

O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Road engineering going down the drain

The iron gratings installed over drains along the left sides of both of DB Marg's carriage-ways have been in the news for all the wrong reasons. Despite appearing to be sturdy, their installation leaves much to be desired as, over time, many of these grates have sunk much below the tarmac, taking motorists, especially two-wheeler riders by surprise and potentially causing serious accidents along the city's main thoroughfare.

Most recently, it was reported that riders, particularly those who are familiar with DB Marg, choose to avoid riding over the grates and instead move to the middle of the road, creating a dangerous situation for the motorists behind them as most of the latter are caught unawares by their sudden swerves. And with the monsoon already unleashing its wrath on Goa in a trailer of sorts, citizens are concerned about the perils that the grates could cause amid driving rain and wind and the resultant slippery roads.

Many have said they do not want the government to pass the buck in its signature blame-game tactic. All they want is to see action on the ground. They want someone, anyone, to take corrective measures to nip accidents caused by these grates in the bud.

The president of the Goa Road Safety Forum himself recently slammed the idea of installing grates on the state capital's busiest and most iconic road. "I do not know what compelled the engineers to cover the drains in this way. This has been done without any thought.

A senior official of the department said they are waiting for a report from a consultant of Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Ltd (IPSCDL), who was tasked with surveying all drains in the city and preparing a master plan. The official said the report was expected this March, but it is yet to come. "They have only pointed out problems but they have to give solutions to those problems," the PWD official added

tical challenges and poor public cooperation to allow time for better solutions to be put in place (such as cemented covers which need a considerable amount of time to be cured), it also pointed to red tape.

A senior official of the department said they are waiting for a report from a consultant of Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Ltd (IPSCDL), who was tasked with surveying all drains in the city and preparing a master plan. The official said the report was expected this March, but it is yet to come. "They have only pointed out problems but they have to give solutions to those problems," the PWD official added.

Now let's zoom out for a moment and look at the larger picture. What is happening along DB Marg is happening on several other busy stretches across the length and breadth of the state too. In most such areas — for instance on the bustling Chogm road — the tarmac is far from smooth as the sewerage line for the area, which was laid last year, has left its mark. Large uneven and bumpy patches bang in the middle of an otherwise decent road evoke the same reaction from motorists as do the grates along DB Marg. To make matters worse on Chogm road, there are no functioning streetlights in certain parts, mainly on the slope leading from the Porvorim plateau down into Sangolda. This is incredibly dangerous as riders who are unaware of the depressions, go right into them and almost lose balance, while those who can gauge, more or less, where the bumpy areas are, manoeuvre right to the middle of the road to avoid the bumps, thereby taking motorists behind them by surprise. If these depressions are not corrected soon, a fatality is almost certain.

With the NH 66, which runs parallel to Chogm road, reduced to something of a war zone in some parts due to the ongoing construction of the elevated corridor, it was binding on the authorities to ensure that Chogm road was in the best possible condition as a bulk of the NH 66 traffic is being diverted on to it to help iron out congestion.

Internal roads in many parts of Goa are in a similarly poor condition too. Uneven, eroded and bearing the remnants of slipshod cover-ups following the laying of public utility lines, they too are a recipe for disaster, and in worst case scenarios, death.

Alas, engineering and empathy, both seem to have gone out the government's window.

comment



PLASTINO D'COSTA

Civility also is a two — way street, you cannot expect financially under pressure Goan taxi drivers to tolerate arrogant tourist tantrums which might be the standard from where these tourists come from



For those who have not paid attention to the happenings of BluSmart — a EV app based ride sharing startup operating in Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai had to suspend their operations leaving their commuters high and dry and thousands of their employees and drivers jobless overnight. Most commuters who got used to their great service are suddenly realising the af-

Believe it or not, Goa's last line of defence is going to be the Goan taxi drivers. They happen to be first-hand witnesses of the tourism boom and it is only natural they are putting up a fight for their rightful share, their method might not be ideal, but they have been ditched and used by politicians in the past, hence the frustration.

Recently Indian tourists on a shoe string budget have been calling them the mafia, and it is possible that the taxi business might have succumbed to infiltration of non-Goans, thereby bringing disrepute to the service they provide, but generally Goa should be thanking the decent taxi drivers who through their politeness acted as silent ambassadors of Goa's tourism in the early days. Unfortunately decency takes a hit, when you find out that there is someone all out to steal your cheese.

Civility also is a two — way street, you cannot expect financially under pressure Goan taxi drivers to tolerate arrogant tourist tantrums which might be the standard from where these tourists come from. The good part is that the Government has realised that Goan taxi drivers are an important part of the tourism machinery, but their ministers keep suggesting that all taxi drivers should be on an aggregator app is definitely not the correct approach, in fact it might be the beginning of their end. Here's why.

ter effects of the suspension due to their hampered mobility. Apparently, BluSmart parent company promoters have swindled some of the finances and it is due to this financial irregularity they have come under regulatory scrutiny. Imagine thousands of drivers jobless for someone else's fault.

That brings us to the question should around ten thousand of BluSmart driver's fate be in the hands of one flamboyant crazy promoter. Should not the power be distributed to each and every driver, so even one driver goes crazy, you contain the situation and move on. Unfortunately in recent times, governments, not only in India but elsewhere too have created oligarchs, who have yielded too much power and created entities that are willing to swallow smaller businesses or force their closure.

The Indian telecom industry for instance had more than 10 operators, than one oligarch made an entry, got access of a government asset in the form of spectrum through questionable means, offered free services and in the bargain killed most of the operators. Today, a big country like India, we are left with 3+1 operator with one operator still facing a barrage of obstacles thrown at it, so that India becomes a duopoly. With one less competitor prices of mobile services can then hit the roof, so that all those free services given at entry point can be recovered with interest, reminding the free loaders that there is never a free lunch.

Now imagine an app based ride sharing, oligarch backed, makes an entry into Goa with deep pockets, offers almost free taxi services with an aim to kill competition and while at it builds up a narrative that by giving free services, it is helping Goa's cause to scale up tourism. While we keep applauding, most of the independent taxi drivers are given choice to either fold up your business or join the company and work on their terms. Who is the mafia then, the helpless driver will never know what hit them and how they got converted from independent business owners to employees with the cream taken away by the deep pocketed corporate.

Aggregator businesses with huge venture capitalist funding have been regularly disrupting small businesses while chasing growth, the deeper the pockets the longer the freebies, a small business owner is then left with no choice but to eventually wind up. Once the competition is neutralised, they then recalibrate the business to increase the price and generate huge profits. Bad for the consumer too, he ends up paying more than he was shelling out earlier.

The Goa Government might argue that this type of oligarchs controlling entire business will never be allowed especially in a core sector such as transportation of the state. But competition in core sector such as the telecom industry was eliminated under the watchful eyes of so many telecom regulators and the government.

Competition should always be encouraged. It is the right thing to do in a functional democracy is the reason a statutory body such as the Competition Commission of India exists. In general, competition tends to lower prices to gain market share, but you don't sell your product and service below your cost with the sole purpose of eliminating competition unfairly.

So the next time Indian tourists come to Goa and complain about high cost of transportation, please remember Goans too have to endure high prices for their transportation needs due to mass tourism. Most Goans are forced to purchase vehicles for their transportation needs and yet we are weary of the entry of app based because we don't know the long term intentions of these new entrants. Remember, there is no free lunch.

Technology is convenient and fast and when the consumer has to pay lower prices it looks all the more attractive, but all the glitters is not gold. You need to work the math and the motive as to why the service is so cheap to begin with. We don't know the intentions of Indian tourists cribbing about high transportation prices, are they building up a narrative for some oligarch to enter in this lucrative business with freebies?

(The author is a business consultant)

Protect Goa's taxi business

people's *edit*

CLOGGED DRAINS, DROWNING STREETS: CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

JOSEPH LEWIS D'SILVA

We --- both literate and the illiterate --- litter our surroundings by throwing garbage along the roadsides and into drains. Children walking home from school often discard empty chip packets, plastic cola bottles, chocolate wrappers and other waste on the streets, especially into gutters.

If only children were taught --- both in schools and at home --- to keep the streets clean and dispose of waste responsibly, we would preserve the natural beauty of our environment.

Garbage irritates, infuriates and agitates everyone, yet few of us take responsibility to keep our surroundings clean. A gutter is a channel designed to carry away rainwater and is usually fixed along the edge of roads. It is not meant to be a dumping ground. However, piles of rubbish, plastic waste, food wrappers, paper scraps are frequently seen blocking these drains.

As a result, swarms of flies descend on the area, invading homes and causes nausea among those living nearby. Clogged drains are a man-made problem --- and unfortunate byproduct of our careless consumption patterns.

A thought keeps recurring: is there no one responsible for cleaning the drains before the monsoon begins? Why no action is taken? Our Church feast was held on May 4, 2025, and after the celebrations, the area was littered with plastic bottles, polythene bags, foil wrappers, and soft drink cans --- all dumped into the gutters near my house.

Even by May 16, the drains remained un-cleared. Concerned, I wrote to the local panchayat, requesting them to clean the drains at the earliest.

On one cloudy afternoon, I looked up at the sky, and suddenly the heavens opened. The first monsoon rain lashed down. The blocked gutter near my house overflowed, flooding our courtyard and turning it into a pond. I stood in awe, watching the thunder and lightning --- nature's most magical and mesmerizing display. Wind and rain danced wildly. But our compound was flooded. Left with no choice, I hired a labourer to clear the blocked drain. We placed the collected debris besides the gutter.

I couldn't burn the waste, as it contained wet and plastic materials, which release harmful toxins when incinerated. Nor could I bury it --- plastic being non-biodegradable.

I sincerely hope the authorities do not turn a blind eye to such situations and act swiftly.

I believe the government should impose strict fines on individuals who dump waste on roads or in drains. Tackling this issue requires stronger policies against littering. Installing CCTV cameras in strategic locations can help identify offenders and ensure accountability. Only through firm enforcement and public cooperation can we achieve a cleaner environment.

We earnestly appeal to the powers-that-be to address this issue in a dynamic, well-managed and honest manner --- before our beautiful Goa turns into the garbage dump of Asia.

It is high time we recognise our role in polluting the environment and take responsibility for keeping our surroundings clean. Clean streets and un-clogged drains are not just the responsibility of the authorities' but of each and every citizen. With better waste management practices, civic awareness and stricter enforcement, we can prevent such flooding disasters. Let's act today, so our children can inherit a cleaner, healthier tomorrow.

Stop sending young Agniveers to forward posts

On October 11, 2023, an Agniveer "died of self-inflicted gunshot injury" along the Line of Control in the Rajouri District of Jammu and Kashmir. Ten days later, a youth from Maharashtra lost his life in the "line of duty" due to "complications arising out of high-altitude conditions." He succumbed in the dangerous Siachen terrain, the world's highest (6,100 m) militarised zone.

The first recruit was not accorded a guard of honour or military funeral as per the Army's policy, but by Haryana from where he hailed, in contrast to the second Agniveer. Why this discrimination? Both youths were on duty and not on leave when they lost their lives.

In the 1st week of October 2024, at the Deolali Firing Ranges in Nashik, Maharashtra two Agniveers aged 20 and 21 years were killed during an exercise when a team was firing a field gun and the shell exploded. A week back an 22-year-old Agniveer, who joined 21 months back, died in Kashmir. The family was informed that he had a bullet injury to his head. Hope the government has compensated their families of all these Agniveers with Rs 1 crore, as assured when the Agnipath scheme was launched.

New recruits — whether Agniveer or non-Agniveer — are sent to the forward posts soon after their training. Undoubtedly, they are trained well but may not have the skills to face real-life situations or take rapid decisions. The recruits should initially be posted within the States before deput-

ing them to the perilous borders. This could encourage youngsters to join the armed forces else even their families might hesitate to permit them to join, if soon after the training the recruits are posted in hazardous places.

The government should not send Agniveers to battle zone posts, deserts and cold areas till they are in the mid-30s, further trained and get acclimatised to the elements and to high-stress living conditions and situations. It is essential to tweak and revamp the Agnipath scheme. The Agnipath scheme was promoted by politicians and defense personnel (serving and retired), sitting in the comforts of their offices, homes and TV studios. It would be interesting to know as to how many of these "promoters" have sent their children or grandchildren to become Agniveers.

Sridhar D'Iyer, Caranzalem

Trees keep falling like nine pins

A huge mango tree collapsed near the North Goa Collectorate in Panaji and in the process damaged over a dozen parked two-wheelers on Wednesday. Heavy rainfall in Ponda triggered multiple tree collapse incidents. Several tree-falling incidents reported across the Bardez coastal belt kept fire-fighters on their toes. It must be said that trees in the state are falling like ninepins.

In the years gone by, Goa used to witness heavy showers but never

letterstotheeditor

For letters to the editor contact us at editor@herald-goa.com.

All letters must contain correct postal address and telephone number. Letters are liable to be edited for brevity.

has one heard of trees uprooting at such a disturbing frequency as is the case now. Serious injuries, fatalities and major property damage can occur when trees come crashing down. What could be the reasons for this? A tree's roots are its anchors. So when the wind blows, those roots hold the tree upright. But when the soil becomes supersaturated with water it loses its strength and the roots slip through the soil. Tree roots need oxygen to function properly. When the soil becomes supersaturated, water replaces the oxygen in the soil. This puts stress on the tree. As a result of massive construction work being taken up in the state, the soil has become loose. Haphazard trimming of the branches also affects the stability of the tree. When pavers are put on the pavement in a tree's critical root zone, the compacted soil can over time smother the tree roots. A large and healthy root system is crucial for any tree. However due to unregulated construction activities, the root system of the trees could be struggling for survival.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Nature strikes back with vengeance

This has reference to 'Rain fury brings Goa to its knees & the picture IDHAR-UDHAR' (Herald May 22 2025).

Indeed, the rains seem to have brought Goa to its knees, especially at a time when the Smart City work is in progress. The

picture of a motorbike with the wheels rotating on the flood water was apt. And these are just the pre-monsoon or unseasonal showers one may say, but the entire picture is yet to unfold when the actual monsoon kicks in.

The point is, we can never be prepared for the monsoon, whether it is Goa, Mumbai or anywhere in the country. Rains have been playing havoc in different parts of the country. What we fail to understand or realise, is that we ourselves are responsible for this state of affairs. Once again, I say, stop playing with Nature, for, when Nature strikes, it strikes with all its might, it strikes at will!

Melville X D'Souza, Mumbai

Objectivism and modern parallels

Ayn Rand, the Russian- American author founded the philosophy of 'objectivism'. It espoused the concept of man as a heroic being with his own happiness as the moral purpose of life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity and reason / scientific temper as his only absolute. The theory highlights a perceived decline in a society's virtue based on observing certain economic and societal trends. She opined, "When you notice that in order to produce, you must obtain permission from those who produce nothing; when you see that money flows to those who deal not in goods but in favours; when you realise that many get rich through bribery and influ-

ence rather than through work, and that the laws no longer protect you against them, but instead, they (the crony capitalists) are protected from you; when you discover that corruption is rewarded, truth is anathema and honesty becomes a form of self-sacrifice, then you can confidently say, without fear of being wrong, that society is doomed."

Alas, we as a nation of regressive and bhakts worshipping the cult of personality have proved her postulates right.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulim

The myth of 'Naya Kashmir'

On August 5, 2019, the Union Government of India revoked the special status of J&K by rescinding Article 370. More than five years since, almost 8,00,000 military and para-military forces are stationed in Kashmir, now a Union Territory with an elected impotent government that does not hold any more powers than a village panchayat, the Centre has dominion through their proxy, a partisan governor.

The Government has been unsuccessful in reducing the presence of the army out of security concerns, maybe this is by design to pressurise the state government to do the Centre's bidding and amplify the latter's propaganda of 'all is well in Naya Kashmir'.

This speaks volumes about the success of abrogating Article 370? After the recent Pahalgam massacre, the situation has only worsened for ordinary Kashmiris, whatever little economic recovery had taken place has been negated.

Rekhha Sarin Trehan, Benaulim