

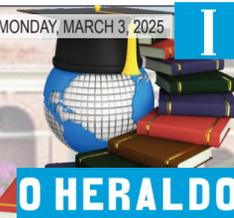


CREATING WORLD CLASS

# HIGHER EDUCATION

FOR GOA

GOA, MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2025



# NATIONAL CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY IN GOA

Goa has the distinction of having not only the first College in India but in Asia. The St. Paul's College which was a Christian College was founded and built by the Jesuits circa 1542. It was once the main institution of higher education in the whole of Asia. In this article **LUIZINHO FALEIRO, Ex CM and Ex MP (Rajya Sabha)** proposes a Goa Christian University based on the enduring legacy of Christian Goan Nationalism which emerged even before the first war of Indian Independence of 1857, when Goa was reeling under the Portuguese colonial yoke and was yet to be integrated with Mother India. It would also right the discrimination against Goa and the Christian Community, which does not have a central university. It would also embody the National Minorities Commission, recommendation for the establishment of a government-funded university primarily for Christians, on the lines of Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia Universities

## Case for a National Christian University as a Central University in Goa

**PART 1**

**A** question that is bothering a number of educationists in Goa is: why is it that Goa is the only State without a Central University? It is a very pertinent question but the answer is not easily fathomable. Goa University, the lone university in the State was started in 1986, when Goa was still a Union Territory and governed by the Congress. It was the fulfilment of the aspirations of Goa's youth who until then were products of the colleges in Goa that were affiliated to Bombay University. Anyone who sought to further their studies and obtain a post graduate degree had to either enrol through the Post Graduate Centre of Bombay University that had been established in Goa or had to relocate to Bombay, as it was called at that time, or any other city that had a university. Goa University, therefore was a huge boost for student community in Goa.

It is now 40 years since Goa University was established. In the intervening decades much has changed and Goa University has not been able to keep pace with all the developments and this mainly has been due to financial reasons. Goa University is a State university and depends on grants from the State government for all its financial outlays. It is only recently that the government, after enacting the Goa Private Universities Act, has given its clearance to some private universities to set up. While that may be a good move that will aid in the larger picture

of converting Goa into an educational hub, as has been envisaged by successive governments, the question of why does Goa not have a Central University remains unanswered.

To that question, we can add another: Why is Goa holding back from demanding that a Central University be established in the State? For a Central University, all Goa would be required to do is provide the land and the Centre would assume all the responsibility to establish the university, finance it and have it running. It is the most pressing need of the hour to restart a discussion on a Central University for Goa and make a demand for it.

I say restart the discussion, because this debate has been held in the past. In 2005, during my tenure as Education Minister of Goa in the Congress government, I had made a representation to the Centre requesting that they establish in Goa a maritime university. In response to that a proposal had been requested and a very detailed and complete proposal had been prepared and sent to the Centre. But my tenure as Education Minister was short as following elections in 2007, I was no longer part of the new government that took office. The State government did not follow up on the proposal with Central government and the same maritime university, largely on the lines of the proposal that Goa had made, was established in Tamil Nadu in 2008. We lost that opportunity, but it was not the only one.

**I**n 2009 Goa was given the opportunity of having a Central University, but this came with a rider. There was a Congress government at the Centre and State was offered the option of converting the existing Goa University from a State University to a Central University. I recall that this had led to a protracted debated, where there were many who were in favour of this conversion, but there was also a lot of opposition to the proposal and in the din created, with arguments for and against flying from both sides, the proposal got derailed. Goa missed a second opportunity to have a Central university and following that there has been no other such offer from the Centre to Goa.

Instead, we now have the Private Universities Act, and in January 2025, Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant announced that there were plans to set up two cluster universities in the State. This is not exactly a good option compared to a Central University, as a cluster university combines two to five colleges from a district to form a university. From this one can assume that what the government has in mind is a university for each district. However, given the current ranking of Goa University, the small size of our

districts, I doubt that cluster universities be practical or even the solution to the current situation, hence, instead of looking at cluster universities, I am making this suggestion of having



Luizinho Faleiro, former CM with Jagdeep Dhankhar, Vice President of India



### BENEFITS OF CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

**V**ery briefly a Central University would be of immense benefit to Goa. To start with, even a cursory glance indicates that a majority of the Central universities in the country are ranked higher than State universities. Other than that, Central Universities are created by an Act of Parliament, come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Human Resources and Development's Department of Higher Education and the funding is disbursed by the same ministry through the UGC. It would not create any financial implications on the State of Goa, instead it would benefit Goa.

As a result of the Central funding, the facilities at these universities - the infrastructure as well as research, science labs, hostels and libraries are markedly better with cutting-edge technology, and as a consequence attract renowned academics and lecturers, while offering students from all economic backgrounds the chance of quality higher education. Central universities also offer students the opportunity to be part of societies and clubs of their choice, giving them a vibrant life outside of academics. In addition they are autonomous, giving them the authority to take decisions. The suggestion being made here is to let Goa University continue to exist and continue with the good work that it is doing, but let us set up another world class university in the State, one that we can all be proud to host.

#### The Goa Private Universities Act, 2020

(Goa Act 4 of 2020) [03-3-2020]

AN ACT

*to provide for establishment and incorporation of private Universities in the State of Goa for imparting quality and industry relevant higher education and to regulate their functions and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.*

Be it enacted by the Legislative Assembly of Goa in the Seventy-first Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. Short title, extent and commencement.— (1) This Act may be called the Goa Private Universities Act, 2020.

(2) It shall extend to the whole of the State of Goa.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

a Central University in Goa. The State is entitled to such a university and setting one such up, would correct an anomaly of Goa being the only State without a Central University.

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