

O HERALDO

Comprehensive map of Panjim's supply networks a must

Bhatlem has been in the news over the past week for the consecutive hits its underground utility supply lines have been taking. If it was the main water pipeline bursting last week, causing many households and commercial establishments in the area to go without water, a gas pipeline of Goa Natural Gas Pvt Ltd was struck by workers of the Smart City Mission who were digging the road to lay a sewerage network. This disrupted supply of gas to at least 4,000 houses in the state capital.

The problem was rectified by the gas supply agency as soon as possible even as it caused a loss of Rs 20 lakh to the agency, but it also highlighted the lack of planning and coordination by officials of the Smart City Mission. The statement, "Such incidents occur when digging work is taken up by a third party and we are not informed about the same," by fire and safety manager of Goa Natural Gas Pvt Ltd, Mehdi Kamal, further hit home this fact.

Indeed, the rupture sparked valid concerns about the safety protocol in place for projects involving earthmoving machinery and the need for better awareness of underground utility lines.

Why would response and repair teams be needed at all if the authorities had a comprehensive map in place and coordinated well in advance with the service providers that might be affected by Smart City works in a particular area? The government would be the best authority to answer this

When development work as extensive as that under the Smart City Mission is being taken up, it must be a prerequisite that all the agencies that could be affected are kept in the loop, particularly where excavations of roadsides are concerned. With key utility supply lines, including electricity lines, going underground in several parts of the state, it is a no-brainer that extreme caution must be taken when roads and their flanks are dug up. Else, damage upon damage being wreaked on supply networks will be the order of the day.

Also, having a comprehensive map of utility line networks that have been laid underground is crucial to avoid any damage and consequent disruptions in supply. It is astounding that there is no such map in the possession of the authorities concerned and that the Smart City Mission is essentially working blind and identifying the existence of underground utility lines only by the stone markers that have been erected by departments and agencies concerned above the ground. If homeowners and those operating commercial buildings insist on being given a blueprint of the electricity and water supply networks concealed in their respective structures by the developers concerned, how is it possible for an area as large as the state capital to function in the absence of a comprehensive map?

Former mayor of the Corporation of the City of Panaji, Uday Madkaikar, said the authorities were indeed lucky that no untoward incident occurred because of the gas leakage. "I think the workers weren't aware of the gas pipeline," he said, hitting home the fact that there is, in fact, no comprehensive map of the city's underground utility networks.

MD and CEO of Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Ltd, Sanjit Rodrigues, recently told the media that the Smart City Mission has a response and repair team to tend to damaged supply lines during excavation, and that individual departments - such as the PWD and the electricity department - have their own teams too. "I think we are responding, but there are some limits to our response also. You cannot expect the response to come there and there. Some time has to be given," Rodrigues had said.

He even agreed that there will be wastage, especially of resources like water and gas, and that these were short term problems for long term gains. He also said citizens should not expect a 'tatkal' response to such disruptions.

Rodrigues' grasp of the situation appears to be high-handed and downright dismissive of the common man's plight when they are forced to go without essentials like water and cooking gas for considerably long periods. It also exposes the shameful lack of coordination and planning between the Smart City Mission and essential service providers.

Why would response and repair teams be needed at all if the authorities had a comprehensive map in place and coordinated well in advance with the service providers that might be affected by Smart City works in a particular area? The government would be the best authority to answer this.



BINAYAK DATTA

At each step, today's and the next 22 Budgets must keep reminding policy implementers, and countrymen we need to be a \$30trillion economy in 2047 (10 times of what we are today) with a per-capita of \$18,000!



The Budget proposals in fields of shipping and transportation and indirect taxes (on the "25% tariff-threat") however do not seem to have ventured into the maze of diplomatic touch-points excepting for a few tariff-reductions-in-advance in items we import from the US like Harley Davidsons.

b) The key points and strategy: I think, its best to fix up a set of key thrusts for

A smart 'middle-class' Budget... admittedly!

Iwould rate this Budget one of the most delightfully lapped-up Budget in my recent memories! The middle-class taxpayer was found in fits of glee. It's another matter that the person earning Rs 12 lakh saves a tidy amount of 83,200 per year and one who earns Rs 24 lakh saves a handsome Rs 1.14 lakh. Be that as it may - it's a certainly a good idea to put money into the hands of countrymen through tax-savings and allow them to spend, if they do, consumption increases, GDP rises, if they save, investments and capital spending increases multiplying values to the economy.

I thought I'll structure my thoughts on the following lines, a) The backgrounds this year, b) The key points in my view, for the Budget; c) How the Budget addresses these, if at all; and d) the financial prudence observed.

a) The backgrounds this year: The Economic Survey correctly points out the three Risks to our economy from global impacts around: i) The disruptions in global shipping and consequent drop in the global supply chain pressure indices, and rising costs; ii) Risks of Inflation and price pressures, though softening was reported towards Q3; iii) Geo-political policy-uncertainty indices turning unfriendly and I can add one more which is risks of the onslaught of protective nationalism witnessed amongst some of our major trade-partners.

Budgets for say three to four years and a set of fungible priorities (eg. an election in Delhi or Bihar this time, or Maharashtra or Andhra that time and so on). I would say for example, we need i) World-class education and sports for our youngsters and reskilling of our current workforce; ii) World-class public-health and nutritional facilities and in the remotest districts of India (we are today 105/127 in the global hunger index). iii) Research and development facilities and our youngsters should be the first to come out with our own large-language model from Generative AI for example, not request another 10 months! The world never waits for anybody. We already allocated \$1200m for augmenting compute power last year and just \$60m in this budget for training. Deepseek claims they spent just \$5.6m on their AI model R1. "ChatGPT", "Llama" and "Gemini Advanced" are all very expensive though. iv) Clean energy for our manufacturing, logistics, agriculture and homes and v) we need world-class infrastructure to make these possible and for gainful asset-creating employment for our youngsters.

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c) How I see the Budget addressing these issues:

(i) The honourable minister spoke of good quality schools and increase in seats in medical colleges but I found in the Budget papers an overall allocation of Rs 1.28 lakh crore (no increases over last year just about 2.6% of the Total Budget). Not her fault, as all we could actually spend was just 90% last year! I'm sorry to have missed any impetus on sports, a crying need area, remember our results at the Paris Olympics last year! (ii) On Health the allocation is Rs 98,000 crore just about 2% of the Budget. We couldn't spend even the Rs 89,000 crore last year's allocation although the 'most unkindest cut of them all' were the eggs for children, cut from their mid-day meals. (iii) On IT and communication, an allocation of Rs 95,000 crore made this year against last year's actual spending of

Rs 1.16 lakh crore, a 20% cut. I thought this year the 6G and Cloud capacities both for telecom as well as AI applications would see an enhanced requirement! iv) Clean Energy: The Minister emphasised on energy security and the need for 100GW of nuclear energy by 2047 on PPP, of which five small modular reactors are proposed by 2033, recall our commitments to the COP21. An excellent step, allocating Rs 28,000 crore up 28% but sadly enough, true to our acts we could not spend even 89% of this amount though allocations were in place! v) I saw Infrastructure being spoken of and the Minister has indeed upped the Budgets by around 17% counting State grants. I'm totally nonplussed as to why we could not spend last year's allocations though. Wise minds would attribute this to Elections I know, but that was known?

d) Financial prudence: The restraint and prudence shown in the Budget is commendable. Borrowings are less both actuals last year and proposed in Budgets this year, lesser Interest costs last year and reduced fiscal deficits consistently over the last 3 years and the Minister has stuck to her targets. Kudos! I have however no idea why we fell short in collection of our budgeted revenue last year from corporation tax, customs and excise and CGST given that we did grow more than 6% constant prices!

One last point, our Debts at Centre Rs 152 lakh crore, add those to the States. Although the Centre's position in a developing ambience seems reasonable, I'm distinctly worried about the significant number of States with debt-to-GSDPs exceeding 30%, when they display fiscal deficits in excess of 4% at State level which ideally should be balanced. However, our proposed transfers are 12% more than last year. That's a caution!

