

CRORES SPENT, BUT NO END TO SUFFERING

Businesses crippled; immense inconvenience to public; commuters frustrated, chaos and confusion reign supreme



Team Herald

PANJIM: Haphazard road works and unplanned closures in the capital city have severely impacted residents, businesses, and commuters. Several small businesses, once thriving, have been forced to shut down due to the ongoing infrastructure work under the Smart City Mission.

Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Ltd (IPSCDL) has closed multiple key road stretches for Central Panjim (Phase 3) development. From February 9 to 28, six crucial roads, including 18th June Road, General Bernardo Guedes Road, and Bhatlem Road, have been shut for vehicular movement, causing major traffic disruptions.

Many business owners, speaking anonymously, have voiced their frustration. "The business community in Panjim has been in distress ever since these works began. Many shops, particularly in St Inez, have shut down. But not many are speaking openly about their struggles," said a businessman near Café Real.

Commuters have also been left frustrated, constantly encountering dead ends and struggling to find open roads. The worst jams occur during lunch hours and office closing times. While police personnel have been stationed at intersections to regulate traffic, the absence of proper signboards has made matters worse.

Tourists unfamiliar with the road closures often drive into no-entry zones, leading to confusion and arguments. The lack of clear notifications has exacerbated the situation.

Taking a dig at the ongoing work, activist Rama Kankonkar remarked, "Every road in Panjim has been dug and re-dug. Maybe they're searching for hidden gold beneath the roads". He also pointed out the financial strain on business owners, stating,

"Some shops in Panjim pay rents as high as Rs 40,000 to Rs 50,000 and have been forced to remain shut for months. How will they survive?"

Kankonkar also questioned the silence of Panjim's residents. "Why are people not speaking up about their suffering? Will you raise your voice only when everything is lost," he asked.

Activist Cecile Rodrigues criticised the poor implementation of road closures, saying, "There are no proper notifications. A closed road doesn't have a barricade at the entrance, so people enter, only to find out they have to reverse and take another route—only to find that road closed too".

Rodrigues blamed both the contractor and traffic police for failing to provide proper guidance to struggling motorists.

Meanwhile, IPSCDL Managing Director Sanjit Rodrigues has assured that "all road works will be completed by March 31".



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HC directs TCP to file affidavit regarding constructions in eco-sensitive areas at Ucassaim

Team Herald

PANJIM: The High Court of Bombay at Goa has asked the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department to file a detailed affidavit within next two weeks substantiating the contention that due procedure was followed while granting development permissions to residential villas, which otherwise appears to be in respect of no development slope having a gradient of more than 25 per cent, at Paliem, Ucassaim.

The High Court in November last year, had stayed the technical clearance granted by the TCP to the proposed construction of the residential villa while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) writ petition filed by Alvito D'Silva of Pomburpa and Ganpat Sidhaye of Britona.

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Appearing for the Mayfair Resorts India Limited, Adv Shivan Desai told the Court that the petitioners obtained an interim stay on the basis of incorrect facts and said that though the submission was made about there being no access, in fact there was access. He further submitted that since the TCP had granted permission to the project, the construction of 12 villas be allowed, subject to the outcome of the PIL writ petition

obtained an interim stay on the basis of incorrect facts and said that though the submission was made about there being no access, in fact there was access. He further submitted that since the TCP had granted permission to the project, the construction of 12 villas be allowed, subject to the outcome of the PIL writ petition.

Arguing on behalf of the petitioners, Adv Rohit Bras De Sa said that the technical clearance had been granted to the projects comprising 12 residential villas and a swimming pool on a no development slope as indicated in the Regional

Plan 2021 and the sloppy land having a gradient of more than 25 per cent.

"There are prima facie materials to indicate that the construction is on a no development slope. We want to satisfy ourselves whether the construction which is sought to be undertaken is after following the procedure while granting the technical clearance. The issue pertains to hill cutting and construction on no development slope as per the Regional Plan, 2021," the Court stated and allowed the interim stay to continue till the next date of hearing on February 24.

Union Min says no to waste treatment plant at Bainguinim

Team Herald

PANJIM: Union Minister of State for Power and New and Renewable Energy Shripad Naik on Thursday urged the government to reconsider its plan to set up the solid waste management facility at Bainguinim as it is a notified UNESCO World heritage site.

Speaking to the media, Naik said that the voices of the people must be heard. "Old Goa is a UNESCO World heritage site and an international tourist destination. Public sentiment should also be taken into consideration before taking any decisions," said Naik.

"I have discussed the issue with Revenue Minister Atanasio 'Babush' Monserrate and Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and have raised concerns before and will try to convince the government to shift the facility," Naik said.

Naik maintained that he is not against the project but was against it coming up in Old Goa against the wishes of the public.

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Commenting on Goa's law and order situation, Naik expressed concern over the increasing involvement of police personnel in various cases, stating that it was tarnishing the reputation of both the police force and the government.

