



**Friends of
the Earth
India**

Friends of the Earth India extends solidarity to communities defending their land, livelihood and nature from the proposed Ratnagiri Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (RRPCL) in Konkan, Maharashtra

06 May 2023

Friends of the Earth India extends its solidarity with the people of Barsu Solgaon, Ratnagiri and condemns the suppression of the protestors of anti refinery movement. The local population under the banner of 'Barsu Solgaon Panchkroshi Refinery Virodhi Sanghathan' along with environmentalists across the Konkan region and Maharashtra have been opposing the setting up of Ratnagiri Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (RRPCL).

The project was initially proposed in 2015 at Nanar village, Rajapur in the Sindhudurg district with a total investment of 3 lakh crore and a refining capacity of 60 million tonnes per annum, making it one of the largest refineries in the world. The project is promoted as the largest single-location refinery complex in the world spread across 15,000 acres of land. The company will have 50% share holding from Saudi Aramco and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company and the rest from Indian Oil Corporation, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation and Bharat Petroleum Corporation.

The project faced opposition in Nanar and was forced to shift the project to Barsu-Solgaon village which is around 20 km from Nanar with a reduced land acquisition from 15000 acres to around 6000 acres. This would however mean 11 villages would be impacted by the project. These include Barsu, Solgaon, Goval, Devache, Gothane, Shivne Khurd, Sogamwadi, Rautwadi, etc.

The plateau also known as Sada on which RRPCL is proposed is a biodiversity hotspot that supports the local community. Sadas are globally endangered habitats with extremely specialized endemic plant and animal diversity not seen anywhere else in the world. It is a source of drinking water for villages and provides food (rice, pulses, fish) and fodder to the communities. Barsu is also the home of more than 62 geoglyphs, and is the largest cluster of geoglyphs in the coastal belt of Konkan. The Sada plateaus host thousands of prehistoric geoglyphs which still remain unexplored to a large extent. Geoglyphs are evidences pointing to the presence of human settlement in the Konkan region from Mesolithic era till historic era.

The proposed Barsu refinery will have a long-term effect on the region particularly on agriculture due to the chemicals and pollution. The local community is dependent on Alphonso mango plantation, cashew plantation and fishing for their livelihood. The toxic discharge and air emissions from the refinery will pose a threat to these traditional livelihoods. Apart from losing livelihood, RRPCL will have serious implications on the health of people. Though the government claims that this project will generate 'huge employment', the local community has been largely self-reliant and does not want the disruption of their livelihood from toxic projects.

The government of Maharashtra has deployed unprecedented police personnel since 23rd April 2023 on the ground in Barsu Solgaon, block Rajapur, district Ratnagiri to conduct soil testing and other tests to deal with opposition from the local population.

On 25th April 2023, the police restricted the media's entry into the plot for the proposed refinery and detained locals who protested the entry of soil testing team vehicles to the proposed site. The Ratnagiri police imposed Section 144 in Ratnagiri's Barsu and Solgaon villages, banning large gatherings in the area.

Page 1 of 2



Friends of the Earth India

Despite the restrictions, villagers, especially women, reached the proposed project site to stop the land survey. Around 50-60 women protestors blocked the road by lying on the ground to stop the survey cars from moving towards the proposed project site at Barsu plateau. Police lathi-charged the protestors and 45 women protestors were detained and destroyed the tents in which women and children were camping. Police continue to arrest people and as of now, more than 100 protestors were arrested.

Friends of the Earth India also condemns the use of brute force on the local affected community without dialoguing with the people and addressing their concerns. Friends of the Earth India adds its voice to the demands of the people of Ratnagiri:

1. The present forceful survey, testing and repression of all the protestors by the government apparatus at Barsu - Solgaon should be stopped immediately.
2. All cases filed against environmental activists, protestors and locals should be withdrawn immediately and banishment notices be withdrawn. Release all the arrested activists and villagers immediately.
3. The concerns about the largest refinery in the world is not just a local issue but one which needs to be implemented only after taking into account the ecological importance of the region and the concerns of the local population and its impact in the region as a whole.
4. Konkan region is a biodiverse area. No polluting, environmentally destructive RED category projects should be proposed and executed in the entire Konkan region, especially not without taking local people into full confidence, undertaking in-depth research and following all the constitutional tenets.
5. In taking up development and infrastructure projects, Government of Maharashtra must fully adhere to principles of environmental sustainability and aim at promoting local, nature enabling products.

In Solidarity,

C Nicholas, Prafulla Samantara, Krishnakant Chouhan

For more details: foeindia21@gmail.com