

O HERALDO

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Exploitation of workforce in the name of progress

In recent times, a troubling narrative has emerged from the upper echelons of corporate India, where some CEOs are advocating for an alarming work culture that demands 90-hour work weeks, often without a single day off. This push for relentless productivity raises a critical question: at what cost does this ambition come? The voices of the workers, who are the backbone of our economy, are increasingly drowned out by the rhetoric of those who have long since forgotten the realities of the workforce.

The notion that working longer hours equates to greater success is not only misguided but also dangerously exploitative. Figures like Bhavish Aggarwal, who dismiss holidays as a Western concept, and SN Subramanyan, who expresses regret over not being able to make employees work on Sundays, exemplify a growing trend among corporate leaders who seem disconnected from the lives of their employees. Their comments trivialise the struggles of countless workers who are already stretched thin, often juggling multiple jobs just to make ends meet.

The stark reality is that while corporate profits have soared—quadrupling in recent years—employee salaries have stagnated. A recent survey by FICCI highlights this disparity, revealing that while corporate profits have reached their highest levels in 15 years, the average salary increase for workers has barely kept pace with inflation. This disconnect is not merely a statistic; it reflects a broader trend of underemployment and wage stagnation that is crippling the middle class and the working poor.

The majority of employees in India are either contract-based or temporary, often receiving meagre wages that barely cover their basic needs. The trend of extracting maximum work for minimum pay is not just a corporate strategy; it is a systemic issue that has been exacerbated by weakened labour laws and a lack of social security for workers

As we delve deeper into this issue, it becomes evident that the demand for longer working hours is not accompanied by a corresponding increase in compensation. The average salary of a worker in a company like Larsen & Toubro is a staggering 534 times less than that of its CEO, who earns Rs 51 crore annually. This raises an uncomfortable question: how can we expect employees to sacrifice their personal lives and well-being for the sake of corporate ambition when their contributions are not adequately

recognised or rewarded?

Moreover, the narrative that equates hard work with success ignores the harsh realities faced by many workers. The majority of employees in India are either contract-based or temporary, often receiving meagre wages that barely cover their basic needs. The trend of extracting maximum work for minimum pay is not just a corporate strategy; it is a systemic issue that has been exacerbated by weakened labour laws and a lack of social security for workers.

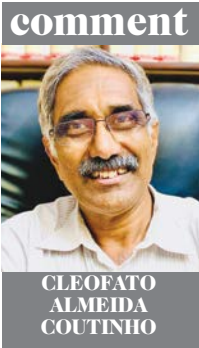
The government's claims of job creation and economic growth ring hollow when juxtaposed with the lived experiences of ordinary citizens. Many workers, despite having completed vocational training, find themselves relegated to low-skill tasks with no opportunity for advancement. This is not merely a failure of the corporate sector; it is a failure of our economic system to provide meaningful employment and fair compensation.

As we witness the widening gap between the wealthy elite and the struggling workforce, it is crucial to question the societal values that allow such disparities to persist. The media, too, has a role to play in this narrative. Instead of amplifying the voices of the exploited, we often find ourselves inundated with memes and jokes that trivialise serious issues. This culture of mockery serves to distract from the pressing questions of wage inequality and workers' rights, allowing those in power to continue their exploitative practices unchallenged.

It is time for a collective awakening. The middle class must recognise that their plight is intertwined with that of the working class. The laughter and memes that circulate on social media do little to address the fundamental issues at hand. Instead, they serve as a distraction from the harsh realities faced by millions who toil day in and day out, often without the recognition or compensation they deserve.

As we move forward, we must advocate for a more equitable work environment that values the contributions of all employees. This includes pushing for fair wages, improved working conditions, and a recognition of the importance of work-life balance. The narrative that glorifies overwork must be challenged, and we must demand a system that prioritises the well-being of workers over corporate profits.

The call for longer working hours in the name of progress is not just a corporate strategy; it is a reflection of a deeper societal issue that must be addressed. We must listen to the voices of the workers, advocate for their rights, and strive for a future where hard work is rewarded with fair compensation and respect. Only then can we truly aspire to make India a nation that values its people as much as its profits.



