O HERALDO
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Road accidents result of collective failure

A motorcyclist named Javed Sadekar died after he flipped over Old Mandovi Bridge and plummeted into the river when his two-wheeler was hit by a rent-a-car on February 23. The accident occurred when the speeding rent-a-car was trying to overtake another vehicle on the Old Mandovi Bridge. The impact of the accident was such that the biker was flung into the air and later fell into the river. The victim left behind a broken home, which has his wife and three minor sons.

Soon after this tragic incident, there was a clamour for banning the rent-a-car system. But on the same day, two other persons were killed in road accidents in the State. An elderly pedestrian, Gopal Gaonkar, from St Cruz, was knocked down by a KTC bus when he was crossing the road near the Holy Cross shrine at Bambolim.

The other life lost was that of Shaukat Ali (60), a painter from New Vaddem in Vasco, after his bike came under the wheels of a truck travelling in the same direction near the Dabolim railway overbridge.

These accidents show that targeting only the rent-a-car system is a very myopic approach to deal with the menace of road accidents. It is an outcome of a collective failure on part of an aimless administration and a callous society.

According to NGO Goa Road Safety Forum, 50 fatal accidents have already occurred in the first two months of 2024 and an equal number of injuries have taken place. The saga of blood bath on Goa roads has been continuing since long and doesn't seem to end.

After every tragedy, the government assures strict measures against road accidents. Despite assurances, it is now evident that neither the central government nor the State government has got any road map to curb this menace of road accidents. Meanwhile, Goa continues to witness the scourge of high-speeding vehicles and non-compliance with traffic rules. These incidents raise questions about the government's commitment towards addressing safety concerns at accident-prone junctions.

The vehicle users are also equally responsible for the accidents by not adhering to safety norms. Overspeeding, drunken driving, lane-cutting, not showing indicators, jumping red signal, not wearing helmets, not fastening seat belts, driving sans valid licence, parents handing over vehicle keys to minors – are some of the key concerns adding to the menace.

There are hardly any traffic police constables at busy road junctions. One can see hordes of traffic cops only when there is a VIP movement. There has to be a crackdown on reckless driving, which is only adding to the menace.

There are too many gaps in the system, which the NGOs and media have been highlighting, but the government seems to be in a state of permanent slumber.

First concern is the issuing of driving licences. There has been a long-pending demand to regulate the way people are presently getting the licences. The driving schools have allegedly become agents. But nothing seems to be happening. Moreover, the driving tests conducted by the RTO are archaic as they provide no evaluation of the driver's real life driving skills and behaviour.

The vehicular population in the State has increased, but barring the national highways, the condition of rest of the roads in Goa is poor. Almost every arterial road in Panjim has been dug, leaving the State's capital in a mess. Moreover, the illumination around these sites is missing.

It was only after the death of a young Ayush Halarnkar that reflectors and warning lights came up at the sites where roads have been dug up in Panjim.

But, blaming the administration alone is not enough. The vehicle users are also equally responsible for the accidents by not adhering to safety norms. Overspeeding, drunken driving, lane-cutting, not using indicators, jumping red signal, not wearing helmets, not fastening seat belts, driving without a valid licence, parents handing over vehicle keys to minors – are some of the key concerns.

The government has to push for strengthening the public transport system inorder to take the automobiles off the road and reduce the vehicle load. It is unfortunate that the Goa government falls prey to the taxi mafia and does not let app-based taxis enter Goa, and has been reluctant in mandatorily deploying speed governors for rent-a-cars. It is only now that after a spate of accidents that the government has made it compulsory.

Also, there has to be curbs on easy availability of liquor. It is appalling that maximum tourists consider Goa as a liquor and party destination. Unless there is a complete image makeover of the State and strict control over liquor availability, the accidents won't stop. Best way to prevent accidents and loss of innocent lives is to create road safety awareness amongst parents and teachers. Also awareness programmes should be held at the panchayat-level.

Just like there is no one factor responsible for the fatal road accidents, there is no quick fix solution available to stop the menace. This requires detailed planning, meticulous execution and a strong-willed administration.

Crack down on traffic rule violators – be it a local or a tourist – because it's not just a tourist causing mishaps, even the locals are responsible for it. It is time to fasten the belt and get going behind the rogue elements on the roads. Every drop of blood counts. We have lost more lives on the roads than on the borders fighting the enemy. It's a shame!