And before I part, ... Of Trump's "25% tariff-threats", Berty Wooster would have silently figured, "Unseen in the background, Fate was quietly slipping lead into the boxing-glove," seeing it as an opportunity hidden in every "round" of the game. Another day!

(Binayak Datta is a finance professional)

Doorstep banking services needed

It is learnt that the ATMs of certain banks are not accessible for Persons with Disability (PWDs) thereby discriminating against them and in violation of Section 3 and Section 40 of the Rights of Persons With Disability Act 2016. Senior citizens and elderly persons have to wait in long queues in the banks to get their work done.

It may be recalled, that after an extremely long wait, an 85-year-old woman from Carla in Sanguem who could not go to the bank received her 16 months pension of Rs 32,000 from a local bank at Quempem delivered at her residence after South Goa MP Capt Viriato Fernandes took up the matter with the bank manager.

Be that as it may, Doorstep Banking Service (DSB) is a facility introduced in line with the RBI's directive to cater to both financial and non-financial banking needs of the customers of all banks. Doorstep Banking services are extended to senior citizens and differentlyabled persons including the visually impaired. The financial services include cash pick-up and deposit, cash delivery against withdrawal from account. The non-financial services include delivery of Demand Drafts, submission of KYC documents, submission of Life Certificate, etc. There are no charges for availing DSB services. Banks need to help retired persons having health issues by delivering their monthly pension at the doorsteps.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

letterstotheeditor

For letters to the editor contact us at editor@herald-goa.com.

All letters must contain correct postal address and telephone number. Letters are liable to be edited for brevity.

Need for DEI in Goan workplaces

I am an octogenarian member of a well-renowned club here in Panjim, and over the years, I have seen many changes—some for the better, others deeply concerning. One such concern is the treatment of staff, which highlights the urgent need for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in Goan workplaces.

Despite their dedication, long-serving staff receive lower pay than newcomers. Hard work and loyalty go unnoticed, while undue stress and low morale plague employees who fear being shown the exit door. Bonuses and increments are selectively granted, with efficient and committed staff often targeted and forced out—whether due to personal biases, excessive workloads, or fabricated complaints.

A high employee turnover speaks volumes about the Board's regard for its workforce. Recognizing and respecting differences, providing equal opportunities and protecting employees from discrimination should be core values—not just for the sake of ethics but also for business performance. A demoralized workforce will only lead to declining service standards, ultimately affecting a company's reputation.

It is time for workplaces in Goa, including esteemed institutions such as this, to embrace DEI not just in words but

in action too.

Antonio Alvaro Miranda, Assagao

Black mark on US air safety record

There has been another accident involving a US Navy jet on February 12, in San Diego. The occupants survived the crash and thankfully no one was killed. This is the fourth or fifth air accident in the US since the Black Hawk helicopter collided with a civilian airliner just outside Washington DC recently that had all 67 on both aircraft killed.

This is a black mark on the US air safety record apart from avoidable loss of life that has also disrupted operations. The collision of the Black Hawk helicopter with the civilian airliner was attributed to a lapse of the air traffic controller who had been on duty for 2 consecutive shifts. It was also found that the pilot of the Black Hawk helicopter had not switched on the anti-collision device that is standard fitment on these helicopters.

These are very serious lapses that has possibly been repeated causing the other accidents. Is this not what Donald Trump should be bothered about and maybe issue an Executive Order on it? Instead of throwing his weight around the world, he should turn his attention to closer home and put his own house in order. Inanities like renaming the Gulf of Mexico and to replace

paper straws with plastic should be stopped.

Srinivas Kamat, Mysore

Valentine's Day is all about love

Valentine's Day is here at last and everyone is busy thinking about what to buy for their loved ones. Though the festival commemorates the martyrdom of a Christian saint called St Valentine, the festival as it is celebrated today, has very little religious significance. The day is usually commemorated as a celebration of love. But love is not about showering people with gifts. It means standing by one's loved ones in good times and in bad.

