

28 arrested as police, activists clash outside Assembly complex

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A police constable was assaulted and a police inspector manhandled, as activists and police clashed outside the Legislative Assembly complex in Porvorim on Monday, after their attempts to get Chief Minister Digambar Kamat to resolve their grievances met with little success.

Police arrested 28 activists and later released them on bail following the intervention of Opposition Leader Manohar Parriker.

Activists from different parts of the State first met at Verna in the morning to highlight their grievances over the new regional plan, national heritage, illegal mining, filling of fields, pollution of water and other issues.

Later, they decided to meet Chief Minister Digambar Kamat and accordingly, went towards the Legislative Assembly complex in Porvorim.

However, they were stopped outside the assembly complex by a police force and a delegation of women comprising Carmina Miranda, Judith Rebello, Judith Almeida and Swati Kerkar met Kamat.

Unhappy over the discussion with the chief minister, they requested Kamat to meet other villagers assembled outside the complex, but chief minister flatly refused to do so.

Agitated activists then tried to enter the assembly complex, but the police obstructed them. In the ensuing scuffle, an agitator reportedly ripped off the rank stars of Police Inspector Devendra Gaad and allegedly

slapped lady police constable Avina Noronha.

The activists have, however, claimed that the police manhandled the women who were refusing to enter the police van.

Porvorim police then arrested 28 activists under Sections 143, 145 and 147 read with 149 of Indian penal code for unlawful assembly, obstructing government servants from carrying out their duties, assaulting police and rioting.

Opposition Leader Manohar Parriker rushed to the police station and held discussions with Superintendent of Police Arvind Gawas, before the 28 agitators were released on bail.

Parriker then assured the agitators that he would put forth their issues with the chief minister.

Speaking to Herald, environmentalist Prajal Sakhardande mentioned that the villagers had gone to meet the chief minister to place before him their demands on various issues and to urge him to solve their problems on a priority basis.

"But the chief minister did not give satisfactory answers to the delegation of women who had gone to meet him and even refused to meet the villagers who were waiting outside in the scorching sun," said Sakhardande.

"This attitude of the chief minister annoyed the villagers and hence they started the agitation. The police manhandled the women who refused to enter the police van. The villagers will continue their agitation to press for their demands," said Sakhardande.



Villagers gather at the Verna plateau in Cortalim.

Photo by M Prabhav