"Some unwanted incidents are a matter of concern. However, the government has taken action and is working to reduce such occurrences," he said.

He further noted that the rise in tourist footfall in Goa has contributed to an increase in incidents involving outsiders.

"Earlier, the number of tourists visiting Goa was lower, but now it has increased

significantly. If you analyse these incidents, most of the people involved are not from Goa," he explained.

When asked about land grab accused Suleiman Siddiqui's claim that he was forced to make a video confession at gunpoint, Naik stated:

"Investigations are ongoing. Everyone has their own perspective, but the government is taking all necessary steps to uncover the truth and present the facts."

On the cash-for-job scam, he assured that the government is actively investigating the matter.

"The government is not silent on this. An inquiry is underway, and the truth will come out. Those guilty will be punished," he said.

The garbage plant at Bainguinim is long overdue with project pending since 2002. However, villagers and panch members of Old Goa are up in arms over state government's proposal to proceed with the plant which will have a capacity to process 250 tonnes per day.

Mayem villagers stand firm against global law college

Question govt's intent; say it will affect sanctity of festivals, religious practices

Team Herald

BICHOLIM: Refuting the statement of Chief Minister Pramod Sawant not to oppose development projects, the villagers of Gaonkarwada, Mayem on Thursday said that they were not opposed to the development project and demanded a long overdue master plan for the village before undertaking any development.

The villagers said that the establishment of the international law college in Mayem will have a severe negative impact on their traditional religious festivals including jatra, traditional occupations and sacred rituals. The proposed project is close to areas that hold significant religious and cultural importance. The construction and activities of the University may interfere with these sacred spaces affecting the sanctity of their festivals and religious practices.

The villagers said that most of them depend on agriculture for their livelihood and feared that the project could threaten the fertile land and water resources.

“Most of us depend on agriculture for our livelihood and we fear that the project will destroy our bio-diversity”

— Villagers

Many families are engaged in cashew plantation for decades and feared that the villagers would be displaced if the project is allowed. The Mayem-Vainguinim during its gram sabha had already passed a resolution opposing the project thereby reflecting the collective will of the people, appealed to the government to prevent any development that could disrupt their religious practices.

The villagers demanded that the government should reconsider the location of the international law college and explore alternative sites outside the Mayem-Vainguinim village and help to preserve the age-old traditional and spiritual heritage of the village. The government should also prepare a master plan for the Mayem village before approving any development projects.

Centre to streamline E-Visa, boost tourism and connectivity in Goa

Team Herald

PANJIM: Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Jitin Prasada, on Thursday announced that the central government is working towards streamlining the E-Visa facility for international tourists, which is expected to significantly boost the tourism sector, particularly in states like Goa.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP office in Panjim, Prasada stated, "Tourism is the biggest industry in Goa. India will develop 52 tourist destination sites in partnership with states through the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. Mudra loans will be provided for homestays, skill development programmes will be



launched for youth in the hospitality sector, E-Visa facilities will be enhanced, and cruise tourism will be expanded. Additionally, Goa's beaches, heritage sites, and eco-tourism destinations will be redeveloped under the PPP model. Connectivity at major airports will also be improved."

Prasada, who is on a two-day visit to Goa, high-

lighted that the state will benefit the most from the UDAN scheme and other initiatives, such as improved connectivity and ease of travel through E-Visas.

He also pointed out that Goa's pharmaceutical industry contributes 12% to India's overall pharmaceutical sector and will benefit from government initiatives aimed at

strengthening the industry.

Regarding sports infrastructure, he stated that Rs 3,000 crore allocated for nationwide sports development will directly benefit Goa's football and athletic training centres. Additionally, there is a provision for developing Goa as a hub for filmmaking.

Speaking on inflation, Prasada acknowledged that it remains a concern

and assured that the government is actively monitoring key indicators to ensure food supply remains stable.

"Food inflation, affected by adverse weather conditions and supply chain disruptions, has been effectively managed," he said.

He further compared inflation rates under different administrations, stating, "Under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government from 1999 to 2004, food inflation was maintained at 2.2%. During United Progressive Alliance (UPA) I, it rose to 6.5%, and under UPA II, it reached 11%. In contrast, from 2014 to 2024, under the NDA government, food inflation has been brought down to 5.3%."

Sarpanch demands full time JE for Divar island

Team Herald

PANJIM: Sao Matias Village Panchayat Sarpanch Anuradha Volvoikar has written to Executive Engineer of Electricity Department, Panjim, requesting him to depute a full time Junior Engineer of the department at Divar island.

The Sarpanch has pointed out that the panchayat in its fortnightly meeting held on January 29, had resolved to request the Electricity Department to depute a full time Junior Engineer so that he can resolve the grievance of local people related to electricity.

She recalled that some months back Shekhar Duplkar, JE of Electricity Department, was given additional duty due to which he was not able to give his full time at Divar island.