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Questions to Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar – Day Four

Topics: Garbage, Health Care, Agriculture, Traffic.

Dear Manohar-bab,

A draft of the **Goa 2035 Vision Document** commissioned by the last government was recently presented to you. Most of it is a pile of cut & paste woolly patter, evidently authored by people who have little understanding of the reality of today's Goa. I recommend that you ignore it. There are pressing issues in the here and now that need redress, many of which I have tabled in this series framed as questions to you.

The last 3 days covered the big, urgent topics of the day. This installment and the one to follow tomorrow survey the balance.

Garbage

I don't need to dwell much on this for we all know the obvious: **Goa stinks**.

The entire state is today a de facto garbage dump. You promised a clean-up and said that the garbage issue would be taken up on a priority basis. I traveled extensively all across Goa last month (August), and virtually nothing has changed in this regard from Digambar Kamat's time. The amount of plastic strewn all over is distressing. (I should add that the primary responsibility for this rests with the individual citizen.) Rotting garbage in open dumpsters alongside the road is a common sight.

May we please have a status update on your garbage strategy, including the treatment plants proposed?

Health Care

Your health minister Parsekar recently announced that each of the 40 MLAs would get a check-up at private hospitals with the tab picked up by the taxpayer. Why should the people of Goa have to pay for the maintenance of your health?

All of you are handsomely compensated – shouldn't you use your own money to take care of your own health?

This is especially appalling when you consider the abysmal state of health care in Goa. The main hospital in Bambolim is in a state of advanced decay. The filthy conditions in the hospital rooms are shameful.

The availability of qualified doctors is also a major concern. There are many critical specialties that are either understaffed or without any specialist. How can we stand by and countenance this state of affairs?

The common man has been rendered helpless, exposed to the mercy of a third-rate hospital system, while you guys help yourselves to a taxpayer-funded check-up at expensive private hospitals.

How do you justify this when you promised a departure from the past? More important, when can we see high quality health care facilities in Goa?

Agriculture and Dairy

You have vowed to revive agriculture in Goa. I urge you to make good on that promise. When we eat a local (*ganvthi*) banana, or local vegetables from *vaingin* to *tambdi bhaji*, the superiority of fresh Goan produce is at once obvious. It is tragic that our land, once rich in cultivation, is today dependent on inferior products from out of state. Perhaps some of the lost ground can be recovered? This is an area that needs a lot of re-think. Someone like Prof. Nandakumar Kamat would be a good resource for policy advice.

Goa Dairy is another broken institution, mismanaged and corrupt. You ought to fire the entire management and put in place good, capable people. Even the cows are fed up with the guys who run Goa Dairy (you can tell by the foul taste of the white liquid they claim to be milk).

Road Safety and Traffic

This is an issue of utmost urgency. The entire network of Goan roads is a death trap. So many unspeakable tragedies on our roads, most of them preventable.

What would it take for the government to train and institute a statewide traffic patrol with authorization to strictly enforce the rules of the road?

Road signs with speed limits must be erected everywhere and enforced. Concurrently a public re-education effort needs to be inaugurated. This is not a problem that government alone can solve. People have to respect the rules of the road. From the enforcement side there ought to be zero tolerance shown to violators.

The traffic situation in Goa is now at an alarming stage and will become uncontrollable if it is not reined in soon. You haven't helped matters with your decision to reduce the price of petrol. Your government believes that building multi-storied parking lots and 6-lane highways will alleviate the situation. I can tell you right now: that is a fool's errand.

Any effective solution to this problem must have two components: One, devise a strategy to reduce the number of vehicles on the road by taking away the incentive for people to hop into a car. This requires the design of a workable and efficient public transportation system. Two, inflict pain on the wallet when you have the first component in place. That is, impose a stiff fee on the use of a car in towns and cities.

The design of a public transportation system is a non-trivial exercise. It will take deep thinking and planning, and require consultation with transportation experts abroad.

Tomorrow I shall talk about the state of Panjim and offer concluding thoughts.

Warm regards,

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