

O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Police inaction and a growing culture of impunity for the rich

Recent incidents in Goa have drawn attention to an unsettling reality: the growing sense of impunity exhibited by criminals, particularly outsiders, and the apparent lack of action by the police in holding them accountable. Two horrific events in Anjuna and Mandrem highlight this failure, leading many to question the state's law enforcement system and the political will to ensure justice for the common people.

The first case involves Judith Fernandes, a music teacher who was grievously injured after being knocked down by a Mercedes driven by 21-year-old Anchit Sangelkar. After the incident, which left Judith in a critical condition with multiple fractures, her husband Prayaj Simepurshkar's desperate attempts to get answers from the Anjuna Police were met with inaction. Rather than taking swift action to apprehend the accused, the police seemed more interested in shielding Sangelkar, whose wealthy family had seemingly leveraged their influence to minimise the consequences of his reckless driving. Sangelkar was allowed to be bailed out so soon. This was not only a failure to uphold the law but an overt display of how privilege can sometimes ensure the protection of the powerful over the vulnerable.

Then, on Friday, another tragedy unfolded in Mandrem, where 23-year-old tourist Deepan Rajeev Batra from Delhi ran over Maria Joao Fernandes, a local woman, after an argument over his dogs. The disagreement, which escalated to physical violence when Batra's mother attacked Maria, culminated in Maria being struck by Batra's car and dragged for several metres, resulting in her death. Shockingly, while Batra promptly surrendered before the police, the subsequent judicial custody he was placed in contrasts the way the police would usually handle a case.

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Both incidents have a common thread: the police's indifference to the suffering of local citizens, compounded by an unseemly rush to protect the interests of outsiders, particularly those with wealth or status. In Goa, the issue of outsiders involved in criminal activity is not a new one. There have been many instances where individuals, particularly tourists or migrants, have committed serious crimes only to be shielded by their resources or the perceived power they wield. In some cases, the sense of entitlement that many outsiders exhibit, especially those from affluent backgrounds, goes unchecked by law enforcement. This disparity in treatment fuels the belief that certain individuals, particularly those from wealthy families or with connections, are above the law.

The question now must be asked: what is the role of the state in all of this? Will the Goa government take responsibility for the failure of its police force to deliver justice? The Chief Minister, Pramod Sawant, has previously made statements warning that migrants come to Goa to commit crimes and evade the law, a sentiment expressed in relation to petty criminals. But will the Chief Minister hold the same standards for the super-rich outsiders who treat Goa as a playground for their reckless behaviour?

There is a growing sense of frustration among Goans who feel increasingly sidelined in their own state. Many have begun to question the priorities of the authorities, particularly when it comes to the protection of locals against those who believe that the law does not apply to them. Goa, once known for its laid-back charm and warm hospitality, is increasingly being seen as a haven for outsiders, many of whom are not here to contribute to the community but to exploit its resources and its lenient legal framework.

What is most alarming is the lack of accountability within the police force. In both the cases mentioned above, the police's role in shielding the perpetrators cannot be ignored. From the apparent bias in the Anjuna case, where the victim's family was harassed while the accused received preferential treatment, to the question of whether or not the Mandrem case was treated with due urgency, the police's handling of these situations is deeply troubling. The people of Goa must ask themselves whether they are truly safe in their own land, or if the growing influence of outsiders is now a greater priority than the well-being of the locals. It is time for the legislators of Goa to step up and safeguard the identity of Goans, ensuring that no individual, regardless of their financial status or background, is above the law.

Goa must resist the temptation to treat its own citizens as second-class and protect the integrity of its communities. The government must ensure that the police force is held to account for its failures, and that justice is served in a fair and transparent manner. The time has come to stand up to the culture of impunity that has taken root in the state and demand a system where the law applies equally to all, no matter where they come from or how deep their pockets are.

In the face of such incidents, it is crucial for the people of Goa to unite, to hold the government accountable, and to insist that those in positions of power do not shield wrongdoers, no matter their background.

comment



SOTER D'SOUZA

The tranquilised mode of Goa's democracy

"We guys are outnumbered now... here on, we must learn to let go silently watch the hellish behaviours of those who do all the devil wants... they do not fear God... we mean nothing to them."

