependent, they are in a no position to support Mopa airport.

Considering that the Mopa airport issue might turn into a major problem the Goa Pradesh Congress Committee planned to depute a delegation to New Delhi in November 2005 to meet Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, Union Minister for Civil Aviation Praful Patel and if possible also to meet AICC chief Sonia Gandhi urging them to retain Dabolim airport even after Mopa is commissioned. In response to which, "the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India in its revised procedural guidelines has made changes to the policy framework to the effect that a Greenfield airport may be permitted where an existing airport is unable to meet the projected requirements of traffic or a new focal point of traffic emerges with sufficient viability. It can be allowed both as replacement for an existing airport for simultaneous operation (Herald, 2005)." While the Ministry of Civil Aviation maintained the possibility of retaining both the airports, "the Transport Minister, Government of Goa has clarified that the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India vide their letter No. AV-20015/8/95-VB (Vol.III) dated 01/05/2000 had communicated that the Union Cabinet on 29/03/2000 had decided *inter alia* that the existing Dabolim airport is to be closed for civilian operations on commissioning of the new airport at Mopa (Herald, 2005)" which created doubt over retaining Dabolim airport and the agitation continued.

The growing support to Charchill Alemao and agitation by the people affected by land acquisition forced the Congress government to take immediate action. In a meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2006 the Congress led coalition Cabinet decided that delegation headed by CM Pratapsingh Rane will go to Delhi to pursue the Central government to sanction already promised Rs.500 crore, for the expansion of Dabolim airport. Rane at a post cabinet briefing

told the media that the state Cabinet had no say in the matter pertaining to Mopa airport as the subject rest with the Central government (Herald, 2006).

### **Demand for shifting Naval Operations:**

The government was time and again clarifying that it is not going to shut the Dabolim airport. While Cortalim MLA, came up with a proposal of shifting Naval operations of Dabolim to Sea Bird, Karwar and to continue it as a civilian airport. Addressing a press conference held by Save Dabolim Airport Committee, Saldana mentioned that Dabolim is a civilian airport and defence had taken possession of the Dabolim airport soon after Goa's liberation. He said: "Dabolim Airport was built and run by the local PWD when it was inaugurated in 1960. After Liberation, the Navy took possession of the airport just for maintenance (Herald, 2005)". While the Navy reply was the Sea Bird at Karwar is not suited for fighter jets.

The crash of naval fighter plane in Vasco raised concerns over having military establishments near civilian quarters. No doubt Vasco has expanded over the past couple of decades and is not the same place that it was in 1960 when the Navy occupied it but today with the progress in aircraft and the lethal capacity of fighters increasing tenfold, has the civilian and military authorities realised and understood the consequences that could occur if one aircraft were to fall on a densely populated civilian area (Herald, 2005). This led to the demand of shifting Navy if not to Karwar than to Mopa. However, in an article retired Lt. Col. Silvester D'Souza mentioned that, "Dabolim is strategically ideal for its paramount role of air surveillance and maritime reconnaissance of the skies and sea lanes as far as the Horn of Africa, the Arabian Gulf and the North Arabian Sea. Long range maritime patrols and counter attack by Navy aircraft can be launched at very short notice. The very presence of Naval aviation Station alongside the civil terminal is reassuring as it can thwart any elements dangerous to air safety by its rapid response capability (Herald, 2006)."

### **Support for Mopa Airport:**

Though the issue received lot of opposition from the leaders within Congress, BJP leaders were in full support of the Mopa airport. Supporting the Mopa airport the then leader of opposition Manohar Parrikar said that Dabolim airport is over –crowded and there

is a need for second airport in Goa. He mentioned that, "A few year back traffic flow at Dabolim airport was just 6 lakh, today it is 15 lakh (Herald, 2005)". Priol MLA Vishwas Satarkar also mentioned that Mopa airport was in need since Dabolim airport was falling short of catering to the needs. The Janata Dal (Secular), Goa unit, has also extended full support to the proposed international airport at Mopa. While North Goa MP Shripad Naik expressed the view that Dabolim airport is inadequate for big planes with more passenger carrying capacity and added that banking on Dabolim alone will not help in developing tourism in coming decades. Mopa airport is needed for greater development.

To protest against the Churchill Alemao's anti-Mopa airport agitation Pernem MLA, Jitendra Deshpabhu planned for one day bandh and also threatened to resign as MLA if government fails to implement Mopa airport project. Indicating the clear split within the Congress party over Mopa issue. Mopa Support Samiti extended full support to Pernem bandh which was called on April 18, 2006. Pernem witnessed total bandh, people blocked highways and shops and educational institutes were closed in many parts of Pernem.

Meanwhile the agricultural tenants from Pernem met Churchill Alemao, who expressed their concern over losing their prime agricultural land for the proposed airport and displace hundreds of agricultural farmers. They requested him to take up their cause and assured their full support to him in this. In view of the controversy over the project Rane government had to temporarily keep the Mopa work on hold.

### **Land Acquisition Put on Hold:**

Under increasing pressure from the members of its own party and people the government put a halt to the process of land acquisition of Mopa airport. The government had issued notification under Section IV of Land Acquisition Act in phase II and it was about to issue notification under Section VI before January 21 for final acquisition (TNT, 2006). On failure of revenue department to issue notification under Section 6 of land acquisition act, the land acquisition process for the second phase lapsed on 23<sup>th</sup> January 2006 and on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2006 land acquisition for the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase also got lapsed.

Denouncing the decision of Rane government to stay the process of land acquisition for the proposed Mopa international airport as anti-state activity the BJP warned an agitation.

The BJP MLA of Mandrem constituency, Laxmikant Parsekar addressing press conference on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2006, said that the congress party has always sidelined the development of Pernem taluka and done grave injustice to the region including delay in construction of Colvale and Chapora bridge (TNT, 2006). Speaking further he said that the land acquisition process is in a different level of completion and if the awarding procedure is not completed before the deadline, the same would lapse.

However, CM assured that the process could be revived. "Official sources also confirmed that the process of land acquisition can very well be started afresh. It doesn't mean that the project is scrapped if the land acquisition process lapses (Herald, 2006)."

The government had so far spent nearly Rs. 5 crore on the project with Rs. 2.6 crore having already paid to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) for conducting feasibility study and presenting report. Recently the government also initiated a project to conduct environment impact study by spending Rs. 21 lakh (TNT, 2006).

Former Union Minister Ramakant Khalap, who headed the Mopa Airport Follow-up Committee expressed the need for both the airports and hoped that land acquisition process for Mopa will restart soon. He Said: "The Mopa airport would be required for wide-bodied aircraft which need 5 to 6 kms long runway, besides fuel tanks for refill, parking strips and cargo facilities, he further mentioned that the Dabolim airport would not be able to fulfill these requirements because of its geographical constraints (TNT, 2006)". He also expressed the confidence that all is not lost. Though the land acquisition procedure for about 24 lakh square meters of land at Mopa lapsed with the government failure to issue Section 6 on January 24, it could still use the emergency clause of Section 17 to make up for the lost time (TNT, 2006). They also decided to visit Delhi to pursue the cause of Mopa with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, the Union Civil Aviation Minister, Mr. Praful Patel and the Congress President, Ms. Sonia Gandhi.

Some government officials expressed concern that Goa could lose the project while Maharashtra and Karnataka have shown interest in setting up international airport near Goa and Dabolim airport may also lose international status as facilities there are not meeting the global standards. When Maharashtra Revenue Minister Narayan Rane, in a Congress meet at Bicholim on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007 stated that if Goa does not want the international airport



they are ready to take it to Sindhudurg in Maharashtra, many felt that if this happens Goa is losing its opportunity to Maharashtra. One of the articles in The Navhind Times, mentions that:

It is really unfortunate that some of our blinkered politicians have let themselves be guided by short term interests rather than long-term interests of the state and the people. How could they ignore that every growing economy, particularly a state like tourism as a major source of revenue, needs infrastructural force multipliers. Mopa is one such project, which could have added to the economic strength of Goa (TNT, 2007).

The Mopa Vimantal Nirdhar Samiti also appealed to the State government to immediately restart the process of land acquisition for the proposed international airport at Mopa. The MLAs of Dhargal and Mandrem constituencies, both in Pernem taluka, namely Manohar Asgaonkar and Parsekar were the active participants of the Munch. It got the support of BJP representatives of Village Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat of Pernem taluka.

Meanwhile five-member committee headed by Chief Minister Rane was constituted in the last week of January 2006, to look into all aspects relating to the construction of new airport at Mopa and advise the central government on the necessity of either continuing or closing the current airport at Dabolim. The other members of the committee were South Goa MP Churchill Alemao, North Goa MP Shripad Naik, Rajya Sabha MP Shataram Naik and Chief Secretary J.P. Singh. The committee was given three months' time to submit its report but considering how complex the issue became the committee had sought for extension.

