

Rajan P. Parrikar
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Questions to Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar – Day Five

Topics: Panjim, Corruption, Conclusion.

Dear Manohar-bab,

This is the final installment of my letters to you.

Panjim

Our capital was once a picture of great beauty and culture, providing a high quality of life for all of its residents. There was no comparable city anywhere in India. In fact, Panjim (and Goa) did not look like India.

Today, Panjim is a sick town, reeling from the abuse and neglect it has been subjected to. It has degenerated into a noisy jumble of people, metal, filth and garbage (like all other Indian towns).

Panjim also happens to be your own constituency. And your party now is in charge of the city government (CCP). It is time to restore Panjim to health.

The traffic is a mess, garbage and litter are all over the place, electrical hazards lurk at every corner, migrants defecate and urinate in the open, and the number of beggars has multiplied. (A beggars' racket is operating in Goa, a scandal that you are aware of.)

Traffic management will have to be a whole separate subject and I have briefly touched upon it yesterday. Several of the city's ills can be addressed by the simple act of enforcing existing city laws: no encroachment on pavements, no begging, no urination/defecation in the outdoors, no unauthorized hawking, and so on. Migrants have taken to loitering in city parks and the promenade along the river rendering these spaces dirty and unsafe for our women and children. The pavements are in a state of disrepair and the storied St Inez *nallah* continues to stink and breed mosquitoes.

The menace of noise pollution by the cruise boats every evening has persisted for years. Why do we need amplified sound on the boats in the first place? In any civilized country, people would do everything in their power to preserve a serene ambience like the River Mandovi. Instead we have turned it into a crude

spectacle. Manohar-bab, I plead with you to institute a permanent ban on amplified music on the river.

When can we expect a comprehensive action plan for Panjim?

Corruption, Lokayukta, Police

The cancer of corruption has taken hold of India's soul, and Goa is a leader in this arena. I was shocked when my 10-year old niece asked me about corruption. It is a measure of the depths the country has plumbed that we have to explain corruption to children of that age.

Your "zero-tolerance to corruption" pledge won't work unless the larger citizenry is on board, for this is a compact between the governor and the governed. You have to hold your political colleagues and bureaucracy accountable.

You announced yesterday that the Lokayukta will be in place likely by the end of this month. I look forward to the appointment of a man (or woman) of unimpeachable credentials, invested with autonomy and without the burden of political interference.

Nothing I say on the topic of Goa Police will be new to you or any Goan. It is a decades-long record of shame and sorrow. We need a complete overhaul.

Concluding Remarks

That's it. I have touched on what I think are the major issues of the day.

Goa can no longer be "saved." Let us not kid ourselves. The Goa we knew and loved is gone. The best we can do is hold on to what we have and strive to make it less unpleasant than the rest of India. Even this will be a challenge, for the forces of decay and destruction loom all around us.

May the Force be with you – and us!

Warm regards,

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