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comment

EUGENIO VIASSA MONTEIRO

The unstoppable pace of Indian startups

Some years ago, in a colloquium at the University of Goa with students in the 2nd year of their MBA, I was surprised that no one wanted to work for someone else, a Co., for example, but were determined to launch their startups. Maybe it was the Me Too effect where one follows the tendency of the most respected or outspoken ones.

That made me think, and in the Colloquium, I just hinted that entrepreneurs are needed, but also other professionals: police, teachers, accountants, financiers, engineers, farmers, taxi drivers, etc. And that no one would feel frustrated if their newborn Co. was not a success or even had to close down. Failures teach us a lot because they oblige us to think and rethink so that we can act much better in the future. Everyone must discover his professional vocation, where he can better serve society and be happy with it.

The will to undertake.

Along with my observations, I reminded that, generally, workers with any qualifications in India were more likely to be recruited to fill administrative requirements in proportion to the firm's activity. In general, their wages were meagre; they had no assigned objectives, and no one paid attention to their training; they learned by themselves, and there were no challenges from daily assignments/ routines to overcome their limits.

Setting up as an independent operator has risks but can be a great driver to creating new companies, wealth and jobs

Until a particular moment, perhaps already outdated in some more dynamic and export-oriented types, companies recruited workers, even with suitable professional qualifications, and they were put "on depot", not knowing what they were doing, what responsibilities attributed, nor their capabilities and abilities.

During the time of the Soviet-style economy in India - from independence till 1991- the economic growth rates were, on average, 3.5% for a country that was very poor, destroyed and robbed by the colonizers. So low the growth rate!

The brilliant and valuable minds received compensation of the same level as all others, and the best thing they could do was to migrate to the USA or elsewhere, where their merit could be valued.

That is why it seemed reasonable that at the University of Goa, each one should think of launching his Co. instead of working for others, where their value and contribution to the Co. would be poorly recognised, if not at all.

Those considered very good, from well-known families, would be placed at the lines of observation apt for promotion.

High staff turnover? How do you try to retain talent?

Some years ago, a significant concern was raised about talent retention, as some IT companies had a high turnover, more than 25% in some instances. The managers were trying to find a way to stop the exodus.

When someone received an invitation from outside and said goodbye, the company owners would think that a hundred plus were waiting for hiring. They never thought that each one exiting took with him the knowledge acquired; besides, the need to train the new hires was an additional cost for the Co. All this seemed irrelevant to the old management.

Until recently, workers received their combined wages. Their performance and effort were worth nothing; it seemed that the good results of the Co. were exclusively on account of the capital holders. Therefore, there was no emotional connection with the Co.

If I am not mistaken, participation in the capital of the Co. with the option to purchase shares started with Infosys in the 1990s. Above all, it was a means to reward those contributing with ideas and deeds for the future success of the Co.

For many large employers (IT Co., for example), establishing many GCC-Global Capability Centers in India had a strong impact. These GCCs are evolving from being a source of cost arbitrage to becoming Global Value Organizations to drive digital transformation and innovation. Over 500 GCCs will join India's current presence of 1,500+ GCCs by 2026 (Nasscom). GCCs are the tech and shared services centres of MNCs in India, increasing as global companies search for talent to help them transform digitally. The 1,500 GCCs in India employ 1.3 million people. (TOI)

Multinational Cos look for the best specialists and do not mind paying well. And, hence, the drain of talent. I find the departures of high-value workers excellent and vital: the best ones usually leave because of their value; others, with good personal skills, will specialise and stand out, waiting for some outside invitation soon.

This fact is good for the high-value workers, as well as for the country. Each person gives more of herself and becomes more specialised. It is unsuitable for the company because it has to replace those who leave. The management feels scared but does not wake up to give more attention to the workers, their current skills and the ones they must develop for their excellence and of the Co.

Startups, unicorns and job creation

Setting up as an independent operator has risks but can be a great driver to creating new companies, wealth and jobs.

India has emerged as the 3rd largest startup ecosystem globally with over 112,718 recognised startups across 763 country districts as of October 3, 2023. According to the Startup India action plan, these firms can access financial incentives. These startups have collectively generated over 1.42 million direct jobs, contributing significantly to the economy.

In 2022, more than 1,300 startups with a technology focus bring the number of active tech startups to 25,000-27,000. In addition, India added around 23 unicorns in 2022 (a unicorn is a company with a valuation of more than $1bn), which was the second-highest number in the world.

