

O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

What ails the South Goa district hospital?

It was partially inaugurated in May 2020, when Covid-19 infections began spreading in Goa, and a good 12 years after the foundation stone was laid. And while one would have expected it to be running smoothly by now, many chinks remain in the armour of the South Goa District Hospital.

It is a no-brainer that the establishment of a full-fledged healthcare facility for the southern part of the state was more a necessity than a dream. In the absence of such a centre, the Goa Medical College at Bambolim was overburdened and its medical staff were stretched beyond their limits as cases requiring urgent medical intervention - from heart attacks to accidents - kept pouring into the tertiary care institute from South Goa on a daily basis. Also, the OPDs at the GMC's various departments were themselves unable to keep up with the demand of patients making a beeline from all parts of the state and even beyond it for routine check-ups or seeking treatment for particular health issues.

When the South Goa District Hospital was finally thrown open five years ago, citizens heaved a sigh of relief. Not only would travel to the closest well-equipped government hospital be slashed, but there was also confidence that the hospital would offer services on a par with the GMC. However, cut to the following day, and the common man complains that the services offered at the facility are way below satisfactory. They also say that many patients, particularly road accident victims, are still being referred from southern regions to the GMC because of insufficient staff and lack of certain medical equipment at the South Goa District Hospital. As a result, voices demanding that the latter be upgraded to a tertiary care facility - the level of the GMC - and be made fully functional are getting louder by the day.

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Last September, Health Minister Vishwajit Rane conducted a surprise visit at the South Goa District Hospital to address repeated complaints of a shortage of medical staff and the resultant queues of patients at the OPDs there. He underscored that the facility needed fully functional departments of cardiology, neurology and orthopaedics and also assured that things would get better within five months.

But if a recent petition to the health minister by a citizen is anything to go by, it does not appear that the situation has improved much. In his communication to Rane, Prabhav Naik said that delayed diagnoses of non-communicable

diseases and the lack of access to life-saving treatments at the South Goa District Hospital continue to affect vulnerable populations. He also said that universal health coverage will remain out of reach unless immediate steps are taken to protect citizens from the financial burden of healthcare. Other issues that were highlighted included long waiting times for patient registration, elevators that frequently malfunction, inadequate services such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed tomography (CT) scans, a functional intensive care unit (ICU) and a blood bank.

Ambulances too are in short supply. This was highlighted last year when a young man who suffered a fracture to his leg was made to wait at the South Goa District Hospital for three hours in excruciating pain as there were no ambulances available to move him to the GMC for treatment.

It is the need of the hour for the government to walk the talk and provide the manpower and equipment that are so sorely needed by the South Goa District Hospital. The people of South Goa should not be given step-motherly treatment especially now, when a government healthcare facility such as the South Goa District Hospital is functional in the district. Instead of continuing to make people's lives difficult by leaving doctors with no choice but to refer cases from South Goa to the GMC, the government should instead focus on improving the hospital and ensuring it is well-equipped and well-staffed. Else, the ailing South Goa District Hospital will soon need to be on life support itself and patients' lives will be in limbo.

Twitter World

Pargat Singh @PargatOfficial
When Punjab demands international flights, permissions are granted only to Delhi airports to deny Punjab economic benefits. But when it comes to running a defaming narrative, a U.S. deportation flight lands in Punjab—even though most deportees are

from Gujarat and Haryana.

Suhasini Haidar @suhasinih
Unlike Colombia, India has not protested the use of military transport for migrants. The message from this kind of transport by the US is clear - take back whoever it decides to send, or else...

comment



The most common diseases linked to overworking include heart disease, strokes, diabetes, anxiety, depression and more. Let us look at heart disease. The report calculated how working long hours can impact an employee's heart health



this "pygmy patriotism." Contrast this with the Microsoft conference in 2014. Satya Nadella, was responding to a question on how to tackle gender pay disparity that women faced. He dismissively replied that they should 'trust karma and believe that the system would fix it over time'. An uproar followed, but within hours, he issued a formal apology on the Microsoft website stating that his reply was completely wrong, and proceeded to explain his belief in equal pay for equal work. Neither his apology or explanation were left to un-

The return of slave labour?

Society is at a stage where we consider outrageous statements by political leaders a fact of life and a sad reality of the level to which public perceptions have descended. Chants of 'goli maro salon ko' raise only muted protests and appear to be a qualification for ministership. 'Batenge to katenge' is looked upon as a clever slogan. Even a politicians' suggestion to rape victims to address the perpetrator as 'bhaiya' to cope with the offense merely arouses passing amusement rather than denouncement. Such warped lines of thought are par for the course for political advancement. However, when someone of the ranking of L&T Chairman, S N Subrahmanyam suggests that employees should work 90 hours a week, and Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy's advocates 70-hour workweeks, this hammers at the boundaries of logic and indeed sanity. The TCS Managing Director and CEO, K Krithivasan's defense of the statement only added to the incredulity.

The L&T top brass immediately came to the rescue of the chairman after his comments raised an uproar in corporate and social media circles. "Extraordinary outcomes require extraordinary efforts" said one. "Nation building is at the core of our mandate," said another. Issac Asimov termed

derlings. In case of L&T, social media was quick to raise other issues. The Chairman got a 43% increase in his salary which was 543.57 times the average salary of L&T employees. I wonder what the reaction of these employees was to the suggestions of the 'boss'.

Quite apart from the impracticality of the suggestion, it quite clearly flouts labour laws. But the most serious and often ignored issues pertain to the health impact of what has been proposed.

In 2021, a detailed report by the World Health Organisation (WHO), found that working 55 or more hours per week increases the risk of stroke by 35% and the risk of dying from heart disease by 17%. "According to the above-described criteria for proceeding to estimation, WHO and the ILO have been able to calculate the burdens of disease for the category of exposure to long working hours of ≥ 55 hours per week and the health outcomes of stroke and ischaemic heart disease," it says. The report had taken into account global disease and injury burden that was linked to jobs from 2000 to 2016. It found that 1.9 million deaths worldwide had been officially linked to work-related causes.

The most common diseases linked to overworking include heart disease, strokes, diabetes, anxiety, depression and more. Let us look at heart disease. The report calculated how working long hours can impact an employee's heart health. With ≥ 55 hours a week, there was sufficient evidence of the risk of ischemic heart disease. Working overtime can lead to chronic stress, which spikes the body's cortisol levels, and that can in turn increase blood pressure and heart rate, both of which raise the risk of heart disease.

For employees working over 55 hours a week, the chances of life-altering conditions like strokes become more probable by 35% going by the WHO report's estimate. Working a 90-hour week roughly amounts to logging in for an approximate 13 hours a day. A study published in BMJ Diabetes Research & Care, and quoted by TIME Magazine, found that "women working more than 45 hours a week had a 51% higher risk of developing dia-

betes during the study period compared to women working 35 to 40 hours a week. (That was after the scientists adjusted for other potential factors that could affect diabetes risk, including physical activity, BMI and smoking)". This is due to the fact that working extra-long hours can lead to people skipping meals, which in turn can cause their blood sugar to fluctuate or drop. This results in low energy levels, which is counter-productive in any case, and may even cause unhealthy eating later in the day.

Another effect of persistent high cortisol levels, experienced by those working long hours is a phenomenon referred to as "increased brain fog", a direct consequence of sleep deprivation. According to the Mayo clinic, during sleep, your immune system releases proteins called cytokines, which your body requires when it has to fight off an infection or inflammation, or deal with stress. "Sleep deprivation may decrease production of these protective cytokines. In addition, infection-fighting antibodies and cells are reduced during periods when you don't get enough sleep. So, your body needs sleep to fight infectious diseases. Long-term lack of sleep also increases your risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart and blood vessel (cardiovascular) disease," the report says.

Research by the National Institutes of Health suggests that a 90-hour week runs the risk of mental health problems that include chronic stress, which leads to irritability, and burnout. Being "in work mode" for such prolonged periods leaves little room for destressing, rest and recovery. The risk of depression and anxiety disorders increase, and can induce negative factors like social isolation, reduced job satisfaction, and a diminished sense of fulfillment; all of which are detrimental to one's mental well-being.

In short, just "staring at your wife, or the wife staring at her husband" on Sundays has much to recommend it!

(The author is a past IMA Goa State President, a founder member of VHAG and past President, and a past member of the VHAI Central Executive Committee)

people's edit

NEGATIVE NARRATIVE VERSUS VALIDATION

SUJIT DE

Throughout my life, I remained in the general category. The reservation policy did not give me anything. Rather, it delayed my first promotion and I lost one promotion in my service life because of it. I am saying this only to point out that my belief in the caste reservation is based on absolute objective logic and not for my personal gain.

But I would have gladly accepted the benefits of reservation had I been in the reserved category. It is because I think it is an honour, duty, and responsibility for a person in the backward caste group to get a chance to represent their community in the government either elected or selected part of it.

It would have been a disaster for democracy if the backward castes found nothing wrong in the practice of five per cent ruling over ninety-five percent and let this system continue. My belief in democracy and in the reservation policy led me to give moral support to my SC colleague, who got a promotion over me.

Some people argue that the reservation should be replaced by providing education to the backward castes. But there is no either - or choice between the reservation policy and education. As a matter of fact, the reservation policy is a helper and not at all a bar to education that wants to eradicate untouchability and caste hatred. The reservation policy itself can educate people that the society can have faith in the ability of so called lower castes. The reservation policy helped instil self-belief in my SC colleague. It also taught my other colleagues that a person from the reserved category could discharge his duties in a responsible administrative post in the most efficient manner.

The reservation policy gives this validation. This is absolutely necessary to counter the narrative doing the rounds for centuries that backward castes possess less merit. Such a derogatory remark can destroy the self-belief of a person instantly. It is not difficult to imagine its effects when it has been told generation after generation, century after century.

It has destroyed the confidence and self-belief of Dalits. It is too much to ask them now to overcome it overnight and ignore the reality of caste based nepotism before competing with others.

We should recall the incident that happened in the life of Thomas Alva Edison. It is all about a toxic comment versus validation. One day Thomas told his mother, "My teacher gave this paper to me and told me to only give it to my mother."

His mother read it out loud to her child, "Your son is a genius. This school is too small for him and doesn't have enough good teachers for him. Please teach him yourself."

After his mother died, and he became one of the greatest inventors, he found a paper on which it was written, "Your son is added (mentally ill). We won't let him come to school any more." Edison cried and then he wrote in his diary, "Thomas Alva Edison was an added child that by a hero mother became the genius of the century."

Thomas Alva Edison cried and said that he was an added child because he knew that the derogatory remark of the teacher could have made him so if his mother did not turn it into a validation.

Non-Aryan people showed more talent than Aryans in architecture, engineering, town planning, and administration. But what is the effect of caste hierarchy and the practice of untouchability which is still followed by one out of four Indians? All these have had a devastating impact on the backward castes. This, plus caste based nepotism, will rule the roost if caste reservation is not in place.

bullying, harassment and intimidation by the rulers and powerful entities. The defamation laws must ideally be scrapped, this will help us move to a more just and equitable society.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulim

Global health crisis in the making

President Donald Trump's announcement of the United States' withdrawal from WHO presents significant challenges to global health governance and international cooperation, and the retraction could lead the US to isolate its health system considerably.

As one of the world's largest funders of global health through, both international and national agencies, Trump back-peddalling may curtail efforts to provide lifesaving health care and combat deadly outbreaks, especially in lower-income countries without the means to do so alone. As for India, key programmes, such as tuberculosis eradication and vaccine distribution could entail significant delays and reduced funding if the global health body's resources are stretched thin.

Moreover, the absence of US support might slow down collaborative efforts between Indian organizations and the WHO, potentially impacting initiatives aimed at tackling antimicrobial resistance, improving maternal and child health, and strengthening general health systems.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai

letterstotheeditor

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All letters must contain correct postal address and telephone number. Letters are liable to be edited for brevity.

online activities is also needed to keep children safe.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Trump's thinking on Gaza is bizarre

US President Donald Trump's latest pronouncement on Gaza is as reckless as it is detached from reality. His suggestion that Washington should take control of the war-ravaged enclave and develop it economically - after Palestinians are forcibly resettled elsewhere, appears to be an inflammatory claim.

Unfortunately, he outlined this bizarre claim at a joint press conference with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu. It also comes at a time when the region is at its most volatile, with a fragile ceasefire barely holding. Besides, his idea runs counter to his own stated policy of keeping the US out of West Asia's crisis.

The forced displacement of Palestinians would amount to ethnic cleansing, a move that would be universally condemned and likely spark further violence across West Asia. Dispossessing Gazans from their homeland will invite more trouble for Trump and will also result in alienating his Arab friends. Preserving the ceasefire in Gaza should be his priority.

Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai

No reserved seats in EV buses

The EV buses of the Kadamba Transport Corporation (KTC) that ply within and in the suburbs of Panjim are a boon. The air-conditioned buses are a hit among the people as they are comfortable, the fares are reasonable and passengers are not packed like sardines. But it is inexplicable as to why there are no seats reserved for senior citizens, persons with disabilities and women. Some years back, the Directorate of Transport mandated that all buses need to have reserved seats for the above categories of passengers. It appears that the KTC authorities missed the bus and 'forgot' to implement the rule. Hopefully they would get the reserved seats labelled in all the EV buses for the convenience of the passengers.

Sridhar D'Iyer, Caranzalem

Defamation laws must be scrapped

Politics in India today is arguably more toxic and vitriolic than anywhere else in the world but the netas seem to be a very thin skinned lot.

They complain and file petitions in court against the opposition about purported criminal defamation with alarming regularity. In dismissing one such

complaint filed by BJP's Rajeev Chandrasekhar against Shashi Tharoor, a Delhi court has underlined the larger stakes in this political pastime. It explicitly mentioned in its judgement that if every speech is viewed as defamation, then freedom of speech and expression would be reduced to zero. This is not an apology for harming the reputation of any person rather it is about proportionality.

Courts however have been inconsistent in defamation suits. In 2023, a Surat court convicted Rahul Gandhi for a remark made four years earlier and ordered a two year imprisonment sentence which led to his disqualification from the Lok Sabha. The Supreme Court stayed the partisan judgement and Rahul returned to Parliament. Conviction or not, there is punishment enough in the process of being tried for defamation.

Criminal defamation laws misused by the ruling party to wither down critics and seek an opposition mukt Bharat is counter to the right of 'freedom of expression' granted by the Constitution. It is a constant overhang on media freedom as well. Parliament via BNS has failed to reform this colonial era censor, the definition of 'criminal defamation' remains dispiritingly expansive and is an arbitrary restriction on free speech. It leads to nothing but