

A GLANCE AT THE

Vadhavan Port

**A DEVELOPMENT MIRAGE
AT THE COST OF PEOPLE
AND ECOLOGY?**

Why is Vadhavan Port Being Pushed Despite Resistance?

Dahanu's eco-sensitive zone, where a portion of the project will be made, the only green zone between the high polluting industrial complexes from Bombay to Vapi, is under direct threat, with risks of irreversible environmental destruction.

On a petition of National Fishworkers' Forum and Conservation Action Trust the Supreme Court has asked the Union government to consider appointing an expert body over the impending damage to environment due to the Vadhavan port in Maharashtra, putting a question mark on environmental and other clearances which have already been given to the project by state agencies.

A project that threatens the survival of fishing, farming, and Adivasi communities in Palghar. It is being pushed despite 30 years of protests and clear opposition.

Policy and regulatory changes seem to be conveniently paving the way for approvals once deemed difficult.

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Community Voices

“It is better that they kill us, poison us and throw us away. We don’t want the Vadhavan port. We don’t want the facilities, we don’t want the lakhs of rupees of compensation. We will work hard and fill our stomachs. We don’t want to move anywhere else and we don’t want the money,”

41-year-old Manisha Ambire (behanbox.com)

“We will continue to protest till the end because the port will destroy our livelihoods totally. We are uneducated people, we have studied till 10th-12th standard. Where will we get jobs? Our lives are completely dependent on fishing and that will be destroyed,”

Rekha Marde, 48 year old fisherwoman (behanbox.com)

“Ekach zidd, Vadhavan Bandar Radd (we are adamant, the Vadhavan port project should be scrapped)” (behanbox.com)

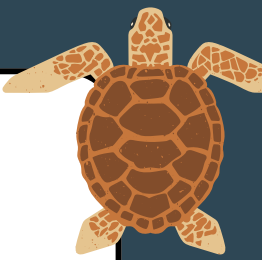
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VADHAVAN: A PROJECT THAT RAISES MORE QUESTIONS THAN IT ANSWERS



*Vadhavan, Dahanu
region, Palghar
district, Maharashtra
—one of India's most
fragile coastal zones.*

Project Scope:



- 17,471 hectares (¼th the size of Mumbai) land needed for port construction.
- 16,900 hectares as port limit, 571 hectares for road and rail links.
- Developed by Vadhavan Port Project Ltd (VPPL), a corporate vehicle controlled by Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) (74%) and Maharashtra Maritime Board (MMB) (26%).

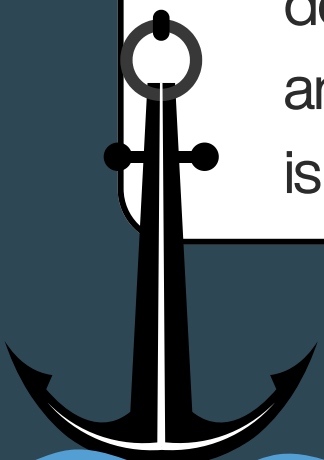
Dahanu's protected status now appears to be a mere formality:

- Declared eco-fragile in 1991.
- Supreme Court appointed Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority (DTEPA) deemed it “wholly impermissible and illegal” in 1998, yet the project is being pushed forward.

₹76,220 crore project, funneled through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) that appear designed to benefit industrial players.

Ground Situation:
Land acquisition under process

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FAST-TRACKED CLEARANCES?

1997

Maharashtra govt awarded contract to British firm P&O, but Supreme Court blocked it in 1998.

2014

Project revived under BJP-led NDA —rebranded under Sagarmala Programme, sidestepping earlier environmental concerns.

2015

JNPA & MMB set up a special-purpose vehicle, possibly to expedite approvals.

2019

Villagers boycotted state assembly elections to protest the project.

2020

MoEFCC granted “in-principle” approval, despite critical environmental concerns.

2023

The Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority on July 31, 2023, granted NOC to Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority to develop the greenfield port, even as key impact studies were pending.

2024

PM Modi’s Bhoomipujan conducted 30 km away from the project site—seemingly to avoid direct confrontation with protesting locals.

UNYIELDING RESISTANCE FROM THE PEOPLE



December 2015

25,000 fisherfolk staged a massive protest at Palghar collector's office.



February 2024

3,000 villagers blocked Mumbai-Ahmedabad Highway in defiance.



Protests erupted across Mumbai's Azad Maidan & the Konkan coast.



Women leading the movement have faced intimidation, arrests, and systematic attempts to silence them.

EXPERTS SOUND THE ALARM ON FLAWED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

- **Shyam Asolekar (DTEPA):** Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) called out as deeply flawed, relying on secondary, outdated data.
- **Marine biologist Bhushan Bhoir:** Government reports ignored crucial marine biodiversity, including reef-forming corals.
- **RTI findings suggest crucial underwater surveys were either incomplete or never conducted.**
- **Debi Goenka (Conservation Action Trust):** Raised concerns that the clearance for the project was given without waiting for key mandatory assessments. He has alleged that the clearance order was signed by individuals who were not even members of the authority.
- Goenka also pointed out that the High Court ruling ignored how onshore infrastructure—such as roads, railways, and storage facilities—would impact Dahanu, even though the port itself is being built offshore.



RULE CHANGES THAT PAVED THE WAY FOR THE PROJECT

2019

CPCB removed ports, harbours & jetties from "industrial activities", weakening environmental restrictions.

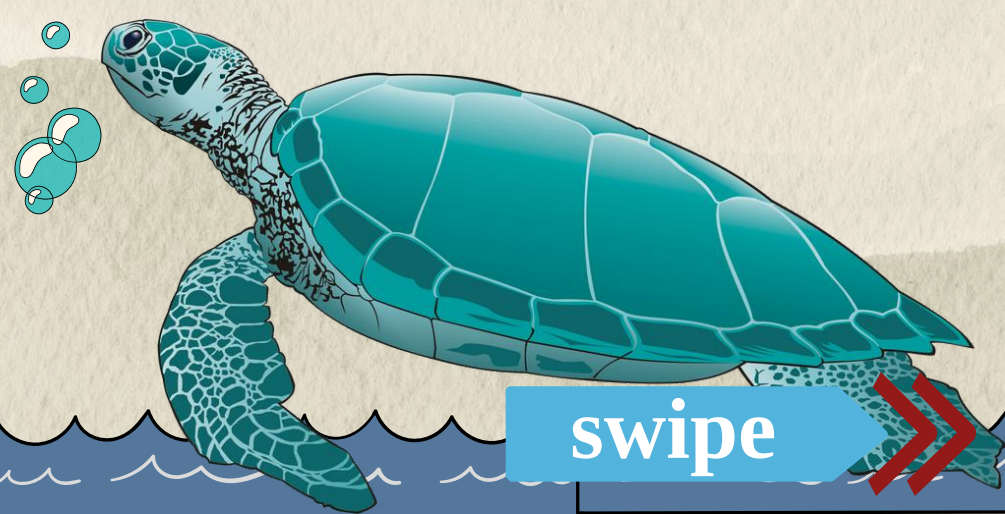
MoEFCC reclassified Dahanu's eco-sensitive protections, enabling previously prohibited industrial activities.

2022

Environmental approvals granted even before key assessments were finalized.

2023

High Court ruling suggested the offshore location placed it beyond local environmental restrictions. Activists claim it ignored the massive onshore infrastructure such as roads, rail lines that will affect the region.



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WHO IS FINANCING THIS?

- REC Ltd (state-run) signed a ₹45,000 crore deal to finance JNPA's port project.
- Power Finance Corporation, Asian Development Bank and Japan International Cooperation Agency have reportedly shown interest in financing.
- No clear public disclosure on financial institutions assessing environmental and social risks.



WHY NO RESPONSIBILITY?

- Will the public banks and finance institutions continue funding such projects ignoring opposition from communities and potential adverse impacts, which makes the project a risky investment?
- Vadhavan has emerged as yet another example highlighting dearth of social and environmental accountability and safeguard mechanisms in finance institutions.

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WHO GAINS? WHO LOSES?



- A familiar pattern of development where local communities bear the costs, while corporations rake in the profits.
- Fishing, farming, and Adivasi livelihoods face destruction, while compensation remains vague and uncertain.
- Striking resemblance to other controversial projects such as Aarey, Hannovar, Dibang Valley, and Great Nicobar, where environmental concerns have been raised and public opposition ignored.



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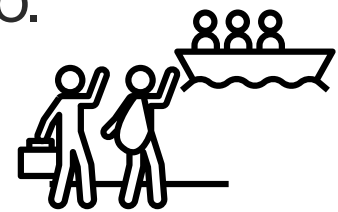
THE TRUE COST OF VADHAVAN PORT



Economic Risks



- Fisherfolk could lose lakhs per season, jeopardizing their very survival.
- Forced displacement without alternative employment, may leave communities in economic limbo.



Environmental Consequences

- Dahanu's crucial green belt, vital for climate resilience, faces a massive threat.
- Potential for coastal erosion, biodiversity loss, and marine pollution.
- Fishing grounds for blackspotted croaker and bronze croaker are at risk of being wiped out, permanently altering marine ecosystems.

Social Impacts

- Women in the region fear being pushed into economic dependence, with fishing-based livelihoods wiped out.
- Public consultations appear designed to suppress participation, raising concerns over whether due process was followed.



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DEVELOPMENT FOR WHOM?

The *Sagarmala* initiative -from Vadhavan to Honnavara to Vizhinjam to Great Nicobar & many more - is threatening to become a pattern of port infrastructure development where coastal communities, adivasis, environmental safeguards, and long-term sustainability are at the risk of being sidelined for short-term industrial gains.

The question remains:
Is this truly development, or is it displacement disguised as progress?

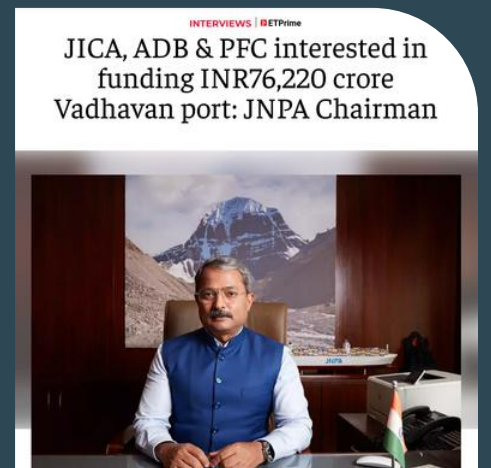


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SOURCES

'JICA, ADB & PFC interested in funding INR76,220 crore Vadhavan port: JNPA Chairman' in *The Economic Times*
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/prime/infrastructure/jica-adb-pfc-interested-in-funding-inr76220-crore-vadhavan-port-jnpa-chairman/primearticleshow/111605456.cms?from=mdr>



REC to lend up to ₹45,000 cr for infra development to JNPA

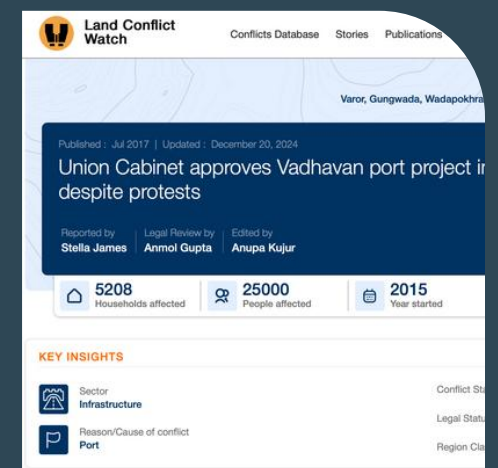
The planned mega port at Vadhavan, Palghar district in Maharashtra was approved by the Union cabinet in June this year.

Rituraj Baruah • Published 25 Aug 2024, 07:37 PM IST



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'Union Cabinet approves Vadhavan port project in Maharashtra despite protests' in *landconflictwatch.org*
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Vadhavan port row: SC asks Centre to consider appointing expert agency

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New Delhi, The Supreme Court on Friday asked the Centre to consider appointing an expert body over the impending damage to environment due to the Vadhavan port in Maharashtra.



Vadhavan port row: SC asks Centre to consider appointing expert agency

'Vadhavan port row: SC asks Centre to consider appointing expert agency' in *hindustantimes.com*
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'Why Women Refuse To Give Up The Battle To Save Vadhavan, Site Of India's Largest Port' in *behanbox.com*
<https://behanbox.com/202>

Why Women Refuse To Give Up The Battle To Save Vadhavan, Site Of India's Largest Port

Despite 30 years of local resistance, the government has pushed through the approvals for India's largest port. Behind it lie systemic efforts to dismantle special protection given to an eco-fragile area

Shreya Raman
Palghar, Maharashtra | February 11, 2025





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