This response above in social media from a friend in the health sector reflects the depressing and demoralising social climate in Goa. If the privileged citizens are left feeling disgusted with the state of affairs in society, one can imagine the plight of the underprivileged sections. Such a feeling of being stuck and helpless with what is happening around is what one frequently hears whispered on the streets nowadays. This is one extreme of the Goan mindset; a sense of hopelessness and helplessness.

At the other extreme is a delusional crowd that is lost in chasing the dangling carrots of *Acche din*, and *Amrit Kaal*. Those living in a fantasy world of cultural supremacy: a cognitive blindness. It's about an ideologically in-



toxicated state of mind that can trample, lynch or drive over others for the thrill. Alongside are those who are under an illusion of having a divine right derived from financial status and political clout to bully others into subjugation. For them, sub-standard governance, unplanned development and an antisocial personality are considered to be smart. Critics are gaslighted with labels such as *tukde tukde* gang, Maoists, anti-national and traitors. The complaints of citizens are trivialized and mocked at with slogans like 'No pain, no gain'. Whose pain is whose gain and the duration of the pain to be endured by citizens remains unspecified.

In the middle of both extremes are a tranquilized lot which is clueless about the actual reality and are drowning in religious devotion and entertainment. The political abuse and violence around hardly matters to them till it lands on their doorstep. They ignore their civic duties and submit to the abuse of their civic rights believing in some divine retribution against their persecutors. Some may not even cast their vote during elections, nor will they attend the gram sabha. At the most, they will pray for those fighting for social justice, but do nothing towards initiating or participating in processes to build a healthy society. They will feed the hungry and also collude with the exploitative and oppressive forces.

There is hardly any doubt that the ethical and moral decline is sweeping every area of public life in Goa. The antisocial activity one never dared to indulge in during colonial times is now carried out with absolute impunity under a banner of cultural revivalism. The lawlessness and lack of civic discipline is visible on the streets wherein the dignity and safety of fellow citizens no more matters. It's all about 'Me, Myself and I' in every social and economic sphere. Civic sense and discipline are dismissed as a colonial legacy. It is the play of money and political power which decides what will be considered to be just and lawful. The rise in incidents of law enforcers becoming law breakers themselves reflects the extent of corruption and criminality which has engulfed society. Goa has perhaps reached the critical stage when neither stringent laws nor PILs in courts can salvage the situation.

Recently, we have been witnessing some bizarre remarks from the Chief Minister ranging from the laziness in Goan culture inherited from the Portuguese to the wrong history taught in schools about Portuguese ruling Goa for 450 years. For rational minds all this would be considered as cheap, attention seeking and hollow rhetoric which is not worth any response. But, such nonsense somehow tickles the impulsive and reactionary Goan into responding and taunting the politicians, little realizing that the motive behind such fallacious logic is to divert attention from the governance failures by generating some controversy to control the narrative and remain in public glare.

Instead of dwelling on the glorious past and correcting history, this government should be talking about how it has improved the quality of life for Goans in the last one decade, if not more. How the Goans blessed with water self-sufficiency during the Portuguese rule are now deprived of even one hour of water supply. So also, how water from the hinterland meant for irrigation purposes is now being diverted to mega housing projects and resorts to cater to the parasitic and predatory lifestyles of the rich and famous. The list of contradictions in the claims of this government could run endlessly.

An authoritarian and corrupt regime should be more than happy with citizens confining their protests to social media and courtrooms, as long as nothing spills onto the roads and overturns the electoral calculations. This is a seasoned government when it comes to dark manipulative tactics. The recent remarks from the NGT bench, "You made 500 million people bathe in polluted sewage water, water that was not fit for bathing, and people had to drink that water", goes to reflect the state of mental health of citizens under the spell of a dictatorial regime. This is no different from the insanity of citizens banging utensils with the politicians to drive away Covid.

Goa's problems stem from a culture which lacks objective critical analysis and reasoning in the social, political and economic affairs. Goans have failed to understand the predatory and parasitic culture which has annexed Goa. With heightened emotionalism and devoid of rationality, Goans continue to miss the wood for the trees and land up repeatedly falling prey to populist political propaganda.

When unlimited festivities are lined up to eat, drink and make merry all through the year, can the Goan ever be in a state of mind to reflect on their social, political and economic reality? (The author has worked with community initiatives related to Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention, HIV/AIDS Prevention, Panchayati Raj, Anti-Corruption, Environment Protection and Social Justice)

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Propaganda even in IIT exams

A bizarre question in an exam conducted at IIT-Kanpur shows how deep the Sanghi rot has spread into our elite educational institutions. The question presented a hypothetical situation and asked students to design a filter that could help former Delhi CM Kejriwal to tune into Modi's 'Mann ki Baat' on radio after his crushing defeat in the recent Delhi elections. This absurd question was part of the Electrical Engineering semester assessment programme. The 'filter' had to be designed such that Kejriwal can bypass the content of one radio channel and connect to two adjacent radio channels to tune into the PM's broadcast.

This is nothing but pure saffron propaganda and Modi bhakti which is forced upon our best educational institutes of higher learning. IIT-K defended itself by stating that the paper setters wanted to make the questions more engaging for students. This explanation couldn't be more hilarious. Instead of being temples of learning, the IITs and IIMs would soon turn into temples to Modi if this nonsense goes unchecked.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaolim

Probe hit-and-run cases for murder also

On Saturday, a woman from Junaswada in Mandem died after being hit by a Delhi registered car. Villagers have reportedly claimed that it was a case of murder. A 58-year-old resident of Parra succumbed to injuries in a hit-and-run case which occurred on late Wednesday when an unidentified vehicle rammed his two-wheeler from behind.

A 21-year-old youth from Porvorim has reportedly been arrested on charges of rash and negli-

letterstotheeditor

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gent driving after his Mercedes car struck and seriously injured a woman in a hit-and-run case in Siolim on Tuesday. Be that as it may, it must be said that there has been a rise in the number of hit-and-run cases being reported in the state. While such accidents can leave the victim physically maimed for life, it can also lead to fatality. In the recent past, during detailed investigation in a hit-and-run case reported at Dhargal, Pernem, the police have reportedly concluded that the deceased was indeed murdered by the accused persons. Such murders could be passed off as a hit-and-run case which attracts minimal punishment. It seems prudent for the police to investigate hit-and-run cases from the murder/attempt to murder angle also if there is even the slightest suspicion. Vehicles could be used as "murder weapons" by those wanting to commit murder with the intention of getting away with the crime. Any CCTV footage available from neighbouring places where the accident has taken place should be utilised to trace the vehicle responsible for the accident and the driver booked.

Don't we have freedom of speech?

The recent arrest of activists in Goa who have been raising issues that have been affecting Goans and State under the influential orders of the powerful people in power only shows that this state is facing a leadership crisis.

The same political party has been harping on the Emergency imposed on the country. This situation now has gone to such an extent that no common man

or concerned citizens like Rama Kankonkar or Goenkar can speak about the destruction that is happening in Goa.

While some people who take law in their own hands under the influential power of the elected representatives are allowed to go scot free, those speaking out against the administration are locked up in jails. Don't we have the freedom of speech enshrined by the Constitution to voice out our grievances?

Gregory E D'souza, Siolim

Novice in politics to rule Delhi

That Delhi, the Union Territory is going to be run by the bosses of the BJP led government at the centre is evident from their selecting Rekha Gupta, a first time legislator and a novice in politics as the Chief Minister of Delhi.

We have to wait and watch the reactions of many stalwarts numbering around six who had been relentlessly lobbying for the top post for over two weeks now and must have got sorely disappointed over the choice of Rekha, the first time MLA for the coveted post.

Tharcus S Fernando, Chennai

Commonwealth Games in India

India is all set to express its interest in hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games, is good news. Having hosted the games in 2010 in Delhi, India is quite familiar with the nitty-gritty of conducting such huge events. Besides, apart from 1951, India has also staged the prestigious Asian games in 1982.

And it will not be a surprise if India wins the bid again. Hockey,

badminton, shooting, wrestling and cricket have been removed from the 2026 Glasgow Commonwealth, and India hopes to re-include these sport disciplines if it wins the 2030 bid.

India has high chances of securing medals in the above sport disciplines. As per the organisation of the games is concerned, despite massive criticism regarding the sluggish pace of work and accusations of corruption, the 2010 games was generally praised for a sporting extravaganza conducted well.

