

O HERALDO

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Bristling over a bridge

The 15-day closure of the old Mandovi bridge has quite literally thrown traffic flow out of gear, underscoring not only how vital the link to and from the capital is, but also how much vehicular density has increased in India's smallest state. Certain sections of the population have been affected the most, particularly office-goers who now have to reschedule their travel times, and students Std XII who are appearing for their Board examinations. Left with no alternative, traffic cops have exhorted students to set out for their exam centres earlier than usual.

As expected, the upset in their regular routes of commuting coupled with the massive traffic snarls owing to the bridge being closed, prompted affected citizens to lash out at the government and its ill-timed decision to shut the bridge for repairs. Yes, the authorities concerned could have planned the closure better but even the best made plans often go away. The much-needed work was already delayed due to the recently concluded winter session of the state legislative assembly and would have probably been pushed back further to facilitate the smooth conduct of the upcoming Carnival and Shigmo celebrations. And before one knew it, the monsoon would have arrived, washing away any chance of the old Mandovi bridge getting the fresh layer of asphalt it so desperately needs.

It should not be forgotten that the bridge in question was built way back in 1971. It was reported Russian in design and the first of its kind to be used in India. However, it should also not be forgotten that the same bridge collapsed in 1986 due to what was later attributed to the "corrosion of the pre-stressed cable that attached the precast concrete segments to the piers".

If the collapse of bridges in the recent past and the loss of life and money they've caused are anything to go by, maintenance on a regular basis is mandatory. However, there needs to be a middle ground in which the convenience of the common man is thought about and maintenance works are scheduled to cause as little problems as possible

strain on each of them, warranting their regular maintenance and repair

It is no secret that the tarmac of the Old Mandovi bridge has been in urgent need of carpeting for many years now, especially the approach road from the Panjim side which is so uneven that even vehicles with the best suspension get rattled on it. Carpeting of the road is indeed important as it reduces the constant slamming of vehicles, especially heavy ones, on the segments joining the spans.

That being said, the government would do well to stagger repairs of the Old Mandovi bridge, or any other bridge, in the future. Keeping such a crucial route shut for 15 days feels like an eternity, specially because it links the state capital and is considered to be a more convenient entrance to the EDC complex at Patto that houses crucial government offices. Also, it is greatly depended on by commuters who travel onwards to their workplaces to central Goa or South Goa.

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For now, the only thing citizens can do is to wait it out and allow the authorities enough time to complete the maintenance of the Old Mandovi bridge. Hurrying it along at this point won't serve anyone as substandard work will affect both, the bridge and the people using it.

comment



BLAISE COSTABIR

One can envision the despair of these young individuals who liquidate all their family possessions to seize an opportunity to reach a foreign shore where they envision the streets to be paved with gold, transforming not only their own lives but also those who supported them back home



of these incidents, it warrants the utmost attention and the full extent of the government's resources to eradicate this evil of human trafficking.

One young man, under the impression that any method was acceptable for traveling abroad, opted for the illicit path. This journey is rife with risks posed by abusive smugglers, as well as potential encounters with wild animals and starvation along the unauthorised route. The tragic

The roads abroad are not paved with gold

As youngsters, we are acquainted with the renowned tale of Dick Whittington, a destitute orphan who ventured to London in search of his fortune, believing the streets there were paved with gold, only to discover himself shivering and famished. He drifted into slumber at the entrance of an affluent individual who offered him a position in his culinary domain. Regrettably, life has not been as benevolent to the numerous undocumented migrants who find themselves repatriated to India.

One can envision the despair of these young individuals who liquidate all their family possessions to seize an opportunity to reach a foreign shore where they envision the streets to be paved with gold, transforming not only their own lives but also those who supported them back home. Thanks to President Trump's stringent mass deportation policy, their narrative has taken centre stage. The initial group of deportees who arrived in Amritsar in restraints failed to stir up any commotion in Goa or among Goans.

The second group includes two individuals from Goa and brought to light the hidden truth that many were aware of, but hesitant to address. The NRI Commissioner appropriately refrained from disclosing specifics regarding the local deportees. It is hoped that despite the lack of names or details, the NRI Commissioner will initiate an independent inquiry into these cases to uncover the perpetrators and their involvement. Given that human trafficking is at the core

incident of the family from Gujarat, who perished due to the cold near the Canadian border while attempting to cross into America, serves as a poignant reminder of the perils involved. A certain elected official even proposes that the double-engine government should leverage its influence with Trump to offer essential aid to the families of Goans illegally living overseas. However, such a proposition is unlikely to materialise within a system governed by regulations; while it might be tolerated in Goa, where transgressions are sometimes overlooked based on the offenders' connections. It would have been more prudent if the official had advised against embarking on illegal migration, highlighting the futility of such endeavors that could result in a nightmarish existence rather than a utopian one. Alas, such a plea seems overly demanding in our society driven by political aspirations and vote bank calculations.

A woman vending the renowned Goan delicacy, *cutlet pao*, was overheard recounting the clandestine entry of her daughter into the United States. The local intermediary provided her with three sets of documents: one for each sector: Goa-Turkey-Mexico-US, each set to be disposed of upon arrival in the country. The plan entailed deliberate detention upon arrival, where the daughter, claiming proficiency solely in Konkani, a language unfamiliar to many, would seek asylum with minimal scrutiny. Following a period of confinement for processing, she was released until her case is scheduled for review, likely in 4 to 5 years. The entire scheme demanded a substantial sum exceeding 40 lakhs. Having spent over thirty days in detention, the daughter now awaits her impending hearing. The question lingers: will she patiently await the legal proceedings or opt to vanish into obscurity. She has not narrated any horror stories. It is exactly how a ponzi scheme works. Many will overhear her story, and some *bakras*/gullible will fall for the bait, she will get her commission for the introduction.

The alternative method involves disembarking or jumping ship in Miami/Florida, and living discreetly while undertaking jobs typically performed by undocumented workers, such as working at gas stations, Indian stores, or restaurants where wages are below the minimum standard. This approach is cost-effective, requiring individuals to secure employment on a US-based cruise line. Many

young men from Goa are choosing this option, unable to return home due to their undocumented status. Moreover, under the Trump administration, stringent measures are in place as all law enforcement agencies are vigilant. Previously, only Immigration & Customs Enforcement Agents (ICE) were concerned with illegal immigrants. The administration has recently restricted a law that previously restricted ICE agents from raiding church services where undocumented immigrants gather.

The Portuguese passport is an option available to all Goans and their families who were born before 1961. However, this path presents its own set of challenges, as many individuals discover that their personal information has been misappropriated and used by others, who may not necessarily be of Goan descent. An increasing number of Goans are now opting for a Portuguese passport in conjunction with an OCI, as this remains the most optimal and lawful avenue to pursue.

The underlying issue that necessitates investigation and resolution is WHY ARE GOANS EAGER TO DEPART GOA? Is it due to the dearth of employment opportunities, or the revelation of having to pay even when jobs are available as evidenced by the recent job scandal? Or is it the allure or sophistication of working overseas that entices individuals to resort to these drastic measures? Alternatively, could it be that the potential illegal immigrant hopefuls are unaware of the implications of their actions, thus resorting to paying exorbitant sums to reach the elusive El Dorado?

Until the authorities unveil the truth, the immediate and pivotal actions required are twofold. Primarily, it is essential to locate and apprehend the perpetrators of human trafficking, ensuring the complete eradication of their operations. Secondly, comprehensive awareness campaigns should be launched, potentially attaining virality on platforms like WhatsApp or Instagram. These campaigns should vividly portray the hardships endured in the quest for foreign lands, the perpetual dread of imminent danger, the susceptibility to exploitation, and the profound shame of returning in shackles, devoid of all dignity. The associated perils far surpass any conceivable advantages. If you must go, find a job abroad or get a Portuguese passport.

(The author prefers to write rather than chat in a balcao)

people's edit

THE ONLY CONSTANT IN LIFE IS CHANGE

SRIPRIYA SATISH

This profound quote by the great Greek philosopher Heraclitus has much to convey and deeply resonates with Generation X. Change is inevitable, and those born in the 70s and 80s have experienced two contrasting worlds—one rooted in simplicity and another shaped by digital advancements.

I can still remember vividly the day my father bought a black and white television set. I was about five then. Though tuning the set for a clear picture was a challenge, the excitement of seeing something on the screen was unmatched. Back then, there was only one channel available—Doordarshan—and that too, the programs were aired for only a fixed time during the evenings. The iconic startup music of Doordarshan is still etched in my memory.

In my teenage years, weekends were special. My brother and I would visit the corner shop that rented video cassettes, eagerly checking for the latest releases. Inviting friends and neighbors to watch movies together in our living room created strong bonds, and we all looked forward to those shared experiences.

Letter writing was another cherished activity. Composing long letters to friends and relatives, then eagerly awaiting their replies, was an irreplaceable joy. My grandfather and I often took leisurely walks to the postbox to send our letters, and we would wait with anticipation for the postman's visit, who always delivered with a warm smile.

I remember when our day used to start with the great Carnatic singer M S Subbalakshmi's divine voice on the radio. The radio was an important means of entertainment back then. Tuning it for various stations to listen to several regional songs was indeed enjoyable. We used to love listening to the Binaca Geetmala, which was a weekly countdown of the then-popular Hindi film songs. The host of the show, Ameen Sayani's majestic yet soothing voice, still lingers in my ears.

I remember we used to dedicate a huge shelf to just audio cassettes of various music genres. My mother loved collecting several Carnatic music cassettes by various music legends. We also used to have innumerable Hindi and Tamil film song cassettes, which we would play in our cassette player according to our mood. This was an enjoyable ritual.

With the advent of internet technology, cyber cafes sprouted in several corners of the city. I still remember the thrill of creating my very first email account with friends. Browsing in the internet parlor with dial-up modems was indeed a lot of fun, even with frequent disconnections and slow speed.

Today's world has seen the biggest transformation in all that I have listed, in terms of miniaturization, portability, and interconnectivity, making today's gadgets more efficient and user-friendly. They have become indispensable in every way. The world has become smaller, yet the charm of our simpler past remains irreplaceable.

Generation X has indeed been fortunate to witness two contrasting worlds—one of patience, anticipation, and community bonding, and another of speed, convenience, and digital connectivity. All said and done, as we move further into an era of rapid technological progress, one thing remains certain—change will continue to shape our lives, just as it has for Generation X.

Share footages with the police

Under 'Project Netra', the Goa police has mapped the CCTV cameras in the State. This stupendous task was carried out in a month and encompassed CCTV cameras installed at homes and establishments. A total of 6,810 cameras were recorded from 1,335 locations. The aim of the project is to check the cameras during an investigation, enable real-time vehicle movement monitoring and to help detect crimes. During any investigation, the police would check the cameras that they need. The police could make the project open-ended with a format to be filled online and uploaded whenever anyone installs or dismantles the CCTV cameras. The details of the owner, location, number of cameras etc. could be sought in the form. The information would help to update the database.

The Chief Minister stated that there is no legal mandate or regulations in force for the owners of the houses or establishments to share the footage and this is left to the discretion of the property owners. This aspect is puzzling because footages of the crime scenes, criminals and suspects would be required by the police when they crack a case and present the evidence to the courts. The exercise of mapping the cameras could be defeated if there are no laws to make it obligatory for the owners to share the footages with the police and other investigative agencies.

Sridhar D'Iyer, Caranzalem

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.

Govt must relook into issue of languages

This has reference to the article 'Hindi as compulsory subject' (Herald - February 20, 2025). Antonio Lobo has provided good insight into the subject of Hindi as a compulsory subject. The government ought to take a relook into this issue of languages in the school syllabus.

In English medium schools, as the author points out, students' percentages suffer in the SSC exams on account of Hindi. Students however, must learn other languages, it is good for them in the long run. The authorities on their part, must look at the possibility of keeping away languages from the evaluation process. There are many languages in our country and each one of them is important, as such, all of them are 'national' languages. India is a multicultural country after all.

Melville X D'Souza, Mumbai

Living on the edge

Today, most food that we eat is said to be adulterated with contaminants and toxic colourants. Metanil yellow is used in dal as an adulterant for colouring. Readymade masala powders are adulterated with artificial colors, starch, chalk powder, etc to increase their weight and ap-

pearance. Turmeric powder is adulterated with cancer causing lead chromate and metanil yellow. Formalin or formaldehyde, which is normally used to preserve dead bodies in morgues, are used on fishes to delay their decomposition. Poultry and cattle are fed with anabolic steroids to speed up muscle growth and fattening.

Fruits like bananas, mangoes, papayas, etc. are artificially ripened with calcium carbide and other hazardous chemicals. Water melons are injected with harmful chemicals like erythrosine (a pink dye commonly used for food colouring) to boost sweetness and make the pulp more red.

Recently, there were reports that fake eggs were being sold in the market. Such eggs were reportedly being made of sodium alginate for albumen and yolk formation, tartrazine dye for yellow food coloring, calcium chloride for the thin membrane surrounding the albumen, and paraffin wax and calcium sulphate dihydrate) for the eggshell.

Milk is adulterated with maltodextrin, starch, flour, benzoic acid and boric acid, etc to increase its density increase its shelf life. Preservatives like sorbates (e.g. potassium sorbate), benzoates (eg, sodium benzoate), citric acid and ascorbic acid are widely used in commercial health drinks and beverages to inhibit microbial

growth, maintain freshness and extend shelf life. The common man gets piped water supplied, which is sometimes muddy and non-potable.

There is also no guarantee that the bottled water is actually mineral water from springs and mountains. Just like the famous line, 'water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink', in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', water is around us but is often not clean or safe enough to drink. When all is done and dusted with adulteration and contamination of food and liquids being the accepted norm, it is time to coin a new line: 'food, food everywhere but not a bite to eat'. Today, we are literally living on the edge. When will we wake up from our slumber and smell the coffee? It is no use crying over spilt milk if we do not act now.

Rosario S Fernandes, Arossim

Safety guidelines needed for events

Atleast 18 people, including women and children, died after a huge rush of passengers caused by two delayed trains and a special Express train to Maha Kumbh led to a stampede at the New Delhi Railway station on Saturday night. Dozens have been injured into the incident and are undergoing treatment at nearby hospitals.

The visuals show people with children trying to board the train through windows and leaving no space to breathe.

reassess and strengthen safety measures for large-scale events like the Maha Kumbh Mela. Investigations have identified factors such as overcrowding and communication lapses as primary causes. While these incidents underscore challenges in crowd management, no evidence points to intentional efforts to undermine the festival's reputation. We call upon authorities to implement comprehensive safety protocols to safeguard the well-being of all participants in future gatherings.

Gopalaswamy J, Chennai

Stampede at Delhi railway station

Atleast 18 people, including 11 women and five children died after a huge rush of passengers caused by two delayed trains and a special Express train to Maha Kumbh led to a stampede at the New Delhi Railway station on Saturday night. Dozens have been injured into the incident and are undergoing treatment at nearby hospitals.

There needs a system to control crowd outside the railway station and tickets issued be monitored as per the crowd. People do not seem to have patience while boarding trains. Many blame the government for the security lapse and crowd management.

Raju Ramamuthy, Vasco