

O HERALDO

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Strategic police patrolling must in crime prevention

Goa, once a peaceful State, and Bardez and Pernem beach belt in particular, have been rocked by a series on assaults and crimes. The rape of a mentally challenged girl in Cansaulim should make the police, the intelligence agencies, the guest house owner and society at large, to hide our faces in shame. Lack of political will to fight crime, political interference in investigations, victimization of honest officers, as seen in Anjuna, Calangute and Margao, are a big setback for crime prevention and fighting.

The Goa government boasts of 95% crime detection rate. Instead, what Goa should boast of, is crime prevention. Despite the limitations in recruitments and political interference, one thing which can radically alter the crime scene in Goa is police patrolling.

Patrolling which is the backbone of every police department, seems to be largely lacking in police stations across Goa. Either the police stations do not have vehicles or police patrols are seen parked in one place, during the day or night. The Pink Force, mandated to ensure women's safety, is seen permanently parked near the Panjim Church through the night. How will a stationery police patrol prevent crime or ensure prompt action?

Police patrolling is critical to keeping neighbourhoods safe. They are a key to reaching out to women in distress, senior citizens and law abiding citizens from being victimised by thugs. With the emergence of all night tourism, shack culture, violation of music playing norms, casino culture and all night gaming, infiltration of touts, illicit businesses, drunken and dangerous driving, proliferation of accidents, land grabbing, and tourists walking the city and towns all night, there is absolute need for Police patrol and vigilance.

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Patrolling is not about apprehending active offenders, but also about creating a sense of security among locals and tourists and preventing crime. But more than that, what the Goa police is not used to is, helping the local community around their police stations and solving community problems and winning the trust of the people.

Generally, standard patrolling is of three types - gut based patrolling, predictive patrolling and hot spot analysis. The problem with the Goa Police is that police officers are rarely seen patrolling during the day or night to deter criminals, law breakers, touts or even traffic rule violators.

Experienced police officers would conduct patrolling through neighbourhoods based on their instinct, personal experience or intuition. Predictive policing uses past crime data to prevent crime by focusing on crime events and known offenders. The third kind of police patrolling is Hot Spot Analysis where the police focus on known crime prone spots.

But more than this, Goa Police should adopt non-enforcement activities or strategies to win back the trust of the community, since people have less confidence in the police force, as an unbiased, honest and public oriented enforcer of law. Hence, firstly, Goa police should be visible, by patrolling areas, walking on the streets, parking in an area and observing since their mere presence with deter criminals.

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Presence of police, especially along the tourism-shack-music playing belt, would definitely up the security of tourists and locals. In Panjim itself, police are rarely seen amid the heightened activity in the capital city at night.

Secondly, officer statistics should be made known to the public, since police salaries come from tax payers' money. Police statistics as to where patrolling is taking place, amount of time spent on a beat, what activities the police and officer had undertaken to deter crime, should be made known, to restore confidence in the police.

Thirdly, police have to share information about non enforcement activities, as to how police have reached out to the community. Police have to coordinate and keep in touch with local bodies, clubs, societies and communities so that they can get information about possible trouble.

Presently, the trust of people in Goa Police is nothing to write home about. In the wake of targeting of honest officers and spike in crime, the police have a lot on their plate to refurbish their image, and prevent crime. Visible patrolling can be a start.



ALBERTINA ALMEIDA

Some of Gemma's work is visible in print form. In the Goa Law Referencer, published by Goa Foundation, the portion of the compilation of all laws applicable to Goa, be they local laws or Indian laws, with details of the Gazette on which they became applicable, is substantially her research and perspiration

Much that an activist is or can be, and does: Remembering Gemma

Gemma was never one to be tired and would keep walking miles in the course of her journey to achieve social, economic and political justice. I have also walked some miles with her. About a fortnight ago, however, she journeyed beyond the horizon.

I first bumped into Gemma at a National Conference of Women's Movements at Patna in 1988. I was pleasantly surprised to see a group of nuns arriving from various regions across the country, dedicated to working at the grassroots level with the poorest of the poor, harbouring the dream of reaching the last mile for peoples' empowerment. They were taking bold positions about the rights of women. I distinctly remember telling her that it is difficult to find nuns in Goa being as assertive in public life, and asking her why she, being a Goan, does not consider working in Goa. The go-getter that she was, she translated my suggestion into reality.

Gemma was one of those nuns who never asked to be called Sr. Gemma, and in fact spurned that kind of appellation for the distance that it created. Neither did she succumb to the pressures of any fossilized elements in power in places like Goa where the institutional Church was (and to an extent still is) dominant, who expected conformity to feudal and patriarchal standards. She was forthright in stating that as nuns, they have the possibility of taking risks which may be difficult for those who live within their families, since this could put their family members also at risk. Working with substance addicts, for example. She, in fact, skillfully walked the tight rope between institutional life and lay life.



We live in times when activists display qualities of both head and heart, and can be quite professional, but are still dismissed as 'emotional' beings whose work has no foundation in practicality. Gemma, equipped with her post-graduation from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, worked with a penchant for professionalism and precision, and compassion and empathy for fellow human beings, and demonstrated that the

two can be merged in one person. Some of Gemma's work is visible in print form. In the Goa Law Referencer, published by Goa Foundation, the portion of the compilation of all laws applicable to Goa, be they local laws or Indian laws, with details of the Gazette on which they became applicable, is substantially her research and perspiration.

Another thing I learned from her is the ability to both analyse hard data and record oral histories and to triangulate claims from both to arrive at robust conclusions. Gemma was as much at ease with women from the suppressed castes and ethnicities, as she was with women from the dominant castes. I remember her interviews with women ranging from women domestic workers, both Goan and migrant, to women from the Mhamai Kamat joint family (as it then was), apart from referencing various books from the Central Library, to put together a kind of position paper on the status of women in Goa.

Did I say qualities of head and heart? Well, I have to say qualities of hands too. It is from Gemma that I learned to identify, by feel, the pressure points that need to be massaged to release stress-related discomfort. Her busy hands also helped produce hand-made cards that were crafted to raise funds, drop by drop to buy an office space for Bailancho Saad. These hand-made cards again combined both craft and message. One card she visualized even offered a feminist re-interpretation she had come across of the Three Kings as three queens, bringing not the expensive superficial gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh but deeper meaning gifts such as the milk of human kindness and the oil of integrity.

And how can one forget the decoy role that she played? When we realized that discrimination against the girl child very much exists in Goa, we couldn't gloss over the possibility that people would be doing sex determination tests to selectively eliminate the girl child. There is such a strong tendency to brush things off by saying, "This doesn't happen in Goa". Yet casting aspersions does not befit us. So the next thing was to verify the information we had received.

There was enough of an age gap between her and me for her to pass off as my mother. We walked together into a doctor couple's clinic at Margao, as mother and daughter. We were trying to gauge the extent of resort to sex determination tests. I told the doctor that I wanted a sex determination test done to

know the sex of the foetus and Gemma added that we wanted to know how to go about it, and do many people resort to this test? His answer was a shocking yes, that he initially sent fluid samples to Maharashtra and it was so feasible that they had decided to set up a laboratory to do the amnio-centesis tests in Goa. When we got out, it took time to digest both the information he gave us, as well as the fact that we had been able to pull together our act of role playing. It was experiences like these that inputted into our contribution to the national legislation on regulation of pre-natal sex determination tests. Needless to say, this acting is different from maintaining the integrity of a conversation with someone one knows or someone who trusts you for who you are.

Talking of acting, Gemma skillfully adaptation of a play that someone had written called 'If Mary were here', about how Mary would have responded in the current situation of injustice, lingers. It highlighted a poignant way to practice the tenets of one's religion, in a contemporary context, rather than through rigid monotonous readings that are not followed in practice.

Gemma also saw the importance of both responding to situations of injustice and going beyond to enable people to stand up for justice. Towards that, she tirelessly visited various educational institutions and youth and social forums as part of the Saad Aangan gender resource group, to engage in gender sensitization, and to assist in documenting individual cases of injustice and violations of community rights to resources, with the swift precision of her stenographic skills.

Her frugal yet healthy lifestyle is exemplary. Perhaps that was what Gemma drew from the Medical Mission Sisters of which she was a part. She braved asthma from her childhood and a heart condition in her adult years, both of which were challenges, but which did not deter her from her activism.

If one thought activists are heartless and only seek publicity, Gemma is a prime example of silent hard work. Her dedication demonstrated the rigorous discipline required in activism - yet she balanced it with fun, comic relief, compassion, and genuine concern for her co-activists.

Last but not least, Gemma was straightforward and would tell you what she thought, like it is. I, for one, am grateful to her for this has had a transforming effect on my life.

(Albertina Almeida is a lawyer and human rights activist)

Police should abide by SC guidelines

The Supreme Court has said that police cannot serve notices to accused persons through WhatsApp or other electronic modes under the Criminal Procedure Code or Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.

A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal has directed all states and union territories (UT) to issue appropriate directions to police for issuing notices under Section 41A of CrPc, 1973 or Section 35 of BNSS, 2023 only through the mode of service permitted under the law.

Well, the cops from the Goa Police department are habitually known (forget using WhatsApp or other electronic modes to serve notices) for directly barging in Goan houses, harassing and even arresting some innocent people on flimsy reasons at the behest of politicians.

The higher-ups of the Goa Police department will now atleast take a very serious note of the above SC directions and instruct their personnel to henceforth stop harassing some innocent people in the state at the behest of politicians and to follow proper procedures whilst conducting certain exercises or investigations in the name of doing duty in Goa.

Jerry Fernandes, Saligao

New academic year from April 25

The Directorate of Education has issued a circular to all government and aided schools from class 6 to 12 to start the academic year from April 25. This is as per

new Education policy. However CBSE and ICSE board are already following the same. The schools will have to conduct yearly exams early so as to declare results and know the status of promotion to next class. Goa is yet to follow no detention policy and this will take time to implement. The classes will be up to 11.30 am till April end and then vacation from, May 1 to June 3 and regular classes from June 4.

Raju Ramamurthy, Vasco

Defunct elevators in Ponda hospital

he recent publication in O Herald on Comatose stage of 7 hospital lifts, including those designated for patients, public and PwDs stopped functioning at Ponda Sub District hospital, calls for urgent repairs.

The orthopaedic patients and those with serious injuries face problems in reaching the concerned wards. In addition, patients moving to different wards on stretchers take a lot of time in the building. The repeated lift issues are due to a lack of maintenance. Many patients in hospitals require support to complete even basic tasks. Patients seeking medical attention have the right to unhindered access to services but lack of facilities here forces them to visit private hospitals and spend huge money.

This raises serious questions about the well-being of patients who are already grappling with

health issues. This incident has triggered a public outcry and rendered the Health Department vulnerable to harsh criticism on social and mainstream media. The government should address the pressing needs of suffering citizens rather than diverting attention to other initiatives. The Public Works Department has to be pulled up for the lethargic service.

K G Vilop, Choroa

Is Air travel a nightmare now?

Air travel considered the safest among all modes of travel, has now become, a nightmare for frequent travellers around the world. The collision of an army helicopter with a passenger plane midair off the White House and crashing into Potomac river in Washington killing 67 people on board has chilled the spines of all. Another passenger plane ready for take off at Busan Airport in South Korea caught fire in its tail which spread to the fuselage putting the life of 169 passengers and 7 crew members on board in grave danger. Thankfully they all were evacuated on time to safety and a major disaster got averted.

Though we are now equipped with highly advanced radar and sophisticated computer operated foolproof control systems in place, still, such disasters do occur and occur frequently nowadays.

Tharcus S. Fernando, Chennai

Of second home and hotel occupancy

It is an open secret that large scale land conversion is taking place in the state and that too in a tearing hurry. Land conversion is carried out to change the use of land from agricultural to non-agricultural purposes. Mass illegal land conversion is also allegedly taking place in the state. Orchard land is being converted into a settlement zone. There is illegal hill cutting going on in several places across the state. All this is being done to make way for massive construction activity. People from other states in the country, especially from Delhi, are buying flats in the state which they utilize as a 'second home'. All this construction can have short term and long term impact on the state. With the construction boom, the green cover in the state is being depleted which can contribute to climate change. Wildlife is being displaced from their natural habitat and there could be a severe water shortage in the not-so-distant future. The construction activities can also have a negative impact on tourism in the state.

In the long run, visitors to the state could be owning a 'second home' in the state. Those who own a 'second home' would prefer to occupy it during their stay in the state and even cook their own food. This could lead to a fall in hotel occupancy and reduction in

people's edit

GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY

GLEN FERNANDES

Do you ever feel as if the world expects you to act in a specific way simply because of your age? Society tends to stick label on us—"too old for that." But guess what? If you stop and think about it, age is just a number—it's the number of years we've been alive. Does that number really tell us who we are or what we're capable of? Of course not! The years may go by, but they don't change our heart, our laughter or our zest for life. Growing old is inevitable but who says it can't be graceful and joyful? Your age doesn't define who you are—your heart does! What truly matters is how you live your life.

Every morning, I look in the mirror and see stories etched into my face. The laugh lines around my mouth? Proof of years of laughter. The occasional silver strand in my hair? A sign that I've lived enough to earn it. The mirror no longer frightens me; it amuses me. I see a younger me hiding behind this older version, giggling at how far we've come. Graceful aging is all about keeping that youthful spark alive. The world moves fast but we no longer need to rush. Instead, savour the moments, finding beauty in stillness and wisdom in simplicity. It's about staying curious, keeping that spark of excitement alive and not letting a number define you.

No matter what has happened in our lives, there is always something to be thankful for. In the hustle and bustle of life, we often forget to stop and acknowledge the one who's been with us every step of the way. There's been one constant: the presence of the Almighty, guiding us, protecting us and loving us unconditionally. Let's be thankful for the love we have received, the challenges we have overcome and the memories we have created. Life wouldn't be the same without the people who walk alongside us. Our family, friends, mentors and even the strangers who cross our paths all play a part in shaping our story. The journey of growing old is a beautiful experience when we approach it with gratitude and a youthful spirit.

Life isn't a race against time; Staying active in mind and body is the best way to keep the spark alive. As we get older, we gather a treasure trove of experiences. This wisdom is a treasure that only grows richer with time and what better way to share it than by passing it along to others? Our story of perseverance and strength is a beacon of hope for others. Age may add a few lines to our faces, but it can never steal the joy from our hearts. Keep laughing, keep learning and keep sharing your incredible wisdom. In the end your kindness, your sense of humour, your energy and your passion are what make you truly unforgettable. And that's something worth celebrating, no matter how old you are!

business for the restaurants. This will reduce the revenue generated by the tourism sector in future.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

No bag day fosters holistic learning

A heavy school bag is pain in the neck for a child. Most of the time, excessive and unwanted stuff, including unnecessary books, render the bags out of proportion. Additionally, proliferation of after-hour tuitions have propelled children to carry bags there too.

Besides text books and notebooks, nowadays there are numerous add-ons that load the bag. An ideal school bag is said to be one that weighs no more than 15 to 20 percent of a child's body weight. Viewed against this backdrop, the decision of the Andhra Pradesh government to reintroduce the "no bag day" for school students every Saturday is most welcome.

This rule was first implemented in 2018; first and third Saturday were "no bag days" then. Students need not carry books, too, every Saturday. This move can benefit the students in a few ways. First, children can have a sigh of relief atleast on one of the school days by not being burdened by heavy bags. Second, they can relax to some extent amidst the excessive pressure of academics.

Third, Saturdays will be focused on holistic development of a student. Children will be encouraged to take part in sports, games and cultural activities like debates and essay writing. However, it is important for the state government to not go back on its aim.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola