

Better road designing, holistic, sustainable development required

God has blessed us people of Goa, with a beautiful land and peaceful life in these times. However, we have to strive to preserve this blessing with His Grace, and pass it on to future generations.

In the junction area near the Holy Family Church in Alto Porvorim, a pillar of the fly-over is coming up. The position of the pillar could have been much better. The pre-construction open crossing with clear view,

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will now be made into a junction with reduced length of line-of-sight. The near-blind-corner would cause problems for the people who use the road below the flyover. Buses too, turn here. Just because of money spent on construction, can people be allowed to potentially die at this junction and beyond, in days and years to come?

We know that parking on curves, or turns, or in junction areas, is to be avoided; as the line of sight of on-coming road-users gets reduced. This causes accidents and deaths—

deaths which were definitely avoidable. Imagine permanently parking a pillar and causing deaths potentially. Infrastructure projects should be better designed, keeping to international codes of safety.

There are many examples in Goa, of artificial near-blind-turns, needing attention and remedy. Years earlier, the clear Mercedes to Santa Cruz junction had a clear line of sight for hundreds of metres on either side on the highway. However, the flyover built a couple of years ago at this junction, has many blind-spot corners under it. Similar blind-spots are a little further on the service road, from Cujira to Annexim in Santa Cruz, and still another going from Dental College area toward Goa Medical College. In-fact the underpass here often needs a police-man and now also has a signal installed! The infrastructure should also make things better for the people using the road below the flyovers. God forbid! if an ambulance carrying someone, gets stuck here years later, due to lack of vision, or our uncaring attitude, today. The GMC to GDC underpass for the pedestrians



needs better designing too, making it safer for pedestrians and vehicle users too.

One of the most dangerous junctions I have come across, is the one near Greenpark Hotel in Guirim.

Earlier, before the road-widening and flyovers, if one came from Pallem in Ucassaim, passed over the rivulet-bridge and wanted to take right towards Mapusa town, it was relatively much better. Today, the flyover underpass is built further to the right, not-aligned with the bridge. This causes the traffic going (from Pallem in Ucassaim) to Mapusa town to go against the direction of traffic flow on the service road, before reaching the opening under the fly-over. Accidents are waiting to happen, due to bad designing.

Road-designing needs to be for the weakest road users (an old blind wheel-chaired person or pedestrian), and not just car-users and trucks plying over the flyovers. There has to be a preferential option for the poor. There may be many more such examples the reader may know in Goa. Probably all these blind-turns need to be rectified, probably by lengthening the span of the flyovers at all such junctions, however without further land acquisitions.

Having a well-announced public-hearing, taking opinions of experts in diverse fields, and listening

with humility to the people helps, and can give a holistic solution. Often, proposed claimed solutions lead to other unseen problems, when not seen holistically or in a trans-disciplinary way.

Often there are better, cheaper and more sustainable happier alternatives to fly-overs, like increasing and having 1000 buses in Goa to reduce traffic jams— just to name one. Impacts of flyovers, like increase in Urban Heat-Island Effect, destruction in earthquakes etc. can also be avoided, when it is listened to in public hearing of projects.

Through this letter, I hope rectifications are made and lives of all are potentially saved, and our roads are safer for us all. We have to use our knowledge and power to do good. Discussion, debate and making informed choices help us all. These thoughts and suggestions written can definitely be further improved. We are stewards of the Earth and not masters of it. Our lives are relatively short. I pray that God gives the grace to our representatives, bureaucrats and citizens, the humility, strength, courage and wisdom, to do what is morally right.

Dumping of mud for construction goes on unabated at Sangolda



Rampant dumping of mud has been going on unabated in the fields basically at Belavista vaddo and all over Sangolda while the authorities have been turning a blind eye to illegalities.

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ronmental degradation. The government of late has decided to act tough against the conversion of low lying fields and have even formed taluka wise squads to take on the wrong doers. Are these rules and regulations only on paper or will they be re-

spected in letter and spirit? The concerned panchas and the panchayat body needs to be pulled up for these violations but we wonder whether that is going to happen as many of those indulging in illegalities here are and were members of the local body.



Desilt nullahs before reconstructing them

Decades after the overflowing waters of the Tillari Irrigation Project flooded low-lying houses in Pilimbi, located in Sodiem, Siolim, the authorities have finally initiated work on desilting and reconstructing the retaining walls of the nullah in Cunchelim.

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The century-old stone walls have been brought down to make way for new construction, but this move raises concerns, as it will likely narrow the width of the nullah. Moreover, unless the area is thoroughly desilted, it is bound to get choked with the first rains, potentially making the cure worse than the disease.

It would be prudent for the Siolim-Sodiem village panchayat to engage in a dialogue with the Water Resources Department and resolve the matter before the monsoon arrives. The width of the nullah needs to be increased—not reduced—and proper desilting is ab-



solutely essential. Last year, villagers endured immense hardships when their low-lying homes were inundated and belongings washed away. Residents were forced to flee from their homes and seek shelter in far-off places. The Sodiem panchayat must now ensure that every nullah in Pilimbi and Bancar Vaddo stand up for their rights and ensure that the authorities are held accountable and do not continue to take the community for granted.

It is regrettable that the panchayat has turned a blind eye to several illegal-

ities, including instances where nullahs have been converted into roads to benefit builders in Pilimbi. Even resolutions passed during gram sabhas remain unimplemented to this day. Villagers must not continue to suffer due to the negligence of both the Tillari Irrigation Project and the local panchayat. The onus is also on locals to stand up for their rights and ensure that the authorities are held accountable and do not continue to take the community for granted.

Where have all the traffic cops vanished?

Ever since Chief Minister Pramod Sawant issued guidelines directing traffic police not to issue challans to violators, the cops have become conspicuous by their absence on the roads.

Following the new directive, traffic police are barely seen around, resulting in traffic congestion across several areas.

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For instance, the situation opposite O' Coqueiro is chaotic, with just two officers often left to manage the heavy flow of vehicles. The same traffic cops who would earlier swoop down on violators and scare the daylight out of them have now vanished from the nooks and corners of Porvorim, Mapusa, Saligao and many places. Even the ones that would give lessons in morality in the quiet to tourists at night basically on the Porvorim side of Mandovi are not seen since then.

One wonders—what is



stopping the police from simply standing on the roads and regulating traffic throughout the day? Was it always just about collecting fines and filling departmental coffers? Don't they need to regulate traffic and ensure travel safety on the road?

There have been several instances in the past where traffic cops were suspended for allegedly extorting money from tourists. But now, their absence from the roads speaks volumes of the escapades. The lack

of regulation is not only inconvenient but dangerous. It is high time the department deploys its personnel effectively and resumes active traffic management. After all, life is far more valuable than penalties. While the honourable Chief Minister needs to be lauded for his directives on penalties, I would kindly request him to use his good offices to deploy the traffic cops back to the roads to streamline traffic and ensure public safety.

Exposed distribution panels

Despite numerous reminders to the Goa Electricity Department, no action has been taken for locking the distribution panels in Benaulim. Similarly exposed outdoor light controls, feeder box-

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es and meter panels are seen all over the village. Minor fires due to short circuits and water have been reported; this is also dangerous to humans. Is



the government waiting for fatalities to occur before it takes action?

Provide night shelter to beggars at Mapusa



Some time back, a group of beggars was seen spending the night on the footpath at Mapusa after selling their wares at a nearby fair. Among them were a couple of young women and small children. It was half past midnight when a policeman stopped his vehicle and began to drive them away.

It was disheartening to see them flee the area after the man in uniform threatened them with dire consequences. Frightened, they disappeared into the nearby fields.

As a society, we must be more sensitive to the needs of our less fortunate brethren. There should be proper shelter homes where they can at least spend the night in safety and dignity. Not only would this pro-

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vide them with a basic necessity, but it would also help authorities keep track of their well-being and activities in a humane and structured way.

No 'pedestrian crossing' near Vasco Govt school

It must be said that it is of utmost importance to have a 'pedestrian crossing' on the road near a school. This helps students to cross the roads without risk as the traffic is expected to slow down.

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There can be a rush of children crossing the road after school hours. However, it is observed that even though there is a road-sign that depicts 'school ahead' near the Govern-

ment High School along the Swatantra Path in Vasco, there is absolutely no 'pedestrian crossing' markings anywhere nearby. Students face the risk of being knocked down by a speeding vehicle along this busy road. The authorities concerned need to see to it that 'pedestrian crossing' is notified in close proximity of this government school and necessary markings made on the road.



Road debris dumped in the field



The Public Works Department (Roads) has undertaken the repair of the culvert at Siolim, Bamon Vaddo, near Lobo's house. While the contractor has begun the work in earnest, what is surprising—and concerning—is that the debris from the site has been removed and dumped in the nearby

fields. This is in clear violation of the recent High Court order in the PIL regarding illegal dumping of construction waste. One hopes that the concerned authorities will take prompt action before this turns into a case of illegal dumping, potentially stalling the repair work altogether.

Clogged drains in Benaulim



The drains in Benaulim are no longer drains. They are merely receptacles for leaves, garbage, rotting discarded food items, plastic bottles, dead animals and other forms of refuse. With unseasonal rains upon us, the gutters not only stink but are the cause of vehicular accidents, drivers on the roads fail to discern drains

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which are almost invisible during the night. Further there are hardly any covers on the drains making things more dangerous. Will the panchayat design to clean them before the monsoons or will it take action only after a fatality occurs.

Garbage near road leading to St Xavier's is a nuisance

The city of Mapusa is getting dirtier by the day, with uncollected garbage piling up by the roadside and creating a public nuisance. Garbage tied up in plastic bags is regularly dumped along the road leading to St Xavier's, raising a foul stink. This is a busy stretch, especially frequented by students, and it is truly nauseat-

ing to endure the stench early in the morning.

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Cunchelim**

Moreover, there is a place of worship in the area, which deserves to be treated with respect. The Municipal Council must ensure that garbage

is collected in a timely manner. Fresh air is the birth-right of every citizen, and the authorities—who routinely collect taxes from the people—must fulfill their responsibility of maintaining hygiene and cleanliness in the city. After all, it is rightly said that cleanliness is next to godliness.

