

'SMART' EXCUSE: 245 days late, then blame the weather

Smart City authorities apologise in High Court for missing project deadline; blame climate change and Panjim's sandy soil for delay

Team Herald

PANJIM: They've missed the project deadline by 245 days, but who is to blame? It's the weather, silly!

After missing multiple completion targets and landing Panjim in a civic mess that has made life a living hell for its residents, The Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited (IPSCDL) has apologised for the delay in its affidavit to the High Court of Bombay at Goa - but has blamed a combination of adverse weather, incessant rains, and challenging soil and water table conditions for this.

The delay that spanned 245 days has pushed the project's completion beyond the initial deadline of

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FILE PIC

May 2024 to March 31 this year now.

According to the affidavit, the onset of the monsoon in the first week of May 2024 further compounded the difficulties faced by the project. The IPSCDL cited these weather-related challenges, along with the nature of Panjim's sandy soil and high water table, as the key reasons for not meeting the timeline. In addition, the IPSCDL tendered an unconditional apology and requested the court to condone the 245-day delay in filing the extension request.

In April 2024, IPSCDL

ACCORDING TO SMART CITY TEAM, GUESS WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DELAY...

- Unfavourable weather conditions involving unseasonal rains in May 2024
- Sandy soil in Panjim area
- The high water table in the Capital
- Climate change, as there was a consistent rise in the sea level globally. Panjim is presently 30 cm below sea level

Managing Director and CEO Sanjit Rodrigues had submitted a report assuring the court that the roadworks would be functional by May 31, 2024, at all locations where work was being undertaken. Following this, the court ordered the submission of another

compliance report by June 10, 2024.

However, in the recent affidavit, IPSCDL explained that the laying of the city's main sewerage trunk line, installation of manholes, and the subsequent laying of concrete road surfaces could not be completed by

the stipulated date due to persistent rains, the sandy soil composition of the area, and the high water table in Panjim. While work progressed in some areas with the help of continuous de-watering, the project still faced setbacks due to soil instability and the need for additional pumps to manage water flow. Emergency shoring was also deployed to stabilise excavation walls where caving in occurred.

"The water table in Panjim is high. We faced substantial challenges during the execution of road and sewerage works due to this, as excavation became not feasible with water appearing at a shallow depth of just one metre," stated the affidavit filed by IPSCDL Chief General Manager Vivek Valke.

As a result of the monsoon delays, the project resumed in the third week of November 2024, after being stalled for several months. The IPSCDL is now seeking an extension for completing the carriageway from Tadmam Temple to the culvert near the Sewerage Treatment Plant, a 150-metre stretch still pending adjudication.

Leaders missing, Cong meetings turn into blame-game sessions

AICC called meetings to take stock of ground situation in Goa, but both Amit Patkar and Yuri Alemao were unavailable

Team Herald

PANJIM: The divided house that the Congress is in Goa was on full display during a series of block Congress committee meetings that saw sharp criticism and notable absences, raising the all-important question - is the party ready to take its role as the principal Opposition in the state seriously?

The meetings were attended by All India Congress Committee (AICC) secretary-in-charge of the Goa Desk, Anjali Nimbalkar and were aimed at strengthening the party organisation, but turned out to be a damp squib, with neither state Congress President Amit Patkar nor Leader of the Opposition Yuri Alemao present for them.

This led to several members of the Sankhali Block Congress Committee voicing their dissatisfaction, with some even calling for strengthening the party position. Sankhali councillors Pravin Baggan, Khemlo Sawant, and Laxmikant Parab expressed frustration over the lack of presence from top leaders

"We have not seen the GPCC president or the Leader of the Opposition in Sankhali. How can you expect us to strengthen the party here?"

-Leaders of Sankhali Block Congress Committee

in their constituency. "We have not seen the GPCC president or the Leader of the Opposition in Sankhali. How can you expect us to strengthen the party here?" they asked, demanding Patkar's immediate removal. "Tell us why the GPCC president isn't coming to Sankhali?" another committee member added.

The meetings, which were part of a three-day programme approved by the AICC last week, were scheduled across various constituencies including Mormugao, Dabolim, Sant Andre, Poriem, Valpoi, Sankhalim, Velim, Cuncolim, and Navelim. However, not all went as planned. The Sant Andre Block Congress Committee meeting was called off after the ob-

server arrived two hours late, and the Navelim Block meeting was cancelled due to a retreat in the village.

In addition to the absences of Patkar and Alemao, observers appointed for various constituencies also skipped the meetings. The only notable presence was South Goa MP Viriato Fernandes, who attended the Dabolim Block Congress meeting.

Meanwhile, members of the Velim Block Congress Committee expressed strong opposition to any potential pre-poll alliance with like-minded parties, insisting that the Congress should contest the upcoming Assembly elections on its own strength. "We will strengthen the party at the grassroots level and bring Congress back to power," the block members told Nimbalkar.

This internal unrest signals that all is not well within the State Congress Party, with growing tensions and leadership challenges likely to affect the party's performance in the upcoming Zilla Panchayat (ZP) elections, scheduled for December this year.

Tesla factory in India would be very unfair: Donald Trump

AGENCY, WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has said that it is practically 'impossible' for Elon Musk to sell a car in India due to the 100% tariffs levied on such imports. He went on to say that Musk setting up a Tesla factory in India would be unfair to US.

"If he built the factory in India, that's okay, but that's unfair to us. It's very unfair," Trump said while sitting next to world's richest man Elon Musk during an interview with Fox News.

Trump was commenting on the reciprocal tariff plans he has recently laid out. As part of the plan, the US government will charge reciprocal tariffs on imported goods. This is expected to severely affect countries like India which has a significant trade deficit with US.

"I was doing it [during my first term]. I charged China tariffs. I took in hundreds of billions of dollars. We had the greatest economy in history. But then we got hit with Covid, and we had to solve that problem... I want to come back and do the reciprocal tariffs because we have a deficit with almost every country in the world," he said.

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PRIDE OF THE HIGH SEAS



PTI

INS Shardul represented the Indian Navy at the International Fleet Review held at Benoa port anchorage in Bali, Indonesia, on Wednesday

Pet lovers slam govt plan to ban two dog breeds

Ban may help curb illegal breeding, say experts

Team Herald

PANJIM: In a move that has sparked mixed reactions, the Goa State Cabinet has approved the ban on two dog breeds - Rottweiler and Pitbull Terrier - citing public safety concerns.

The decision, announced by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant following a Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, prohibits the import of these breeds into the state. The ban comes in the wake of several violent incidents involving these dogs, including three high-profile attacks in Taleigao, Anjuna, and Assagao, though vets and pet lovers feel that it will ultimately be very difficult

WHAT WILL EXISTING ROTTWEILER AND PITBULL OWNERS DO?
Once the amendments to the Goa Animal Breeding, Domestic Regulations, and Compensation Ordinance 2024 are implemented, individuals who own these breeds will be required to register their pets with the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department

to implement the ban.

The decision follows a string of alarming events, the most notable being the tragic death of a seven-year-old boy in Anjuna, who was fatally mauled by a Pitbull in August 2024. The child was reportedly attacked

while visiting a neighbour with his mother. The incident has sparked widespread outrage and renewed debates over the ownership of aggressive dog breeds.

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Taps trickle & die in parched Porvorim

Locals rely on wells and pay for water tankers after road work ruined water pipelines

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PORVORIM: Despite the government's rosy promises on adequate water supply, residents across Porvorim and Socorro have accepted the bitter reality that piped water is indeed a pipe dream for many of them. As their taps stay dry for months, residents have been compelled to rely on age-old wells or are forced to shell out thousands for tankers.

Senior journalist and Porvorim resident Sigmund de Souza, said, "There is no proper water supply system. Different areas of Porvorim have different problems. Some people are receiving little water, while others like us are not. Our area has been completely dry for the last two months. However, slum dwellers, who are the vote banks, are receiving water, and honest taxpayers like us are not. I fail to understand the logic behind this."

"We are forced to purchase water from tankers. A tanker of 7,000 litres capacity costs

Water supply in our area is very bad. Our housing society is solely dependent on water from tankers. It's been nearly a month since we last got tap water. The society has 175 flats and 33 shops and the number of tankers ranges from five to 10
- Farida Vishal Bandekar, a resident of Sapna Gardens.

Water WOES

"We are forced to purchase water from tankers. A tanker of 7,000 litres capacity costs around Rs 1,000, which only lasts for a week. It means we have to shell out around Rs 4,000 every month
- Sigmund de Souza, senior journalist & Porvorim resident

"There is only a trickle of tap water supply. This has been going on for around six months. It started after road work and due to the laying of underground cables. At many places, water pipes have been damaged as the contractors carry out works using earthmovers
- Dhananjay Borkar, another local

around Rs 1,000. This water lasts for a week, which means we have to shell out around Rs 4,000 every month. My main concern is that we have no idea

whether the tanker water is treated or not. We do not know what will happen if there is an epidemic. That is why the government has to work overtime

to ensure that treated water is supplied to the people," he said. Sigmund said it was very disheartening that despite lodging complaints, the authorities are

just giving excuses and have failed to find a solution to the problems faced by the people.

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Agent who 'duped' Goans untraceable

Team Herald

VASCO: The owner of the consultancy services company who is named in an FIR for allegedly sending two Goan youths to the US on an illegal route is reportedly out of station and his office in New Vaddem, Vasco, is shut, according to police officials.

According to police, when they tried to serve a notice on Stanley George, who owns Captain George Consultancy Services in Vasco, it was reportedly received by his parents. A lawyer representing George informed authorities that he was currently unavailable for questioning and would return in the first week of March. There is no information available on whether he is out of the country.

The FIR was lodged on the complaint filed by one of the deported Goan youths, Sarzora resident Advinct Clipson Mascarenhas.

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