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Growing narcotics problem: A call for action

Year after year, the narcotics problem in Goa continues to escalate. Despite numerous drug seizures and arrests, the illegal drug trade remains rampant and largely uncontested. Goa, once famous for its idyllic beaches and vibrant culture, has increasingly become a hub for narcotics trafficking, with drugs flowing into the state at an alarming rate. Will Goa, once famed for its carefree atmosphere, end up as the next "Udta Punjab" of India, the "Go Goa Gone"?

The situation is disheartening. Despite numerous arrests, Goa's law enforcement agencies have struggled to reach the masterminds behind these operations. While smaller drug busts regularly make the headlines, the bigger fish—the kingpins of these extensive drug networks—continue to evade capture. This raises an uncomfortable question: is the Goa police incapable of investigating these crimes, or is there a lack of political will to dig deeper and disrupt the narcotic supply chains?

It is striking that in most major busts, the culprits arrested are often just low-level operatives or individuals operating on the periphery of larger networks. In the most recent major raid by the Goa Police Crime Branch, nearly 12 kg of hydroponic weed, valued at Rs 11.67 crore, was seized. The accused, Gautam, a 32-year-old from Bangalore, was apprehended in Guirim after successfully smuggling the drugs from Thailand to India. Yet, despite this significant seizure, Gautam could be described as an independent operator—a case in point that this does little to dismantle the larger networks of drug traffickers.

The narcotics trade in Goa has evolved to meet the changing demands of its clientele. Hydroponic marijuana, prized for its purity and chemical-free properties, is increasingly popular in Goa's high-end party scene. According to police reports, Gautam had been distributing small quantities of the drug to local peddlers to introduce it into the market. This type of drug trafficking may appear to be a victimless crime to some, but the broader consequences—especially on the youth of Goa—are devastating.

In the same breath, it must be acknowledged that the police forces in Goa are not entirely inactive. They have made some notable arrests and drug seizures in recent months, with the most recent being the arrest of two individuals in Vasco for possessing over 4 kg of suspected ganja. Despite this, the general trend remains one of smaller busts and the capture of low-ranking operatives. The larger kingpins behind the drug trade continue to elude justice. This pattern has led many to question whether the police are merely scratching the surface and whether there is a lack of systematic investigation into the higher echelons of the drug trade.

While the Goa Police Crime Branch's efforts in monitoring and intercepting narcotics shipments are commendable, it is clear that the problem runs far deeper. Goa's law enforcement agencies have made significant efforts to combat the spread of drugs, including tracking local drug suppliers, engaging in surveillance, and making periodic arrests. In January this year alone, Goa Police arrested 15 individuals and seized drugs worth approximately Rs 25 lakh. Yet, for every arrest made, dozens more drug peddlers continue their work, and the flow of narcotics persists.

More troubling still is the fact that Goa has become a hotspot for foreign nationals involved in the narcotics trade. The Anti-Narcotics Cell (ANC) of Goa Police in January arrested two foreign nationals who were allegedly carrying narcotic substances to a psy-trance party in Arambol. These foreign nationals—along with many others—often see Goa as a lucrative market for drug trafficking, capitalising on its international appeal to tourists and partygoers. If such networks are allowed to flourish unchecked, Goa risks becoming synonymous with drugs, attracting negative attention and potentially tarnishing its reputation as a tourist destination.

This situation calls for a more coordinated, robust, and long-term strategy from Goa's law enforcement authorities. The Goa Police must focus not only on making arrests but also on identifying and dismantling the powerful cartels behind the trade. In this context, a holistic approach—one that includes greater surveillance, inter-agency coordination, and an increased focus on intelligence gathering—is essential.

Furthermore, it is crucial that the authorities look beyond the arrests and confront the root causes of the drug crisis. The increasing number of youth turning to drugs as an escape from socio-economic pressures, stress, and a desire to fit in must be addressed. Prevention and awareness campaigns targeting school and college students, along with rehabilitation programmes for those already affected, are key components of any successful strategy. In addition, partnerships with local communities, including tourism stakeholders, will be essential to combat the growing influence of narcotics in Goa's tourism industry.

While the Goa Police Crime Branch's recent bust of 12 kg of hydroponic weed signals that efforts are being made, it is only a small victory in the larger war against drugs. To truly tackle Goa's narcotics problem, there must be a concerted effort to break the vicious cycle of drug trafficking—one that does not merely focus on minor arrests but aims to uproot the kingpins and the international syndicates that support them. Only with a determined, multi-pronged approach can Goa hope to maintain its reputation as a peaceful paradise, untainted by the scourge of drugs.



ROBIN ROY

'Mark' it... Justin out... Carney in

Even as Justin (Trudeau) is just out... and Mark Carney, the new leader of Canada's ruling Liberal Party, who is set to become the next Canadian Prime Minister... he has several unpleasant tasks and goals to achieve as he has inherited a difficult situation courtesy to (some extent) his predecessor.

Carney comes at a time even as Trump is thumping around the globe with his tariff brouhaha and Carney among other things also has to handle the situation with India which to a large extent had gone awry in the Trudeau regime. The 59-year-old former Central banker would also want to diversify Ottawa's trade relationship with New Delhi.

Carney had handsomely won a race to replace Trudeau as Canada's top leader after securing 85.9 per cent of votes in the Liberal Party leadership race.

The major political upheaval in Canada came after Trudeau announced in January that he would step down after more than nine years in power as his approval rating fell, forcing the ruling Liberal Party to run a quick contest to replace him

Recently, before his election, Carney addressed the issue of US tariffs on Canada by saying, "What Canada will be looking to do is to diversify our trading relationships with like-minded countries, and there are opportunities to rebuild the relationship with India."

"There needs to be a shared sense of values around that commercial relationship, and if I am Prime Minister, I look forward to the opportunity to build that," he added.

Carney, a veteran in the field of economics and finance, is keen to boost Ottawa's economic ties with New Delhi.



Carney had previously led both the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England and also headed the board of Brookfield Asset Management, which has invested in India's realty, renewable energy and infrastructure sectors.

Carney's effort to improve bilateral ties will in all possibility be welcomed by New Delhi, especially amid Donald Trump's tariff threats which will affect both countries. With Canada being one of the top destinations for Indians migrating abroad, New Delhi may

also raise the issue of Canada restricting immigration and tightening norms for visas.

The ties between India and Canada reached an all-time low after Trudeau in September 2023 alleged that Indians were involved in the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on June 18 in 2023. New Delhi repeatedly refuted the allegations, calling them "baseless". Following this, both countries expelled each other's top diplomats.

Canada had also paused the Early Progress Trade Agreement, which would have concluded in 2023.

It may be recalled that during his leadership campaign, Carney emphasised his commitment to strengthening ties with India. Addressing concerns over US tariffs imposed by former President Donald Trump, he highlighted the need for Canada to diversify its trade partnerships with like-minded nations.

He further stressed the importance of shared values in commercial relations and expressed his eagerness to improve diplomatic ties with New Delhi in the event of him being elected.

"There needs to be a shared sense of values around that commercial relationship and if I'm Prime Minister, I look forward to the opportunity to build that," he added.

Carney will assume the crucial role during an exceedingly turbulent period for Canada, as the country faces a trade war with its long time ally, the United States, under the country's re-elected President Donald Trump, while also preparing for a general election.

Mark Carney, who has been vocal in his criticism of President Trump, reinforced his stance against the US as he delivered his victory speech. He declared that he would never allow Ottawa to be "part of America."

"America is not Canada. Canada will never ever be part of America in any way, shape or form," he said.

As far as Trump's tariff threats are concerned, Carney stated that Canada's retaliatory measures would remain in effect until the US makes a credible commitment to free and fair trade.

Following Trump's decision to impose a 25 per cent tariff on all Canadian goods, excluding the automobile and energy sectors, Canada, under (outgoing) Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, had held a retaliatory

stance.

"There's someone who's trying to weaken our economy," Carney said of Trump, spurring loud boos at the party gathering. "He's attacking Canadian workers, families, and businesses. We can't let him succeed."

"This won't be business as usual," Carney said. "We will have to do things that we haven't imagined before, at speeds we didn't think possible."

The major political upheaval in Canada came after Trudeau announced in January that he would step down after more than nine years in power as his approval rating fell, forcing the ruling Liberal Party to run a quick contest to replace him.

Known for his criticism of US President Donald Trump, on his victory announcement as well, Carney expressed his strong stand against America.

In response to Trump's repeated wish of making Canada the 51st state of the United States, Carney responded by saying, "America is not Canada. Canada will never ever be part of America in any way, shape or form."

He described America as a country "we can no longer trust" as it has brought dark days to Canada. "We are getting over the shock but let us never forget the lessons, we have to look after ourselves and to look out for each other. We need to pull together in the tough days ahead."

Mark Carney promised the people of Canada that together, the nation will get through this crisis. "We can and we will come out stronger than ever, and we will because Canada is built on the strength of its people."

"Vive la Canada (long live Canada)," Mark Carney said while concluding his speech.

The PM-designate, in his victory speech, highlighted the main dual challenges he will be facing—especially the threat of US President Donald Trump's tariffs.

"Donald Trump as we know has put unjustified tariffs on what we build, on what we sell and how we make a living. He is attacking Canadian families, workers and businesses and we cannot let him succeed, and we won't, we won't," Carney declared after the results.

The rest, time will take care of... and we shall all see what Carney does to mend the ways with India and tackle the great US challenges.

(Writer is Senior Journalist and Former Senior Associate Editor, O Herald, Goa)

people's edit

THE MAGIC WORLD OF THE MIND

JOSEPH LEWIS D'SILVA

Some people believe that certain individuals have supernatural power of seeing supernatural images or using evil spirits to do harmful things like destroying enemy's property or even human beings; they may even make claim: "You will get what you want; if, and only if, you harm or eliminate that person."

Many firmly believe in such individual's statement like every one of us believe in a family doctor. Others, blindly believe it, because that individual's idea has been trusted and relied on for a long time. But, just because someone's message has been going around for some time does not mean it is scientifically valid. Clinging to false belief in someone's wrong ideas, causes wrong effect; when one keeps it in the mind for a long time it can trap a person mentally --- a mental prisoner; and shape one's action in harmful ways --- as prisoner of destruction. As Shakespeare's Othello strangled Desdemona because he believed he was right. Macbeth let dream blind him into committing murder. Our thought has the power to influence us. The stories we believe shape our actions.

Just as a mirror shows all that is before it, so also our recurring thoughts and feelings shape our life. In other words, the effect of what we become in this world outwardly depends how we mirror our ideas inwardly in our thinking. How we enslave ourselves to some individuals, by listening, obeying and executing other's ideas; thus putting ourselves in the cage of some individual's thoughts; making ourselves to behave as what goes inside our head. So, just like the mirror shows all that is before it, so also our outward behaviour shows the world, what type of soul we have inside our body. It is rightly said, "As one thinks, so one becomes."

Secondly, if a false information is repeated often enough in public; people believe it to be correct: for example, if someone is continuously, labelled a thief, everyone accepts it as fact—even if it is a lie. Eventually, the accused may think, "If everyone sees me as a thief, why not become one." Here repetition turns falsehood into perceived reality.

Lastly, our strongest judgement about ourselves comes from our belief; e.g., if a student believes he has the ability to succeed he succeeds. But if he is tortured by self-doubt about his capacity, he fails; not due to lack of intelligence, but because of his belief in his own failure.

Here is a golden rule: "As you think, so you become. / A positive mind, sees opportunities. / A negative mind projects problems. / A small mind is focused on petty things. / A matured mind sees greatness."

If you feel stuck don't wait to change ... change your thoughts; and the circumstances will follow. Even when faced with undeniable truth, people often resist to change. But do not take shelter in self-imposed limitations. Often, our mind-set, as a defence mechanism, resists transformation. In reality such resistance hinders personal growth.

In the end, our reality is shaped by the belief we hold. Whether we rise or fall, succeed or fail, love or hate --- it all starts in the mind. If we allow ourselves to be trapped by others' false narratives, we become prisoners of illusion. But if we take control of our thoughts, we shape our destiny. The mind is our magic world --- we should use it wisely.

Deforestation and heat waves

There has been no respite from heat for Goa. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has reportedly extended the yellow alert heat warning for Goa till March 11 and predicted hot and humid conditions in the State during this time. Earlier the yellow alert was only until March 10. According to the IMD maximum temperatures are very likely to prevail between 35 and 37 degrees Celsius. Climate change is rapidly intensifying. Scientists warn that the cooling effects of La Nina may not be sufficient to offset the rising temperatures in future.

Cutting down forests is increasingly influencing the climate and the earth's temperature. This adds enormous amounts of greenhouse gases to those naturally occurring in the atmosphere, increasing global warming. The country recently saw its warmest February since 1901, along with one of the driest winters in recent history, which has raised concerns about the ongoing climate crisis. The extreme temperatures and resultant atmospheric conditions adversely affect people as they cause physiological stress. It is learnt that heat waves are caused by trapped air, which typically circulates in large prevailing winds. But when trapped over one region, it warms to unusual temperatures due to sunlight. Scientists warn of increased El Nino events, leading to extreme weather and heightened heat-

waves. Climate change is having an impact on the rising temperatures. The climate change caused by humans is causing yearly changes in weather patterns.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Double delight

Saturday and Sunday last week, turned out to be Red Letter Days in the annals of Indian history.

Music Maestro Ilaiyaraaja created history at midnight on Saturday by becoming the first Asian musician to present his 'first full length western classical symphony' titled, 'Valiant', at London's Eventim Apollo Theatre.

Ilaiyaraaja mesmerised the audience comprising not only music lovers but also world-renowned music composers, with his 'Valiant' and in return for Ilaiyaraaja's feast to their ears, the audience, gave the maestro a standing ovation.

With his great feat, Ilaiyaraaja has got his name etched in gold in the hall of fame of music along with those of Beethoven, Bach, Mozart and Haydn, pioneer-composers of western classical symphony, considered the ultimate in music. India feels proud of the achievement of Ilaiyaraaja and Tamil Nadu is in extra jubilation celebrating the magical music feat of its son of the soil. We are only waiting to see how

the Central government is going to honour this great son of India.

And on Sunday, the Indian Cricket Team brought glory to our country by winning the ICC Champions Trophy defeating the formidable New Zealand by four wickets and an over on hand, in a nail-biting thrilling final. With this most desired and cherished victory, India has avenged its defeat to the Kiwis in 2000. Skipper Rohit Sharma and his team deserve accolades and rewards for their consistent progress right from the start to the finish of the tournament.

Tharcus S Fernando, Chennai

True champions

Kudos to Rohit Sharma and the whole Indian team for winning the coveted ICC Champions trophy 2025 in the final against the equally formidable New Zealand, creating a slew of records in Indian and ICC cricketing history.

This win will go into history as Rohit and team snatched victory away from the Kiwis team through diligent fielding, meticulous bowling and dashing batting. When crisis rose after Kohli's early departure the Men in Blue patiently and composedly confronted the opponents and, making the game one of the best-ever played in a final by the team, won the trophy beautifully.

The splendid performance by

the team says it all - to be positive, determined and make the impossible possible. The team under Rohit has also proved that a fearless, committed, united, dedicated and determined positive mindset can make anything possible. Let us hope that this winning streak continues.

M Pradyu, Kannur

Performance worthy of champions

Team India etched their name in history, lifting the ICC Champions Trophy for a record third time, defeating New Zealand in an absorbing final at Dubai on Sunday.

Under the dazzling floodlights, with Dubai International Cricket Stadium transforming into a sea of blue, the Men in Blue delivered a performance worthy of champions. The atmosphere reached a feverish pitch when Ravindra Jadeja struck the winning shot, sending the crowd into a frenzy of jubilation. The triumph marks India's second ICC trophy in as many years, following their T20 World Cup victory last year, further cementing their dominance in white ball cricket on the global stage. The triumph also reinforces the ability of the Men in Blue to perform under pressure and excel in global tournaments. Meanwhile, full marks to the Kiwis as they soared high, winning every game until Team India

clipped their wings in the all-important final.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai

Rohit leads India to glory

In a thrilling Champions Trophy final at Dubai, India clinched the title with a four-wicket victory over New Zealand, delighting nearly a billion viewers worldwide.

Rohit Sharma, often criticised for not converting good starts, silenced his critics with a stellar 76, seemingly taking Sunil Gavaskar's advice to bat deep. His crucial 100-plus partnership with Shubman Gill laid the foundation, and despite a stunning catch by Glenn Phillips dismissing Gill, Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul steadied the chase.

Hardik Pandya accelerated the run rate, and Jadeja sealed the win with a boundary. New Zealand, after electing to bat, posted 251-7, with Daryl Mitchell's 63 and Michael Bracewell's unbeaten 53 rescuing the innings. India's strategy of four spinners—Varun Chakravarthy, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, and Ravindra Jadeja—proved decisive in restricting the Kiwis. Despite four dropped catches, India held their nerve, with New Zealand's fielding brilliance highlighted by Phillips' acrobatic effort.

With this triumph, India reaffirmed its dominance in white-ball cricket, and Rohit Sharma, the 'Hitman,' delivered when it mattered the most.

Gopalaswamy J, Chennai