### **Restarting Land Acquisition Process:**

It is in May 2008 the High Powered Committee on Mopa (appointed in 2006) had decided to go ahead with the Mopa international project by recommending the restarting of land acquisition process. On 29<sup>th</sup> January 2008, the Committee on Mopa airport had accepted in principle the report of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) clearing aspect of coexistence of two airports in Goa. It is three months after ICAO report became public, Goa Government declared its decision to proceed 'in-principle' with the two airport plan. ICAO acknowledged in its report that both Dabolim civil enclave and Mopa airport may be needed on social and economic grounds. However, ICAO calls the two airport plan as a

second best solution (the ideal one being a single airport). It insisted that going ahead (with Mopa) is necessary despite the importance of the currently planned investment programme at Dabolim airport. According to the draft final report of the International Civil Aviation Organisation which had conducted feasibility study on the proposed Mopa airport project, "The proposed Mopa international airport, an ambitious green field project which is coming up in North Goa, besides facilitating domestic as well as international air travel to and from the state, will create 34, 314 jobs by 2015 and employ altogether 87,887 persons by 2034 (TNT, 2008)".

The then Chief Minister Digamber Kamat met the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008 and presented him the report approved by the committee headed by him. He also mentioned that the decision of the committee to go ahead with the construction of Mopa airport is final and there is no going back. Chief Minister also mentioned that direction have been issued to North Goa Collector to start land acquisition proceedings for proposed Mopa airport. Accordingly, the Office of the Special Land Acquisition Officer for Mopa has moved a file to the government for restarting the land acquisition afresh by invoking the urgency clause (Section 17) of the Land Acquisition Act 1984 (Herald, 2008). While the decision of the government to restart the land acquisition process of Mopa international airport is based on ICAO report, it is interesting to note that, "the ICAO deputed a two member team made up of an airport operations and planning experts and an air traffic forecasting/ air transport economics expert – to assess the airports. Their job was to look at the situation at Dabolim and Mopa, and make appropriate recommendations. They were in Goa for eight days from July 7, 2007 to July 16, 2007, at the very height of the monsoon, when we all know that Goa's landscape starts looking different and there are huge logistic difficulties of moving around, especially to remote plateaus in distant Pernem (Herald, 2008)." Within eight short days they were able to produce feasibility cum viability study that resulted in their producing a report of 46 pages based on their visits to both Dabolim and Mopa.

Speaking at the independence day programme held at Martyr's Memorial at Patradevi the then Chief Minister Digamber Kamat emphasized that his government is committed to make Mopa international airport a reality. "Regretting that Goans are now opposing everything for the sake of opposition, Kamat felt that this is not a good trend (TNT, 2008)". In an

attempt to put to rest the fears among the members of the house as well as the general public about the closure of Dabolim airport, the Chief Minister, Kamat, on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2008 “informed the state legislative assembly that the Goa government would not enter into any agreement with the Centre as regards to closure of the existing airport at Dabolim, once the proposed Mopa airport becomes operational (TNT, 2008).”

The Central government had approved setting up of an international airport in Mopa, Goa on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2010, as a PPT project and not to close Dabolim airport. While speaking to the reporters Information and Broadcasting Minister Ambika Soni told the reporters that the new airport at Mopa will be constructed on a Built-Own-Operate-Transfer basis for which a private entity will be selected through a global tendering process (Herald, 2010).

#### AREA PROPOSED TO BE ACQUIRED (SQ. MTS.)

Location	Original Proposal	Present Proposal
Chandel	11,96,042	8,58,310
Varcanda	21,49,061	22,14,479
Mopa	35,46,069	23,64,115
Kasarvnem	13,09,650	13,23,926
Ugem	Nil	4,50,935
Amberem	2,00,250	2,87,725

**FOR APPROACH ROAD 8,84,812 sq. mts.**

Source: 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2008, Herald

From the above table it is very clear that, the present proposal for the acquisition of land is reduced compared to the original proposal for the land acquisition. This is mainly because during the process of land acquisition it has been realised that new structures have come up during these period making it difficult to acquire land in those areas. There was a proposal to exclude 1,11,826sqm. land from the Varcand area while actual land to be acquired was 22,14,479 sqm.

### **Protest by the People:**

The land acquisition process met with another hurdle when “some villagers of Mopa have filed a writ petition before the Bombay High Court at Goa challenging the acquisition of land initiated in Pernem taluka by the State government for the new international airport. The petition has alleged that invocation of urgency clause to acquire lands under Section 17 of the Land Acquisition Act is illegal. Inspire of filing their objection to the acquisition the State government had gone ahead with the acquisition they charged (Herald, 2009)”.

The petitioners have contended that the State government within the meaning of section 3 (ee) of the Land Acquisition Act 1984 and consequently has no legal competence to initiate acquisition proceeding for Union purpose. The petitioners have stated in the petition that construction of airport is a union purpose directly relatable to Entry 29 in List I of the constitution of India and therefore the state government has neither any power nor authority to initiate the acquisition proceedings (TNT, 2009).

The petitioners claimed that on August 2, 2008, the gram sabha of Varcand Nagzar Panchayat had passed a resolution opposition the acquisition and the Panchayat had thereafter filed objections before Special Land Acquisition Officer on August 11 (Herald, 2009).

Mopa villagers under the banner of “Mopa Vimantal Pidit Xetkari Samiti”, have questioned the State governments claim on land acquisition. They asked if central government has given its nod to the international airport in June 2010, why the state government is claiming since 2003 that the Central government had approved the project? They accused the government of misguiding the people of Goa by claiming that the land acquisition process is in the final stage. Sandeep Kambli one of the members of the Samiti and also one of the writ petitioner, alleged that some MLAs have vested interests. Kambli said, numerous big-wigs from socio-political circle of Goa, have purchased sizable amounts of plots at Mopa over the last three years, and are hoping that the value of their property would escalate after the construction of airport starts (Herald, 2010). Kambli claimed that he obtained all records of land purchase from Pernem Sub Registrar’s Office. Kambli also alleged that government is using police to stop poeple’s protest against land acquisition.

Hundreds of people from Nancechepani, Shemechiadvan, Dhangarwaddo, - Casarvarnem, Tilaskarwadi and Ameri, are likely to be affected by the proposed international airport and the locals here feel that it would be wrong on the part of the government to acquire this land, which would affect their lives.

Visit to the Mopa airport site made it clear that people are divided over the issue, some demanding more compensation while others are opposing land acquisition as it is not only taking away their livelihood but also affecting the environment. In the Mopa village the protest began with the demand for more compensation. In this village most of them are not cultivating their land and few of those who were cultivating the land were not allowed to cultivate because they are been told to stop their cultivation as the land is being acquired. People in this village are not opposed to Mopa airport coming up in their area. When the villagers learnt about the airport in the beginning there was not much opposition. But, when they learnt that they are been paid only Rs. 40 per sq. mt. of land (which was just Rs. 6 per sq.mts. in the previous notices) they raised their opposition along with other villagers who were opposing the land acquisition. They formed the Committee of land owners under the Chairmanship of Rupesh Parab, one of the land owners. Later on when they came to know that the compensation money cannot be increased they agreed to give their land for the airport project and they detached themselves from those who were opposing land acquisition. Rupesh Kambli who was leading the protest in Mopa village mentioned that they protested mainly to increase the compensation money. He told us that, when they received notices it used to bear the total land being acquired from that area and the total amount of compensation which they (all villagers together) are supposed to get, which used to look huge but when got divided among all they realised that the compensation is very less. Now they are not protesting with other against land acquisition because they feel that compensation cannot be increased and very few families in this village are having proper land records. Rupesh also told that all the families in Mopa are affected by this land acquisition either directly or indirectly. Frequent notices to the people also created confusion. In the absence of proper compensation policy people were forced to be happy with whatever compensation given to them by government.

No support was given by the Panchayat, which feels it has no role to play in this because initially it was said to be a central government project. Sarpanch of Mopa Panchayat

mentioned that, Village panchayat has not been given any notice or circular with regard to this land acquisition. Government is directly dealing with the people by issuing notices to them.

A visit to Varkand revealed a different story. In this village and surrounding areas the issue is not of compensation. People are protesting against land acquisition for Mopa Greenfield airport project for various reasons some are not willing to part with their land while for others the amount for compensation cannot compensate for what they are losing and few people are fighting to protect the natural habitat and grazing land. People are also losing natural springs which provide water for irrigation of their plantations. Many of them are losing their agricultural land as well as houses. The big question before some is of rehabilitation. However, "the proposed international airport coming up at Mopa will relocate very few virtually nil population in the area as per the socio-economic survey presented in the draft final report of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) (TNT, 2008)" as "the ICAO report maintains that, there are no permanent human habitats in the project area. Only a few temporary huts made of bamboos and thatch are erected by nomads for temporary shelter during the grazing period, and alternate grazing land will have to be designated. It observes, that, apart from this group there are no issues pertaining to relief and resettlement (TNT, 2008)."

