

Margao's civic decay reflects poorly on Goa's commercial capital

Margao may be known as Goa's commercial capital, but its civic infrastructure tells a very different story—more reminiscent of a neglected tier-3 mofussil town than a leading urban centre. The dilapidated

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condition of the SGPD market and the newly built fisheries complex stands as a stark symbol of this urban decay. Even the area surrounding the municipal garden—the very heart of the city—is in a sorry state. At the junction of NH66 and Isidoro Baptista Road lies a long, gaping pit cluttered with cables, boulders, and wild vegetation. The adjacent footpaths are



lined with broken pavers, making it hazardous for pedestrians. This neglected stretch poses a daily threat to commuters, with minor accidents becoming all too

common—especially after sundown. Worse still, the boundary wall of the garden across the road has become a de facto hangout for vagrants, alcoholics, gamblers, beggars, and eve-teasers—all of this happening right under the nose of the Margao Municipal Council. While public expectations from the current government may be modest, Margao deserves at least the bare minimum in terms of civic upkeep and dignity. Residents continue to pay their taxes, only to see their contributions swallowed by corruption and bureaucratic neglect. It's a shame that those entrusted with the city's well-being have allowed it to decline so visibly and so shamelessly.

With whom does the buck stop?

The Benaulim beach road—from the beach to the Maria Hall crossing—was recently dug up to lay a water pipeline. However, instead of properly restoring the surface, the contractor merely dumped fine aggregate into the trench without any compaction or consolidation.

Predictably, with the first monsoon showers, the loose material washed away, and the road now resembles a lunar crater. It's a criminal waste of taxpayer money. Who is responsible for this shoddy, short-sighted work? The PWD engineer? The contractor? The administration? Or the unsupervised labourers?

There is clearly no accountability, no oversight, and no regard for public funds. The "sarkar" seems content to look away while citizens pay the price—literally and figuratively. The worst part? When a concerned citizen dares to ask questions or demand accountability, they're gaslit, ignored, or worse—victimised.

So again, the question stands: With whom does the buck stop? Because right now, it feels like it stops nowhere. We're beginning to make even South Sudan look good.



Pothole menace returns with a vengeance

With the arrival of the monsoon, Goa's pothole menace has returned—this time with a vengeance. Commuting has become a daily ordeal, as potholes and broken stretches have resurfaced across the state's roads, triggering widespread anger among citizens and commuters.

Most urban roads seem to be constructed without proper planning, resulting in misshapen surfaces and poor-quality pavements that disintegrate with the first showers. In areas like Patto, a dysfunctional drainage system and overflowing drains have led to water-logged roads, further compounding the problem.

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The state of our roads speaks volumes about how little the Public Works Department (PWD) values taxpayers' money. It's no secret that water is the biggest enemy of roads, yet road gradients are still being built incorrectly—with the centre higher and shoulders lower—causing water to seep into the layers beneath and weaken them.

A proven solution exists: incorpo-



rating plastic waste in road construction. In 2015, the Supreme Court mandated that 8% to 10% of hot mix must consist of plastic—but this is typically applied only to national highways. City roads, unfortunately, are left out, largely because contractors aren't required to follow this guideline.

Our deteriorating roads have become a matter of national irony. While we speak of eradicating poverty, we still struggle with corruption—and potholes. Even before the rains, our roads were in bad shape. Now, navigating them feels like driving through a minefield.

It's high time the authorities showed the same urgency and accountability toward road maintenance as they do toward collecting taxes.

Don't let Customs fleece you for gifts from loved ones

Customs officials at Mumbai's Foreign Post Office facility—which has jurisdiction over Goa—appear to be taking away law-abiding citizens of their hard-earned money. Nearly every parcel sent by friends or family abroad

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via India Post now seems to attract customs duty, regardless of its contents.

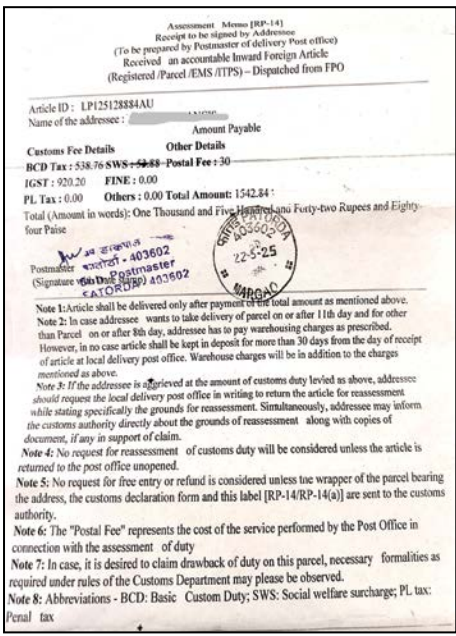
My daughter, who lives in Australia, recently sent me a parcel containing a small purse, two items of clothing, and a photo album of my granddaughter's pictures. These were clearly personal gifts with no commercial value, correctly declared as such on the customs form. Yet, I received a call from the post office asking me to pay Rs 1,500 in customs duty. When I questioned it, the staff said everyone pays without protest, claiming it was a "new rule" and that the money had to be sent to Mumbai.



According to customs regulations, gifts of personal effects valued at Rs 5,000 or less are exempt from duty. Still, this rule is routinely ignored. In another instance this February, a friend was charged over Rs 4,000 in duty for a parcel containing just a few books and postcards—again, a personal gift.

By indiscriminately slapping customs duty on gift parcels—which are already expensive to send from over-

seas—and exploiting the public's lack of awareness, the authorities are effectively fleecing citizens. I chose to return my parcel for reassessment and received it three weeks later with zero customs duty payable. For others receiving parcels from loved ones abroad: Do not open the parcel. Return it to your post



office and request reassessment. Write a letter listing the contents, clarifying that it is a personal gift and falls within the duty-exempt limit. Know your rights, and don't let the system take advantage of you.

Internet outage cripples Piedade Post Office

The Piedade Post Office in Divar (PIN 403403) has been facing a severe inconvenience—its internet and fibre connection (No. 2280021) has been non-functional for the past seven months. As a result, all online services at the post office have come to a complete standstill.

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The official in charge at the post office remains helpless, citing a lack of response from the Panjim Head Office. When the issue was brought to the notice of higher authorities, they admitted the lapse was on their part. However, despite this acknowledgment, no action has been taken to resolve the issue.

Residents are now being directed to the Old Goa Post Office for even basic postal services, causing great hardship—especially to the elderly and those without transport.

It is unacceptable that in this digital age, a government service remains paralysed for months due to unresolved technical issues. Authorities must act immediately to restore internet connectivity and ensure that essential services at the Piedade Post Office are resumed without further delay.

Raised manhole covers in Mangor pose risk to commuters

It has been observed that many of the metal manhole covers along the underground sewage pipeline in Mangor, Vasco, are positioned significantly above the road level. This poses a serious risk to commuters—especially two-wheeler riders—who can easily lose balance when riding over these uneven surfaces.

CITIZEN ADELMO FERNANDES Vasco

The danger is even more pronounced during the monsoons, when wet roads can become slippery,



and the raised manholes become hard to spot. In an attempt to avoid them, riders may swerve into the path of oncoming traffic, increasing the risk of head-on collisions and accidents. Ideally, the manhole covers should have been installed flush with the road surface along the entire stretch. Now, the only

viable solution appears to be hot-mixing the road to bring it level with the manhole covers.

The concerned authorities must act urgently to rectify this issue before it leads to avoidable injuries or worse. Road safety cannot be compromised due to poor planning and execution.

Overflowing sewage chamber near school poses health and traffic hazard

I wish to draw the urgent attention of the concerned authorities through the columns of your esteemed daily to a serious civic issue near Presentation Convent High School, adjacent to the South Goa District Hospital in Margao.

A sewage chamber in this area has been overflowing and left open for the past few weeks,

creating an unsanitary and hazardous environment. The stench and contamination not only pose a health risk but also reflect poorly on the basic civic upkeep of the area.

More worryingly, the issue has led to a par-

tial blockage of the road leading to the school, resulting in daily traffic jams—especially during school hours. Shockingly, even ambulances heading to the district hospital have been seen stuck in this congestion. This is not just a matter of inconvenience; it is a serious public health and safety concern.

CITIZEN RAYZEL CARVALHO Margao

Fuel prices up, subsidies down: Private bus operators ask, how to survive?

Private bus operators in Goa face mounting challenges every day—from rising diesel prices to shrinking incomes caused by government-run buses operating on the same routes. It has been over six years since any fuel subsidy was provided, all while costs for vehicle maintenance, staff salaries, and loan EMIs continue to rise.

CITIZEN LEANDER C. D'SOUZA Candolim

The COVID-19 pandemic brought services to a halt, with passengers vanishing overnight. Yet, despite playing a vital role in transporting people to hospitals, workplaces, and back home during difficult times, private bus owners received no meaningful financial support from the government.

Now, schemes like the Majhi Bus Scheme require private operators to surrender their brand identity, autonomy, and

route choices—effectively converting once-independent businesses into government-managed services. Kadamba Transport Corporation (KTC) buses, which were earlier limited, now dominate key routes like Panaji-Mapusa, directly affecting the livelihoods of private operators.

The disparity in government support is glaring. While diesel buses receive a modest Rs 3/km subsidy—a rate unchanged for years—electric buses benefit from subsidies exceeding Rs 70/km when accounting for all forms of support. The imbalance is not only unfair, it is unsustainable.

In contrast, during my Master's studies in Mangalore (Dakshina Kannada district, Karnataka), I've observed how private buses continue to thrive. They operate under structured associations, with well-coordinated schedules, minimal government interference, and preserved brand identi-

ties. This model fosters public trust and ensures sustainable operations—something sorely lacking in Goa.

Back home, private bus owners in Goa remain divided, with no strong associations, no standardized time slots, and no clear policies for fair route sharing. Without coordination, unity, or equitable support, every day becomes a battle—for fuel, for permits, and simply for survival.

Yet, these buses continue to run. They carry schoolchildren, workers, elders—without fail—while silently bearing the burden of debts, diminishing revenues, and declining recognition.

What's missing is not resilience, but respect, fairness, and support. It is high time the government acknowledges the indispensable role of private buses in Goa's public transport system—and takes urgent steps to address these pressing issues.



Broken slab over nullah a death trap in Sangolda

A dangerously damaged slab covering a nullah in the middle of the road at Livrament Vaddo, Sangolda, has become a ticking time bomb—especially for pedestrians and two-wheeler riders. Shockingly, this very stretch of road was recently repaired at the taxpayer's expense. Yet, within barely two months, it has begun to crumble, exposing a gaping pothole capable of swallowing a bike whole. The broken slab and the surrounding road have turned into a hazard, and despite its prime location, the authorities appear blind to the danger.

With the main Porvorim road in disrepair, many motorists take this Sangolda shortcut to reach Mapusa—only to be met with treacherous road conditions. It's ironic that while the government collects a hefty share from every citizen in the form of various taxes, it fails to provide even the most basic infrastructure in return.

The broken slab over a nullah which posed danger to commuters at Sangolda was repaired immediately after it was highlighted in the Citizens Herald, on June 16



risk. Who will take responsibility for this gross negligence? Is there no accountability for contractors who endanger lives with shoddy work? The panchayat must act—immediately. A police complaint should be filed against the contractor responsible. If this issue is not rectified without delay it may lead to

Police barricades misused to cover open drain near Mapusa MMC building, public safety at risk

In a glaring example of official negligence, police barricades have been repurposed to cover an open water drain adjacent to the Mapusa Municipal Council (MMC) building—raising serious concerns about pedestrian and vehicular safety in the area.

The barricades, which are property of the Goa Police and typically used for traffic management and crowd control, have been crudely positioned over the

uncovered drain in an apparent makeshift attempt to prevent accidents. However, this temporary measure exposes deeper lapses

CITIZEN JENNIFER FERNANDES Aldona

by both the Mapusa Municipal Council in addressing civic hazards in a timely and appropriate manner.

Located just a few metres

from two schools and a college, this stretch of road sees thousands of students and commuters daily. The risk is particularly high during monsoon season, as wild grass has now overgrown the area, further camouflaging the danger and potentially creating a breeding ground for mosquitoes, snakes, and other pests.

"It's shocking to see police barricades, meant for road safe-



ty, being misused this way. The barricades are rusting and aban-

doned in several locations across the town," said a concerned trav-

eller. "Authorities must conduct an inventory of these barricades and retrieve those left unused or misappropriated."

While the intention to prevent a mishap may be appreciated, the method is both inadequate and unsafe. With monsoons intensifying, residents hope the authorities will act swiftly—before a preventable accident turns this civic lapse into a tragedy.

Mapusa is already grappling with severe congestion and poor urban planning caused by years of unregulated development. The current state of civic affairs only adds to public frustration.

Residents have now urged the Mapusa Police to reclaim the barricades and the MMC to urgently cover the drain with proper cement slabs to ensure lasting safety for all road users.