

SMART CITY WORKS STIFLE PANJIM: ROAD CLOSURES, POWER AND WATER OUTAGES PLAGUE LOCALS

Commuters, residents, businessmen bear the brunt of uncoordinated planning and traffic chaos

Team Herald

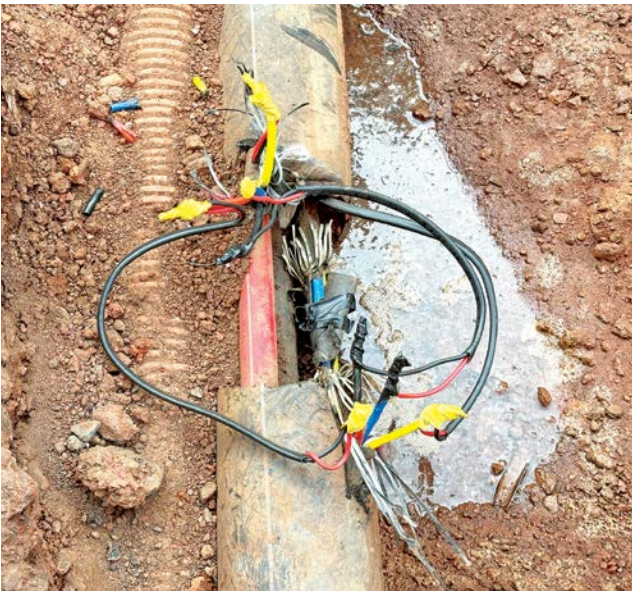
PANJIM: The shoddy Smart City works continue to plague to city as water and power supply was disrupted due to digging near Café Bhonsle.

Woes of the people are likely to continue as the work is far from complete while, the Mala jatra and closure of old Mandovi bridge from Saturday will further choke the city.

The road from the Ram Mandir and Masjid up to the St Francis Xavier Chapel at Portais, has been closed for vehicular traffic. The motorists regularly travelling on this road were now using the Mala road but this route will be shut on Friday due to Hanuman Jatra at Shri Maruti Temple, Mala-Panjim.

The PWD has also ordered closure of the Old Mandovi bridge for all types of vehicular traffic from February 8 to 23 to carry out work such as milling of the existing wearing course, laying mastic asphalt and bituminous concrete.

Reacting to the traffic mess in the city, former CCP Mayor and councillor Uday Madkaikar said that Smart City works were undertaken without proper planning. "There was no plan-



PICS: SAGUN GAWADE

“There was no planning from day one and the works were not carried out in a phased manner. It is unfortunate that the officials and contractors are now doing mapping of drains, which should have been done before executing the works.”

— Uday Madkaikar, councillor

“As a citizen of Panjim, I regularly go to the square in front of Café Bhonsle. I was shocked to see that the entire triangle shaped square was broken down and the road dug. Sewage is also flowing there.”

— Adv Rui Ferreira, Panjim resident

“There is lot of chaos. The work is not systematic. People are not given prior information about the closure of roads and works are carried out as per the whims of Smart City officials. There are neither signages nor barricades placed where works are carried out. There is absolute no responsibility with so many sub-contractors and sub-supervisors.”

— Raj Vaidya, pharmacist

“The workers damaged the water supply pipeline. On Wednesday, our power supply was disrupted. CCP Deputy Mayor Sanjeev Naik met us and requested to bear the inconvenience caused for 15 days.”

— Altaf Khan, shopkeeper

ning from the day one and the works were not carried out in a phased manner. It is unfortunate that the officials and contractors are now doing mapping of drains, which should have been done before executing the works. It appears that

the ongoing work of laying sewerage lines will take at least a month to complete it.”

Raju Vadavadekar, a resident of Bhatlem said, “There will be traffic congestion at Bhatlem and Mala particularly on Friday

as four-wheelers will not be allowed to use the Mala road due to jatra on Friday. There is no proper diversion of traffic and it will cause lot of hardships to the people. No one listens to residents and there is no accountability.”

On the other hand, the entire road in front of Café Bhonsle and the square has been dug making it difficult for the people even to walk. To add to the woes of nearby commercial establishments and residents, the power supply was disrupted

as electricity cables were damaged on Wednesday while, water supply pipeline was broken on Thursday during digging.