CLEOFATO ALMEIDA COUTINHO

For #GoaTourism, the 'toolkit' ought to be showcasing of its greenery, the environment, the rivers, the countryside and the forests cover, not crowds on 31st December in the Calangute-Candolim belt!



60 to 70% occupancy, there is focus on the struggling condition of the tourism industry in the evolving tourism market in the world.

Videos around Goa's tourism as 'Go-Goa-Gone' in social media went viral. Various TV channels highlighted the falling foreign tourist arrivals and deserted beaches last December. The Goa tourism minister threw up a conspiracy theory that non-Goan social media influencers have run a negative campaign against Goa. Entrepreneur Ramanujan Mukherji who tweeted about Russians and Brits opting for Sri Lanka was accused of putting out false data on tourist arrivals. The tourism department filed the police complaint for alleged-

ly damaging Goa's image as a safe and welcoming destination for tourists.

Print & TV journalist and the editorial director of Hindustan times Vir Sanghvi in his video blog claims that he came to Goa every year and sometimes even three times a year. He now claims Goa a disaster due to criminality mixed up with politics, corrupt eco system, taxi mafia, collapse of infrastructure, among the factors. Amitabh Kant former CEO of Niti Aayog states that if Goa has to promote tourism, greenery must be preserved. Obviously, what must be in his mind the rampant destruction of the countryside and the green cover through change of zones and conversions as widely reported. Can we accuse Vir Sanghvi or Amitabh Kant as acting against the interest of Goa?

Instead of targeting the messengers, the Goa government ought to have dealt with the message. Ten months back Goa government brought its own 'toolkit' to showcase Goa through a social media influencers policy with Entertainment Society of Goa as it's nodal agency. With the department of information and publicity allocating funds for developing empanelment software and setting aside funds to project execution. That could have used as our own 'toolkit' of building brand Goa instead of going on the offensive. Despite spending lakhs of Rupees, the brand image of Goa has a safe & good destination did not get built.

'Go, Goa, Gone' claim can only be busted by the government providing data of average occupancy in the starred and non-starred hotels.

Whether Goa rang in the New Year on a high note as claimed by the government, can be easily seen from the amount of GST collection in the tourism belt, which could be great indicator of the amounts of spent by the tourists. The number of foreign tourists, charter tourists who were given tourist-visas by the government of India would confirm the foreign tourist arrivals.

Instead of providing data, the Goa government and the tourism minister went on an offensive and pressed its 'toolkit' of offence as the best form of defence. The conspiracy theories, filing of police complaints is clearly an attack on free speech. The ESG

is now tasked with a list of nine influencers to reshape Goa's tourism image on social media reels. Videos may now show case 'crowds' at popular destinations. That is the government 'toolkit' to deal with adverse publicity. Can a government having social media influencers policy object to other influencers with a different view? Positive and negative aspects of content are judged by the consumers (people). Positive images can only be sustained by facts and data.

Propaganda cannot be dealt with counter propaganda. False narratives have to be negated by numbers. Influencers, celebrity endorsements and meme marketing may work in building commercial brands. How Pepsi took on Coca-Cola and Coca-Cola took on Pepsi which had established market for over a century is a case in point. How Myntra FWD took the GenZ by storm is known fact. An effective way of building a strong brand is by maintaining an active presence on social media. Influencer marketing may work in destroying or building images of individuals for a limited period. State partnering with social media influencers is something new. But building of brand of a state can be best achieved by providing facts and figures, may be through social media influencers. People trust facts in the long run, perceptions work for elections! For #GoaTourism, the 'toolkit' ought to be showcasing of its greenery, the environment, the rivers, the countryside and the forests cover, not crowds on 31st December in the Calangute-Candolim belt!

When a state brings out a social media influencer policy an important element would be operational and ethical paradigms for the influencers to navigate. The alignment of their morals, ethics and beliefs of the influencer must be in tune with state policy. The influencers are likely to be from the 'committed' lot. The difference between the ruling party and the government is likely to wither away as the government shifts from traditional advertising to brand building with social media influencers and meme marketing.

