OHERALDO The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Gruesome murder ahead of Women's Day ominous for gender equality

arch 8 is celebrated the world over as International Women's Day. This year, the United Nations' theme is, "For All Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment." The theme calls for action that can unlock equal rights, power and opportunities for all and a feminist future, where no one is left behind. Central to this vision is empowering the next generation—youth, particularly young women and adolescent girls-as catalysts for lasting change.

The World Economic Forum has painted a grim picture, based on the current rate of progress, that full gender parity can be reached only by the year 2158, that is 133 years hence. The International Women's Day website has a different theme based on the above analysis, ie. 'Accelerate Action for gender equality' with increased momentum and urgency in addressing the systemic barriers and biases that women face, both in personal and professional spheres.

On March 6, two days ahead of International Women's Day, the macabre murder of a five-year-old innocent girl in Usgao, sent a chill down every Goan's spine, who has known the state to be one of the most peaceful in India.

Earlier speculation was rife was carried out as part of a black magic ritual to help the couple conceive a child, however, the police ruled out this possibility, stating that forensic experts had found no evidence of occult practices at the crime

The once peaceful state of Goa. has gained such notoriety that it is now being known for crimes and murders, not only in the national, but international circuit for crimes. **A frustrated Chief Minister of Goa has** come out against these crimes, saying that most of the crimes are being committed by migrants

scene. The top brass of the police now claim that the deceased child's mother and the accused woman had a heated argument over a matter and in a fit of rage, the accused couple took the child inside their house and killed her

Whatever may be the reason, being 25 years into the 21st Century, being an aspiring 5 trillion dollar economy and flaunting rapid progress, bullet trains and slogans such as Beti Bachao and Beti Padao, the kidnapping, murder and gruesome burial in the backyard, of an innocent girl, is a national shame with regard to gender equality and respect for women, especially the girl child.

Since it qualifies for the rarest of rare, brutal and gruesome case, locals of the vicinity are so shocked and filled with such revulsion that they have called for quick trial and capital punishment. The unfortunate mother of the girl, a Goan was married to a man from Ratnagiri. For two years, the wife and the two girls suffered terribly at the hands of the father. Due to this the mother decided to return to her mother's house in Usgao. They had been staying there for about a year and the neighbour, the childless couple --Babasaheb Alat, 52, and his wife befriended the girls. On March 5, the wife of Alat is seen on CCTV footage taking the girl into the house. The girl was not seen coming out of the house. Alat sacrificed the girl and buried her in the backyard and kept a huge vessel over the grave. On March 6, he tried to fool the police by even joining the search party, since the girl had been missing from March 5. The CCTV footage provided the clinching evidence to nail the migrant couple. The once peaceful state of Goa, has gained such notoriety that it is now being known for crimes and murders, not only in the national, but international circuit for crimes. A frustrated Chief Minister of Goa has come out against these crimes, saying that most of the crimes are being committed by migrants. The demography of Goa is undergoing a rapid change from the 1980s, due to the growth of tourism and large scale influx of migrants due to the construction and real estate boom. Politically, the migrants have become a boon to the politicians, since slums of 3000 to 4000 migrants form potent and 'political fortune swinging' vote banks for MLAs in almost every constituency. The recent statement of an MLA that no one can touch Moti Dongor is an indication of how politicians protect these vote banks and may even interfere with police conducting raids in such slums. Such vote banks exist in almost every constituency, due to which the MLAs win. Though by and large there is sufficient gender equality based on various HDI parametres among the three major religions in Goa, within the family, at the societal level and legally, with the implementation of the common civil code by the Portuguese and high level of education, there is still scope for improvement in terms of political participation, job opportunities, etc for women.