Panjim resident Adv Rui Ferreira said, “As a citizen of Panjim, I regularly go to the square in front of Café

Bhonsle. I was shocked to see that the entire triangle shaped square was broken down and the road dug. Sewage is also flowing there. People used sit in the square and read newspapers. Some students who could not afford proper

lights at home would come here to study. It was also a meeting point for many but the entire square has been damaged. What is the planning and what is the next step, nobody knows. They are destroying instead of constructing something better. There is complete destruction of Panjim.”

Raj Vaidya, a pharmacist said, “There is lot of chaos. The work is not systematic. People are not given prior information about the closure of roads and works are carried out as per the whims of Smart City officials. There are neither signages nor barricades placed where works are carried out. There is absolute no responsibility with so many sub-contractors and sub-supervisors. The road closures has affected the shopkeepers and other businessmen.

Altaf Khan, a shopkeeper said, “The workers damaged the water supply pipeline. On Wednesday, our power supply was disrupted. CCP Deputy Mayor Sanjeev Naik met us and requested to bear the inconvenience caused for 15 days. I hope that the ongoing work will be completed as per schedule and there be no further hardships.

Taleigao farmers oppose construction project on agri land

Question locus standi of authorities approving construction plans by bypassing gram sabha resolutions

Team Herald

PANJIM: Farmers from Taleigao have strongly opposed a large-scale construction project set to take place in fields located opposite St Michael School. The farmers argue that the development contravenes the resolutions passed by the gram sabha and violates state government regulations that prohibit the filling of low-lying agricultural areas.

In a statement to the press, Advocate Bhupendra Prabhudesai said “I had moved a resolution stating that no construction should take place in agricultural fields and we were assured by the gram sabha that construction licences would

not be granted for such projects, including roads.”

Prabhudesai went on to elaborate on a previous gram sabha resolution he had proposed, which stated that no new construction projects should be approved until the issue of water scarcity was resolved. He expressed dismay at the planned construction of a six-floor building. “When these resolutions were passed, Taleigao MLA Jennifer Monserrate was the Chairman of the North Goa Planning and Development Authority (NGPDA) and continues to hold this position,” he said. “Yet, despite gram sabha resolutions, permissions are still being granted, and they claim to bear no re-

sponsibility. The NGPDA should be scrapped entirely. I fail to understand how they are approving projects in low-lying areas.”

Prabhudesai also referred to statements made by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who has publicly declared his commitment to promoting agriculture. “If the Chief Minister truly wants to support agriculture, then he cannot allow such projects that involve dumping vast amounts of mud and filling agricultural land,” Prabhudesai added.

The farmers remain firm in their stance, demanding the cancellation of the project and the protection of their agricultural land from further development.



SAGUN GAWADE

Congress flays govt over ‘deteriorating’ law and order

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) has strongly criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government in Goa, alleging that it has completely lost control over law and order in the state. The Congress questioned whether incidents such as the Bicholim police cash misappropriation case, the Colvale jail controversy, and a recent murder at a beach do not indicate the failure of the Home Department.

Referring to the misappropriation of cash at Bicholim police station, the Congress accused the government of losing its grip on law enforcement and policing in the state. Congress MLA Carlos Ferreira alleged that there was an attempt to cover up the incident by asking the accused to return the money. “I want the police to come clean on this. There were attempts to shield her. Even after the case was known, she was only suspended today,” Ferreira said. He further asserted that the involvement of a

lady police constable (LPC) in such a case was a clear sign of corruption and that she was unfit to serve in the police force.

Questioning the integrity of the police, Ferreira remarked, “The accused police personnel are unfit to be in the force. I want the government to come clean on this, and this is an answer that must be provided by the Chief Minister, who is also the Home Minister. This is a clear sign of corruption and dishonesty in the system.”

He further demanded stronger action against those responsible. “These are the people who should be sent home and not merely suspended,” he stated.

Commenting on reports that the accused LPC had returned Rs 17 lakh of the swindled money, Ferreira raised concerns about the role of tax authorities. “How is the Income Tax Department unaware of this? How can someone amass so much cash without attracting scrutiny? I will take this up with the Income Tax authorities,” he declared.

HC sets aside disqualification of Sahakari as director of Milk Collection Society

Team Herald

PANJIM: The High Court of Bombay at Goa on Thursday set aside the order disqualifying Madhav Sahakari as a director of the Kapila Sahakari Dudh Utpadak Vyavasayik Saunstha Maryadit, Curti-Ponda, on the premise that he was disqualified by Registrar of Co-operative Societies (RCS) from continuing as a board of director of the Goa State Co-operative Milk Producers Union Ltd (Goa Dairy).

Sahakari had filed a writ petition challenging the

order issued by the Assistant RCS dated January 28, 2025 directing the Kapila Sahakari Dudh Utpadak Vyavasayik Saunstha Maryadit, to disqualify the petitioner from his position as a director, on the premise that he was disqualified by the RCS from continuing as a director of the Goa Dairy.

Arguing one behalf of the petitioner, senior advocate A F Diniz said that Sahakari had resigned as a board of director of Goa Dairy on February 23, 2023 by the

RCS by an order dated April 21, 2023, disqualified 10 board of directors of the Goa Dairy including the petitioner from continuing as directors. They were disqualified for adopting resolutions in 2017 and for having acted in a manner detrimental to the interest of the Goa Dairy.

Adv Diniz submitted that the disqualification of Sahakari as board of director of Goa Dairy cannot be a reason for disqualifying the petitioner as a director of the Kapila Sahakari Dudh

Utpadak Vyavasayik Saunstha Maryadit.

Adv Diniz told the Court that Sahakari’s disqualification as a board of director of Goa Dairy had no bearing on his directorship in the Kapila Sahakari Dudh Utpadak Vyavasayik Saunstha Maryadit. There is also no provision in the Act which provides for such automatic disqualification merely because the petitioner is disqualified as board of director of Goa Dairy. The Assistant RCS passed the order completely on wrong premise, he said.

National Association for the Blind Goa branch marks 42 yrs

Seeks financial support to carry on with its vision for visually impaired

Team Herald

PANJIM: As the Goa branch of the National Association for the Blind (NAB) celebrates 42 years of dedicated service, the organisation continues to grapple with the challenge of securing financial support to sustain its work for the visually impaired.

The NAB Goa State Branch, located in Santa Cruz, is commemorating its 42nd anniversary with an alumni meet under the theme “Vision Beyond Sight.” The event aims to highlight the capabilities of the visually impaired

and demonstrate that they can achieve just as much as their sighted counterparts, aided by advancements in technology that go beyond Braille.

As part of the celebrations, NAB will felicitate over 50 alumni who have secured employment, regardless of the scale of their jobs. Employers who have demonstrated inclusivity by offering opportunities to the visually impaired will also be honoured. Additionally, assistive aids, appliances, and the latest technology designed to enhance education for visually impaired students will be

showcased at the event.

Mahadev Sawant, an ex-student of the NAB branch in Santa Cruz and an Executive Member of the organisation, emphasised NAB’s role in promoting inclusivity. “NAB is the only NGO that works for inclusivity. Here, students are integrated into regular schools so that sighted students can learn about visual impairment, while visually impaired students experience mainstream education,” he said.

Currently, the NAB branch in Santa Cruz provides training for 30 students with partial or full

visual impairment. However, funding remains a major challenge. Rozendo Mendonca, Vice-President of NAB Goa, spoke about the financial constraints the organisation faces. “Securing funds is an ongoing struggle. The government does provide some assistance. We currently operate from a renovated old government school, which has been taken on a long lease. However, most of our funding comes from personal donations and support,” he explained.

Mendonca further elaborated on the financial needs of the institution,

stating, “We receive some funding through the Social Welfare Department, but our monthly expenses amount to Rs 5 lakh. NAB is the only boarding facility for the visually impaired in Goa.” He also outlined the organisation’s ambitious expansion plans, which include a new facility estimated to cost nearly Rs 12 crore. “We are in the process of securing the necessary government approvals. Our goal is to accommodate 100 children,” he added. Speaking on the challenges of integrating visually impaired students into mainstream schools,

Sawant remarked, “Most of our students study at the Santa Cruz school, but when we approach new educational institutes, we often encounter hesitation and uncertainty. We are working to support these schools by providing the necessary curriculum and apparatus required for our students’ education.”

Despite financial constraints, NAB Goa remains committed to its mission of empowering the visually impaired, ensuring they receive the education, skills, and opportunities they need to lead independent and fulfilling lives.