(The writer is a Sr. Advocate and a foremost political thinker)

Building Goa brand the Pepsi way!

people'sedit

90-HOUR WORKWEEK: MY BALANCING ACT

CS KRISHNAMURTHY

When I heard luminaries like N R Narayana Murthy and L&T's S N Subrahmanyan propose 70 to 90-hour workweeks, my initial reaction was to laugh nervously and clutch my coffee mug a little tighter. Surely, they didn't mean actual hours, right? Maybe they were counting daydreaming at the desk or staring blankly at Excel sheets as part of their calculations. But no, these stalwarts were serious—foregoing weekends and sacrificing personal lives for professional excellence.

While their intent for national progress are admirable, one wonders: have they tried this schedule themselves? Or perhaps they've confused humans with high-performance machines that run on endless fuel.

Remember, overworking doesn't equal productivity. It equals burnout. I've seen it happen—people running on empty, turning into walking, coffee-guzzling zombies. They might look busy, but their brains are silently crying for help. Exhaustion clouds judgment, impairs creativity, and transforms even the brightest minds into foggy thinkers.

Now imagine a 90-hour work week. That's 15 hours a day, six days a week. I can barely survive an extended movie marathon without needing a nap and a neck massage. Stretching one's work capacity to these limits assumes heroic stamina—and an army of helpers managing your personal life. Most of us don't have that luxury.

Financial disparity

Then there's the glaring issue of financial imbalance. Subrahmanyan, who champions these extended hours, reportedly earns over 500 times the average L&T worker's salary. Let's just say that's a lot of zeroes. Now, while he might have the financial cushion to pay for domestic help, personal chefs, and possibly a live-in yoga instructor, the rest of us are juggling skyrocketing costs and limited resources.

For employees slogging 49-hour weeks already, asking for more hours without proportionate compensation is like handing them a treadmill and saying, "Run faster. No, you won't get water, but you might get applause... if you're lucky." How motivating.

Smart is efficient

Take the mantra "work smarter, not longer." It's not an excuse for slacking; it's about efficiency. An employee with a clear head and well-rested mind can often accomplish in six hours what a sleep-deprived colleague might struggle to finish in ten. Quality trumps quantity, every single time.

Here's a fun fact: happy employees are productive employees. It's not rocket science; it's basic human psychology. When people feel valued, rested, and connected to their personal lives, they bring their A-game to work. On the flip side, overworked, disgruntled employees are like leaky taps—draining company resources without delivering results.

A colleague once said: "I'm so overworked, I dreamed of spreadsheets last night. They were chasing me." It was funny, but also tragic. No one wants to live in a world where Excel files haunt their dreams. Leaders must recognise that fostering a happy workforce isn't just a feel-good strategy; it's good business sense.

India's progress doesn't hinge on marathon workweeks, but on sustainable practices that respect human limits. Corporate leaders must redefine hard work to include creativity, innovation, and, yes, a life outside the office. Great ideas often come when you're relaxed—taking a walk, spending time with family, or even while showering (Einstein would agree).

My takeaway: Balance, not burnout

I admire Murthy and Subrahmanyan's dedication, but let's not glorify overwork. Instead, let's champion a culture where hard work and personal fulfilment coexist. Let's redefine success to mean not just professional excellence but also happiness, health, and a good night's sleep.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some Netflix episodes to catch up on. It's called research... for work-life balance. Really!

I am afraid may send wrong signals amongst enthusiastic youngsters who would want to prove themselves.

Gopalaswamy J, Chennai

Improve public transport to reduce accidents

The government is eager to announce and undertake 'development' activity in the State. Right from roads to bridges and flyovers, wherever you go, one will come across the so called infrastructure development in Goa. The worst is how the Smart City works are being perennially given deadline after deadline. All these works are adding to traffic congestion and sadly deaths to fatal accidents.

One way to improve the situation is to go back to good old days of excellent public transport. Goa was known for bus connectivity across the State, which included KTC buses as well as private buses. Without good public transport, the public suffers and are forced to travel in private vehicles, most of the time a single soul in a four-wheeler.

While the infrastructure works can continue to flourish, only reducing the number of vehicles can ensure less congestion and improved road safety.

This applies to the rental vehicles too. If govt promotes better public transport and taxi facilities and takes the self driven rental vehicles off the road, it will add to employment as well as better and safe commute among the tourists.

Ibn Budan, Verna

Armando Colaco has scripted history

Congratulations to Armando Colaco for being chosen for the prestigious Dronacharya Award. Goans are proud of you for being the first Goan to achieve this prestigious award and third Indian after Syed Naeemuddin in 1990 and Bimal Praful Ghosh in 2022.

Armando Colaco is a son of soil hailing from the village of Curtorim in South Goa. He started his career as a football player, a very successful player and after his retirement from playing football in 1985 he started coaching and became a coach and later in life he became a manager. His contribution to football is huge as a player, Coach and also a Manager. He had played and coached for most of the Goan Club Clubs, like Salcette sports club, Sesa Goa, Churchill Brothers, Sporting de Goa and of course Dempo Sports Club. He also became a coach for our state team in the Santosh Trophy and also Indian National football team and thus Armando Colaco was a legend in the Indian football field. He achieved a lot and also contributed lot to Goan and Indian football. He deserves this Prestigious Dronacharya Award for his sacrifices in football. It is learnt that this Award will be awarded to Armando by the President Draupadi Murmu on 17th January at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Goa is proud of you Armando for getting this Prestigious Dronacharya Award to Goa, you are a jewel in the Crown of Goan as well as Indian football.

Natividade Fernandes, Cavellossim

letterstotheeditor

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.

Baby steps in conserving Mhadei river water

It is shocking to note that the House committee on the Mhadei water dispute met on Wednesday, almost two years after the last meeting. The Mhadei water issue is very important for the state of Goa. However it has never become an emotive issue and does not evoke much response even during the state assembly elections. It is the environmentalists who are in the forefront to prevent the diversion of Mhadei river water to the neighbouring state of Karnataka. It won't be wrong to say that Goa is taking baby steps towards conserving 'mother' Mhadei River water for Goa. The Mhadei River is considered a lifeline and a nurturer of the state's ecosystem and culture. Karnataka is going full steam in its work in diverting water from the Mhadei basin to the Malappurabha basin.

It is learnt that in the House Committee meeting that the members cutting across party lines have decided to visit the Khalsa and Bhanduri projects in Karnataka in order to inspect the work carried out by the neighbouring state for diverting the water. Is it too little too late? Even though Karnataka has a Congress government and Goa has 'double engine sarkar', it is understood that the Chief Minister of Karnataka held a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi

seeking permission to divert Mhadei waters for drinking purposes.

It seems necessary for an expert team to accompany the politicians from Goa during the visit to Kalsa and Banduri project sites in Karnataka to get a first-hand experience of the ground situation.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Melodrama has taken sheen off reality shows

Television Reality shows boomed at the fag end of the 1990s and the early 2000s. India emulated the West almost along the same time to offer a wide range of reality programmes which really began with talent-hunting song shows. However, some 'reality' shows have become the butt of jokes, and others have been accused of 'fixing' the entire series, from day one.

The problem with the reality shows began the day they transgressed from its definition: unscripted, real-life situation with unknown participants. Scripted, pre-planned, stage-managed, rigging are the common words used by audiences to pan the shows. Unnecessary melodrama has taken the genuine stuff out of these shows.

The past histories of several participants are needlessly raked-up to pump the show with emotional overload and endlessly drag the event. There are also reports on how some stories about contestants are fabricated to increase the

Television, or Target, Rating Point (TRP) of the shows.

Talent-hunting should concentrate only on one particular aspect of a participant: aptitude. Socio-economic hindrances cannot be highlighted to garner empathy towards the contenders and, thereby, votes.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

Quality, not quantity work needed

While Infosys Chairman Emeritus and Founder Narayanmurthy has advocated for seventy hours work a week ago, L&T's Chief Subrahmanyan has bettered it by advocating for ninety hours week and also questioning how long the employee would look at his/her spouse's face. Both the bosses have not realized the fact that employees do have a personal life as well and that it is the quality of work out put which should matter and not the quantity. Both being exceptionally well-run successful companies hope they adapt exemplary work standards and ethics.

While on work hours both the bosses may also recall the recent death of young woman employee of E&Y Anna Sebastian Perayil who at the prime age of 26 died due to work related stress which her mother had also reasoned to the long work hours and the work-stress.

Statements of the sort coming from acclaimed industry bosses,