Further, India is nursing a high ambition to host the 2036 Olympics and a letter of intent has already been sent to the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Fans are keeping their fingers crossed because a final decision by the IOC is expected in March 2026.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

Shower praises when person is alive

There is a saying in Konkani "Mel'lem moxik bhara xher dhud". This saying aptly applies to those who seldom pay a visit or call a person who is sick at home or in a hospital. But after that person's demise, all accolades start pouring in saying that person was a gem and wonderful human, always ready to help or has done a yeoman service to the society etc. At the funeral we bring big and expensive bouquets of flowers and lots of eulogies are said. Sadly, the dead person can't see all this. However, if it was done when that person was alive, it would have made a world of difference.

So let us make it a point to visit people when they are alive. May be on their birthdays, anniversa-

people'sedit

LIFE POST RETIREMENT

KALYANASUNDARAM RAMAMURTHY

Work as long as possible. This was the advice given by my friend who had taken premature retirement and had a lot of health issues. He told me that as long as he was working, his mind was active and he was healthy. I took his advice seriously and continued working even after crossing sixty. One day, the inevitable happened. The management felt that it was not healthy for the organisation to have people, who are on the wrong side of sixties in their rolls. Unfortunately they were not aware that studies prove that man is at his productive best between sixty and seventy years of age. Anyway the D day arrived, when a suitable replacement was found.

After working sixty hours a week for many years, spending time after retirement was a big problem. I wanted to help my wife in the kitchen and re-invent my long lost culinary art. However after botching up some dishes, I was relegated to doing some unskilled jobs like boiling milk, cutting vegetables, peeling onion etc. Then I tried my hand in teaching. Thirty years back, I was barred from teaching after I had confused my daughter in maths. Any way, I thought I will try once more with a new student. When I started teaching my granddaughter, I found out that I was woefully out of tune with the present curriculum and teaching methods. The more I tried teaching her, the more I was exhibiting my ignorance. She was also mischievously laughing at my accent. Then I decided not to spoil her basics and quietly withdrew from teaching, much to her relief. Having failed in my both initiatives, I felt it was a good idea to pursue my passion, Table tennis. Surprisingly I found that I had not lost touch with the game and was playing the same bad shots, I used to play earlier. Though playing makes me feel young at heart, the other body parts have become old and are not keeping pace. Anyway keeping fit is the main intention of playing though occasional wins keep my spirits high. Walking with friends in the evening is another pastime, I have pursued in these years.

All said and done, the six years of my retirement life has been one of the best periods of my life. There has been no tension of getting up early and hurrying to office, no bosses to report to, no targets to achieve and I feel as though I am travelling in a timeless world. It has given a good time to dwell on my past achievements, lost opportunities, goals achieved, missed etc. I have all the time for my family, old age comes with its own perks like preferential treatment in public places and the respect grey hair gets. I enjoy these perks but the bottom line I remember is "Don't take yourself seriously as no one else does". This is so true at my age.

ries or even a surprise visit can do instead of waiting for the last moment and regretting for life when that person is dead and gone.

Jerry Fernandes, Vanxim

Vaccinate, sterilise stray dogs

After banning Rottweiler and Pitbull breeds of dogs in Goa, the Directorate of Animal husbandry and veterinary services has planned vaccination and sterilisation of canines.

The move is an important step as in Goa we can see many dogs by the roadside that are unattended.

These are not pets or adopted by anyone, but strays that are not sterilised and vaccinated. Many dog bite cases have been reported in the State which can lead to rabies.

Two days ago, the department commenced the drive in Colvale to tackle the stray dog menace and control the canine population.

In Panjim, Margao and Vasco stray dogs roam around in groups by the roadside, which could lead to dog bite cases. There should be a mechanism in place to catch stray dogs, vaccinate and sterilise them.

Raju Ramamurthy, Vasco

Impound stray dogs at Guirim

I would kindly bring to the notice of the Guirim Panchayat to take immediate steps to impound stray dogs right from the Green Park Hotel right to the chapel on the main road. Packs of stray dogs create a nuisance at night along this road and chase commuters. Very often people are two wheelers end up falling on the roads and are attacked by this vicious canines.

Raju Gadkar, Betim