The challenge for Goa and India

recently came across a post written by a lady originally from Mumbai now residing in Goa. She was sharing how she had been frequently sexually harassed on the serene bylanes of Goa. One of the comments commiserating with her experiences was from a Goan lady who, without irony, claimed these acts were being

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committed by outsiders. So, what exactly is Goa today? Is it that sun kissed idyllic place? Or is it where the beaches are covered with shacks blasting music that drowns the soothing sound of the sea? Is Goa the land where voung restaurateurs open their bars and eateries or is it that place where tourists pay through their nose to get the right table to watch the sunset or Instagram new age cuisine? Is Goa that escape which people choose in their desire to slowdown or is it where

new-Goan shopkeepers open their shop at 6 am and shut at 10 pm, and where every other new-Goan becomes a property agent? Is Goa the land of gated communities or modern villas or something called Portuguese villas or large apartment complexes? Does Goa breed corrupt politicians or residents who are too busy in their lives to realise what is happening to their land but have time to complain about Goa is one of those places

where the taxi fare from or to the airport may equal the cost



The tragedy of Goa is that everyone wants a piece of the pie without accepting the responsibility for the outcomes. Goa facts

Per the 2011 Census, Goa's population was 14.59 lakhs. This was an increase from the 13.48 lakh as determined in the 2001 census. Per Goa

1990 ie 16.08%. The birth rate has fallen since Goa achieved statehood - 18.24 per 1000 in 1987-88 to 10.87 in 2022-23 and 10.73 in 2023-24. As per the Goa government website Goa's current population is

18.2 lakhs. Domestic tourists have increased since the formation of this state - 7.34 lakhs in 1987-88 to 76.69 lakhs in 2022-23, and 84.32 lakhs in 2023-24. Hotels and lodging houses have increased from 275 with 11065 beds in 1987-88 to 7483 with 108679 beds in 2023-24.

The Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at current prices has increased from Rs 856.15 lakhs in 1987-88 to an estimated Rs 10653257 lakhs in 2023-34. The per capita income at current prices has increased from Rs 7,618/- to an estimated Rs 674684/- in the same time period.

On the other hand, the number of people registered in government employment exchanges has increased from 14065 in 1987-88 to 21,008 in 2022-23, and 18,131 in 2023-24. The vacancies that were notified by this body were 4800; 15,001 and 21,852 for the periods mentioned above. However, the vacancies filled were 1219, 2135 and 1845 respectively. The unemployment rate in Goa is 8.7% the youth unemployment

rate is 19.1%. These figures are contested by the Goan government. Taxes on property and

capital transactions have increased from Rs 253.36 lakhs in 1987-88 to Rs 128552.73 lakhs in 2023-24. The government has spent crores on vanity smart City projects. Goa is becoming a prime market for purchase of second homes. Some second homes are offered at between Rs 40 and 50 crores. Per Savills Research 'The standard sizes of villas have shrunk to almost half from 5,400 sq. ft. to 2,700 sq. ft. in the past five years'. The demand for land has increased to such an extent that it has decreased the size of villas. Is the

pie decreasing and therefore more is being made of less. Or to cater to the high demand, builders are building smaller but making a bigger bang for their buck? It's a moot question but - 'would Goa's falling birth rate need more houses?' There must be a link between increase in per capita

ployment; the much-reported increase in crime rate, and air pollution (poor on Feb 25th as per aqi.in).

Rest of the country India's GDP is growing, domestic and foreign tourist numbers are near pre-Covid figures, and direct tax and GST collection is increasing. The per capita income has increased from Rs 125,883 in 2019 to Rs 184,205 (provisional) in 2024. However, World Inequality Lab, finds 'extreme levels of inequality in India In 2022-23, 22.6% of national income went to just the top 1%, the highest level recorded in our series since 1922, The top 1% wealth share stood at 40.1% in 2022-23' Per Blume Ventures, Indians are not saving enough because of an increase in unsecured loans, and household debt to GDP is at an all-time high. Further, consumption in India is not widening but deepening ie the consumption market is not fuelled by new consumers but by current consumers consuming more expensive goods. Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy data indicates the unemployment rate was 8.3% in December 2024.

The inability to bridge the wealth gap is mirrored in the country's inability to control air pollution which costs India 3% of her GDP annually.

Is there a link between increase in GDP, high GST collection, pollution, inequality, and unemployment?

Goans blame outsiders for Goa's problems. Many in India have a plethora of choices - minorities, the past, the Nehruvian socio-economic model - to blame for India's current predicament.

The increase in government collection seems to be benefiting a few, others - who face an uncertain future - are told that they should be proud of the many vanity projects. This makes for India's very own Marie Antionette moment which is exacerbated by this absurd blame-game.