Madan Kamble a land owner who owns around 4000 sq. mtrs. of land mentioned that what we will do with such meager compensation which is just Rs. 40 per sq. mtr. The compensation cannot be more than Rs. 58 per s.q. mtr. which is fixed by government for any compensation for land acquisition in Goa. He also mentioned that when people approached their local MLAs they mentioned their helplessness in this matter because the compensation is decided by the government. Madan also mentioned that it is nothing but a harassment of the people by government.

Villagers feel that they are losing everything by this land acquisition- their houses, agricultural land, mangrove grows, cashew nut trees, betel nut trees, etc. which is their main source of income and livelihood and nobody can compensate for it. When people approached the Land Acquisition Officer he told them that it is a Central government project and he is just implementing the orders.

At present “the greenfield airport policy works on the principle that 74 per cent of the stake will be held by a private consortium, which will build and operate the facility, while the state will provide the land and air navigation services and other related concessions. The state government as well as the central government also will hold the stake, the later through the airport authority of India (TNT, 2008).”

Narayan Salgaonkar resident of Varkand said: “What we earn by our land is not been able to earn by the jobs which they offer”. If at all government promises some jobs to them his worry is to how many people in a family will get the jobs? Which in most cases is, one person from each family. But, their land is providing job not only for each person in the family but also they hire some workers to work in their land. If at all they accept the jobs offered to them by the government as compensation, keeping in mind the kind of education they have they are not hopeful of getting good white colour jobs. They think that they end up being the sweeper or cleaners in some factory getting very less salary. Kambli said, “We don’t want any type of compensation be it money or job per family. Even if one youth per family is given a job, what is the assurance that the youth will be able to support the entire family? As most of the youths are not very well educated, what kind of job these youths will get? What if youth decides to go it alone and discards the family? What will the parents and other family members do? (TNT, 2009)”.

People also mentioned that government officials are making visit to the places to give numbers to their trees so that they can cut them. Some villagers did not receive any notice regarding the land acquisition while others have received the notice. Villagers are having a feeling that only those who agreed to give their land were issued notice and those who opposed the land acquisition were not issued notice and government will try to forcibly acquire the land.

Sandeep Kambli a villager, told that people are not ready to give away their land and are ready to use any violent means to protect their land. He said that they are not opposed to construction of Airport. Their opposition is to the forcible acquisition of the land. He feels if people do not wish to give their land they should be allowed to do so. When the topic of rehabilitation came about, he said, “We are against rehabilitation as this will take us away from our land, which has sustained us from several generations. We have our cashew trees,

coconut trees and we also cultivate paddy, nachani, and we are happy as things are (TNT, 2009)”.

Hanumant Aroskar, a villager from Nanechepani said, “Whatever condition here, we are happy with it, we don’t want to leave out soil, and we are very much attached to our land and we don’t want any project at the cost of our land (TNT, 2009).”

In 18<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Mopa Land Acquisition Officer visited Chandel village to distribute compensation money to them. The compensation decided for Chandel people was Rs.45 per sq.mtr. for land owners and Rs. 25 for tenants. However, people refused to take the money and demanded for increase in the amount of compensation.

In May 2012, High Court of Bombay at Goa held that the Goa government is competent to initiate land acquisition proceedings for construction of new international airport at Mopa. Government is going ahead with the Mopa project marginalising the voices of those who are making an attempt to oppose land acquisition for environmental and livelihood reasons.

The issue of Mopa brought out once again the question of development for whom? And the role of people in their own development. There is a need to relook into and create a well thought out development plan after involving the stakeholders and also developing mechanisms for giving meaningful voice to the people affected.

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The article is part of the research work undertaken by Shringare, A. (2012), *Popular Responsiveness to Development Programmes and Projects in Goa*, ICSSR sponsored project, New Delhi.
- <sup>2</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2005, Herald.
- <sup>3</sup> The MopaVimanta!SamarthanSamiti and the MopaVimanta!NirmanManch are brought under MopaVimanta!NirdharSamiti.



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