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Questions to Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar – Day Three

Topics: Tourism Policy, Migrants

Dear Manohar-bab,

Today I shall address the problems of tourism and the migrant influx.

But first: Like all politicians, you have made your fair share of mistakes, some of which you are probably not proud of. I continue to believe that you are a force for the good of Goa. I know you face critical challenges in the days and weeks ahead, and that the pulls and pressures you will be subjected to will test your mental and physical reserves. Let your conscience be your guide.

Tourism

In the 1980s our government decided to project Goa as a major tourist destination believing it would be a boost to the local economy and a source of employment to the locals. It was a half-baked idea not backed by any vision much less planning.

After 30 years of this version of tourism we know the score: Goa's beaches have lost their character, almost the entire northern coastline is rutted with ugly concrete, outsiders and even foreigners have commandeered enclaves where they are a law unto themselves, Goa has become a hotbed of drugs, prostitution, pedophilia, and touts, beggars and squatters from other states have dropped by to cash in.

The collateral damage to Goa's environment has been significant: the tourism mania has given rise to land grabs, actuated indiscriminate land conversion, and spawned illegal construction all over the place. Our land has been converted into a garbage can with piles of trash at every step. Goa has come to be seen by the rest of India as a lawless 24-hours fun-filled open-air brothel, a haven for sex, booze and drugs.

On the other count, viz., employment, most of those employed in Goa's tourism industry are today outsiders (you will have the numbers).

In summary, the tourism policy has been a debacle, a boon only to the relatively few who stand to gain from it. For the vast majority of us Goans who have lost the tranquility and purity of our outdoor spaces, it is a nuisance and an unwelcome intrusion into our lives.

Can we please have a comprehensive review of the tourism policy?

We need to determine what kind of tourist we want to attract to Goa and cap the numbers. But your tourism minister wants to take us in the opposite direction with his new hare-brained schemes. **We must decrease – not increase – the total tourist count.**

These days there's much talk about "hinterland tourism." Haven't we screwed the coastline enough? Now we want to go in and ruin the hinterland as well? Why?

Along with mining and construction, unplanned tourism has brought ruin to Goa. Just put a cap on it. Many of us are sick and tired of this in-your-face tourism we have to endure day in and day out.

A final suggestion: keep your tourism minister Parulekar at the non-striker's end. That will solve half of the problem. Perhaps you had no choice but to include dimwits like him in your cabinet.

Migrants

In a recent speech in Salcette you called for freezing Goa's population at its current levels and emphasized the urgency of preserving our *Goenkarponn*. Kudos to you! This is the first time any Goan chief minister has gone anywhere near this issue.

Goa is today drowning in the flood of migrants from all over India. This cannot go on. We are a very tiny place with a limited carrying capacity and finite resources. We must preserve our quality of life and the relatively pleasant condition of our land.

Goa is already saturated with a lot of in-migration that has taken place in the last 10 years. If we do not act now, we risk turning Goa into yet another Indian toilet city. We face a demographic wipeout and our *Goenkarponn* – Goan Identity – is imperiled at the current rate of influx. We must do everything in our power to protect ourselves, our language, and our way of life. Unlike other Indian states, we are tiny, both in area and in our numbers.

We are being hit from both ends of the economic spectrum, the moneybag from Delhi as well as the labourer from Bihar and elsewhere. Goa cannot be a sink for India's poor. We must welcome quality entrepreneurs who have the capacity to create good jobs here, and we must strive to attract world-class talent to our academic institutions. But enough of the guy who wants a second home in Goa or is escaping his own toilet town in the rest of the country.

Manohar-bab, on one issue we must stand united: **NO MORE SLUMS IN GOA. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.**

Now, it won't be an easy fight and you will get a lot of pushback, for Indians somehow have this mistaken notion that it is their God-given right to go park themselves wherever they want to, no questions asked. You - and we – will be charged with xenophobia and the Constitution (a document that no Indian, living or dead, has ever read) will be waved in our face. We want you to stand firm. Goans will overwhelmingly support you on the issue of limiting migrant influx.

I have summarized Goa's migrant problem in a newspaper column written in 2008. It is available at this link -

<http://www.parrikar.org/misc/HeraldColumn-2008-05-05.pdf>

I will be back tomorrow with another set of issues.

Warm regards,

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