

GREEN DREAM TURNS NIGHTMARE: PANJIM'S PARKS IN DESPERATE NEED OF RESTORATION

Miramar and Caranzalem children's parks lie in dilapidated condition with broken equipment, neglected green spaces and dwindling facilities

PICS: SAGUN GAWADE



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PANJIM: In a disheartening turn of events, the ambitious 'Beautification of Beachfront Promenade at Miramar' project, launched just three years ago, has fallen into a state of neglect that starkly contrasts its initial promise.

Inaugurated by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and funded under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and executed by Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited (IPSCDL), the Rs 12-crore initiative was intended to enhance the beach experience for both locals and tourists, boasting facilities such as a children's park, public gymnasium, and scenic walkways. However, the reality today paints a grim picture of deteriorating infrastructure and inadequate maintenance, particularly in the

children's park, which has become a cause for concern among parents and visitors alike.

Broken garden benches, dilapidated swings, antiquated slides, and poorly maintained play equipment are in a state of disrepair, reflecting the lack of concern the civic authorities have for the children and their parents who frequently visit this idyllic play area by the beach. Moreover, the beach attracts numerous domestic and international tourists.

When the *O Herald* team visited, it found broken benches, worn-out children's play equipment, including a swinging climber, and rusty slides.

Sameer Parab, who had come to the beach with his two children, expressed his concerns, stating that it is very risky to bring children here as they may injure themselves while playing.

Ananth Ramakrishnan, a tourist from Chennai, remarked, "We had heard a lot about Miramar, but we felt disappointed to see its condition. The park is not maintained properly. How can children play here?"

However, the children's park at Miramar is not the only park in a state of neglect. One km away towards Dona Paula lies Caranzalem Park, which was once well-maintained. This park, located by the seashore, featured a well-organised layout of swings, slides, and open-air gyms, offering an excellent view of the beach and beautiful architecture



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— Ananth Ramakrishnan, a tourist from Chennai

"I have been playing here since childhood. It used to be so green, but now the trees have vanished. You can see that half of the grass in the garden has not been cut. There used to be at least five people to look after the garden, but now only one person is left. There is no watchman, the gate has disappeared, and so have the lights"
— College student

"I have previously mentioned that the materials used in the construction are of inferior quality. Furthermore, the park is not being maintained properly. This is a significant issue with the Smart City initiative. Additionally, the flooring at the entrance of the beach has deteriorated; it could not last even six months after being constructed"
— Uday Madkaikar, ex-CCP Mayor



with well-arranged pillars. It provided a peaceful recreational space for both children and the elderly.

Now, in stark contrast to its former glory, the park is in complete disrepair, with children's play equipment broken and strewn across the ground.

A college student, who wished to remain anonymous, expressed his disappointment at the park's condition, which he has visited since childhood. He said, "I have been playing here since childhood.

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Meanwhile, speaking to *O Herald*, former Mayor of the City of Panaji (CCP) and current councillor Uday Madkaikar stated, "Miramar Park was developed by IPSCDL and

is still being maintained by them. It was supposed to be handed over to the CCP but that has not happened."

"I have previously mentioned that the materials used in the construction are of inferior quality. Furthermore, the park is not being maintained properly. This is a significant issue with the Smart City initiative. Additionally, the flooring at the entrance of the beach has deteriorated; it could not last even six months after being constructed," he added.

Usgao p'yat seey booked for outraging modesty of staff

Team Herald

PONDA: The Ponda police on Tuesday registered a case against the Usgao-Ganjem panchayat secretary, Honaji Morajkar (55), for allegedly outraging the modesty of a 22-year-old woman from Valpoi.

According to the police, the accused, a resident of Sankhali, contacted the complainant and persistently sent lewd messages to her on her WhatsApp. On January 3, while travelling from Panjim to Usgao in the car with the accused, and near Ponda, Morajkar allegedly outraged her modesty with the intention of sexual gratification.

Following a complaint, the police registered the case under Sections 75(2), 75(3), 78(2), and 79 of the BNS 2023.

The victim, who had been working in the panchayat office since October 2, 2024, resigned on January 4 this year due to alleged sexual harassment, according to the complaint. She has also filed a formal complaint with the Ponda Block Development Officer (BDO) and the Director of Panchayats.

The victim, along with six other girls seeking employment, had approached the panchayat secretary, who had offered them contract-based jobs to conduct

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a survey for the reassessment of house taxes within the Usgao-Ganjem village panchayat jurisdiction. Morajkar instructed them to begin the fieldwork on Gandhi Jayanti day.

According to the complainant, the girls were promised a monthly remuneration of Rs 24,000 and were asked to pay Rs 9,000 in cash to Morajkar. Subsequently, the victim and the others handed over Rs 9,000 each month to the accused.

However, on October 15, 2024, Morajkar instructed the victim to stop the fieldwork and work in the panchayat office instead. She was asked to sit in his office cabin and handle tasks such as reassessment letters, income certificates, trade licences, and NOCs for water and electricity connections.

In December 2024, the victim took leave to care for her sick mother. It was then that the accused began sending lewd messages and making sexual comments toward her. The victim has provided photocopies of the screenshots of the messages as evidence.

power shutdown

CUNCOLIM: On January 15, from 9 am to 2 pm near Masconi, Comba, Carojem, Cotamol, Old Demani, Madicotto, Culwado, Cuncolim Market, Naigillo, Murida, Adiband, Dandora and Nainem.
MARGAO: On January 16, from 9 am to 3 pm at Chamundi Building, Near Malbhat Masjid, Blue Chip Building, Tyson, UCB Showroom, Sanrit Hotel & Surrounding areas.
VASCO: On January 17, from 9 am to 2 pm near Chafaran, Dhobi Ghat and Rehabilitation Board area.

Tourism Board discusses steps to improve visitor experience and regulations

Focuses on infrastructure, transport issues and cultural promotion in key meeting

Team Herald

PANJIM: In a significant step towards enhancing the tourism experience in Goa, the Goa Tourism Board convened its fifth meeting, focusing on key issues such as infrastructure developments at cruise terminals and the regulation of transport services, including taxi services.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant chaired the meeting on Tuesday at Mantralaya, Porvorim. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Sawant said, "The meeting focused on deliberating and deciding on important matters to bolster Goa's tourism sector."

Key discussions centered on infrastructure improvements at the cruise termi-

nals, with plans to incorporate Wi-Fi, washrooms, pathways, lounges, hotels, waiting areas, faster security checks, and the development of Goa as a home port for cruise liners.

To improve transport services, the Board proposed the introduction of regulated taxi fares at airports, railway stations, and cruise terminals. The proposal also included offering uniform pricing and introducing stricter regulations for rent-a-car services.

In a bid to promote cultural tourism, the Board discussed several initiatives, including the Ekadasha Teerth Circuit, global campaigns to counter misinformation, familiarisation (FAM) tours, and targeted marketing campaigns

KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING

- **Cruise Terminal Upgrades:** Washrooms, pathways, lounges, hotels, waiting areas, and faster security checks
- **Taxi Regulation:** Proposal for regulated taxi fares at airports, railway stations, and cruise terminals, along with uniform pricing
- **Rent-a-Car Services:** Recommendation for stricter regulations
- **Cultural Tourism Promotion:** Initiatives like

the Ekadasha Teerth Circuit and global campaigns to counter misinformation

■ **MICE and Wedding Tourism:** Proposal for a single-window clearance system to streamline approvals

■ **Tourist Spot Cleanliness:** Emphasis on maintaining cleanliness at beaches and tourist spots, improving beach safety protocols, and addressing illegal constructions

aimed at foreign media. A single-window clearance system for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) and wed-

dings was also suggested to attract more events to the state, as tweeted by the Chief Minister.

The meeting also under-

lined the importance of maintaining cleanliness at beaches and tourist spots, improving beach safety protocols, and addressing illegal constructions at key tourist locations.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte said, "Chief Minister Pramod Sawant gave directions on issues like ease of doing business. We presented the outcome of the meetings with stakeholders that we had on Monday. We said that we need intervention from various departments to address some issues because tourism is a department but the tourism industry is a collective responsibility. Whether there is an issue of dogs, stray cattle or touts, various departments have

to intervene. We have urged him to call for a meeting with the chief secretary and go ahead. We will have to make a plan to ensure that good tourism takes place."

On the issue of social influencers claiming a 'decline' in tourism in the state, Khaunte said, "We have already shared the figures. The figures should plug the miscommunication or attempt to malign the image of the state. Let us not give more importance to them. The numbers have been respectable and better than previous years. Let us work for better numbers and better tourism this time."

Jack Sukhija, President of the Travel and Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG), said, "The meeting was held for the first time after 2023.

Chandgad MLA seeks CM's intervention on poultry dispute

Team Herald

PANJIM: Chandgad MLA Shivaji Patil met Chief Minister Pramod Sawant at Mantralaya in Porvorim on Tuesday to discuss the ongoing issue regarding the supply of poultry products from Kolhapur to Goa.

Speaking to reporters, Patil said, "For the last 30-35 years, poultry products have been coming to Goa from Kolhapur district. There is a BJP government in both states, so I urged the Chief Minister to intervene in the matter. The Chief Minister assured me that he will call a meeting with the President of the All Goa Poultry Farmers and Traders Association and the association of chicken suppliers from Kolhapur to resolve the issue." On Sunday, January 12,



Jaikrishna Naik, head of the All Goa Poultry Farmers and Traders Association (AGPFTA), had claimed that vehicles coming from Maharashtra did not possess fitness certificates for the birds. "There is no problem with the supply from Karnataka. The issue is only with the Maharashtra suppliers," he said, adding that he demanded that those transporting the birds follow proper channels to ensure Goa receives disease-free chicken. Naik also claimed that some vendors were attempting to supply chicken without proper checks and selling it at cheaper rates. He stated that the association would file a formal complaint against those vendors.

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