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Mindless shrinking of urban parking space by 'UnSmart City'

Many urban planners and keen residents perceive the Smart City project as a plain and simple construction biased project with nothing smart or intelligent about it. In fact, some even call the IPSCDL as Imagine Panjim Smart Construction Development Ltd. The reason is thus far, Smart City has only constructed sewerage, roads and footpaths. The reckless and mindless manner in which the internet and TV cables were cut is potent proof of how unsmart the Smart City managers appear to be, with no alternate provisions made to provide for 4 lakh internet users.

As the city's human and vehicle population continues to surge, one of the critical aspects of smart cities is facing the mounting challenges in managing traffic, ensuring accessibility and improving overall urban life. Over 50% of Goa's population resides in urban areas, however the Smart City does not have increasing parking space as a priority. In fact, it is actively reducing parking space with the mindless and adhoc manner in which it is going about constructing roundabouts, roads and footpaths, without consulting citizens.

A visible example where parking space has been halved is the tree lined avenue from Hotel Neptune to Café Bho-sle. Here, where three cars could be parked between two ancient trees has been reduced to two cars, by putting huge cemented squares around the trees. So, where earlier about 25 cars could be accommodated on both sides of the road, now only 15 cars can be accommodated.

Similarly parking at the Café Bho-sle square has been halved, by erecting a huge unnecessary triangle. Recently, after the local shopkeepers protested and O Heraldo highlighted the senseless planning, the width of the triangle was reduced by 2 metres only. However, on February 25, around 11.30 am, when an onsite Smart City engineer was questioned as to why there was need for such as huge triangle, when the original triangle and

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sitting space was three times smaller and why parking of at least 50 two wheelers and at least 15 cars in the area was reduced, the engineer said that it was not a "notified parking area." Asked how Smart City had increased parking area in the city, he did not have any answers.

Another parking area which has been massacred is, beside the old Post Master General Office Panjim, where

earlier at least 15 cars would be parked. Two huge mounds of mud have been dumped there for planting grass, which is totally unwarranted since precious parking space has been destroyed. Similarly, parking spaces in front of St Inez church and the cemetery have been reduced and eliminated respectively. Where will these additional cars park now?

Smart City has not only to create additional parking space, but with such rapid urbanization and increase in vehicle population, provide real-time parking data. Smart cities, powered by the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and big data, should be used to ease congestion and enhance efficiency in traffic movement and parking. Comparatively our Smart City plans seem to belong to the Stone Age.

The world over, innovators in the field have introduced sophisticated systems that incorporate cutting-edge technologies such as sensors, cameras, machine vision, and big data analytics. These smart parking systems empower municipalities to regulate parking availability, optimize traffic movement, and address congestion hotspots through predictive analytics. By analyzing historical patterns, these systems can inform policy decisions that enhance future urban planning.

The real game changer for drivers in Goa would be, reduced search time for finding parking space with Smart Parking by introducing a real time App and IoT-integrated reservation systems, which would really make the city, "Smart". It is estimated that drivers waste an average of 25 minutes per day searching for parking, translating to nearly six full days per year. The inefficiency of conventional parking methods not only frustrates drivers but also contributes to unnecessary traffic congestion and increased emissions.

Autonomous occupancy detection technology should be introduced to ensure real-time accuracy, guiding users directly to vacant spaces. Even the shuttle service which have been introduced, do not work on a smart system. They should be integrated as part of rapid transport system App, where the exact location of a particular city bus should be pinpointed on the route and how long it would take and what time it would reach a particular bus stop. That would give passengers the opportunity to save time and reach their destinations on time.

Creating adequate and Smart parking would reduce parking search time, decrease traffic congestion, lower carbon emissions, and improve overall urban mobility. Only then will the Smart City be really "smart" by integrating Smart Parking and other Smart Systems. Building roads, pavements and sewage does not make the city "smart", by any inch of imagination.

comment



Besides this, there are the social and ideological factors that normalise sexual violence. If people convicted for gender based crimes are garlanded or rewarded with a job on being prematurely released, simply because they are card-holding members of the ruling party, or there is inaction when a political heavyweight is involved, it becomes a slippery slope and not long before other cases follow the leader



of rape are two different reports for the police, and each needs to be acted upon, even if they pertain to the same person. When there is information about rape, the police cannot be found being content putting a tick to the disposal of the missing report alone or conveying to the police station where the missing case is reported that the person is found. This amounts to gross dereliction of duty by the concerned police. It means that if the matter is not pursued by the relatives or concerned citizens, there will be no record or registration or investi-

Addressing sexual offences against women in Goa: Way to go

106 rape cases are stated to have been reported to the Goa police in 2024. This is out of 365 cases of crimes against women registered in 2024 as against 288 cases registered in the previous year. To add to this, there was reportedly a recovery of 12 lakhs worth of GHB (Gamma-hydroxybutyrate), stated to be a date rape drug.

Response by the police at the first point of contact is critical. Prompt action must be taken against police if they fail to make so much as a station diary entry when they get a call from any good Samaritan or the pink force or the robot police or the person herself that she has been raped, and is being brought to the police station. That call must find a record somewhere. To start with, the station diary report must reflect the information received orally. The faster detailed protocols on these matters are put in place by the Goa police and followed, the better.

Worse still, some of the victims of sexual offences are under some incapacity because of being minor or disabled. In cases where the victims are kidnapped or abducted, there is an additional responsibility on the police. There can be missing reports filed because they are missing. However, a missing report and a complaint

gation into the case.

It is great that technology is being effectively used to detect cases of crimes against women, as was recently done through digital mapping, based on the statement of the complainant, which was not happening earlier. One has seen cases, where use of digital technology could have helped detect the crime and bring the culprits quickly to book. But technology was not at all used, by the very police station which is supposed to be best equipped with the technology, that is, the Cyber Crime Cell.

Having said this, any efficient digital mapping by the police in the particular case, cannot excuse the failure of another police station which received the information about the case to register a case of rape, after recording the said information at her residence or at a convenient place of such person's choice. It cannot also excuse the callous conduct of this other police station and the police station to which the young woman was handed over, to hand over the woman midway between their police stations, like she were a parcel to be passed on half way.

Medical evidence can be hard to come by if there is a delay in examining the victim and in processing and obtaining forensic evidence. The demand from groups to have a forensic laboratory in Goa, to eliminate time lags, is statedly now met with the setting up of such a laboratory in Goa. But sadly, the laboratory seems not to be equipped enough to qualify to be recognized as examiner of electronic evidence under section 79A of the Information Technology Act, 2000. Is it that everything must require shouting from the rooftops for the required infrastructure or protocols to be introduced.

In any investigation, as also later, in appreciation of evidence about the case, it is necessary to factor the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as ethnicity, ability, caste, ethnicity, religion, and economic status, which can increase the challenges faced by women and girls. Contextual understanding of a crime is important, to assess what steps will be required to collect evidence. Similarly, context is important to consider in appreciation of evidence by the Court.

India's new criminal laws

kicked in from 1st July, 2024, statedly to dispense with what were considered as colonial laws. In the process, there was a claim that crimes against women would also be better addressed through these laws. But while sensitive legislation is necessary, the provisions for time bound procedures can only be set up for failure if we do not have the systems to enable time bound compliance to happen. The State cannot absolve itself of its responsibility to reach justice to the last woman, and towards that, it must have enabling systems. There is no timely recruitment of judges, because of which, with the rising cases, and the vacancies not filled, the responsibility is cast upon an already burdened judiciary. Who is responsible for this delayed recruitment of judiciary? We need to bell the cat, if that is what it amounts to.

There must be all the required personnel for prevention, for enforcing prohibition and for enabling rehabilitation. This involves making adequate provisions in the budget, and timely appointments of judicial officers. This involves paying as much importance to prevention, where gender sensitization, sex and sexuality education, must be intrinsic to school learning. In the absence of this, the best of laws and policies are doomed to failure.

Besides this, there are the social and ideological factors that normalise sexual violence. If people convicted for gender based crimes are garlanded or rewarded with a job on being prematurely released, simply because they are card-holding members of the ruling party, or there is inaction when a political heavyweight is involved, it becomes a slippery slope and not long before other cases follow the leader.

Also, what happens when there is a substantial breakdown of law and order, where even in broad daylight, people are entering houses, and threatening and intimidating people into exiting, and even washing away any possibilities of evidencing something? In this scenario, who cares about the well-being of the marginalized and of those who are challenged?

(Albertina Almeida is a lawyer and human rights activist)

Traffic challans must be paid online

The traffic cell on Wednesday has announced that starting from March 1, cash payments will no longer be accepted for the compounding of traffic challans issued under the Motor Vehicle Act and Rules. Instead, all challans will now be compounded digitally in a shift towards online payment methods.

It has also said that the new system will only accept payments through two modes — QR code payment wherein a QR code will be generated on the e-challan machine, which can be scanned by violators to make the payment or pay through the online portal wherein a direct link will be provided to violators through the official website.

Sounds like a very good decision and many will say that with the implementation of the new system, the cops from the traffic cell will now finally fall in line.

And what about all the senior citizens/some uneducated poor people who do not have a single debit card, who do not know how to use this online facility despite of having a mobile phone and who go to exclusively use only cash in their day to day affairs in Goa? Will their vehicles be confiscated right on the spot and taken to the police station just because they do not know how to use the online payment facility while compounding of traffic challans in Goa?

Just don't understand why the government is so much in a hurry to bring such sudden new changes when it still cannot provide it's citizens with the basic facilities like free uninterrupted Internet, education, descent jobs, good

roads, water, electricity etc in the name of going fully digital even after 64 years of Goa's liberation.

Jerry Fernandes, Saligao

'Idli-sambar' row unwarranted

The Calangute MLA on Thursday reportedly waded into controversy around sub-letting of beach shacks to non-Goans, pointing to this practice as one of the principal reasons for the decline in tourism across the state. It must be said that the opposition by the MLA to sub-letting of the shacks is understandable.

But how this is related to the decline of tourism in the state is debatable. It was also suggested that selling of idli-sambar in shacks should be stopped. Idli-sambar is available everywhere across the country and there is no point in stopping to serve it in the shacks. Several Indian tourists visit Goa and there can be no restriction on what they eat at the shacks. Isn't idli-sambar served in the Udipi restaurants in the state?

How can one have control on the menu of the shacks? Tourists from other states could be strict vegetarians and hence should have a free choice of what they eat. How can serving idli-sambar in the shacks have a negative impact on the promotion of our culture? Instead of deciding on what the tourists should eat and what not to eat, it would be in the fitness of things to concentrate on stopping the rowdy behavior of the local tourists who seem to have no fear of the local

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law-enforcing agency. They drink on the beach, drive recklessly, even causing deaths due to road accidents, pick up fights with the locals, indulge in eve-teasing of Goan ladies and carrying out other illegal activities.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Proper fishing nets needed

I am a Dutch tourist staying in Benaulum. Every time I walk the beach and see the fishermen pull in their nets, I am always kind of mad. The "holes" in the nets that they are using, are so small, that nothing can escape.

Small fish are caught in the net and are just disposed off/left on the beach. By this, the fishermen are destroying their own livelihood. Why is there no restriction on how small these holes can be, so that the young fish can escape/grow up.

Giovanni Santuz, by email

CBSE's two board exams creates confusion

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE's) proposal for two Class ten board exams from 2026 has sparked a row. The board had gone for such innovations in the past too and though some of its novelties had gone well with the students some did not. Public examination undoubtedly has always caused anxiety and apprehension among parents, teachers and students and now with the boards experimentation of two semester's- doubts, apprehen-

sion and worries have risen. Exams normally cause unnecessary stress for students, parents, and teachers and now with two exams within a short span, many of them feel, will only increase the pressure of direct stakeholders.

Teachers fear that it might disrupt the entire academic calendar of schools effecting other school activities. Parents and teachers doubt whether students will take the first exam seriously as they know that there is a second one. Even though bettering ones performance in the second exam sounds viable it only gives stress and anxiety to the students. Expectations of the teachers and parents will further enhance anxiety and pressure in the students.

Institutional heads are anxious about the work load that they will have to encounter. Normally examinations follow evaluation and now with another examination and evaluation, teachers fear, will over burden them. Schools that are exam and evaluation centres may find it difficult to conduct other classes and executive school activities.

Teachers fear that for those engaged in invigilation and evaluation it will be 'marathon work' as they will not even get a short break. Schools also fear about resources management. Though two CBSE board exams can provide flexibility it also raises concerns about student teacher stress, school work load, resource allocation and so on. The board has to seriously take in the views of the various stakeholders especially the students, teachers, par-

people'sedit

THE MEANING OF REST IN OUR LIVES

BY HARSHAL DESAI

I refuse to believe 'rest' is merely a requirement as a response to tiredness, to exhaustion. 'Rest' is not merely a state of reclaiming one's health. A kind of a bodily 'stagnancy', whose prescription is made necessary only by the prevalent disease or exhaustion. The ordinary course of our lives is after all also a tiresome vocation. All the tiredness seems to seep into the body little by little. And the days are like heavy drops, from a constantly dripping tap, each sent hiding deep into the earth.

Rest is more than mere reclamation (of health). Rest is also more than the vocabulary of pain and tire in whose context we have learned to name it. Rest is a place of defining health itself. A place we enter to see our understanding of health from without. If rest is only a response to pain and hurt and exhaustion, health is nothing more than the absence of these things, because after all rest (as understood this way) is only a reclamatory state to it. Reducing 'rest', to only such a materialistic understanding according to me, limits greatly as to when the restive state is 'justified' and when not. Refusing to acknowledge 'rest' as also an a-responsive, creative place, which we may arrive at freely, we run the risk of wrongly labelling some as mere indolence. If the entire understanding of rest is pain or ache-based, we can never lay a 'claim' to rest, if firstly there exists no ache/pain, and secondly, if such ache/pain is not communicable.

In our times, the idea of 'rest', is juxtaposed with capitalist understanding of the body as a mere capital to be worked on and let off from time to time. I think it is extremely difficult, but important to disentangle our bodies, minds and hearts from the net and knots of the capitalist understanding of work, rest and body. 'Work' and 'rest' are not contrary, but mutually coexisting (even in principle), not merely supplementary, as long as work is a natural product of the acting body (not an imposition) and rest, its result. In this way, the body acts, which is to say it works, and this crucifies as rest. 'Art' is thence, rest; good household work, the raising of children, the listening of each other's lives at the dinner table, to see the face of another in light, to converse, to pray, to be grateful, to love, is also to rest.

As long as our de-capitalist understanding of 'work' and 'rest' is tied together, it is unworkable to think of rest as leading to indolence, mere inactivity. Rest being non contingent, truly constantly renews, rejuvenates and is a product in itself. It is not a period when work or living may be paused, to only have ourselves be ceaseless apprehensive about it, but where the eclectic entirety of our being delves and finds a deeper depth of being.

ents and make a thorough study, debate, deliberate, evaluate the challenges and then only implement the new system.

M Pradyu, Kannur

Impact of weaker Rupee

It is unprecedented in the history of India that Rupee stands depreciated so steeply by about a whopping 5% to 87.20 against the dollar from 83.50 in August, 2024! This is a great blow not only to the importers but also those who have acquired foreign currency loans from overseas lenders as they have to shell out more in rupees to buy dollars from the banks. Moreover, the weaker rupee has become double trouble for the students who have gone abroad for their higher studies; (i) Shelling out more Rupees to buy the required foreign currency to pay their tuition fees periodically (ii) Tightening of post education visa norms which dims chances of higher pay and repayment of loan sooner back home.

Though there may be various factors for the steep slide in the value of rupee against dollar, the skewed policies of the BJP government and their failure to gauge the fall in advance and guard against the same are the main reasons for the same. When the priorities of the government linker around winning election after election by hook or by crook and attending religious meets like Kumb Mela in Prayagraj and Mahashivratri celebrations in Coimbatore, imposing Hindi on Non-Hindi speaking states and spending more time in finding ways and means to stay put in power, all unconnected to strengthen the economy of the nation, such things detrimental to the progress of the country are bound to happen.

Tharcus S Fernando, Chennai