

CM's push for 'safe' bus travel exposes Kadamba's gaps in rural coverage, night service

KTC officials admit that not every village is serviced; buses follow their own schedules and do not run past 6.30 pm in most remote locations

Team Herald

PANJIM: Even as Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has urged individuals travelling long distances, particularly those using two-wheelers, to consider utilising the services of the Kadamba Transport Corporation Limited (KTC) to mitigate the risk of accidents, KTC has long miles to go before it offers last mile connectivity in Goa's hinterlands. Despite KTC plying the only public transport service in several forested villages and hilly areas, the buses are few and far apart, and do not stick to a reliable schedule, with no options for those who finish work later in the day.

According to information on their website, KTC operates on 415 routes, including inter-state services. However, concerns have

been raised regarding the reliability of bus timings. For instance, the bus service from Valpoi to Panjim operates from 6.40 am to 5 pm, while the return service from Panjim to Valpoi runs from 10.46 am to 6.20 pm, with a frequency of one to two hours. Similarly, the Bicholim to Panjim service runs from 5.45 am to 4.50 pm, with the return service starting at 9.30 am and ending at 6.15 pm. This raises questions about the availability of night services.

A senior KTC official, who preferred to remain anonymous, disclosed to **O Herald**, "The buses run according to their schedule. Service depends upon route permit timings. It varies. It may start at 5 am or 7 am. Buses do not go to each and every village in the state. They halt at certain locations."

He further noted that



NUMBER OF BUSES AVAILABLE	
Diesel buses by KTC	450
Electric buses by KTC	93
Buses under Smart City	48
Buses under Mahaji Bus Scheme	60

there are specific areas where only KTC buses operate, such as the village of Salgini and the region of Mangal. "There are many thickly forested areas in Valpoi, like Nanoda, where only Kadamba provides connectivity," he added.

KTC boasts a fleet of 450

diesel buses, alongside 93 electric buses and 60 buses operating under the Mahaji bus scheme, with 59 in South Goa and one in North Goa. Additionally, 86 buses are dedicated to transporting students, primarily in rural areas.

Despite these provisions,

the official acknowledged that some routes are experiencing connectivity issues, particularly as private bus operators have reduced their services following the Covid-19 pandemic. "They do not operate if they get fewer passengers on any particular route, but KTC continues to operate buses irrespective of the number of passengers they get," he stated.

Moreover, he highlighted a growing trend of carpooling among individuals who need to work late in the city, adapting their travel arrangements to suit their schedules.

As the state grapples with road safety concerns, the Chief Minister's appeal for increased bus usage underscores the importance of reliable public transport in reducing the risks associated with long-distance travel.

Ponda traffic cell cracks down on violations; roads still in a super mess

Traffic Cell penalises violators, nets Rs 1.80 cr; disheartened residents hit out at the government, say roads still in deplorable state even during festive season

Team Herald

PONDA: Even as the Ponda Traffic Cell has collected nearly Rs 1.80 crore from violators between January and October 15 this year, commuters are furious with the authorities for failing to repair the pothole-ridden roads in the taluka.

Naresh Naik, a local vehicle driver, expressed frustration, stating, "Fines are acceptable for violations, but when pothole-ridden roads are causing accidents, when will we see 'Achhe Din' for these roads?"

He noted that while traffic police respond swiftly to violations, similar urgency is lacking when it comes to road repairs. Interestingly, when commuters highlight the state of the roads, traffic officials issuing fines often dismiss their concerns, claiming that road maintenance falls under the jurisdiction of other departments.

It is worth noting that the government had previously hot-mixed some roads in the taluka, including those in Ponda town. However, this work was carried out during the monsoon season, resulting in the tar being



One of the potholed roads in Ponda town, posing a risk to motorists as they navigate the pathetic conditions by driving on the wrong side of the two-way road

washed away and potholes re-emerging, much to the dismay of the commuters.

The Public Works Department (PWD) has issued notices to several contractors in Ponda regarding the poor road conditions, yet none of the roads damaged by rain have been restored. Residents are disheartened to see that the roads remain in a deplorable state, even during the festive season.

For nearly eight years, residents of Ponda have endured the consequences of poorly maintained roads, which have been dug up for various development projects. The promise of "Achhe Din" for road conditions seems increasingly distant, and residents are anxiously awaiting government action to repair and hot-mix the roads where necessary.

Pondaites are urging the government to shift its focus from merely issuing fines to prioritising road repairs, which would provide much-needed relief. Traffic police often inform motorcyclists that road

maintenance is not their responsibility, leaving many to navigate roads that can cause significant discomfort and health issues, including neck and back pain.

In some areas, the roads have become so bumpy that they pose a serious risk to drivers. Residents are calling on the government to at least address these issues and ensure that the roads are safe for all commuters.

