

O HERALDO

Students at the receiving end of govt apathy

They are often described as the future of the state, and lofty promises are made by the government to ensure their well-being and intellectual growth. But the fact of the matter is that young people in Goa, particularly secondary and higher secondary school students, have been at the receiving end of severe government apathy on many fronts in recent weeks.

For instance, students of Class XII, who are in the midst of answering their state Board examinations, have been afflicted by a myriad of problems. Candidates, particularly those residing along the North Goa coastal belt, have had to grapple with deafening trance and house music pulsating from private nightclubs - particularly at Morjim, Siolim, Anjuna and Vagator - as they desperately scramble for some peace and quiet in their homes to study. A delay or denial of justice in this matter means that only the local people, and in this case, young students, continue to suffer as they try to save themselves, protect their mental peace, and make the state proud all at once.

If that was not enough stress for tender minds to deal with, the mid-month closure of the Old Mandovi bridge threw them into another tizzy. Scores of students appearing for their Class XII Board examinations found themselves stuck in serpentine traffic jams while on their way to their respective exam centres. Many candidates ended up being unduly stressed, not only by the pressure of the tests they were about to take, but also by the possibility that they would reach their exam centres late and lose out on precious time allotted to them to answer their papers. The traffic police, who themselves had their backs to the wall in the matter, thereafter advised the affected students to set out for their exam centres earlier than usual. And to make matters worse, the bridge, which was expected to be thrown open in 15 days, continues to remain closed as maintenance work is yet to be completed.

According to parents, a significant number of students are heavily dependent on the array of study material available online to help them better understand the syllabus at hand and to improve their performance at exams, which have a domino effect when it comes to them choosing their future streams of education. With WiFi connectivity being unavailable owing to the tussle between the electricity department and internet service providers, it was the students who became the silent sufferers at a time when a thought should have been given to their difficulties and stress they might face

paring for the Class X state Board exam that is scheduled to commence from March 1, found themselves with no internet to access study material online.

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Peaceful and quiet surroundings, a good network of roads, and a robust internet system are not a luxury. They are a necessity, especially in the present day and age when the world at large and the country in particular are developing at a rapid pace. If the government cannot provide these basic requirements to its younger generations - the pillars of tomorrow's Goa - it should forthwith stop spewing rhetoric about how it is committed to the wellbeing and prosperity of children and the youth. It should put its money where its mouth is instead, and make sure all stops are pulled to ensure that at least young people are not affected by stressors such as these.

It would be a crying shame if the children themselves are eventually forced to come out onto the streets to demand better facilities from the government. It will hardly be a matter of pride for the government if that does happen. But will the state care? Or will it continue going about its business in its signature nonchalant style?



LUIS DIAS

The extra-musical benefits of music education in young people are well-documented: improved cognitive skills like memory and problem-solving, enhanced creativity, increased confidence, better social skills through teamwork, and even positive impacts on language development and overall well-being



This is exciting news for the UK. It also offers hope and inspiration to other nations, including our own.

One of my fondest school memories in the 1970s and 1980s is the Don Bosco school marching band led by Mestre Santana Cota. How he single-handedly got a rag-tag bunch quite unruly (I know, because many were my classmates) boarder boys to play so many woodwind, brass and

percussion instruments, not just play, but play them well, often while marching, never ceases to amaze me. Those countless hours and years of individual and group practice shaped those boys into the fine men and pillars of society they are today, wherever life took them.

I'm not sure whether Mestre Cota retired or passed away while still teaching, but the Don Bosco marching band initiative evaporated after he was out of the picture.

Even that was not really a school-wide initiative, as its ranks were drawn almost exclusively from the boarders, but it offered a tantalising taste of what could be achieved if instruction in instrument-playing (and very importantly, ensemble playing) could be made available to each and every schoolchild.

When my wife Chrysselle and I began the music education charity Child's Play India Foundation in 2009, alongside working in children's shelters like Hamara School, initiatives in schools were always just as important, and we did begin them in Caranzalem and Carona-Aldona using local teachers.

As we grew, we were able to recruit overseas teachers for disciplines that needed strengthening in Goa. In those years, we focused on viola and cello; a woodwind or brass instrument project would be a much costlier consideration as the instruments are so much more expensive.

The Coronavirus pandemic put an end to our hiring of overseas music teachers and we haven't yet resumed, and I'll explain why.

