

# O HERALDO

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## Disconnected Goa

The recent crackdown by the Electricity Department on illegal internet service cables hanging from electricity poles has sent shockwaves across Goa. On Tuesday, in a sweeping move, the department severed cables from around 43 poles in Panjim alone, plunging businesses, professionals, and countless citizens into digital darkness. This abrupt action disrupted critical internet services, leaving many establishments paralysed and causing substantial financial losses. While the issue of unauthorised cable usage has long been brewing, the sudden, heavy-handed approach taken by the authorities raises serious concerns about governance, preparedness, and the government's understanding of the digital era's essential needs.

The Electricity Department justifies its actions on two fronts: loss of revenue and security concerns. While these arguments hold merit individually, their simultaneous invocation raises doubts. If revenue loss was the primary concern, then security threats were evidently not urgent enough to warrant immediate action. Conversely, if safety risks posed by hanging cables were genuinely critical, then all non-electricity cables, including authorised ones, should have been banned outright. The inconsistency in reasoning suggests a lack of coherent policy planning, leaving common citizens to bear the brunt of bureaucratic inefficiency.

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What makes this situation even more troubling is that cable operators had approached the High Court seeking intervention. However, the court refused to stay the Electricity Department's crackdown. Following this legal green light, the department escalated its actions, seemingly without considering the real-world consequences of their decisions. The affected citizens—small businesses, students, professionals working remotely, and online service providers—found themselves cut off overnight, with no prior warning or alternative solutions in place.

The crux of the problem lies in governance failure. The internet is no longer a luxury; it is as fundamental as electricity and water. The abrupt severing of cables without an immediate backup plan indicates a lack of foresight. Service providers argue that they are willing to pay fees for using the poles, but they contest the high charges demanded by the Electricity Department. Additionally, they claim that paying the entire amount at once is financially unfeasible. The department, on the other hand, asserts that it is merely enforcing existing rules. However, a question arises—if these regulations were always in place, why was enforcement delayed until now? And why was no structured resolution sought before resorting to drastic action?

Beyond revenue and security, another key concern is the authenticity of the networks operating in the State. With cybercrime on the rise, ensuring that only legally authorised and well-regulated service providers operate is crucial. But a blanket shutdown is not the solution. The government must take proactive steps to scrutinise these networks and ensure compliance with security standards without disrupting essential services. The ideal long-term solution is clear: underground cabling. Modern urban infrastructure worldwide has transitioned to underground ducts for internet, telecommunication, and power lines. This not only eliminates safety hazards but also ensures a cleaner, more efficient urban landscape. However, service providers argue that the existing infrastructure, even in so-called Smart City projects, lacks sufficient underground ducting. This has forced operators to rely on existing electricity poles, an arrangement that saves costs and time but has now resulted in regulatory conflict. If the government is serious about resolving this issue sustainably, it must accelerate the development of robust underground cabling infrastructure and provide clear, enforceable guidelines for all service providers.

Dialogue is the need of the hour. Authorities must engage with service providers, urban planners, and technical experts to craft a solution that balances revenue, security, and uninterrupted service. Without swift intervention, the situation could spiral into public outrage, with citizens demanding accountability for the disruptions they have endured.

Enough damage has been done. The time for bureaucratic standoffs is over. Goa's leaders must now take charge and ensure that this critical issue does not snowball into a crisis that could have been easily prevented with better planning and coordination. Internet access is not a privilege—it is a necessity. The government must act accordingly.



RADHARAO GRACIAS

The Goan "teatrist" is much maligned and little appreciated by the elite. As in other occupations "teatrists" come in varying shades of white, grey, and black; the white predominates, the rest are a mere fringe. The "teatro" represents the underpinnings of the underclass. It needs to be understood, not undercut

I can hear "Teatr! Teatr!! bore-antlo boro teatr zatolo sodan-cheach zagear Copela lagum-justuch sanjecha 6 vazztam Dezembrchea 17 tarker assun famad teatrist Remmy Colaco, M Boyer, Jacinto Vaz, C Alvares, Alfred Rose, Ophelia, Antonette," followed by a roll call of lesser names. (Drama! Drama! The best of all, at the usual spot near the chapel at 6 pm sharp, December 17 featuring famous actors Remmy Colaco, M Boyer, Jacinto Vaz, C Alvares, Alfred Rose, Ophelia, Antonette.....). The pickup fitted with a jarring loud-speaker that generates more static than announcement is coming closer. It is interval time. We rush precipitately chasing the pickup, some trip, fall over to suffer bleeding knees, lacerated palms, split chins, or contused limbs

The fortunate ones grab a handbill flying out of the vehicle hug it tight, lest someone take it away; we rush back, the school bell has summoned us. The injured are directed to the washroom. As they return cringing in pain, the class is half way through.

Alarmingly, they are more bloodied than before. Have they been further punished? No not at all; only a coat of mercurochrome has been applied! Weeks later when the next teatro comes the scenario repeats. The seething teacher proclaims "You neither learn from what is taught in class nor learn from what happens when chasing pickups; at this rate you will end up either as tarvotis or teatrists" The teacher's proclamation proved prescient. Many of my schoolmates did end up as "tarvotis"; hardly anyone is a "teatrist", though. Evidently, the latter is a more demanding career. But the utterance of the teacher is testimony, to the disdain with which "teatrist and tarvoti" were looked upon in my school days.

I have no memories of an actual "teatro" in my childhood, having never attended one. But most of my classmates did; I was a silent listener to their dissection of the plot, the actors and the "clowns" in the ensuing days. Just for the record, back then individual songs were called "clowns", for reasons that continue to mystify me, and lie forgotten. I can only imagine the earliest "teatrists" dressed as clowns!

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# The Teatrist and Opinion Poll



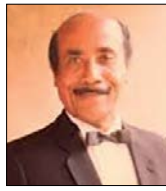
Alfred Rose



C Alvares



Jacinto Vaz



M Boyer

black; the white predominates, the rest are a mere fringe. The "teatro" represents the underpinnings of the underclass. It needs to be understood, not undercut. The "teatro" was the main medium to entertain and disseminate information in the era before the Radio, TV and Cellular phones arrived. Then, as now, the "teatrist" is the earliest to smell some foul act, particularly by the ruling class and lampoon the misdoings in rhyme and rhythm.

Today, some are seeking to unsettle the title "Father of the Opinion Poll" conferred on Dr Jack de Sequeira, by those who participated in and witnessed his initiative. But, none have dwelt on the subject to find out, who actually fought the battles that saved Goa from being a mere district of Maharashtra. Remember, no general has ever won a battle, without an infantry. Who then were the foot soldiers?

Two classes of people played a starring role in galvanising the voters in the Old Conquests, the priests with their strong moral authority and the "teatrists" with their dramatic ability. Every "Bomboikar" was down in Goa touring the back country, campaigning for re-entention of separate status for Goa; the "social worker" so common now, was rare. The people gathered in throngs to listen to their ditties; "Don panam zalach pahije! Alleluia!" boomed everywhere. Songs, skits and slogans were heard far and wide, through the mouth of man and child.

To be truthful it is the teatrists who led the charge of the Konkani brigade. Permit me to take liberties and paraphrase Lord Tennyson: "Cantar" to right of them "Cantar" to left of them, "Cantar" in front of them Volleyed and thundered; Stormed at with "duets and trios", Boldly they rode and well, Into the "lathi" charge

by police, Into the gates of hell Rode the "teatrists"! Maulled the Marathi marauders Rescued "Amchi Bhas!" Salvaged "Amchem Goem!!!" From the jaws of Maharashtra!!!

If one has to have an actual glimpse of Goa in the 1960s, one has to watch the Konkani classics "Nirmon" and "Amchem Noxib" that portray life as it was lived. Actually, in contrast to Bollywood there is no distinct film fraternity in Concanim. These films were scripted, directed, acted in and produced by the "teatrists" themselves, all for the better. The actors are "teatrists" who look typically Goan, unlike the meticulously simulated "beautiful people" that populate Bollywood films.

I am not a "teatro" goer in normal course. However, bulk of the Niz Goemkar patronise and enjoy the "teatro" better than anything else; the continuing evolution of the "teatro" over a century and half and its performance and appreciation wherever Goans have settled, indicates that it will continue to thrive ever more.

I was weeks from entering my teens when the Opinion Poll happened. I have clear memories of the campaign. It was my first realisation, that there were two sides to Goa, the majority and minority, two languages Konkani and Marathi. The battle lines were clear even in class, where we spoke "Concanni" but the majority (all non-Saraswat), claimed that their language was Marathi. It was strange, as neither knew Marathi; we conversed without hindrance, in the only language we knew. And that was Concanni! Notwithstanding, they claimed Marathi and clamoured for Maharashtra, mainly manifesting the mala fides of their parents. Nothing could ever be more perfidious. These feigned divisions are responsible for the ills that have bedevilled Goa thenceforward.

The role of the "tiatrists" in the success of "Don Panam" in the Opinion Poll needs to be studied in depth to repay the debt the State owes the teatrists. Perhaps a PhD. dissertation would be in order.

(Radharao F Gracias is a senior Trial Court Advocate, a former Independent MLA, a political activist, with a reputation for oratory and interests in history and ornithology.)

people'sedit

## THE DELAYED REVISIT

BY KSS PILLAI

Though I had decided to visit Indore soon, where I had spent the 1960s, it happened after a long delay.

My elder brother, employed at Indore, had asked me to accompany one of his friends on leave to Kerala. One morning in June 1960, we started our journey. We had to change trains at Cochin (now Kochi), Madras Central (now Chennai) and Bhopal to reach Indore on the fourth day.

As few trains had reserved seats and berths, porters at the stations where long-distance trains originated doubled as seat-grabbers. At Cochin and Madras Central, they went to the railway yard to 'reserve' seats by spreading our towels on them.

Passengers carried their luggage in steel trunks. The windows had no bars, and the youngsters used them to enter and exit over-crowded compartments as reaching the doors was difficult. Beggars, singing current popular cinema songs, beating their stomachs with their hands, approached all passengers for alms. So did ticket checkers and hawkers, who sold different things. The overcrowding was no deterrent for passengers to play cards or sleep on the floor with the trunks as pillows.

As all trains had steam engines, our bodies and dresses became black with coal soot when we reached the destination.

My brother had official quarters near the seven-storeyed Maharaja Yeshwantrao Hospital. A stadium was under construction before our quarters. It was there that I saw a cricket match for the first time.

Three-wheeled rickshaws plied between the hospital and the city's western part. Few motorised personal vehicles existed, and people usually travelled on bicycles, which cost about Rs 200, a large sum. I remember buying one under the hire-purchase scheme and a company representative coming to my workplace to verify my statements.

That was the period of shortages. There were long queues before ration shops and grain merchants when stocks arrived. Water, among many other things of daily use, was also in short supply. The water's flow was so slow that it took a long time to fill a pot. Fortunately, the district collector's bungalow was only a little away from our quarters. Water tanks used to go to his bungalow, and the driver was kind enough to allow us to fill our pots.

There was a considerable number of people from Maharashtra in Indore, thanks to the Maratha kings who ruled the area for a long time. I used to have my breakfast at a restaurant run by a Gujarati. My barber was also a Gujarati. Indore was an education centre with prominent colleges running night and morning classes. It was a textile hub with several famous mills.

When I visited Indore after many years, it had changed. Old cinema houses had disappeared, giving way to different business houses. New housing colonies had come up. The city had spread on all sides. It ranked the cleanest city in the country with wide roads, multi-storied buildings, modern transportation, and everything cities had.

Most textile mills had declared themselves 'sick' and closed. Many of my friends and colleagues had died. Some of the remaining came to meet me, had a nice time reminiscing the past, and left.

The old city had disappeared, and an unfamiliar one stood there.

no coal would be handled at any of the new stations along the Konkani Railway line. He went on to say: "These fears are unfounded" and drew comparison to similar apprehensions voiced during the establishment of the Konkani Railway in 1993-94.

Let it be known that opposition to the Konkani Railway was for the following reasons: 1. Destruction of the Ecology, 2. Acquisition of land and displacement of people and 3. Fear of mass influx of people particularly migrants, resulting in the increase in crime rates and the illegal occupation of land.

Promises are made, which are never fulfilled, and there is no accountability. Compensations and jobs were promised to those affected, which never happened. Similar is the case of the Mopa Airport. In the mining areas the list is endless. If the government feels that the citizens are going to benefit, then there should be transparency. The benefits, which will accrue, should be spelt out in a White Paper, wherein the intelligentsia of the State should be involved. We are proud that Goa has one of the highest literacy rates in the country and boasts of many capable persons who can contribute to the welfare of the State and its people in a meaningful manner.

