

O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Is Shah Jahan to blame for Campal Lokotsav mess?

Like Pandit Nehru, should Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan also be blamed for problems occurring down 'history's lanes'? Shah Jahan's building the Taj Mahal without tenders had serious impact on the non tendering of the renovation works of Goa's Kala Academy, which burnt an over Rs 54 crore hole in the State Public Exchequer, over questionable renovation works. Now Shah Jahan is at it again. Residents of Campal and stall vendors including local artisans from Goa, have blamed Shah Jahan for the utter mess at Lokotsav 2025.

Thirty seven years after Statehood and 12 years after continuous BJP rule, it is an utter embarrassment that Goa, which is annually awarded as one of the best performing small states, does not have an exhibition ground, like the Pragati Maidan, at New Delhi. The nightmare on Dayanand Bhandodkar street which happens every time a festival or exhibition is organised, is there for all to see. Panjimites, and in particular Campal residents, dread every time there is such a mega event at Campal grounds or at Kala Academy.

January 2025 too, Campal residents, have a seige laid around them by Emperor Shah Jahan or his event management company. In a novel form of protest against Shah Jahan, residents of Campal have put "No Parking" posters on all the trees in the 'Campal bylanes' to protest the parking of cars in the residential area. They have directed vehicle users to park at the designated parking of Lokotsav. Shah Jahan is using the service road and the 'lanes' that were constructed by the farsighted Portuguese, who made provision for parking, knowing that Shah Jahan would organise Lokotsav, much after they left.

Residents of Campal bitterly complain that they cannot get into or out of their houses, once such festivals start. There is danger to safety and security, especially at night and particularly for senior citizens since the vehicles are sometimes parked blocking access to their houses. No policemen are seen patrolling, when vehicles are parked near the Campal residential area, to ensure safety of residents.

The Corporation of the City of Panjim had long ago passed a resolution not to allow any government department to organise mega festivals or events at Kala Academy and Campal Bhandodkar grounds due to the traffic and parking havoc the events create. There is traffic congestion from Mandovi Hotel right up to Miramar circle at peak hours, causing frustration among vehicle users. But as the former CCP councillor said, it appears to be a case of greed and money, and damn the public good.

So far three irregularities are alleged in the organisation of the Lokotsav exhibition, by Shah Jahan or his events company. One infuriated former councillor pointed out a parking scam where even as one third of the Dayanand Bhandodkar ground was to be reserved for parking, stalls have been put up in the parking area, which she attributed to greed and money. As a result people park their vehicles in the Campal bylanes and Dayanand Bhandodkar footpaths, creating a nightmare for the residents and pedestrians.

Secondly, on a day prior to Lokotsav, there was a huge frustration among local vendors who complained to media, at the Art and Culture department office, that they had not received forms, whereas some families had received four forms, alleging favouritism in stall allocation. On the first day of Lokotsav itself, one stall aspirant Pankaj Kumar from Uttar Pradesh stated that the same stall No 42, was allocated to him and another vendor Sutapa Bhuniya from Maharashtra, and he was without a stall. Pankaj showed his receipt of Rs 12,000, while Sutapa also showed her identity card and receipt of Rs 10,000 paid for the same stall. One wonders how the same stall was allocated to two persons and at different rates. Seven to eight other vendors told on camera that they had come from outside Goa and had no stalls allocated to them. "What are we supposed to do after transporting our material here?" they questioned.

The third irregularity was when a former CCP Councillor caught red handed workers of Super Clean agency, Vasco, who were given the tender for collection of garbage, dumping garbage into a CCP truck. They confessed they did this on a daily basis. The event organiser stated that they had been given the tender of only 'garbage collection' and not transportation. So the transportation is being done at the cost of the public exchequer.

In the political culture of Goa, organisation of events and exhibitions has become one more way of procuring considerations. Let the public and public welfare be damned. Looking at the all-round scams in construction of highways, bridges, land grabbing, mega construction projects, it is high time that 'thought leaders' and the people seriously think of packing the present crop of representatives and radically think of the 'Road' to 2027. Blaming Shah Jahan will not help!

comment



BY TALLULAH D'SILVA

After all, Tiger is just a metaphor for all of nature—streams, trees, herbal plants, animals, hills, forests, etc. We need the oxygen, water, food and medicine that these hotspots provide for us. If these are destroyed, we too will not have long to survive



menace and it not only affects us but wildlife too. I will tell my friends, other students and villagers with the hope that when they are affected by plastic pollution, they will remember that I had warned about its ill effects. Today plastic is everywhere—in tribal villages, schools, forest. We must reduce and like our Van Sena, use cloth bags instead," said Ramniranjan Yadav,

A toast to Goa's O Herald newspaper...

This newspaper daily has faithfully dedicated itself to the cause of Goa and Goenkarponn. In fact it is synonymous as the Voice of Goa. Among Goans its a morning refresher more addictive than the morning coffee. Until one reads and glimpses through the pages the thirst for Goan news is never satiated.

My congratulations and salams to your years of resilience and hard work towards keeping the Goan torch lighted and making the thousands of Goan heartbeats beat as one. No other media platform has so gratuitously stood behind Goans with all its might. Be it politics, governance, culture, education, business, sports, entertainment, community, O Herald has been a daring, no nonsense and truthful reporting machine. It has indeed been a catalyst in preserving Goa's communal and cultural harmony. May I conclude by saying that you have been 'The salt of Goa's people and its diaspora. Wishing you many more great years of Solid Journalism. Viva Herald.

Felicio Fernandes, Panjim

Freebie culture makes mockery of democracy

The election campaign in Delhi has become a sop war between parties that are competitively offering goodies in cash, kind and services to the gullible voters. Election manifestos are treated as promissory notes now, not statements of future plans and policies.

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party as well as the two main Opposition parties, the BJP and the Congress, are pulling out all the stops in this high-stakes

Inspiration from Kahna

On one of the safaris we were watching a herd of spotted deer and a troupe of langurs when suddenly a langur made a loud call. Our local forest guide Jeevan, who was an excellent tracker, explained that the langur had made an alarm call and was warning all the animals that there was a tiger on the prowl nearby. I found it so amazing that while having no association or deriving any benefit from deer or other such animals, the langur was still warning them of danger. It made me reflect that in our human associations, our behaviours are rather selfish and rarely do we behave in empathy or humanity. I will take this learning with me when I go back to my city in Bengaluru and I will encourage and start an initiative to get students and citizens to come together, bind and work together for the common good and conservation of the environment," said Poojashri Gowri BR, Bengaluru Tiger Ambassador.

"I want to go back to my school and village and talk to them about Kahna Tiger Reserve, and how well it is managed by the Forest Department. I liked that on each safari visit to the forest, there were many strictures that we all followed. No plastic bottles, no litter but take the litter back policy, no screaming, no vehicle turning anywhere and the discipline followed by everyone. Plastic is a

menace and it not only affects us but wildlife too. I will tell my friends, other students and villagers with the hope that when they are affected by plastic pollution, they will remember that I had warned about its ill effects. Today plastic is everywhere—in tribal villages, schools, forest. We must reduce and like our Van Sena, use cloth bags instead," said Ramniranjan Yadav,

"Here in Mukki, Kahna I saw in the tribal villages and nearby areas little children along with adults in the family taking cows for grazing and doing routine chores in the house and fields. They are not afraid of hard work. We, living in cities shy from household work or any hardships sometimes. Another thing is, I did not know about the Barahsingha and its near extinction many years ago. When I learnt about the success of the initiative by the Forest Department with stakeholders to increase its number from around 60 to now more than a thousand, I was not only enlightened but also want to take this message to my own state that

Bandhavgarh Tiger Ambassador.

"I will go back to my city cherishing the greenery of Kahna and the forest lush with Mahua, Sal and the Crocodile Bark trees. I want to green Mumbai and spark a campaign to plant, care for indigenous trees and ensure that they grow to an adult tree thereby becoming the green lungs the city critically needs," stated Tanisha Chodankar, Mumbai Tiger Ambassador.

"After meeting all the other Tiger Ambassadors and listening to their experience, I too feel enthused to do something for the environment. We all celebrate World Environment Day and talk about saving the Earth. I have been selected to participate in the Student World Parliament which has representatives from across the Globe. I will share my Kahna trip experience and create awareness on the need for conservation of nature, taking action than just talking. We need actively participate in campaigns to protect our environment, to bring positive change," stated Prashasti Pandey, Delhi Tiger Ambassador.

"I will go back to my school in Nagpur where the city is so urbanized that it has very few trees, is heavily polluted with dust and is too hot in the summer. I will share with my school and citizens about the clean air, trees, sounds of birds, cold weather and how we can take steps to change our city to make it liveable," said Rugved Paturkar, Nagpur Tiger Ambassador.

"These lessons from Kahna and the leads from each of the Tiger Ambassadors shared here, can make our leaders in governance think deeply and guide them in striking the right balance to safeguard environment and tigers. After all, Tiger is just a metaphor for all of nature—streams, trees, herbal plants, animals, hills, forests, etc. We need the oxygen, water, food and medicine that these hotspots provide for us. If these are destroyed, we too will not have long to survive.

working together and working hard is critical for conservation of forest, wildlife and biodiversity," said Savio Pinto, Goa Tiger Ambassador

These are the voices of all the students representing their schools from different cities across India that participated in the recently concluded Kids for Tigers National Camp 2025 at Kahna Tiger Reserve. Since its inception more than 20 years ago, the KFT programme in schools has seen many ambassadors turning Earth Champions in their college and adult or professional life. As founders, mentors like Bittu Sahgal, Dr Parvish Pandya, Preeti Takle reiterate, wherever you are and whether you become a business tycoon, chef, baker, IAS officer, politician, teacher, researcher, etc let environment take priority and do all you can to be concerned for the environment in your professional capacity.

Award winning tiger conservationist and wildlife campaigner Belinda Wright met with the Tiger Ambassadors and shared her experience working with tribal communities, forest Department and the police and she had insights that were valuable and inspiring having worked on anti poaching, wildlife protection and wildlife trade and tigers. When she met the Goa delegation, she expressed her shock at what was happening to Goa, its land and forests in the current wave of development that was destroying the very essence of Goa—its pristinity and uniqueness.

Hope these lessons from Kahna and the leads from each of the Tiger Ambassadors shared here, can make our leaders in governance think deeply and guide them in striking the right balance to safeguard environment and tigers. After all, Tiger is just a metaphor for all of nature—streams, trees, herbal plants, animals, hills, forests, etc. We need the oxygen, water, food and medicine that these hotspots provide for us. If these are destroyed, we too will not have long to survive.

(Tallulah D'Silva is an Architect and silver awardee of the Golden Door Award 2020 for truth and integrity.)

people'sedit

THE STOLEN TRUST

ANANTHA PADMANABHAN

An unusual stillness had fallen over the neighbourhood park, a stark contrast to the usual vibrant hub of activity. I searched for my elderly walking companion, Mr. A, who was always punctual, but this week, his absence had cast a long, unsettling shadow.

I finally reached his doorstep, the sight that greeted me was devastating. Mr. A, a retired schoolteacher and bachelor gentleman, usually so lively and full of stories, slumped against the worn armchair, his shoulders sagging, his gaze fixed on the floor.

"What happened?" I asked, my voice laced with concern.

Mr. A looked up, "It's gone," he whispered, his voice trembling. "All of it."

My blood ran cold. "Gone? What's gone?" Mr. A gestured vaguely towards his living room. "My savings. Years of scrimping and saving, vanished in a blink."

Confusion clouded my mind. "Vanished? How?" Mr. A recounted, "I received an SMS about an unpaid traffic challan. I clicked the link, the website looked official, with the police emblem and everything. I filled in the details, my mind racing... and then it was gone. Just like that."

The man, who hadn't owned a motor vehicle in decades, had fallen victim to a digital predator. He had been duped, his trust betrayed, his life savings plundered by a cruel and insidious thief.

Mr. A looked at me, his eyes filled with a mixture of shame and disbelief. "I feel so foolish, so... helpless."

My heart ached for him. This wasn't just a financial loss; it was a blow to his dignity, a shattering of his trust in the world.

He, who had always been so independent and resourceful, now felt utterly vulnerable, a victim of a technological world he barely understood.

I sat with him, offering what comfort I could, listening patiently as he recounted the events. We contacted the authorities and his bank, hoping to recoup some of the losses.

Overwhelmed by shame, he initially resisted the idea of going out or meeting anyone, fearing the judgment of his neighbours.

However, I gently persuaded him, explaining that his unsavoury experience could be useful in generating awareness about online scams. To my surprise, he agreed.

A couple of days later, he resumed his morning walks, where he shared his cyber-scaming ordeal with fellow walkers, becoming a walking (pun intended) awareness campaign.

This incident served as a poignant reminder of the ever-shifting sands beneath our feet, a stark lesson that even the most cautious among us can be caught off guard. It also highlighted the alarming reality that cyber fraudsters are getting increasingly sophisticated, making it crucial to stay vigilant and informed, as preventing them at the individual level often feels like a constant uphill battle.

As we walked together in the park, the morning sun filtering through the leaves, I realised that true security, like happiness, often lay not in accumulating wealth or possessions, but in the strength of our connections, the support we offer each other, and the collective wisdom we share to navigate the ever-changing complexities of the world.

letterstotheeditor

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battle. Their special focus is on women, who have emerged as a make-or-break vote bank in recent years.

The powerful BJP is bent on beating AAP at its own game, conveniently forgetting that PM Narendra Modi had recently criticised rival parties for promoting the freebies culture.

The RBI has repeatedly cautioned against fiscal repercussions of such giveaways, highlighting how they erode states' ability to invest in long-term development. Many states, already burdened with high deficits, are resorting to increased borrowing to fund these schemes. Maharashtra is the latest example. The freebie culture is not only vitiating the electoral process but also making a mockery of Indian democracy. The Election Commission should take a serious note of this.

Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai

Penalise car drivers not wearing seat belt

It is learnt that in the first 20 days of 2025, the Goa traffic police issued over 15,000 challans for various traffic violations. The most common offences include entering non-entry zones, dangerous parking and riding without helmets. However for some unknown reason, no action is forthcoming against car drivers who do not wear seat-belts. Section 194B of the Motor Vehicle Act 1988 mandates the use of safety belts. Violation of the rule is punishable with a fine of Rs 1000. If car drivers in Goa were pulled up for not wearing seat-belts, the number of traffic vio-

lations would have been much higher. As per Newton's first law of motion, when a car abruptly stops or crashes, due to inertia of motion, a person sitting in a moving car may be pushed forward.

A seat-belt stops the body from hitting the steering wheel or windshield of a high-speed car, which could easily result in injury or even death. The spine is also at risk. Even a minor injury to the spinal cord can be devastating. It is learnt that even in minor accidents, people can be brain-dead when they impact the windshield. At higher speed those sitting in the front seat, including the driver, can be thrown through the windshield onto the road. Use of a lap and shoulder belt reduces the risk of fatal injury by 60%. Wearing a seat belt by occupants of a car is as vital as wearing a helmet by a two-wheeler rider.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Adhoc judges for quick case disposal

The Supreme Court recently suggested that retired High Court judges be appointed to some High Courts where there is an acute pendency of criminal appeals. High Courts of Allahabad, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Patna and Rajasthan were referred to by the bench presided over by the Chief Justice. There are 371 vacancies of the sanctioned strength of 1122 judges in 25 HCs.

Besides, paucity of judges, procedural delays have prolonged a litigant's misery. Former Chief Justice SA Bobde,

in the course of a hearing had pushed for retired High Court judges, based on their expertise, as ad-hoc judges for a limited period in specific branches of law that has a whopping backlog of cases for a very long time.

Justice Bobde was clear that the serving judges' interests should not clash with the ad hoc ones. Former judges will bring in tremendous amounts of experience and talent, familiarity with the task at hand, and focusing on the job with no worries over interference, promotion or transfer.

The Constitution of India, too, is unambiguous over appointing former judges. Article 224A has dealt with the same. Of course, appointment of ad hoc judges should be smooth, quick and their works and perquisites should be adequately taken care of.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

All citizens are equally entitled to rights

No kudos is enough for Chander Gupta for the article titled "We all pay taxes" (January 24).

"I pay my tax, so I demand my rights" --- a very common boast among many "elite educated enlightened" persons! It seems they are engaged in a sort of "charity" to the State by paying tax upon their income with those not falling within the ambit of tax being "lesser citizens", also having no authority to raise rights entitled to a human being!

RJD MP Manoj Jha once had hit the nail hard right on the

head of those snob brigade by stressing "This is a welfare state, isn't it? When a poor man buys a bar of soap, he is as much a taxpayer as Adani and Ambani"! Yes, it needs to be repeatedly reminded to the class-conscious privileged Indians that each and every citizen of the country pays taxes --- direct or indirect. So even the richest of rich hold no right to think themselves as of any "special stock" with the indirect tax payer any lesser to them in any respect. And so as citizens of the State, all are equally entitled to all sorts of rights.

Similarly no Government in the Centre or any state holds any moral right to beat its trumpet of providing necessary amenities/services for "free"; more so when the recipient is of economically poor vintage. The citizens have a stake upon the amenities/services of the State and it is nothing but denigration of the recipient when any particular Govt or leader advertises their "magnanimity" by stressing upon the word "free".

The privileged lot should also remember that not only Indirect taxes contribute more to the Treasury than Direct tax, the economically downtrodden also hold every right to enjoy basic rights like food shelter in subsidised rates. After all, it forms the urgent duty of any Welfare State to look after those citizens in lower economic scale! After all, not only the poorest of poor also pay Tax (indirect), their actual percentage of contribution is more than the rich because they are paying the same amount (say for a tooth brush) despite their proportionately low income. So the privileged few who think they are only paying tax to the Treasury of the nation are damn fools.

Kajal Chatterjee, Kolkatta