

Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan calls Official Language Act a plot against Roman script

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan (GRLA) has asserted that the Goa Official Language Act (OLA) of 1987 was a conspiracy orchestrated by the Devanagari lobby with the intention of undermining the Roman script.

"Thirty-eight years ago, on this day, February 4, after a long and bloody agitation that saw seven martyrs sacrificing their lives, the Goa Official Language Act was passed, making Konkani in Devanagari script the official language of Goa, with Marathi designated for all official purposes," said Kennedy Afonso, President of GRLA.

Afonso expressed that the Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan salutes the efforts of all Konkani stalwarts who were at the forefront of the

movement, including the seven martyrs who sacrificed their lives to make Konkani the official language of Goa.

"However, for the Catholic community, which was at the forefront of the Konkani language movement, this day remains one of mixed emotions—betrayal, anger, and protests. To add insult to injury, Marathi was also granted the status of being used for all official purposes," he stated.

Afonso emphasised the importance of reflecting on the decision made by the Government of Goa 38 years ago.

"Given the internal politics and the aftermath of the bloody agitation, the government's decision at the time may have been understandable, but today, it's crucial to reconsider and amend wherever necessary.

SYMBOLIC PROTEST IN PANJIM TODAY

MARGAO: In a bid to reaffirm their demand for an amendment to the Official Language Act of 1987 and to grant equal status to the Roman script, the Global Konknni Forum has announced a symbolic protest at Azad Maidan in Panjim on February 4 at 10 am. This date coincides with the State's Official Language Day.

The protest comes after years of agitation by a significant segment of the Konkani-speaking population, particularly Roman script users, who feel betrayed by the exclusion of their script from the Act, passed on February 4, 1987 and recognised only the Devanagari script as the official script for Konknni.

Jose Salvador Fernandes, Secretary of the Global Konknni Forum, described the omission of the Roman script as a "great betrayal" of the people, particularly the

linguistic minority community. Seven individuals lost their lives as martyrs during the historic Konkani language agitation, Fernandes reminded.

He criticised the Official Language Act for dividing the Konkani-speaking population along script lines and claimed that the omission of the Roman script from the Act was a result of a deliberate conspiracy by proponents of the Devanagari script. According to him, these vested interests continued to influence institutions like the Sahitya Akademi, perpetuating the injustice to Roman script writers.

"The Act has benefited only a small section of Goan society that uses Konknni in Devanagari script, while the growth of Konknni in Roman script has been severely hampered for the past 38 years," Fernandes said.

Roman Script deserves its rightful place in the Official Language Act," he stated.

He alleged that the Official Language Act had all

the hallmarks of a conspiracy, crafted by the Devanagari lobby in collaboration with the politicians of that era, aiming to eradicate

Roman Script in Goa. Afonso traced the roots of this push to the All India Konknni Parishad (AIKP) held in Kumta on July 8, 1939,

shorttakes

BUS DRIVER ARRESTED FOLLOWING FATAL COLLISION IN CALANGUTE

CALANGUTE: The Calangute police have arrested Pramod Kandolkar, 51, the driver of a bus involved in a head-on collision with a two-wheeler on Saturday morning. The accident resulted in the death of the motorcyclist, Dhurba Jyoti Sureshwar, 25, a resident of Bengaluru. Kandolkar, a resident of Socorro, Porvorim, has been booked under Sections 281 and 106 of the BNS for driving in a rash and negligent manner, causing the death of the motorcyclist, according to the police.

Eyewitnesses reported that the accident occurred at approximately 8.30 am when the speeding motorcycle, KA-02 KL 1084, collided with a local passenger bus, GA-03 N 1011, driven by Kandolkar. The bus was entering the main road to proceed towards the bus stand at Umtawaddo, Calangute. The motorcyclist, who was travelling from the beachside, suffered severe injuries and was rushed to the Candolim Primary Health Centre. However, he succumbed to his injuries on the way and was declared brought dead at the health centre.

FIRE GUTS HOTEL STOREROOM IN ARPORA

CALANGUTE: A fire broke out in the storeroom of a hotel at Diwanbhatti, Arpora, on Monday morning, causing an estimated loss of Rs 70,000. The blaze, which started at around 10.45 am, completely gutted the storeroom and its contents, including bed sheets, pillows, and towels. The Pilerne Fire Station was alerted by the hotel management, prompting firefighters to rush to the scene and bring the fire under control. Despite their swift response, most of the stored items were destroyed in the fire. The Anjuna police have filed a report on the incident, and further investigation is underway.

SAFETY TEST



The Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) personnel during the mock drill along the floating jetty near the ferry wharf at Panjim

Musicians strike the chord to preserve mother tongue Konkani

Team Herald

MARGAO: A heartfelt appeal was made to Konkani-loving people to preserve the mother tongue at a mega Konkani musical event held at Telaulim-Navelim, amidst growing concerns about the increasing number of migrants in Goa.

The YMCT Entertainment-Telaulim hosted the Konkani musical event as part of its 40th-anniversary celebrations, which brought together a number of prominent figures, including Konkani singers and tiatr artists.

In his address, Navelim MLA Ulhas Tuenkar praised

the efforts of Konkani singers and tiatr artists in promoting the language, but expressed concerns about the loss of Goan identity if the language is not preserved in daily life.

Former Minister Averano Furtado echoed these sentiments, calling for a collective effort to ensure that Konkani remains a vital part of Goa's cultural heritage.

Anthony Barbosa, President of the Tiatr Academy of Goa, extended full support to YMCT for future initiatives and shared that the new General Council of the Tiatr Academy is working towards the establishment

of a Tiatr Bhavan.

Other dignitaries present at the event included Zilla Panchayat member Edwin Cardozo, Fr Valentinho Alvares, Navelim, Sarpanch Michael Cardozo, Telaulim Sarpanch Freny Barretto, as well as YMCT office bearers Steven Goes (President), Edward Ferrao (Secretary), and Avito Pires de Menezes (Treasurer).

The event also saw the felicitations of Anthony Barbosa, President of the Tiatr Academy of Goa, and Marcos Gonsalves, tiatrist and Vice-President of the Tiatr Academy of Goa, for their significant contributions to the field of Tiatr.

Elements within Congress fiercely opposed Romi Konkani Bill

Team Herald

PANJIM: During the first Wilfred de Souza Congress Ministry (1993-1994), though Congress party had the majority, they did not pass the Amendment to the Official Language Act to make Romi Konknni the official script, along with Devanagari, when a Private Members' Bill was introduced in the Goa Assembly by Independent MLA Radharao Gracias, on 25 March 1994. This was mainly due to the divisions within the Congress since a section of Congressmen had from the MGP, which espoused Marathi as the official language of Goa.

The Goa Assembly witnessed heated exchanges between members when Radharao introduced the Goa, Daman and Diu Official Language (Amendment) Bill, to make Konknni in the Roman Script as official script along with Devanagari. It was opposed by Margao MLA Anant Narcinva Naik, vociferously supported by Opposition MGP and Congress MLAs.

Radharao argued that Konknni language had been kept alive due to the sacrifices of the people over cen-

A CLARION CALL TO REVIVE KONKANI LITERATURE IN ROMAN SCRIPT

MARGAO: Despite Konknni being an official language of Goa, supporters of the Konknni language in Roman script complain that they have been facing significant challenges since the government declared Devanagari as the official script.

In an interview with O Herald, Kennedy Afonso, president of the 'Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan', expressed concern over the declining number of Konknni speakers. He noted that Goa has lost over two lakh speakers since the 2001 Census. He argued that this decline is a direct reflection of the lack of acceptance of the Devanagari script among the Konknni-speaking population.

"The literature in the Roman script has suffered greatly, and there is an urgent need for its revival," Afonso said. "Only 2 percent of the minority Roman-script users are in government jobs because they are unable to take exams in Devanagari," he added. Afonso pointed out that despite 38 years of teaching Konknni in schools and the government's expendi-

tures. He said that the language had been preserved and nourished in the Roman script over these centuries.

MGP MLA Mohan Amshakar observed that the mass scale conversion by Portuguese had led to the bifurcation and division

of crores on the promotion of the Devanagari script, Konknni is still listed as an endangered language by UNESCO. Jose Salvador Fernandes, a member of the 'Global Konknni Forum' and a strong supporter of the Roman script, echoing Afonso's concerns, criticized the lack of support for publishing houses that produce literature in Roman script.

"By granting official status only to the Devanagari script in the Official Language Act, the government has caused a major divide within the Konknni-speaking community. These divisions are a result of the government's script choice, and today, Konknni is on the decline with each passing day," Fernandes said.

He claimed that those from the Roman script community are being overlooked in terms of government job opportunities and recognition at higher levels. Literary works in Roman script are also being denied prestigious national recognition, such as the Sahitya Akademi Awards.

was passed on February 4, 1987, condemned the Loutolim MLA as a "rabid communal man who was putting rubbish before the House." (Herald, March 26, 1994). Rane (who originally belonged to MGP and had crossed over to the Congress in 1979-80) was ably supported by Congress members and MGP MLAs in his condemnation. AN Naik summed up Radharao's speech as "an instrument for stirring anti national feelings among the members of the House." (Herald March 26, 1994)

Rane's opposition to the Romi Script Bill was so fierce that he went so far as to say that the best place for such anti-national elements was detention under Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (TADA) Act at the Aguada jail. Rane said the expert committee had paid enough attention while choosing the Devanagari script for the language. Rane accepted that cent per cent Goans spoke Konknni and that the people from the majority community read, conversed and wrote in Marathi, "but they also speak Konknni", he said while reiterating their stand for choosing the Devanagari script. (Herald March 26, 1994)

House. It has to be thrown out into the Mandovi (river which was adjoining the Assembly Complex, at Adil Shah palace at that time)." (Herald, March 26, 1994).

Pratapsingh Rane's fierce opposition to Romi Script

Congress MLA and person who was CM when the Official Language Bill

Goa's achievements in the race to beat cancer

As a shining example of Goa's famed model of healthcare for all, cancer detection and treatment have been given a big impetus by the Directorate of Health Services of Government of Goa. To mark World Cancer Day on February 4, the State reiterates its commitment to provide the best and most modern measures to the people of Goa

VISHWAJIT RANE

If there is one disease, the mention alone of which sends shivers down the spines of people all over the world for the last many centuries – it is cancer. Right since scientists came to the conclusion that it is a disease for which awareness and prevention are best bets to beat it, cancer awareness has acquired an urgency across the world. Among all States in India, Goa is on the forefront in implementing innovative strategies in spreading awareness about cancer. In addition, the State has launched several technology-backed measures for early detection, prevention and treatment of cancer.

As we observe World Cancer Day on February 4, it is my privilege to recount the extraordinary measures the Directorate of Health Services (DHS) of Government of Goa has taken to limit the cases of cancer among women and other sections of society. A notable initiative is the launch of a Mobile Cancer Van as a cancer detection unit, by which 2,794 persons have been screened so far. These include 773 males and 2,021 females. It is worthwhile to note that there were 78 cases of early detection and 13 confirmed cases.

Another unique initiative is the launch of the iBreastExam under the highly commended 'Swasth Mahila Swasth Goa' (SMSG) Pro-

ject. It is a joint initiative of Yuvraj Singh Foundation and DHS, in collaboration with UE Life Sciences and supported by SBI Foundation. It was launched on October 26, 2021, with an aim to screen 100,000 women for breast cancer over a period of two years in Goa. The exercise involves a technology intervention in the form of iBreastExam devices. It is a matter of pride for the State that the target was successfully achieved by screening 1,11,980 women with 58 confirmed cases of breast cancer in March 2024. The programme had a great impact at the community level because of which the project has been extended till December 2025. In the second phase 29,184 women were screened, out of which 7 were diagnosed with breast cancer.

Breast cancer screening and awareness camps are being conducted in collaboration with various stakeholders like educational institutes, NGOs, religious groups, self-help groups, industries, etc. Awareness sessions on breast cancer, along with breast self-examination techniques are also conducted before every screening

camp to educate women on early detection of signs and symptoms of breast cancer. Those suspected of having malignancy are referred to Goa Medical College and Hospital, District Hospitals and Sub-District Hospitals for further investigations and treatment.

The iBE device is a unique technological innovation which works on DCPC (Dynamic Co-Planar Capacitive) pressure sensors technology that can electronically differentiate between varying tissue elasticity. Breast lumps/tumours/lesions are harder than normal breast tissue and this difference can be measured to detect breast lumps early. It



can be operated by primary health care providers, it is painless, radiation-free and delivers instant report since it is ultra-portable and battery powered, as it is mobile connected, having cloud storage and analytics. The device is effective in younger women and dense breasts. It is also safe to be used during pregnancy and in lactating mothers.

Another measure involves use of Pertuzumab + Trastuzumab combo therapy which is available free for HER2+ breast cancer patients.

Lung cancer detection

Another extremely useful and effective initiative is the "Lung Cancer Early Detection" project launched in collaboration with AstraZeneca India Pharma Ltd, DHS and Qure.AI. It was launched on February 7, 2024, which uses AI-based chest X-ray technology to detect the lung nodules. The project aims to increase survival rates by screening and early detection of lung diseases, through early diagnosis and detection of lung diseases through AI interpretation of digital chest X-ray and follow-up chest CT scans. Cure.ai is the AI-based chest X-ray interpretation tool which helps in identifying lung nodules with assigned malignancy scores, which are predominantly the precursors of lung cancer. This X-ray based AI tool is accessible, affordable, scalable and adopted

in healthcare system as a lung cancer screening tool. The Qure.ai's qXR solution can identify 29 different lung conditions including lung nodules.

The qXR is currently deployed at 17 health centres having digital X-rays with internet facilities on-cloud at North Goa District Hospital, South Goa District Hospital, Sub District Hospital Ponda, Sub District Hospital Chicalim, CHC Valpoi, CHC Pernem, CHC Canacona, CHC Curcholem, CHC Bicholim, CHC Sankhali, PHC Shiroda, PHC Aldona, PHC Quepem, PHC Balli, PHC Dharbandora, PHC Cansarvarnem and PHC Sanguem. All patients referred for the chest X-rays will be uploaded on cloud through AWS gateway for interpretation. Since the initiation of the project till December 2024; 33,149 cases have been screened and the number of cases with suspected nodules is 139. So far, only one case has been detected positive for lung cancer.

The Government of Goa is taking all possible measures to involve different stakeholders and latest technology to come out with novel solutions to different health problems. We are confident that the Goa Model of governance will continue to set new standards for all other States.

(The writer is the Minister for Health, Urban Development, Town and Country Planning, Women and Child Welfare, and Forests in Government of Goa.)

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