If promises are made, then there should be a board appointed to monitor that the promises are fulfilled. This is sadly lacking and hence the opposition by the people is mainly to safeguard the interest of the future generations.

Joaquim Pinto, Mapusa

## Curb illegal LED fishing

The accusation of fishing practices using LED devices are causing irreparable damage to the marine ecosystem.

Traditional fishers, who use sustainable methods, say this practice is leading to the depletion of marine resources and threatening their livelihoods. Fishermen from the earlier generations were genuinely concerned about fish wealth, but the current set of fishermen focus only on making money.

As concerns escalate amongst the traditional artisanal fishing communities. LED fishing is banned, but nobody stops this activity. Such illegal fishing is going on in Goa destroying our fish and the livelihoods of traditional fishermen.

Fishing using lights is compared to an older form of fishing at night using torches lit by fire. In the past, there used to be Bermuda fishing, a traditional name given to fishermen venturing into the sea at night with torches lit by fire. This method would get a small catch.

But today, huge LED lights are being used to carry out fishing on a much larger scale and that is affecting the lives of fishermen who depend on traditional means.

Though the Centre banned it in all coastal States in 2017, fishers say the use of LED lights remains rampant in waters. Cancel the licences with monetary penalties for those using LED lights at sea.

K G Vilop, Choroa

## 'Smart City' works & carnival celebrations

The carnival floats parade scheduled at Porvorim on February 28 has reportedly been cancelled this year due to ongoing construction work of six-lane construction work of six-lane elevated corridor.

It is also learnt that the Shigmo floats parade scheduled on March 29 have also been cancelled for the same reason. In Panjim, the carnival parade will be held along the same route on March 1. With the ongoing "Smart City" work, the question on everyone's mind is whether Panjim will be ready to hold a mega event like the carnival float parade. Roads in the city have been dug up and the parking space has been greatly reduced due to the ongoing work. Thousands from all over the State throng Panjim to witness the float parade. Many travel in their own vehicles. With the carnival float parade in Porvorim being cancelled, the number of people at the Panjim float parade will only increase.

Parking of the numerous floats before and after the parade will also be an issue. Will the ongoing Smart City work put a spoke in the Carnival celebrations in the capital city? Hopefully, all the necessary work along the float parade route will be completed in time so that the public will

not have to face inconvenience due to traffic congestion and non-availability of parking space.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

## Goan culture and landscape changing

The surprise visit by the Health Minister Vishwajit Rane to the North Goa District Hospital, Mapusa, was indeed good as he tried to check the staff's performance and pulled up several staff for their careless attitude towards the patients.

The reluctant reply by the head nurse on the nurses' count in the hospital only shows the failure on the part of the minister to set the ball rolling for free and fair recruitments of these staff.

The decision to look into the services of the day care nurses in the hospitals is much appreciated as it would definitely provide relief to several relatives of the patients to have a qualified caretaker who will oversee their services.

While he doubles as a TCP and Forest Minister, my sincere appeal to the minister is to visit the sites before allowing the land conversion taking place on lands that they have been marks in the Regional Plan as erroneous rather than have faith in the Chief Town Planner who has been misguiding the committee that is overseeing the destruction of Goa under your leadership.

Then only Goenkars will appreciate your service because just as hospital staff are supposed to save lives, so also the TCP and Forest Departments have a very important role to play in saving the environment and biodiversity of the State. I hope the Supreme Court remark: "Don't turn Goa into a concrete jungle" has reached your TCP and Forest Departments and the so-called expert panellists who blindly allow such huge land conversions.

Despite several litigations I request the TCP Minister to begin the process for the new Regional plan. You seem to be least bothered to uphold the democratic principle of a government by the people, of the people and for the people, but the TCP and Forest departments have been seen only favouring the real estate sharks. The fruits of your decisions are the recent spate of murders by these so-called filthy rich purchasers changing the Goan culture and landscape for long term erosion of the original Niz Goemkar susegad culture left by the past rulers of the tiny State.

Gregory E D'Souza, Siolim

## Railway station at Neura

This is in reference to the news report: "Neura stands firm against proposed railway station" and the Chief Minister's remarks assuring the public that