

## O HERALDO

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# Will Smart City deadline of March 31 be met?

With just nine days to go before the Smart City deadline for completion of all road works in Panjim, the question which is hanging over every Panjimite like a Damocles' sword is—will the road works be completed by March 31? The city and its residents, visitors and tourists alike, have been reeling under the Smart City dust pollution, dangerous pits, dug up roads, barricades and lack of signboards and traffic marshals for eight long years. Will this tortuous ordeal end with little over a week to go?

The Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited (IPSCDL) through the Advocate General has assured before the High Court that the Smart City road works in Panjim will be completed before March 31, 2025. However, till date the work remains sluggish, chaotic, disorganised and with lack of supervision.

As of date, in central Panjim, there are 3,450 metres of road work which remain unfinished. Contrary to this, an affidavit has been filed in the High Court of Bombay at Goa that only 200 metres of roadwork in St Inez is pending out of a total of 3,000 metres. As pointed out by **O Herald**, on Rua de Ourem, a staggering 13,800 metres of roadwork remains incomplete.

However, completing the road works with poor quality tar is not the end of the ordeal, as residents have found out since the roads face the prospect of being repeatedly dug due to poor planning. Sanjit Rodrigues the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director has himself declared that the road tarring

is not final, since if required, the roads will be dug again. The contractors, their supervisors and workers who are seldom supervised by government engineers are reportedly digging and re-digging the same areas despite earlier claims of completion of work. For instance, the roads near UCO Bank-Govinda Building junction, Vishal Mega Mart Junction and Atmaram Borkar Road have been dug up multiple times. The Smart City digging and re-digging has had tremendous impact not only on the psyche of the commuters and motorists, but it has led to loss in business to the local shopkeepers. Businessmen have admitted that the number of customers visiting their shops has reduced, even as they have been doing business at the same location for years. Other businessmen say that it is a very bad phase for them, since they have to pay the salaries of their employees, even as the business is not thriving.

The most important default on the part of the Smart City Mission is the non communication of their proposed works to the people. Roads are dug up overnight and left closed for days. Even if the roads are opened for traffic, they are left incomplete. The bureaucratic hurdles will also determine whether the deadline of March 31 will be met. The Smart City workers pointed to the need for official clearances for hastening of works. They assume that only works which have received clearances from the authorities will be completed on time.

People as well as activists are completely fed up complaining about Smart City negligence, delays, bad roads, dust pollution and the general upsetting of the lifestyle and disturbance of the peace of the beautiful city, they so much loved to visit, sit at particular joints, such as the Café Bhosle joint, have a cup to tea and muse about life in general or catch up with the latest on politics.

Citizens are pessimistic about the city road works being completed by March 31. The Café Bhosle square, the Duarte Pacheco road near Real Barberia, and most importantly the Panjim Municipal Market road area work in progress. The latter too have been freshly dug up for relaying. Are there more roads which the Smart City wise men will dig? No information has been made available to the public. Will the assurances given to the Court be revised?

Apart from the completing the roads, which have only been given a single coat, the next deadline is the completing of all works before May 31, 2025. This includes the completion of the parking lots and the footpath and traffic islands. But as far as the March 31 deadline, with just nine days left, serious apprehensions persist that the Smart City work may not be completed on time, leaving the residents, visitors and tourists back again on a rough road.



TALLULAH D'SILVA

# Can you feel the heat?

All roads in Goa seem to lead to the highway of construction, concretisation, rampant urbanisation and the resultant destruction of Goa's pristine and irreplaceable environment. The entire highway cutting across Goa has reduced its green cover to a large extent. The current highway work at Porvorim right up to Guirim has mowed down old heritage trees and our future of carbon sequestration, oxygen power houses and anti-landslide sentinels. The fields of Taleigao are continuously being assaulted and ravaged with dumping of debris, land filling and conversion to commercial zones with gated colonies and more hotels slated to rise above our food security and flood management systems, decimating them all with sewage, pollution and increased heat island effect.

The rising heat is not the only problem Goa is currently facing. There is no drinking water in this high rainfall state. Wells are going dry. Even with tube wells, the desertification of Goa is becoming imminent. We are soon to witness a severe water crisis



The turtle nesting sites of Morjim and Agonda are also not left alone with numerous business establishments literally operating right over these eco-sensitive areas. And this is not a comprehensive list because the real estate giants from

Delhi NCR like Lodha, Bhutani, DLF, Sabh Infra, Axon, Veera Group, Axis Ecorp, are all on an acquisition spree announcing or in the process of announcing second homes in Goa!

Now all tourists are coming back to purchase land in Goa to live like tourists in villas with swimming pools. But can Goa survive this?

Yes, Goa is the richest state. It is the most luxurious state too. Its richness and luxury comes from its forests, resources like fresh water, abundance biodiversity including marine life and peace loving people. But isn't it sad that instead of hoardings promoting this natural beauty all that we see today in advertisements right from the airport or border entry points are casinos and real estate promotions for luxury homes that are being built with the most substandard quality cleverly hidden with heavy makeup of synthetic paint and cosmetic drama. And most buyers are getting fooled by this short term glitter oblivious to the open wounds of hill cutting, bleeding forest trees sliced mercilessly, black filth oozing out into our rivers and water bodies. What are the new citizens going to eat, breathe and survive on if the very essence of Goa is damaged?

The rising heat is not the only problem Goa is currently facing. There is no drinking water in this high rainfall state. Wells are going dry. Even with tube wells, the desertification of Goa is becoming imminent. We are soon to witness a severe water crisis. What will the new Goans with luxury villas and swimming pools do to sustain their metropolitan lifestyles here in Goa? Where will the water for all the swimming pools come from?

It is ironic that even after the Supreme Court had to intervene and order for safeguarding Goa's environment and biodiversity, it has fallen on deaf ears and the Government of Goa is blatantly violating all laws and human rights.

Goa is getting plundered. Where are the custodians, its guardians and lawmakers to protect and conserve this paradise for its future generations? Is the Chief Minister of Goa listening, seeing,

feeling? Is the TCP Minister listening, seeing, feeling? What about the other departments and ministers and local representatives? What has happened to them that they are killing their own mother land and are not feeling any pain? Can power and greed for money make one so blind that you begin to not care for your own and are willing to commit crimes on innocent people and the environment that nurtures you? Isn't the role of the Development body to plan for the future and the wellbeing of its people and environment? Isn't the natural cover, trees, rivers, hills, fields all our critical infrastructure to help us live well and survive? Therefore, isn't the primary role of the TCP, PDA to plan for the conservation of this natural infrastructure for the future generations of the State? Or is it to only pass plans by taking bribes, aid land use change and conversions for concretization and kill our motherland? Village Panchayats are demanding money for approving construction licences. They are violating laws by permitting massive developments with no public participation or accountability. At the recent silent protest at the Panjim Church to demand for the ouster of the TCP Minister for permitting large scale conversions of private forest lands and others to building developments both residential and commercial, it was shocking to see yet again the misuse of power where the police obstructed the silent protesters from walking up to the CM's office at Altinho to submit the appeal letter.

Is it too much to ask Mr Chief Minister and TCP Minister to safeguard Goa's rich natural assets for all children including yours? Isn't that the least you can do to ensure that your children and all children have a future full of clean air, lush trees and forests with fruit and medicines, intact hills full of ground water and khazans full of fish, curry and rice? Goa is dying. Our mother is dying. Aren't we going to save her?

(Tallulah D'Silva is an Architect and silver awardee of the Golden Door Award 2020 for truth and integrity.)

## High accident rate remains a challenge

Goa has witnessed a worrying rise in road accidents in recent months. In September 2024 alone, the state recorded 195 accidents, resulting in 18 fatalities and several injuries, with two-wheeler riders being the most affected. The situation worsened in October 2024, with the number of accidents increasing to 260, leading to 17 deaths. These alarming figures highlight the growing safety concerns on Goa's roads and the urgent need for stricter regulations and awareness initiatives. However in 2025 there has been no difference either, accidents still take place on a daily basis.

To address this issue, authorities in Goa have intensified traffic law enforcement. The Transport Directorate issued over 12,000 challans in September and more than 13,000 in October for various violations. Additionally, the Goa Police introduced motorcycle patrolling to monitor traffic infractions more effectively and ease congestion. Despite these measures, the high accident rate remains a major challenge, emphasising the need for sustained public awareness campaigns and stricter enforcement of road safety rules.

The general public in Goa should not wear helmets, seat belts and other safety precautions just to avoid the fines that have been implemented, however this mentality has to be changed and the public should be made aware even further on the importance of these safety

measures, mainly because it is for the benefit of the public's well being rather than the police.

Warren Pereira, Tivim

## Swimming pools are water guzzlers

Raising an alarm over water shortages in various parts of the state, the Aldona MLA has reportedly called on the government to ban new construction licenses for large apartment complexes and high-end bungalows with attached swimming pools.

It appears that swimming pools have now become more of a necessity than a luxury. It is a fact that people now want to live a luxurious life and are willing to pay for the amenities. However these swimming pools are putting a lot of pressure on the water availability for the locals for their daily use. Without a swimming pool cover, a lot of water in the pool is wasted due to evaporation. This loss of water is all the more during the hot summer season. Using a cover regularly reduces evaporation by 90 to 95%. Swimming pools are water guzzlers and lead to depletion of underground water. Recycling swimming pool water can be an environmentally friendly way to manage water usage and maintain pool hygiene. These pools must have a filtration system that circulates the water through filters to remove debris, dirt and contaminants. Periodically draining and refilling the pool can help manage

water quality, but it's important to minimise this practice to conserve water. Chemicals like chlorine or bromine are added to sanitise the water, killing bacteria and preventing algae growth. Allowing swimming pools in apartment colonies and high end bungalows will have a lasting impact on water availability for Goans. Levying tax on swimming pools is a small consolation.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

## Nurture nature back to health

The editorial 'Nurture Nature back to health first' (Herald March 21, 2025) is hard hitting. Yes, you've rightly stated, Nurture Nature back to health first, and I'm convinced everything else will fall in place. We all need to understand that climate change is for real, it is at our doorstep, it has entered our system. We need to come out of that 'not in my backyard' syndrome! Repeated signals from Nature seem to have been ignored not just in Goa but in other cities like Mumbai and in the rest of the country as well.

Here in Mumbai, there was a heat wave warning recently and then suddenly at night, there was a dip in the night temperatures. It is evident now, that the situation is going to be so erratic in the near future. The government and the health department have a huge task ahead of them. In the meanwhile, yes, 'the Heat is on!!!'

Melville X D'Souza, Mumbai

## Margao Council's decision is unjust

The Margao Municipal Council's decision to bring Advocate chambers under the trade license net is unjust and goes against the legal principles of fraternity. The council should not carry out the decisions as per whims and fancies. Imposing trade license fees on Advocate chambers/office based on erroneous assumption that of commercial activity, as that the Advocates do not conduct any trade.

As the legal profession is considered a non-commercial activity. The purpose of Law in society is to maintain Order and preserve moral sanctity that holds the society. Lawyers are officers of the court and one of the most indispensable pillars of the justice delivery system.

Legal profession is a noble profession and absolutely distinct from business, commerce and trade. It's a professional service because it's very person specific and based on skill and knowledge of the person. Moreover Law Firms do not require registration if the lawyers have already been recognised by the Bar Council of India.

By the Rules framed by the BCI, the lawyers are prohibited from actively participating in any trade or profession. Therefore, the legal profession cannot be called as the commercial activity, trade or business. The lawyer's activities are

not commercial establishment as held by the Supreme Court and by various High Courts.

K G Vilop, Chorao

## The great cricketing extravaganza kicks off

The Indian Premier League (IPL) is known to showcase domestic cricket talent in a big way. It has been a stepping stone for plenty of young Indian cricketers hoping to make it big. From the initial leagues, to the upcoming 18th edition, it has metamorphosed into a tournament that has a keen eye for talent and skills. Along the way, the league has shed its early teething problems.

Despite a few inherent flaws, the IPL has groomed and encouraged players. Presence of senior Indian and foreign cricketers alongside, freedom to go for their natural game and a significant financial cushion have ensured that young names like Riyan Parag, Sai Sudarshan, Rinku Singh came to the forefront along with a lot of others. Fearless and committed, sincere and ambitious, the young guns in the IPL editions of the IPL have paid scant respect for reputations. Their focus is more on the ball; bowlers are secondary. The confidence reposed by franchises on some players despite their lackadaisical form has made sure that they repay the trust reposed in them.

Numerous local cricket leagues modeled on the IPL are trying their best to hone talents. Fame and money are deceptive and dangerous companions; they need to be prioritised vis-a-vis duty and dedication.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola