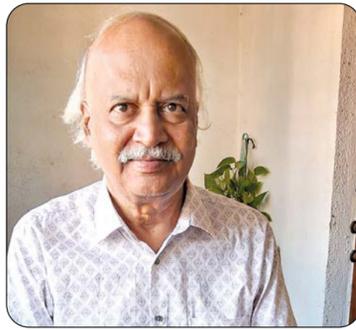


# Herald Cafe



EXPLORING THE WORLD THROUGH STAMPS



JUBILEE OF RELIGIOUS CELEBRATED IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GOA AND DAMAN

## King Momo the legacy of Carnival

This year, a new chapter unfolds at Carnival as Cleeven Mathew Fernandes, King Momo 2025, is the next generation of the four Fernandes brothers from Panjim, stepping into the limelight

Dolecy D'Crus [dolcy@herald-go.com](mailto:dolcy@herald-go.com)

Growing up in Goa, King Momo has been a mythical king, who wears a crown and regal attire and is often accompanied by Queen Momo and an entourage of dancers and singers, leading the four-day Carnival celebrations. Every child would rush ahead just to see the grandeur with which King Momo's float would be decorated and his

strong voice declaring the Carnival open was a moment to celebrate. For Cleeven Mathew Fernandes, from Benaulim, this excitement was a family affair. He had grown up watching his uncles wear the King Momo crown and then as a young boy of 12 years, his father Roque Tome Fernandes became King Momo for the first time. "I was not even born when my uncles began the parades as King Momo, but I witnessed my father and my uncle,

Bondo, take on this prestigious role. When my father became King Momo in 2000, I was already captivated by the excitement and vibrancy of the festival. Growing up around Carnival, I quickly became part of the festivities. I would blow up balloons, play with colors, and dress up in my sisters' clothes, complete with makeup and artificial hair, fully immersing myself in the spirit of celebration. The craze for Carnival was undeniable; it was in our blood," says Cleeven, who has been attempting for the title since 2022.

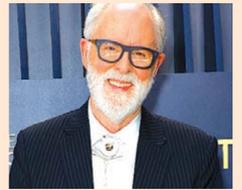


Five years King Momo: Roque Tome Fernandes

### SWIPE RIGHT

#### John Lithgow cast as Dumbledore in new Harry Potter series

The 'Harry Potter' television series has officially found its headmaster of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. John Lithgow, 79, recently confirmed that he said yes to playing Albus Dumbledore in HBO's upcoming small screen adaptation of JK Rowling's hit books. "Well, it came as a total surprise to me," the veteran actor said. "I just got the phone call up at the Sundance Film Festival for yet another film, and it was not an easy decision because it's going to define me for the last chapter of my life, I'm afraid. But I'm very excited. Some wonderful people are turning their attention back to Harry Potter. That's why it's been such a hard decision. I'll be about 87 years old at the wrap party, but I've said yes."



#### John Abraham talks about actors' 'ridiculous' fees

Actor John Abraham, who has produced films, spoke about the exorbitant fees of actors in Hindi cinema, the overhead entourage costs, and the 'mental' practice of paying stylists Rs 2 lakh per day. He said, "As an industry, we are really suffering." John reacted to actors being paid as much as Rs 100 crore for a film and entourage costs inflating a film's budget. He said, "It's already hurting Hindi cinema. At this point in time, we shouldn't be paying people to act in films because we don't justify those huge budgets. The huge fees that we get paid—we can't load a film with entourage costs as well. It's ridiculous."



Tripti Dimri dropped pics from her 'love and laughter-filled' birthday celebration with rumoured beau Sam Merchant.

**DESIGNING THE COSTUME**  
The costume is a crucial part of the King Momo persona. Cleeven designed his own outfit, with the help of his parents, incorporating elements that make it unique while paying homage to past traditions. With just 15 days to prepare, they worked diligently, drawing inspiration from his father's time as King Momo. The result is a dazzling gold ensemble, with an extravagant bejewelled crown and an eagle-topped staff, a symbol of power and royalty.



King Momo 2025: Cleeven Fernandes

**A MESSAGE TO THE YOUTH**  
"To the young participants, dancers, and float designers, my message is simple: come with energy, unity, and a spirit of celebration. Forget your exams and daily pressures for these four days and immerse yourselves in the magic of Carnival. It is a time to bond as a community, spread joy, and keep the Carnival tradition alive for generations to come. As King Momo, I embrace my role with honor, carrying forward a legacy of entertainment and festivity. Let the Carnival begin!" concludes Cleeven on a positive note.

**THE JOURNEY TO BECOMING KING MOMO**  
His path to becoming King Momo was not instantaneous. When his father was seriously ill, Cleeven thought of becoming King Momo to honor him. All brilliant musicians, the four brothers, Timoteo, 88, Lourenco, Tome and Bondo had been King Momo over the years. Cleeven now becomes the first from the next generation. "The role is about bringing joy and entertainment to the people, embracing the very essence of the Carnival spirit. However, I consider this my first and last festival as King Momo. Now that my father is well, it feels even more meaningful to have him by my side as I take on this role," explains Cleeven. This year, Cleeven's sisters, Flavia and Achilia, will be joining the festivities as King Momo especially in Panjim and Margao.



**HOW THE CARNIVAL PARADE BEGAN WITH THE FIRST KING MOMO, TIMOTEO FERNANDES**

In 1965, taking inspiration from a Carnival parade in Brazil, Timoteo Fernandes led a parade of a group of Panjim youngsters on the streets on a bullock cart, playing musical instruments with two guitar, a bandolin, violin, bongos and a bass

box and woke up the city from its afternoon siesta. "I met an owner of a bullock cart from Mercedes and decorated it at Patto Bridge, Panjim. I stood in front dressed as King Momo and asked my 15-20 friends to come along with me singing and dancing till Municipal Garden," says Timoteo. This was the first Carnival after Liberation. The following year, Timoteo was allowed to use Vasco Alvares' open jeep of Panjim Municipality with Lourenco Fernandes, Timoteo's brother becoming the second King Momo. The parade went from Patto Bridge, passing through Club Nacional, Club Vasco-da-Gama and concluding at Municipal Garden. The Carnival celebrations was constituted in 1967.

**BEYOND CARNIVAL: A Life at Sea**  
Cleeven is currently on vacation in Goa. He believes that he is the first seaman to become King Momo in the state. While on the passenger cruise, he always promotes the beauty and culture of Goa, not forgetting the grandeur of Goa's Carnival. "I often tell everyone that Goa has the best Carnival after Rio de Janeiro's famous Carnival, much to the amusement of my colleagues. They laugh and remind me, 'You are talking about Goa, India,' but I firmly believe our Carnival holds its own unique charm and legacy," says Cleeven.



#### KING MOMO OVER THE PREVIOUS EDITIONS:

- 2024 - Clive Anthony Gracias
- 2023 - Russel D'Souza
- 2022 - Emiliano P Dias
- 2021 - Eric Dias
- 2020 - Shalom Sardinha
- 2019 - William Anes
- 2018 - Bruno Azaredo
- 2017 - Roque Tome Fernandes

## The annual Zomnivhele fell are back in play

The four-day Carnival festival kicks off in Goa and in the villages of Goa especially in Salcete taluka, it is the time when 'Zomnivhele fell' (folk plays) are performed



Pio Esteves

The flamboyant floats, songs and dances are the major features of the Carnival festival, which is restricted to only four days. But during that particular period of time, back in the villages, especially in Salcete taluka, there's another lively activity, which catches the eyes of any viewer.

**WHAT ARE 'ZOMNIVHELE FELL' (FOLK PLAYS)?**  
'Zomnivhele fell' (folk plays) is a name which is synonymous with the Carnival

festivities in Goa. They are presented not on stage, but on a flat surface. Presentation of three folk plays of 30-45 minutes duration each is the uniqueness of this age-old traditional art passed on by our ancestors. The themes of the folk plays could range from family, social, religious issues haunting the society today. And apart from enactment by the artistes, the rest of the delivery and message is done through renditions. 'Zomnivhele fell' has only one opening song and thereafter carries several 'cantos' rendered by the artistes in the folk play, which make the viewing interesting.

As most of the 'zomnivhele fell' originates from the Salcete taluka, the 'saxiti' dialect is mostly used in such folk plays, thus amusing and entertaining the gathered audience. Before the commencement of the folk plays at a particular venue, an announcement made from a vehicle automatically draws crowds. Earlier, for the 'zomnivhele fell', the brass band comprised the blowing instruments and the drums. But today, the electronic instruments such as the keyboard and the bass guitar also find its place in those folk plays. The presentation of 'zomnivhele fell' by a good number of directors receives bookings for their shows in the villages across Goa well in advance via contractors. And each director will have a maximum five shows each day at different places and venues.

**THE END OF TAG'S ANNUAL COMPETITION**  
After organizing the annual competition for 13 years for participants of 'zomnivhele fell' at Kala Academy, Azad

Maidan and other places like Porvorim and Curchorem, this year, the Tiatr Academy of Goa (TAG) has decided to hold mere presentation of the folk plays and reward all the participants. This wise decision was taken by the officials of TAG this year to avoid controversy over the distribution of prizes to the declared winners. Last year, there was a row over the same issue, with some of the directors accusing and abusing the unfair judgment made by the judges, who were appointed by the concerned. **THE LEGACY CONTINUES WITH FOLK PLAY DIRECTORS**  
Among the directors of 'zomnivhele fell', Curtorim-based Luis Azavedo is one of the seasoned, who has come penned and staged his folk plays since 2013. Luis has 36 folk plays under his sleeve and as there are teachers and students' involvement in his folk plays this year, he intends to stage



his plays only during the evening session. The other directors will be staging their plays at different venues from morning, noon till late in the evening, with five shows booked each day. Another folk play director, Luis Xavier

Mascarenhas, popularly known as Xavier de Maina, has also geared up with three folk plays and his entire family, including wife and three children, would form part of his troupe to entertain the 'khell' crazy lovers. Xavier de Maina's association with folk plays dates back to 1985 and since then it has been 'never turning back'. He has penned 75 folk plays. In 1983, he penned his first tiatr 'Rinnkari', followed by 'Roma' and 'Ghatki'. Till date, he has penned and staged 7 tiatrs on the Konkani stage. "The folk plays staged during Carnival provides a good platform for the amateurs to showcase their talents and later hop on the tiatr stage. 'Zomnivhele fell' builds their confidence and they march towards stardom," Xavier de Maina shared. "The flavor of tiatr is slowly creeping in the folk plays and that should be avoided as 'zomnivhele fell' has a different aroma of its own, with less of dialogues and more of the story delivered through 'cantos'. Such an essence has to be maintained at all costs," concludes Xavier de Maina.