Pharma experts demand urgent overhaul of drug regulation policy in India

Team Herald

PANJIM: Experts demanded an urgent overhaul of the drug regulation policy in India. Dinesh Thakur, pharma industry whistleblower, Prashant Reddy, lawyer and Ganadhis Kamat, pharma industry consultant who debated the topic, "Drug regulation in India, policies and prescriptions" at the International Centre Goa (ICG) lamented the deplorable state of drug regulation in the country.

The experts pointed out that the Indian pharma industry was being governed by the archaic, Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940 and an urgent overhaul was needed to meet modern day demands.

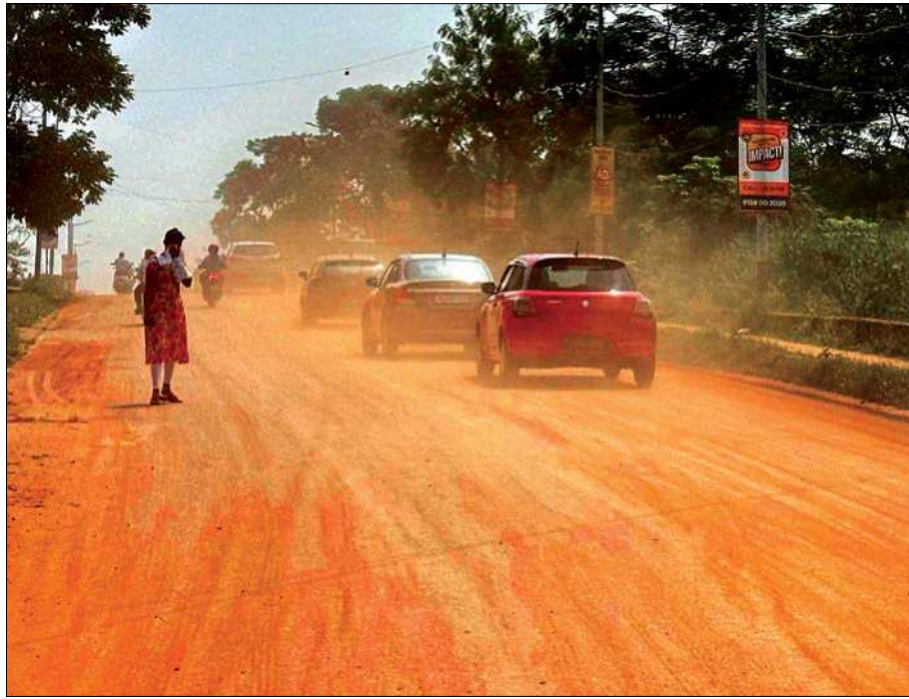
Reddy said, "Drug regulation was a state subject and we have 37 drug regulators in India. This is distorting the drug regulation in the country. Drugs manufactured in one state, are being sold across India, without any system of centralized quality control."

According to Reddy, a drug like paracetamol was being manufactured in ten, different states and there was no method to check the quality of the same.

Pointing out the dismal state of clinical trials, Thakur said, "Companies made huge profits by selling the antiviral drug, Fabiflu during Covid-19 pandemic. But this was done without conducting adequate clinical trials for the same."

CAUGHT IN THE HAZE

SAGUN GAWADE



A woman struggles to cross a dusty service road at Porvorim where construction work for the elevated expressway is ongoing. With no regard for the safety of commuters and pedestrians, the highway authorities, have failed to install hazard signage, leaving one prone to accidents due to poor visibility

Govt to raise land prices in Tiswadi, Mormugao and Salcete talukas

Team Herald

PANJIM: Those planning to invest in property in Tiswadi, Mormugao, and Salcete talukas will have to cough out more money with the Goa government announcing a significant increase in minimum land prices. This decision is expected to have far reaching implications on the already booming state's real estate market.

In Tiswadi, the minimum price is between Rs 5,000 per sqm and Rs 25,000 per sqm as against old rates ranging from Rs 600 to Rs 6,000.

In Salcete, the price is ranging between Rs 5,000 to Rs 20,000 per sqm while the old rate was between Rs 480 to Rs 10,906 and in Mormugao, the price is varies between Rs 8,000 to Rs 25,000 per sqm. The old price range was between

Rs 420 and Rs 4,200.

"In exercise of the powers conferred under sub-rule (3) of Rule 4 of the Goa Stamp (Determination of True Market Value of Property) Rules, 2003, the Government of Goa is pleased to partially modify Order for the three Talukas namely Tiswadi, Salcete and Mormugao issue statement of minimum land rates for the year 2024-25 which shall come into effect from the date of publication in the Official Gazette," the notification said.

"The Taluka wise minimum rates as mentioned are base values and are applicable to S1 Zone for an area upto 1000 sq. m. However, for an area upto 500 sq. m. in zone S1 to S4, the said base rate will be reduced by 30 per cent," the notification said.

In September this year, the State government had

hiked the prices in Pernem and Bardez by nearly 130 per cent.

While its going to have a direct impact on property costs, it will also generate higher revenue for the government through taxes.

The growing demand for scarce land in the coastal state besides the infrastructural developments has played a significant role in hiking land prices.

"We have decided to increase the minimum price in Tiswad, Mormugao and Salcete talukas so that these talukas don't lag behind in development," said a senior government official.

Defending the hike, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant had said that "common people will not be affected by the decision as those buying about 500 sqm of land to construct a house will pay according to the old prices."

Dudhsagar jeep operators to go on hunger strike over booking row

Team Herald

PONDA: The jeep operators under the Dudhsagar Tour Operators Association (DTOA) are set to go on a hunger strike from Saturday to protest against the government for failing to find a solution to the vexatious online registration row for almost two weeks now.

The operators are calling for the government to shut down the GTDC online booking counter, claiming that it has reduced their customer base due to a steep hike in booking fees. At the same time, they are demanding that the government return their booking website to them, allowing them to start online bookings at a nominal rate of Rs 30.

It may be recalled that the rain-delayed season was officially declared to have started on 19 October however the ongoing dispute between the jeep operators

and GTDC over online booking issues has delayed the tourism at Dudhsagar falls in Collem, thereby dampening the Diwali spirit in the Shigao, Mollem and Collem panchayats.

The locals here heavily depend on tourism for their daily bread are deeply affected as their businesses including hotels, tea stalls and others have suffered significant losses. With curtains coming down on mining activities for almost over a decade, Dudhsagar tourism was the only ray of hope for the villagers here, but that too has hit a roadblock.

They have stated that until it is shut down, they will not ferry tourists to the Dudhsagar waterfall.

Following this, after the Chief Minister's intervention, the fee was reduced by Rs. 100; however, the Jeep operators are not prepared to commence the season and are insisting on

CHAIN HUNGER STRIKE: Destruction of Goa has to stop, say protestors

Team Herald

VASCO: Villagers and activists who are continuing the chain hunger strike, after former Sancoale sarpanch Premanand Naik broke his hunger strike, have strongly demanded to stop the destruction of the State.

On Friday, they demanded that the Sancoale Village Panchayat and the State government must listen to the people and revoke the construction licence issued to the Bhutani Infra project at Savorfond, Sancoale.

"We have to save our fields, our hills and our lands, to avoid the destruction of Goa and the government must listen to our woes," the protestors said even as the chain hunger strike entered the third day on Friday.

Fidol Pereira said, "What is happening is really bad because it is affect-



Continuing with their chain hunger strike against Bhutani Infra project at Sancoale, protestors demanded destruction of Goa has to stop

ing all Goans and future generation. The villagers panchayats are responsible for all the mega projects coming up across the State and the panchayats have to take strict action. I appeal to the people of Goa not to sell their lands to outsiders."

Expressing his solidarity to Premanand Naik, activists Anthony D'Silva stated that the biggest issue was that the land available in the State was scarce and if mega

projects are allowed then it will be disaster in-waiting for people of Goa.

John Fernandes and Nazareth Faleiro of Sancoale also spoke. They demanded that the Sancoale village panchayat should immediately withdraw the construction licence to Bhutani Infra project. The protestors said that there are some village panchayats who always stand by with the villagers and work for their welfare.

Mangalsutra stolen at Ponda

Team Herald

PONDA: A bullet rider snatching a mangalsutra from a woman in the crowded Ponda market has shocked the locals. According to witnesses, the incident took place on Thursday at 11 am when unknown thieves snatched a mangalsutra from a woman on a road busy with traffic and a rush of people for Diwali shopping.

The police have seized a motorcycle with a fake number plate and are investigating the matter;

however, they have stated that they have not received any complaints regarding the mangalsutra snatching.

According to the information received, while a woman was walking on the road in front of Borkar Petrol Pump in Kaziwada, two men on a bullet motorcycle snatched her mangalsutra and fled the scene. Some bystanders raised an alarm when they witnessed the theft, causing a crowd to gather. However, they suspect the thieves may have escaped.

Trio booked for murder at Morjim

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Mandrem Police have booked three persons for allegedly killing a man from Morjim resident.

On October 29, the accused Sanjay Kole, Laxmi Sandeep Sawant alias Anja and Prajaya Kole assaulted Nitesh Parab from Varna Wada, Morjim, with kicks and hard objects which resulted in Nitesh sustaining serious injuries. Nitesh died while undergoing treatment at Goa Medical College, Bambolim.

* BY INVITATION ONLY

GRACIA GRAND LAUNCH

TODAY, 7PM, EMERALD LAWNS, PARRA

CHIEF GUESTS: HON. MLAs MICHAEL LOBO & DELILAH LOBO

MUSIC: TIDAL WAVE | DJ SMUG SMYLER | DJ PAPS | DJ RYAN SPARK | DJ AARON WOLF | DJ NUTCASE | MC JEFFERY | VASQUITO'S TAQUERIA | CARNIVAL DANCERS | BATTLE OF THE BARTENDERS' FINALE, JUDGES- MARIA RAMIREZ, NOLAN MASCARENHAS, SANDEEP VERMA, TOBIAS, ANURADHA HOLST