Valentine's Day is an international festival that celebrates the feeling of love and friendship.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

Long way to go in controlling corruption

India has been ranked 96th in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) in public sector with a score of 38 by Transparency International (TI) that ranks 180 countries from 0 to 100 (highly corrupt to very clean). India's overall score was 39 in 2023 and 40 in 2022. It ranked 93 in 2023. As per the TI, there are meagre institutional checks and balances to control corruption.

Its report is a warning to all stakeholders, who are in a position to control corruption, to get

people'sedit

THE NATURE OF MANIPULATION AND PATH TO PERSONAL GROWTH

STEVEN DE SOUZA

In a world where new ideas and perspectives constantly shape our understanding, it is crucial to recognise the subtle forces that influence our minds. Every advancement and fresh interpretation of reality has the potential to shift our beliefs—sometimes without us even realising it. What we cling to becomes our personal truth, shaping our perception of the world around us.

However, resistance to change—even when faced with compelling evidence—is a form of self-imposed manipulation. We often hold onto familiar mind-sets as a psychological defence mechanism, providing a false sense of stability and control. In reality, this resistance hinders personal growth.

Manipulation refers to the act of influencing someone's thoughts, emotions or actions, often to serve a particular agenda. It is generally viewed in a negative light, yet influence is an inevitable part of human interaction. From a young age, we are conditioned by societal norms, cultural expectations and familial beliefs that shape our world view. The media, education systems and even casual conversations contribute to the narratives we accept as truth. At times, however, these influences can limit independent thought.

Yet, manipulation is not always external; it can also stem from within. Our own minds are powerful tools of self-persuasion. We justify decisions that may not serve us well, cling to outdated beliefs and resist uncomfortable truths. This inner manipulation can be more dangerous than external influence because it convinces us that we are in control—even when we are not.

Change is uncomfortable. It forces us to step out of familiar patterns, reconsider long-held beliefs and acknowledge that we may have been wrong. This is why people often resist new ideas, even when they are logical, evidence-based, or beneficial. Instead of engaging in open dialogue, many double down on their existing beliefs, dismissing alternative perspectives as biased, false, or manipulative. This instinct to protect one's world view creates an illusion of certainty, but in reality, it limits intellectual and emotional growth.

Stubbornness often leads to misunderstandings. People cling to their version of events, convinced they are right, while failing to see another person's perspective. This unwillingness to shift viewpoints creates division rather than connection. True growth happens when we step outside of our own narrative and consider alternative interpretations of reality.

To truly grow, we must first acknowledge that our perceptions are not absolute truths but evolving understandings. The willingness to accept that we may not know everything and that our perspectives can always be refined does not mean abandoning core values. Rather, it involves developing the ability to engage in critical thinking.

In relationships, this means practicing empathetic listening rather than debating to "win" an argument. It involves recognising that others have their own experiences that shape their views and understanding that true connection comes from dialogue rather than defence. When we allow room for different perspectives, we foster deeper connections and mutual respect.

their acts together. Generally, however, countries of the world have come to a "standstill" in their fight against graft. Even nations at the top of the index, have revealed signs of going slow against corruption.

It has been shown that any country that has failed to uphold its democratic fabric, and faltered in preserving human rights, has not done well in dealing with corruption.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

LA fires costliest in history

The Los Angeles fires last month are not just a local crisis but a wake-up call for global unity in the face of climate disasters. Residents of Los Angeles, from high-profile celebrities to those experiencing homelessness, have all been affected by the fires.

The horrific scenes from uncontrollable wildfires in LA are a stark reminder of the price to pay due to little attention paid to climate change that has caused this unimaginable destruction, clearly fuelled by anthropogenic activity. The LA wildfires are said to be the costliest in US history, with some analysts projecting economic losses of over \$200 billion dollars. The cost of such gargantuan losses can be measured in monetary terms as well as in terms of societal chaos and displacement of population. The LA fires and the destruction are a clear message to the global community to pay heed to science and climate change in a serious manner.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai