

# Delay in clearances, rains held up Smart City works, RS told

In reply to Tanavade, Union Min Sahu says challenges in vendor, resource availability and procurement of construction material were the other reasons

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** Challenges encountered in implementing projects including inter alia, delay in obtaining clearances from different departments, land acquisition, groundwater issues, seasonal rains and others were some of the reasons for the delay in completing the Smart City works in Panjim.

This was informed by Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu to a question tabled by MP Sadanand Shet Tanavade in the Rajya Sabha on Mon-day.

The minister said that besides the above reasons, challenges in vendor and resource availability in the



city and the procurement of construction material were the other reasons for the delay.

Panjim has taken various steps to expedite works like deployment of addition-

al manpower, working in three shifts, close supervision by department concerned, etc, the minister informed Tanavade.

As apprised by the Imagine Panaji Smart City

Development Limited (IP-SCDL), in order to address public grievances arising from dust pollution, traffic congestion, road conditions and safety concerns due to Smart City works,

The special purpose vehicle (SPV) had taken several measures including, inter-alia, provisioning of alternative routes, daily updates on road diversions published in newspapers and on the official website, proper signage and barricading for smooth traffic flow and pedestrian safety, regular water spraying in construction zones, covering construction materials, temporary road repairs and adequate lighting and installing reflectors and

warning signs.

As on March 4, 2025, the IPSCDL has been able to claim Central financial assistance of Rs 441 crore under Smart Cities Mission, out of which Rs 411 crore have been utilised. Also IPSCDL has undertaken 51 projects amounting to Rs 1,051 crore, out of which 42 projects amounting to Rs 849 crore have been completed. Nine projects amounting to Rs 202 crore are ongoing, it was informed.

Also on the requests received from States/Union Territories, the Government of India has extended the Smart Cities Mission up to March 31, 2025, for completion of its all ongoing projects.

# Computer shortage at Sanguem Municipality

13 staff members forced to share four systems

Team Herald

**SANGUEM:** The Sanguem Municipal Council is facing serious infrastructure issues, with only four working computers for 13 staff members, forcing employees to share systems, which is causing delays in public services.

Due to this shortage, residents have to wait for several days even for basic work. The building of the council is big but the facilities are missing. According to sources, there are a total of 13 staff members and ten of them do not have a desktop computer. Not only that even condition of printers too is not good and they do not function properly. Some of the desktops which are not functioning have been kept at a corner of the office. The shortage of the facility is causing inconvenience to the people of Sanguem who visit the council for various kind



A lone staffer is spotted working in the Sanguem municipal office

**I have spoken to the chief officer of the Council. He is the authority and I have hope that he will do the work. It does not look good that there are no required number of computers. People come here for different type of work. People need to be provided service.**

— Meshu D'Costa  
Sanguem councillor

Speaking to O Herald, Sanguem councillor Meshu D'Costa, said, "I have spo-

ken to the chief officer of the Council. He is the authority and I have hope that he will do the work. It does not look good that there are no required number of computers. People come here for different type of work. People need to be provided service."

"People pay taxes so they should get service. It is a very shameful act that there are no computers. We can only request, other than that I cannot do anything. Chairperson should act on this. Even the DMA (Directorate of Municipal Administration) too should know what is going on here," D'Costa said.

# CM reviews Budget utilisation of the financial year 2024-25

Assesses implementation of centrally sponsored schemes and new Gol schemes

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Monday reviewed Budget utilisation of the financial year 2024-25 and action plan for clearing pending cases in the last month of the financial year.

Chief Secretary Dr V Candavelou, Secretaries to Government, both District Collectors and Heads of Departments were present.

Sawant said that besides reviewing budget utilisation of the financial year 2024-25 and action plan for clearing pending cases in the last month of financial year, the meeting reviewed implementation of Centrally-sponsored schemes and new Government of India schemes which can be implemented in the State.

The meeting discussed preparation of State Budget 2025-26, to be presented in the State Legislative Assembly starting from March 24 and expeditious disposal of vari-

ous pending cases in both the Collectorate offices. It also reviewed various online services and on-boarding of new services in online mode.

The Chief Minister has directed officials to clear dues of Dayanand Social Security Scheme (DSSS) Laadli Laxmi scheme, Griha Aadhar, Kalakar support scheme and other social welfare schemes. He asked officials to expedite implementation of Aadhaar-based Payment Systems to enhance transparency.

Sawant mentioned that deliberations took place on green budget, solid waste management, focussed on strengthening infrastructure for tourism, strengthening time-bound online services and development of the State.

Sawant said that the government will consider the suggestions, inputs shared by the people and present a budget to ensure long-term development of the State.

# Sanguem residents demand immediate repair of ambulance

Team Herald

**SANGUEM:** The non-functional 108 ambulance service at the Primary Health Centre, Sanguem is a serious issue, as it directly affects people's access to emergency medical care. Many locals have reported that either the ambulance is unavailable or there are significant delays, putting lives at risk. The lack of basic healthcare facilities in the region has worsened the situation.

It's concerning that, as per locals, the health department only takes action when the issue is highlighted in the media but fails to maintain consistent services. Reports of people losing their lives due to oxygen shortages in ambulances further emphasise the urgent need for reliable emergency care.

Now, the residents are demanding immediate repairs of the ambulance and the appointment of a pilot and EMT (emergency medical technician) if there is a shortage.

# South Goa District Administration celebrates 10 years of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The South Goa District Administration celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme on International Women's Day, at Margao. The event was attended by dignitaries, officials, school children and women achievers. The achievements of women were highlighted in various fields. The event included cultural performances, felicitation of school children and women achievers.

On the occasion, Commanding Officer of the Technical Training Centre at Dabolim, Col Suman Kumari, was felicitated for her contributions. Students who excelled in higher secondary education, as well as women from Self Help Groups, professionals, sports-women, NGO workers and Anganwadi teachers were felicitated on the occasion.

Speaking at the event, Social Welfare Minister Subhash Phal Dessai, said the Beti Bachao Beti



Commanding Officer of the Technical Training Centre at Dabolim, Col Suman Kumari, was felicitated for her contributions

Padhao scheme has transformed from a mere slogan to a revolution that celebrates womanhood in the country. He emphasized that society should create a conducive environment for women to seize every opportunity for success and growth. Women, he added, should always be prepared to shoulder life's challenges, as it will reward them with opportunities to excel.

Phal Dessai highlighted that the BBBP scheme was launched to address gender imbalance and noted that the

girl child birth ratio has improved from 933 to 977.

In her address, Col Kumari urged young girls to dream big and work hard to achieve their goals. She shared how the Indian Army enriched her personality with discipline, resilience, and dedication. South Goa Police Superintendent (SP) Tikam Singh Verma stressed that gender equality has become a necessity for society, and women's empowerment and welfare are now matters of national importance.

# power shutdown

**CALANGUTE:** On March 11, from 9 am to 3 pm. Affected areas are Sautawaddo, Khobra waddo, Baga Ronil and Agarwaddo, fat fish, Calangute and surrounding areas.

**MARGAO:** On March 11, from 9 am to 6 pm. Affected areas are Harmonia Apartments, behind Siddharth building and surrounding areas.

**MARGAO:** On March 12, from 9 am to 6 pm. Affected areas are opp. Viswas - B building, Asro - F building, near Garden (BPS club) Ramnath Laximibai Heritage phase II, near Forest Department and surrounding areas.

**TALEIGAO:** On March 12, from 9 am to 1 pm. Areas affected are Bayview 8 surrounding areas

**TALEIGAO:** On March 13, from 9 am to 1 pm. Areas affected are Aivao 6 surrounding areas.

**TALEIGAO:** On March 15, from 9 am to 1 pm. Areas affected are La Citadel Colony 6 surrounding areas.

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# ASSAGAO RESIDENTS FACE OFF WITH WRD, PWD OVER MEGA HOUSING PROJECT

The village panchayat had initially rejected the approval for the culvert, prompting the project developers to appeal the decision to the Block Development Officer (BDO) of Bardez. The BDO upheld the panchayat's refusal, but the matter was subsequently brought before the Director of Panchayats, where approval was granted.

The local panchayat has strongly objected to this decision, and the case is now pending in the High Court after an appeal was filed against the panchayat's original ruling. Sarpanch Hanumant Naik expressed concern over the approval granted by WRD Executive Engineer Milind Gaude to construct the culvert. "We had met the Minister last year and the then WRD executive engineer Nazareth Vaz revoked all earlier permissions but the new executive engineer has granted approval despite the fact that the PWD has not given an approval for the construction of the culvert, especially since the width of the main road is just three metres," he informed.

Executive Engineer Gaude, who was present during the confrontation, confirmed that the approval was given but explained that it was necessary due to the High Court's monitoring of the case. He warned that failure to comply with the court's directives could result in departmental officials facing contempt charges. This justification was strongly rejected by the sarpanch, who insisted that the local community's concerns about the potential disruption of the Assagao Nullah's water flow should take precedence.

A group of concerned villagers voiced their objections to WRD officials, warning that altering the flow of the nullah could lead to flooding during the monsoon. They urged the departments to reconsider the approval and act in the best interests of the community. PWD Assistant Engineer (Roads) Valentino Sequeira, who was also present, clarified that no file regarding the culvert's approval had been submitted to his office, and he indicated that such approval could not have been granted without proper processes.

Siolim MLA Delilah Lobo lent her support to the villagers' concerns and emphasized the

importance of considering the local population's grievances. She urged the engineers to take immediate action to address the issues raised. Lobo further assured the residents that she would escalate the matter to higher authorities, including WRD Minister Subhash Shirodkar and Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, and arrange a meeting to discuss the issue at a higher level.

# VANUATU PM CANCELS LALIT MODI'S PASSPORT

"While all standard background checks, including Interpol screenings, conducted during his application showed no criminal convictions, I have been made aware in the past 24 hours that Interpol twice rejected Indian authorities' requests to issue an alert notice on Lalit Modi due to lack of substantive judicial evidence," the statement said. Napat said any such "alert" would have triggered an automatic rejection of Lalit Modi's citizenship application.

The release also stated that the "Prime Minister emphasised that holding a Vanuatu passport is a privilege, not a right, and applicants must seek citizenship for legitimate reasons."

"None of those legitimate reasons include attempting to avoid extradition, which the recent facts brought to light clearly indicate was Modi's intention," the statement said.

People familiar with the matter said India sent a request to the government of Vanuatu to cancel Modi's passport along with certain details of his case.

The Vanuatu prime minister suggested that the application for citizenship of the island nation by Lalit Modi should not have been accepted by the authorities in his country.

Napat's office said the government of Vanuatu has significantly strengthened the due diligence aspect of its 'Citizenship by Investment Programme' over the past four years, resulting in a marked increase in applications failing the enhanced scrutiny undertaken by the country's financial intelligence unit.

The improved process implemented several years ago includes triple-agency checks, including Interpol verification, it said.

India doesn't have a mission in Vanuatu and the Indian high commission in New Zealand handles relations with the island nation.

In recent years, India has ramped up its outreach to the Pacific Island nations as part of the four-nation grouping Quad's efforts to counter China's growing presence in that region.

Last week, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Modi has filed an application with the Indian high commission in London to surrender his Indian passport.

"He has made an application for surrendering his passport in the high commission of India, London," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

If Modi's request for cancellation of the Indian passport is accepted, then he may become an illegal alien in the UK as Vanuatu is also revoking his citizenship.

The former IPL chief is wanted by Indian law enforcement agencies in connection with allegations that he was involved in embezzlement of crores of rupees during his stint as the top boss of the IPL.

# CLOGGED TOILETS FORCE A-I FLIGHT TO RETURN TO CHICAGO

The statement read that about an hour and forty-five minutes into the flight, the crew reported some of the lavatories in Business and Economy Class to be unserviceable.

"Subsequently, eight of the 12 lavatories in the aircraft became unserviceable, causing discomfort to all on board," the statement said.

By this time, the aircraft was overflying the Atlantic, leaving points in Europe as potential cities to divert to. However, due to restrictions on night operations at most of the European airports, it was decided to divert back to Chicago, Air India said and added that the decision to divert was taken entirely in the interest of passenger comfort and safety.

"We are aware of some social media posts about the unserviceable lavatories on AI126 operating from Chicago to Delhi on March 5, 2025 that caused the flight's diversion back to its origin, Chicago O'Hare International Airport."

"We would like to confirm that as part of our investigation into the incident, our teams found polythene bags, rags, and clothes that had been flushed down and stuck in the plumbing. This led the lavatories to become unserviceable," the statement said.

On March 6, Air India said the AI126 air returned due to a "technical issue".

Air India also urged passengers to use "lavatories only for the purposes that they are meant for" and mentioned that previously, its teams had found objects like blankets, underwear, and diapers, among other waste, having been flushed down the toilets on other flights.

According to information available on the flight tracking website flightradar24.com, the flight was operated with a Boeing 777-337 ER aircraft and returned to Chicago airport after being airborne for over ten hours on March 6.

# USGAO LOCALS VOW TO GHERAO PWD MIN IF WATER WOES NOT SORTED

The locals informed that this was the fifth time they have come with empty utensils to launch a morcha on the PWD office.

She urged the AE to provide at least two hours of water supply so that villagers can fill their utensils with sufficient water to meet their daily requirement.

Usgaonkar said despite her ward being located on the slope, the locals at Marwasada and Vodakade are not receiving water.

A villager complained he did not receive even a drop of water and had to rely on neighbours to meet his water requirement.

AE Saraf assured to inspect the area, and the tap connections to sort out issues by restoring water supply immediately.

# INDIAN-ORIGIN DRUG LORD WANTED BY FBI ARRESTED IN PUNJAB

The six arrested by the FBI were identified as Amritpal Singh alias Amrit alias Bal, Amritpal Singh alias Cheema, Taqdeer Singh alias Romi, Sarabjit Singh Saabi, Fernando Valladares alias Franco and Gurlal Singh.

The arrest came amid Punjab government's ongoing "Yudh Nashian Virudh" (war against drugs) campaign, launched on February 25.

The DGP said Bhinder was also wanted in an Arms Act case registered in December 2024. The Tarn Taran Police had arrested five members of the notorious Jaggu Bhagwanpuria and

Amritpal Bath gang in the case, leading to the recovery of a significant cache of arms and ammunition from their possession.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Ferozepur Range) Swapan Sharma accompanied by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Tarn Taran Abhimanyu Rana said preliminary investigations reveal that Bhinder played a key role in transporting large consignments of drugs across international borders using trucks and trailers.

He said it was found during interrogation that "accused Shawn Bhinder, operating under the guise of a legitimate transportation business in Canada since 2014, allegedly facilitated the movement of drugs from Colombia to the US and Canada via Mexico".

Probe also revealed that Bhinder, along with his accomplices, was transporting approximately 600 kg of cocaine from Colombia every week, he added.

SSP Rana said the accused's network is believed to have ties with notorious drug traffickers, including Amritpal Singh alias Baath and Gurjant Singh Bholu Havelia. Further investigations are on, he added.

# BENFICA SURPRISES GOA-BORN SUPERFAN CAROLINA MIRANDA ON HER 100TH BIRTHDAY

Following the video messages, Carolina and her guests joined together in singing the Benfica club anthem. The festivities also included a surprise performance of traditional mando and dulpod songs after the cutting of the cake, performed by mezzo-soprano Carolina Figueiredo, another relative, who accompanied herself on piano.

Carolina Miranda, whose father Antonio Miranda served as "Presidente da Relação" (President of the Appeal Court in Panjim that also catered to Mozambique, another Portuguese colony), has maintained strong connections to her birthplace through family and friends.

This unexpected tribute has particularly resonated with people in Goa and amongst the Goan diaspora, where there exists a significant following for Portuguese clubs like Benfica and Sporting.