On its website the Goa government claims 'Goa is the coolest place in India', and 'Goa is forever'. The Government of India promised Acche Din, Viksit Bharat, and in its 2022-23 Budget introduced the Amrit Kaal Budget. There is just one question to both -For Whom?

people's*edit*

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THINKING ALOUD ON NOISE REDUCTION VISWANATHAN VAIDYANATHAN

aliban, an enigmatic character in William Shakespeare's play The Tempest, muses about his native island thus: "The isle is full of noises, sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not." Alas, the noises that surround us in daily life are far from sweet airs.

Modern street vendors have taken to technology like fish to water, outfitting their vehicles with loudspeakers that broadcast pre-recorded messages at ear-shattering decibels. Curious about the process behind these recordings, I encountered a vendor selling vegetables from a mobile truck. When I inquired about the prices, he didn't respond directly. Instead, he gestured for me to wait, stepped aside, and used a mobile app to record the updated vegetable prices in his coarse voice. Within minutes, the recording was live on the speaker attached to his truck.

While it's encouraging to see street vendors embracing technology to simplify their business, the noise generated by these loudspeakers is certainly less endearing. The arrival of a knife sharpener in our locality in Chennai is heralded by a war cry so intense that residents get an adrenalin rush to run towards him and surrender all their kitchen knives at his feet for sharpening.

Add to this, the medley of garbage collection vehicles with their signature jingles. A long procession of speaker-fitted street vendors march past our area from early morning till evening, featuring a diverse array of sellers: fruit, vegetables, flowers, potted plants, and waste paper vendors; sellers of sleeping mats, idiyappam (a steamed rice dish) and kolam flour; repair services for everything from sofas to gadgets; and traders offering money for old laptops, used gadgets, and silk sarees. This ever-growing list seems to mock the likes of Amazon, Flipkart, and other e-commerce giants. While some traditional vendors still shout their wares the old-fashioned way, their numbers are dwindling.

Public transport comes with its own set of auditory challenges. Some co-passengers treat their phone conversations as theatrical performances, projecting their voices at volumes suited for a stadium. From loud bargaining over purchases to executives chastising contractors and bosses reprimanding employees, a whole spectrum of workplace drama unfolds on the move. Others unleash WhatsApp or YouTube videos without headphones, creating a chaotic blend of soundscapes-political rants on one side, spiritual sermons on the other, leaving the rest of us stuck in a surreal blend of spiritual politics or political spirituality.

Stepping out of a metro station in Chennai, I once mistook the sudden barrage of explosions for a transformer burst or, worse, enemy carpet bombing. To my relief (or dismay), it was a funeral procession where crackers were being burst in close proximity to passing vehicles. While regulations limit fireworks during festivals, such rules seem absent for other occasions. The result? Deafening and hazardous fireworks that jeopardize both public safety and peace of mind.

In our evolving hybrid work culture, where online classes, seminars and remote work are the norm, such disturbances can be more than just inconvenient-they can be debilitating. Perhaps it's time for policymakers, law enforcers and stakeholders to do some 'loud thinking' about keeping public spaces and residential areas calm. Ironically, even a jarring debate on television about reducing noise pollution could spark meaningful steps in this direction. So, let's make some noise about noise reduction.

- to blame for India's current predicament

Check on occult

practices needed

stitious beliefs.

In a country which is taking gi-

ant strides in Information Tech-

nology (IT), digital world, space

science, etc, it is shocking to note

that there still exist people who

believe in black magic or super-

While many cultures have be-

liefs and practices surrounding

magic, there is no scientific evi-

dence to support the existence of

supernatural forces. Black magic

"works" only on mentally weak

people, not because it actually

works but because it affects their

psychology. The recent suspected

case of human sacrifices in Kerala

has brought into focus the severi-

ty of crimes related to witchcraft

and occult practices and the prev-

alence of superstitious beliefs,

black magic, and sorcery in a pro-

In India, practicing black mag-

ic is punishable with up to seven

years in prison and a fine ranging

from Rs 5,000 to Rs 50,000. Goa

does not have a specific anti-su-

perstition law, but it does have

laws that can be used to deal

with superstitious practices. To a

large extent there may not be in-

stances of occult practices in the

state. Nevertheless police need

to keep a watch on such occult

first preference for jobs?

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

practices in the state.

Will Goans be given

gressive state like Kerala.



have a plethora of choices minorities, the past, the Nehruvian socioeconomic model

Goans blame

outsiders for

Goa's problems.

Many in India

The Goa government will have to think of targeted strategies to ensure gender equality, education and empowerment of women in the slums as almost 40 percent of the population of Goa can now be presumed to be migrant.

government website population growth rate of 14.8% during 1991-2000 is lower than what it was in 1981-

income; higher GSDP; manifold increase in tourists, and property and capital transaction taxes; Goa's high unem-

(Samir Nazareth is an author and writes on socio-economic and environmental issues)

employed by a host of nations. More and more state of the art technologies are imperative to tackle the nefarious drug and arms trade, and thereby securing the health and lives of the people of the state.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

The legacy of greater good

Mick Jagger, the legendary lead vocalist of the rock band Rolling Stones, has decided to donate his share of the band's songs catalogue to charity rather than leave it to his children. Valued at an evewatering US\$ 600 million, the catalogue constitutes @40% of his personal wealth. In an interview, Jagger opined that his children don't need the money to live, expressing his desire to use his fortune for a greater good. He emphasized his intention to make a positive impact in the world.

His approach reflects a deeper personal philosophy about wealth and legacy, focused more on social good than on familial inheritance.

While Mick Jagger's decision has ignited discussions about inheritance and philanthropy, it is clear that he intends to leave a legacy that extends beyond his musical contributions, aiming to benefit the world in a more meaningful way. Hope our Indian billionaires take a leaf out of Jagger's book, his is a legacy worth emulating.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulim

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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. hapless patients Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai The impunity with which private hospitals make patients bleed Declare war financially is a poor reflection against drugs on the Central and state governments, which have been found Smuggling of drugs across the

> India-Pakistan border is quite rampant. Punjab shares approximately 553 km of the border between the two nations. As is known, narco-terrorism and arms influx have driven the vouth of Punjab into a state into despair and something needs to be done to eliminate or control the dual evil. Evidently, the use of technol-

ogy is quite crucial in preventing the influx of drugs and arms. The Punjab government is said to be keen on utilising the anti-drone technology to beat the perpetrators of drugs' smuggling at their own game. Although the Border Secu-

rity Force is totally engaged in thwarting the nefarious designs of the unscrupulous elements from Pakistan, a coordinated effort is the need of the hour. Anti-drone techniques like radars, cameras and jammers are a few globally used methods. Radio frequency techniques

and Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) jammers are highly acclaimed anti-drone long way in easing the woes of technologies that are currently

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deficient in providing affordable

medical care. In this context, the

Supreme Court has rightly called

on the Union and State govern-

ments to draft policies aimed

at preventing the exploitation

of patients and their families in

private hospitals. This practice

is often seen as unethical and

anti-competitive as in-house

hospital pharmacies charges are

excessive compared to outside

pharmacies. Patients should

have the freedom to buy medi-

cines from any pharmacy of their

choice based on price, quality,

or convenience. Hospitals might

push for specific brands or medi-

cines due to tie-ups with pharma

The onus is on policymakers

to frame guidelines to curb ram-

pant exploitation of patients and

their families. Government agen-

cies like the National Consumer

Disputes Redressal Commission

and Competition Commission

of India should strictly monitor

and penalise such practices. A

comprehensive reform of the

drug regulatory system can go a

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Unfair pricing by on Thursday said that his government has now approved an private hospitals amendment to the Employment Exchange Act, making it man-

datory for private companies to advertise job vacancies within the state, failing which they will have to pay a penalty of up to Rs 30,000.

Has the government done a big favour for Goans by doing this in Goa? And will the private companies, which are wellknown for hiring only outsiders for peanuts and exploiting them for years now start hiring only Goans by giving them first preference?

Well, if the government is really serious in doing something worthwhile for Goans on the employment front in future then it should compulsorily instruct the owners or managing directors of all the private companies to bring out a list of Goans who are currently employed in their companies and impose hefty fines on companies which are still found refusing to recruit Goans under some pretext or the other rather than merely bringing an amendment to the Employment Exchange Act and making it mandatory for these private companies to advertise job vacancies within the

state just to fool gullible jobless Goans. Jerry Fernandes, Saligao