

## SMART CITY: DEATH OF YET ANOTHER DEADLINE

Special purpose vehicle IPSCDL fails to meet High Court's March 31 target; O Herald's on-the-spot investigation shows parts of the State capital still in a mess

Team Herald

PANJIM: As expected, the Smart City Mission has failed for the seventh consecutive year with Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited (IPSCDL) failing to live up to people's expectations, by not meeting the March 31 deadline set by the High Court of Bombay at Goa to complete the works and provide the much-needed relief to city residents, who have been forced to undergo severe hardships for no fault of theirs.

On Sunday, O Herald's on the ground investigations revealed that the situation is chaotic and messed up. It was found that works along roads such as Rua de Ourém, Dr Pandurang Pissurlekar Road and 18th June Road have not yet commenced. The trench near Don Bosco Higher Secondary School has been covered with mud, but has been shoddily tarred. To add to the residents' woes, the Y junction at St Inez is incomplete and the road at Taad Maad, St Inez continues to be in the deplorable condition with the workers executing the works stating that it would take at least 10 ten days to construct more chambers. In Bhatlem, the ongoing work is being executed in a haphazard manner.

Major intersections includ-



The road at Taad Maad, St Inez continues to be in a deplorable condition. (Top right) The rubble along the incomplete road near the Panjim Police Station. (Below) The incomplete concrete road near Rua de Ormuz

ing the one from Cafe Bhonsle to Mascarenhas Building are left open with poorly patch work and incomplete drainage system. The roads which are left incomplete include General Bernardo Guedes road (from municipal market to Geeta Bakery), M G Road (Mascarenhas building, Delhi Darbar, Hotel Vinanti), Atmaram Borkar Road (EDC Limited, behind Goa College of Pharmacy), and Rua Ismael Gracias (near Signal Training Centre).

"The Mission has been

getting multiple requests from some States/City government representatives, to grant some more time to complete the balance 10 per cent projects. These balance ongoing projects are in an advanced stage of implementation and got delayed due to various on-ground conditions. It is in the interest of people that these projects get complete and contribute towards the ease of living in their urban areas. Taking cognisance of these requests, the Government of India has

extended the Mission period upto March 31, 2025 to complete these balance 10 per cent projects. This extension has been informed to the cities that it would be without any additional cost, beyond the already approved financial allocation under the Mission. All ongoing projects are now expected to be completed before March 31 2025," a statement from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs said.

Cont on Pg 9 >>



### FLASHBACK: IPSCDL AFFIDAVIT ON THE DELAY

- In the affidavit, submitted to HC, IPSCDL attributed the failure to meet the May 2024 deadline to unfavourable weather conditions, incessant rains, the sandy soil, and a high water table
- It mentioned that the early arrival of the monsoon in May last year hindered progress
- Issued an unconditional apology for the 245-day delay in seeking a time extension from the Court
- Stated that the high

water table made excavation challenging, with water encountered at just one meter of depth

■ It explained that laying the main sewerage trunk line, installing manholes, and laying the concrete road surface were delayed due to the aforementioned conditions

■ Dewatering efforts were implemented, but caving of adjoining soil occurred, requiring additional dewatering pumps and emergency shoring

### 'UNREALISTIC' DEADLINES

- Launched in 2015, the aim of the Smart City Mission was to create 100 Smart Cities.
- Cities were selected on a competitive basis between 2016 & 2018
- Were given a deadline of five years to complete
- But as works were incomplete, the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs gave an extension in 2021 to get the works ready by 2023
- The deadline was further pushed to June 30, 2024
- Again in July last year, the Ministry extended the deadline to March 31, 2025

### GROUND REALITY

#### ROADS WHERE WORK HAS NOT COMMENCED

- Rua de Ourém, Dr Pandurang Pissurlekar Road & 18th June Road

#### POOR WORK AT MAJOR INTERSECTIONS

- Cafe Bhonsle to Mascarenhas Building

#### ROADS INCOMPLETE

- Y junction at St Inez & road at Taad Maad, St Inez, where workers executing the works say it would take at least 10 days to construct more chambers
- General Bernardo Guedes road (from municipal market to Geeta Bakery), M G Road (Mascarenhas building, Hotel Vinanti), Atmaram Borkar Road (EDC Limited, behind Goa College of Pharmacy) & Rua Ismael Gracias (near Signal Training Centre)

Smart City work has been abandoned opposite the Head Post Office causing major inconvenience and health issues to residents. No workers have been seen for almost a month. Controversial footpath has been left incomplete without drainage which will result in rainwater accumulation in the parking area. Pavers have been dumped right in front of the "ramp", preventing residents from getting in and out.

— Chryselles Dias, Panjim resident

## 'No school in April' slogan reverberates at Lohia Maidan

Children express concerns through poems, songs, skit & placards; gathering vows to pursue all legal avenues in a unified stand against govt move to reopen schools on April 7

Team Herald

MARGAO: Citizens comprising children, parents, teachers, principals, among others thronged the historic Lohia Maidan, Margao, for the public meeting in support of the "No Schools in April" campaign.

Voicing their opposition to the government's decision to start the new academic year on April 7, the campaign organisers reiterated their strong opposition to the Education Department's notification and vowed to pursue all legal avenues. They urged the government to reconsider and engage in constructive dialogue with stakeholders to find a solution that prioritises the health, safety, and education of Goan children.

Parents and activists reiterated that they would not back down, emphasising that the government must address public concerns rather than impose unilateral decisions. Several speakers stressed that education policies should be formulated with community input, taking into account Goa's unique climate, cultural traditions, and existing academic structure.

The meeting, attended by Opposition MLAs such as Vijai Sardesai, Venzy Viegas, Cruz Silva, and South Goa Congress MP Captain Viriato Fernandes, saw children reciting poems, singing songs, performing a skit, and expressing their concerns. They also created placards with slogans, adding to the growing chorus of opposition.

Parents passionately voiced concerns about the heat, lack of infrastructure,



Students hold placards with slogans, adding to the growing chorus of opposition to the govt's move to start the new academic year on April 7

### PARENTS SUBMIT MEMORANDUM HIGHLIGHTING FUNDAMENTAL FLAWS

MARGAO: The parents' memorandum submitted to the South Goa MP Capt Viriato Fernandes, which will be sent to the Union Education Minister, systematically outlines what they describe as fundamental flaws in Goa's hurried transition to an April academic calendar, presenting a detailed critique of the policy's implementation. Criticising the lack of stakeholder consultation, they emphasised that teachers, students, and parents were never properly oriented about the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 changes, leaving schools scrambling to adapt. Infrastructure gaps further compound the problem, with many lacking basic facilities like clean water and functional washrooms, while the absence of vocational subject choices forces students into limited options, contradicting NEP's promise of flexibility. Climate remains a pressing concern, with April's scorching heat and frequent power cuts making classrooms unbearable and unsafe.

Cont on Pg 9 >>

the difficulty of Hindi for Class VI students, removal of foreign languages, issues with the medium of instruction,

and disruption of traditional holidays. They argued that the new academic terms were not balanced

and that the government failed to justify the change. Some also pointed out that Goa's tourism-dependent economy would be affected, as families typically plan vacations during April and May when schools are traditionally closed.

Parents demanded a transparent review of the academic calendar, adherence to National Education Policy (NEP) principles, proper teacher training before introducing new subjects, and a phased implementation instead of sudden changes. "The government may try to drown our voices with official circulars, but our voices will only grow louder," a parent declared.

In speeches, sketches, and songs, children highlighted the unbearable heat, questioning how they were expected to manage four hours in classrooms when adults struggled for just minutes in the sun.

They pointed to widespread opposition from children, parents, and teachers, questioning why the government was acting against their interests.

Capt Viriato criticised the government not just for this decision but for other "ill-policies" jeopardising the younger generation's future.

He recalled his childhood spent engaging in sports, culture, and music during the holidays.

He also promised to update parents on the response from the Union Education Minister.

Goa Forward Party (GFP) president and Fatorda MLA Sardesai called the move "insensitive, ego-driven, and anti-people".

Cont on Pg 9 >>

## Aftershocks rattle Mandalay

AFP, MANDALAY: Residents scoured collapsed buildings Sunday searching for survivors as aftershocks rattled the devastated city of Mandalay, two days after a massive earthquake killed at least 1,700 people in Myanmar and at least 18 in neighbouring Thailand.

The initial 7.7-magnitude quake struck near the central Myanmar city of Mandalay early Friday afternoon, followed minutes later by a 6.7-magnitude aftershock.

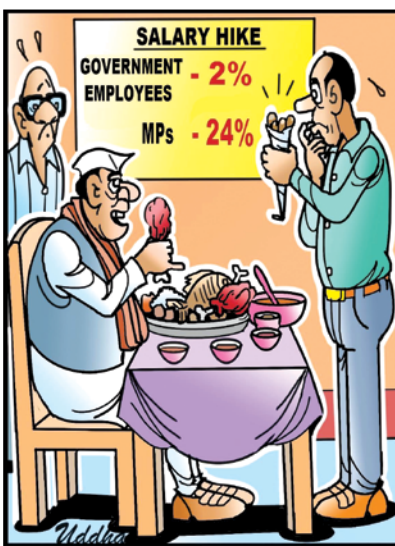
The tremors collapsed buildings, downed bridges and buckled roads, with mass destruction seen in the city of more than 1.7 million people.

Tea shop owner Win Lwin picked his way through the remains of a collapsed restaurant on a main road in his neighbourhood early on Sunday, tossing bricks aside one by one.

"About seven people died here: when the quake struck, he told AFP.

MAX. TEMP 33.6 °C  
MIN. TEMP 26.4 °C

idharudhar



Cheers! You enjoy your peanuts, while I feast!

## HERALDING THE NEW YEAR



Women dressed in traditional attire ride motorcycles during a procession on the occasion of Gudi Padwa festival, the beginning of the Hindu New Year, in Mumbai, Maharashtra, on Sunday

## A clarion call to Churches in Asia to address ecological crisis

Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences president Cardinal Ferrão issues pastoral letter providing a stark assessment of continent's environmental predicament

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a powerful appeal to faith communities across the continent, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) has urged Churches in Asia to take immediate and concrete action to address the growing ecological crisis facing the region and the world. The call comes through a comprehensive pastoral letter released recently by FABC President, Archbishop Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão, who also serves as the Archbishop of Goa and Daman.

The letter coincides with the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' landmark encyclical Laudato Si' and the ongoing Jubilee of Hope 2025. It outlines the severe environmental challenges confronting Asian nations while proposing practical steps that local parishes and communities can implement. Incidentally, the letter was released before the powerful earthquake hit Myanmar and rattled Thailand.

"We reflect on the urgency of responding to the ecological crisis in

"We must not let fear or apathy paralyse us. Instead, let us walk the Pilgrimage of Hope together, responding with faith and courage — Archbishop Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão, FABC president



our time," wrote Cardinal Ferrão, who emphasised that Christian hope calls for "active engagement in the restoration of creation and the healing of the wounds of our world."

The pastoral letter provides a stark assessment of Asia's environmental predicament, including deforestation across Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines; rising sea levels threatening coastal communities in Bangladesh and Vietnam; water security issues from melting Himalayan glaciers; and dangerous air pollution levels in major cities like Delhi, Manila, and Bangkok.

Cont on Pg 9 >>