It has 89 technology-focused unicorns and 174 potential unicorns, of which 60 grew in 2022. The Venture Capitalist may have the temptation to manipulate the value, intervening in the acquisition of shares when the price is low and selling them in total or part once the value per share is high. That is why many shareowners prefer the dispersion in many hands instead of letting it concentrate in the hands of one or two wealthy capitalists.

The influence of women in the startup ecosystem is growing. At least one of the founders/co-founders of 36% of unicorns and potential unicorns is a woman.

About 17% of all investment deals between 2019 and 2022 were raised by women-led startups, and nearly 18% of all startups in the ecosystem include at least one female founder or co-founder.

(The Author is Professor at AESE-Business School (Lisbon), at I.I.M.Rohtak (India), author of The Rise of India)

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people's*edit*

DOWN MEMORY LANE

KALYANASUNDARAM RAMAMURTHY

The occasion was the Alumni meet of the school mates of Mahabub College, Secunderabad. This meeting was very emotional one for me as I was meeting most of my school mates after more than five decades. We were in our teens, in the morning of our life when we parted and are now in seventies, rather in the late evenings of our lives. As was expected, we had difficulty in recognising each other with our once shining black hair giving way to shining bald heads or grey hair, and our youthful looks and exuberance lost with the passage of time. We had lost some good friends in these five decades and it was sad that we will never be meeting them again in our lives.

The name Mahabub college gives the impression of a Muslim Institution and also as an institution for under graduates. In reality, it was neither of these. The school owed its name to Mahabub Khan, a minister in the Nizam rule in the State of Hyderabad, a patron of the institution and was a multipurpose school and not a college at that time. I moved from Tanjore, the historical town in Tamil Nadu and joined this school in 1963, in my Class nineth. Till my Class eighth I had studied in Tamil medium and the medium of instruction in the new school was English. I had to study Hindi as my second language of which I had only rudimentary knowledge and had to cover a lot of ground to be on par with the rest of the class. The transition was really tough, and I was cursing the educational system in Tamil Nadu for not including Hindi in their curriculum. The school atmosphere was totally different from the one in Tamil Nadu. It took nearly one year for me to cope with the new educational system and the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the twin cities. Thanks to the guidance of my cousin, I could accomplish this transition successfully.

During the meet, we shared our experiences, our educational and career paths and retired lives. We recalled nostalgically our school days, our teachers who played a great role in laying foundation of our lives, their nick names, the naughty acts and the pranks we played. We also recollected some of our own explosive experiments we did in our Chemistry labs and the fun we had in the games' periods. The metamorphosis of many of us from the crazy boys to respectable senior citizens was amazing.

It was a memorable day in my life which reminded me of the following lines of Robert Drake:

"I want to go back in time…not to change things but to feel a couple of things twice. I wish I could go back to school… Not to become a child but to spend more time with those friends, I never met after school. Since the times that are gone can never come back, let's enjoy the moments as we live them from now on, to the fullest."

BSNL services going from bad to worse

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) mobile, landline and broadband users in Goa, especially in the rural areas are bogged down by poor connectivity. The subscribers say that they often face difficulties while making calls or while surfing the Internet due to the frequent disruptions caused by the poor overhead cabling and crumbling infrastructure.

Residents in Goa who rely on BSNL for their landline connections and internet services have expressed growing frustration with the deteriorating quality of service and lengthy resolution times for their reported issues. Complainants have highlighted problems such as malfunctioning landline connections and the lack of internet supply.

The locals have said that many of the landline telephone subscribers have been put to great inconvenience as their telephones have been 'dead' for a long time. Despite repeated complaints to the telephone exchange, there is no response and the telephone subscribers do not know who to approach to redress their grievances.

BSNL services have been going from bad to worse, with consumers complaining of errant services and constant disruption in broadband connectivity. However, BSNL officials are quick to blame others for the poor service, laying blame on various companies that carry out irresponsible digging work, thereby causing damage to lines at various places.

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, which flaunts 'world class, multi-gigabit, multi-protocol, convergent IP infrastructure through National Internet Backbone', to provide broadband services, is arguably the worst service provider, locally. The public sector once monopoly service provider, cares two hoots for constant connectivity, monitoring of services and customer feedback in a highly competitive segment.

Newton Mendonca, Aldona

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letters to the editor

For letters to the editor contact us at editor@herald-goa.com.
All letters must contain correct postal address and telephone number. Letters are liable to be edited for brevity.