Government of India regulations stipulate that foreign passport-holding music teachers must be paid a minimum of INR 16 lakh a year; it therefore made economic sense to use their services to the fullest, having committed to the expense. But the biggest challenge we faced when we employed overseas music teachers being paid such a salary was to fill their morning slots while the children were at school.

So, I'd like to again make a public appeal to all people invested in mainstream school education, especially those working with the underprivileged or lesser-privileged children, but not necessarily restricted to that sector: principals, headmasters, headmistresses, teachers, people on school administration boards. If you are even mildly interested in exploring the idea of having an orchestra and/or music

education in your institution, please do get in touch. Our handle for all social media is @childsplayindia.

Our focus is orchestra and choir. Marie Bejstam, the experienced choral leader and trainer from Sweden who has worked with children in Goa for two consecutive years (and this year with adults as well) is keen to form a durable partnership with interested schools, so do get in touch for this too.

All we need is one enthusiastic (preferably more than one, but one will do for a start) partner in a school who is willing to go the distance, long-term, in investing in an in-school children's music education programme. If there is a reasonable commitment for this, then the sponsorship for teacher salaries and purchasing instruments can be raised. The fund-raising is not as much a hurdle as the will and commitment to make this dream a reality.

We Goans get so complacent with self-praise that we become blind to both, our lacunae and to possibilities. Let's face it: we don't really have a grass-roots widespread youth orchestra initiative in the true sense, offering high-quality instruction in all orchestral disciplines, (upper and lower strings, all the woodwind and brass instruments) either in Goa and much less elsewhere in India. It follows therefore that we don't have a National Youth Orchestra in the sense and of the calibre accepted as standard in the rest of the world.

The reason is obvious: we just haven't invested comprehensively, sufficiently or sincerely (as yet) in the basic concept of music education. But we can start now, and Goa is the perfect place for this.

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Orchestras in schools would be hands-on instruction in these values: teamwork, discipline, practice makes perfect; hard work pays off; and creating literal and figurative harmony in that beautiful microcosm of society: the orchestra.

(Dr. Luis Dias is a physician, musician, writer and founder of Child's Play India Foundation. He blogs at luisdias.wordpress.com)

An orchestra in every school

people'sedit

RISING TEMPERATURES A GROWING CONCERN

MOLLY FERNANDES

Last week, Goa's scorching temperatures took a toll on the health of many Goans, including myself. Several people were hospitalised due to heat-related illnesses, such as hypertension, diarrhea, and vomiting. Personally, I experienced an unbearable heat-wave that left me drenched in sweat for three consecutive days, with burning sensation in the eyes and my head feeling like it was on fire. The unusual heat was relentless, and I was not alone in my misery.

Goa, a state known for its picturesque beaches, lush green forests, and pleasant tropical climate, is facing a new challenge: rising temperatures. The state, which was once a haven for those seeking refuge from the scorching heat of other parts of India, is now experiencing a steady increase in temperatures, leaving its residents and tourists alike feeling the heat.

According to data from the Indian Meteorological Department, Goa's average temperature has risen by 1.5°C over the past three decades. The rising temperatures are not just limited to summer months; even winters are getting warmer, with average temperatures increasing by 2°C over the same period.

What could be the reason and factors contributing to the rising temperatures in Goa?

Climate Change: Global warming is a significant contributor to the increasing temperatures in Goa. The state's location near the equator makes it vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Urbanisation: Goa's rapid urbanisation has led to the destruction of natural habitats, such as forests and wetlands, which help regulate temperatures.

Industrialisation: The growth of industries, such as mining and manufacturing, has increased the state's greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change.

Population growth: Goa's population has grown significantly over the years, leading to increased energy consumption, transportation, and waste generation, all of which contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

Besides the above-mentioned reasons and factors of the rising temperatures in Goa have severe consequences for the state's ecosystem, economy, and inhabitants:

Water scarcity: Changes in precipitation patterns and increased evaporation due to warmer temperatures have led to water scarcity in many parts of the state.

Agricultural impacts: Rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns are affecting crop yields, leading to economic losses for farmers.

Health concerns: Warmer temperatures increase the spread of heat-related illnesses, such as heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

Tourism impacts: Goa's tourism industry, which is a significant contributor to the state's economy, is vulnerable to the impacts of rising temperatures. Warmer temperatures can make the state less attractive to tourists, leading to economic losses.

To combat Goa's rising temperatures, collaboration on mitigation and adaptation strategies is necessary seeing its need and urgency, including promoting renewable energy, afforestation, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

Rising temperatures in Goa are a growing concern that requires immediate attention. The state government, people, and tourists must work together to implement mitigation and adaptation strategies to reduce the impacts of climate change.

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.



Ban junk cars at Carnival parade

It is learnt that the traffic police in Goa has started a drive against vehicles using modified silencers. Several vehicles, including bikes and cars having modified silencers which make a loud noise have been seized. Bikes with loud silencers can have several negative effects including, noise pollution which causes hearing damage, stress, and sleep disruption for people nearby. It precipitates potential health issues for sensitive individuals like heart patients. It increases the risk of accidents due to startled pedestrians or drivers and has a negative impact on the rider's own hearing. It has potential legal repercussions due to exceeding noise regulations, and in some cases, even reduced fuel efficiency for the motorcycle itself.

The Goa Carnival celebrations are a couple of days away. Ironically the Carnival float parade features a 'junk cars' category where modified cars participate in the parade. The vehicles participating in this category make an ear-splitting noise which can be harmful for little children and elderly persons. The riders of bikes with modified silencers speed up and apply brakes suddenly as they ride through the float parade. This can lead to accidents. It is pertinent to note that last year the Vasco Carnival Committee decided not to allow

noisy and speeding vehicles to participate in the port town float parade even in the junk cars category. When police are cracking down on vehicles with modified silencers that make a loud noise it makes very little sense to have a junk cars rally at the Carnival float parade.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

When will Goa learn?

Many aspects of life in Europe are impressive. Being courteous, caring and compassionate is a way of life and the only positive way to move ahead.

Remarkably, there is not an iota of that VIP culture whatsoever. Traffic is never diverted or traffic lights switched off to make way for a VIP to despotically cruise through, while inconveniencing the public. The political class is always accountable, and they tumble at the slightest fumble.

The absence of the malaise of political sycophancy is a boon towards a fair and dignified society. The all-round very high levels of transparency and accountability make the difference.

One may never need to exercise the Right to Information, as those checks and balances of

public scrutiny are inborn and always in place. A truly independent Press that values freedom of speech also holds those with responsibility accountable in the public interest.

The administration and the law enforcement authorities are totally insulated from any political meddling. And of course that institutionalised corruption is not a way of life.

Public transport is so very dependable, clean, safe and extremely user friendly. And that very essential availability of WiFi on trains, buses and even in almost every café, besides public places is a communication bonanza. Water, power supply and other basic amenities never falter. The resolute online services towards the digital world are commendable. There are systems in place that work and can't be fiddled with.

Daylight favouritism and nepotism is never seen, so also there is never room to jump the queue. One can see high levels of quality control and accountability in all private and public works executed. In Goa that mind boggling Panjim Smart City man-made fiasco at huge expense to the taxpayers and still with no accountability is something unknown in Europe.

Sanity and respect for rules, regulations and service levels in public life is what makes the world of difference for the common good.

Aires Rodrigues, London

Disconnection of cables

It pains me to hear the abrupt action taken as per the recommendations of the executive engineer in the Electricity Department. What right does he have to act arbitrarily to disconnect the cables and to put the school, college children and the public consumers at large to leave high and dry without internet. BSNL which was the only government

landline is now bankrupt at the hands of double engine government. Despite many people would like to have landline connections, they are compelled to withdraw as no capable linesmen having full knowledge in the field have been appointed. And now the High court also who alone could come to the rescue of their afflicted, students and the consumers at large seem to have turned deaf ears. Imagine what will be the plight of those depending on the internet if they want to call an ambulance or fire services. I

would be much obliged if High Court could give some time or suggest some measures in this situation.

Jose Gonsalves, Mercers

Birds shaped aviation industry

The skies have always captured the human imagination, inspiring dreams of flight and exploration. But long before humans took to the skies, birds had already mastered the art and science of flight. Long have humans gazed at birds with a mix of envy and awe. It was these feathered fliers that first inspired us to take to the air in flying machines. Throughout history, and even today, new advancements in aerospace can be traced back to bird anatomy, which has served as a wealth of inspiration for engineers and designers, shaping the evolution of the aviation industry.

From the graceful soaring of eagles to the precise hovering of hummingbirds, each aspect of bird flight has provided valuable insights into aerodynamics. Even though everything about aviation appears to have been invented right from the time of the Wright brothers - Wilbur and Orville - in 1903, even today much of how birds are able to move across the skies at staggering heights with such grace remains largely mysterious.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai