

# RP panel had given alternative route for NH widening

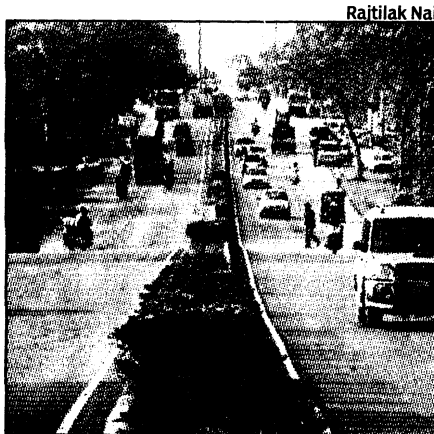
**Panaji:** The government is going ahead with its plans to widen the national highways even though the team preparing the Regional Plan 2021 had suggested an alternative viable route.

This came to light during a regional media briefing workshop on 'Coasts, Coastal Population and their Concerns' organized by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and the Goa Union of Journalists at the Goa University with the session topic 'Flashpoint Goa — Tourism, Mining, Fisherfolk and the Regional Plan'.

Architect Dean D'Cruz, who spoke on the state's Regional Plan for 2021, said in reply to a query about the widening of NH 17 and NH 4-A, "There were suggestions that the state highway could be taken through the hinterland where it would pass by the (Mopa) airport, pass by river junctions and link the port at Mormugao. The (state) highway could be aligned to link up with the Golden Quadrilateral."

His reply was to a query by Matanhy Saldanha, part of the audience, who asked D'Cruz if the government's plan to widen the highways to four/six lanes was in consonance with RP2021.

Ironically, the issues most affecting the state were given the least amount of time at the workshop, as they were scheduled as the last session of the day and sessions preceding this had overlapped their stipulated time, members of the audience observed. While speakers were told to hurry up with their subject, presentations that were prepared could also not be shown.



Meanwhile, social activist and former Panaji ward councillor Patricia Pinto spoke on the non-existence of sewerage networks and STPs on the state's coastal belt which had resulted in sewage being channeled towards the beaches.

"We are giving permissions for construction projects first and then thinking about setting up sewerage treatment plants to take care of the sewage generated," she said.

NIO scientist Antonio Mascarenhas spoke on disappearing sand dunes of Goa, while Sebastian Rodrigues spoke passionately on how mining is destroying Goa's hinterland villages.

Saldanha questioned the panel whether such events which brought about suggestions from planners, experts and intellectuals would have any effect on the state's current law makers.

Writer Andre Rafael Fernandes, also in the audience, said he had complained about mangroves being cut and fields being filled in Raia.

"Unfortunately, the people doing it have political backing," he alleged. TNN