Empathy can prevent road accidents, save lives

In the past month or so Goa has witnessed numerous road accidents, many of them ending in fatalities. Goa could well become the accident capital of the country given the number of accidents per lakh population. It must be said that road accidents can be avoided if the one behind the wheels cares for others on the roads and drives defensively and responsibly. The "Sadak Suraksha Abhiyan" initiative was launched in January last year to raise awareness on the importance of road safety and encourage responsible behaviour on roads to help save precious lives. The campaign focuses on cultivating empathy behind the wheel, aiming to produce positive behaviour changes by sensitising citizens to the value of every life and rewarding safe driving practices. It has been noted that the likelihood of saving lives drastically improves when victims receive urgent medical attention within the first hour, commonly known as the Golden Hour. It is understood that a bystander's indifference to road accident victims is fuelled by a significant fear of potential legal complications and bureaucratic obstacles. Empathy is the need of the hour. To facilitate prompt medical assistance and protect Good Samaritans who render aid, the Good Samaritan Law was enacted in 2016. This legislation shields individuals from legal or financial liabilities when assisting accident victims. Subsequently, in 2019, the Government of India, as part of the Motor Vehicle Amendment Act, introduced a section aimed at further ensuring protection for Good Samaritans.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Must create a safe work environment

It is often said that the first-aid to the injured is safety. Safe work environment at home and work invariably promotes produce and enhances punctuality. It also cuts down absenteeism besides being an economic necessity. Anticipation and preparedness do not cost much: but treatment and rehabilitation do. Safety, health and environment (SHE) are interlinked. But the majority of Indian workers are in the dark about keeping themselves safe. Industrial safety is on the decline as evidenced by fire tragedies in establishments. Gadgets, no doubt, enhance safety levels but at the end of the day an individual- employer and employee -is his own defence.

The example should come from the top; workers learn from their employers. Employees cannot carry on with old ideas and rusted tools. Ushering in an atmosphere helpful to safe work is not a luxury; it is imperative. Worker education, risk assessment and risk elimination are three aspects the employers cannot do away with. The biggest employer in India- the government -should also leave nothing to chance. "Safety for a sustainable future" is a catchy and apt theme on National Safety Day observed by the National Safety Council on March 4. To take SHE to every nook and corner of the country, through campaign and awareness, is its stated aim.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

Dabolim airport is the pride of South Goa

The pride of South Goa, our Dabolim Airport, will be closed down very soon. That news creates goose bumps as our South Goa people are literally going to suffer. Are really ministers going to work on this or only false promises are going to be made. Dabolim is also a part of development so why is the government not trying its best to save this development? We want Dabolim Airport we don't want Mopa. Please work for the welfare of the people.

Anita Fernandes, Verna

Stop harassing KTC passengers

It is understood from KTC checker Umesh Naik at Margao that 71 bottles of alcohol transported from Goa on KTC for commercial use were apprehend at Hyderabad by the excise duty officers in January 2024, for that the KTC management has advised all KTC outstation bus passengers personal luggage to be checked while boarding the bus at the KTC bus stands. The operation was so badly handled that any unknown person would think, if they are looking for illicit substance, the way clothes and belongings are turned upside down. Once a ticket is booked, KTC sends series of pre-boarding messages, but this restriction is not advised, with passengers caught by surprise while boarding.

What one cannot understand is, airlines allow five litres per passenger, railway allows at least two bottles on permit issued by the Goa Excise Department, no private buses are checked while boarding - why KTC should unnecessarily harass the passengers while boarding at the door. Requesting the senior citizens and even, there is no mercy for the ladies to open their suitcases and trolley bags in public without securing their privacy, despite they honestly confessing that they don't have any alcohol.

If at all someone is taking one or two beer bottles or wine or even Goa's liquid gold cashew feni, do you think they are taking to sell, where each bottle is labeled as 'not for sale outside Goa' and what would one earn versus dragging the one or two bottles for personal from one destination to the other - does not make sense. Many Goans depend on their relatives or friends in Mumbai for medical, visa documentation or for a job interview, where they carry as gift or gesture against obligation for the few days of free stay. The sudden embargo on innocent passengers, who are forced to simply leave the bottles at the KTC bus stand unattended with no other choice apart being embarrassed or harassed, even if one is old as 70+ ladies or gents!

Not a complaint, but a humble request to the Goa Government, to look into this issue with staying in par with airline or train travel, if they hold a permit to carry the entitled quantity for their personal use.

Gaston Dias, Sarzora