

## O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

## Balancing reform and reality

The Goa government's decision to start the new academic year from April 1 has sparked a fierce controversy between parents and the education department. While the government insists that the change is necessary to align with the National Education Policy (NEP) and eliminate imbalances in the academic calendar, parents are raising serious concerns about the practicality and potential harm to students. The situation has now escalated to the courtroom, with a group of parents filing a writ petition in the High Court, challenging the abrupt and seemingly unplanned implementation of the policy.

According to the government's affidavit submitted in court, the NEP has been thoroughly studied by experts, and the recommended changes are essential for improving the quality of education. But is this urgency justified, or is it a desperate attempt to catch up with a missed deadline at the cost of student health and comfort?

Parents are not opposing the NEP itself. Their protest is against the hasty and impractical manner in which it is being implemented. The issue of heat and infrastructure deficiencies has emerged as a major point of contention. On March 11, during a visit to a school in North Goa, parents witnessed a power outage from 10

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lack of planning is evident in the fact that stakeholders, including teachers and parents, were not consulted before the decision was taken.

On the other hand, the government's argument is straightforward. Goa is already behind in implementing NEP, and further delays will only worsen the gap. According to the government, students from Classes 6th to 10th and 12th will benefit from an adjusted academic calendar, which will balance the time between the two sessions. Currently, the first session receives more time than the second, which impacts the completion of the syllabus and examination preparation.

The government insists that the change will ultimately benefit students by ensuring better time management and more balanced academic pressure. However, this justification seems hollow when weighed against the practical challenges of coping with extreme heat, inadequate infrastructure, and logistical difficulties.

This is not the first time that the Goa education department has made a hasty and poorly planned decision. The directive for students to wear 'canvas shoes' without a clear explanation or preparation caused confusion and frustration among parents. Similarly, the government's repeated warnings about illegal schools operating in the State have not translated into any concrete action. Merely issuing threats without follow-through has created an atmosphere of administrative indifference.

Change is inevitable, but it requires careful execution. The problem is not the NEP itself but the hurried and thoughtless manner in which it is being rolled out. Education reforms should be introduced gradually, with proper consultation and preparation. Stakeholders, teachers, parents, and students must be taken into confidence before such significant decisions are made.

A balanced academic calendar and improved educational standards are desirable goals. However, these objectives should not come at the expense of student health and safety. The government must acknowledge that Goa's infrastructure is not yet ready to handle summer classes. Instead of pushing forward recklessly, the administration should pause, consult stakeholders, and implement the policy in phases.

Rushing to meet a deadline is not a sign of progress; it is a recipe for chaos. True reform comes from strategic planning, thoughtful execution, and respect for the voices of those it affects the most — the students, teachers, and parents. Goa's education department must recognize this before it turns a promising policy into a disastrous misstep.

## Twitter World

António Guterres @antonioguterres

Women's rights are under siege. Around the world, hard-won gains are being thrown into reverse. Now is the time for those of us who care about equality for women and girls to stand up and to speak out.

Mohamad Safa @mhdkhsafa

People aren't going hungry because we cannot feed the poor. People are going hungry because we cannot satisfy the rich.

## comment



MARIAN PINHEIRO

The question of whether India is a democracy today is pivotal to the country's political future. A truly democratic system is one where governance is transparent, inclusive, and accountable to the people



Institutions like the Election Commission of India should function without bowing down to political masters. In recent years, India's media landscape has faced challenges from corporate ownership, and dwindling journalistic ethics. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and activists have often been at the forefront of advocating for rights and justice. However, increasing restrictions on their functioning undermine their ability to contribute to democracy.

## The need for democratisation of Indian democracy

Indian democracy, often celebrated as the world's largest, is at crossroads. Contemporary democracy watch dogs agree that today India resides somewhere in a nether region between full democracy and full autocracy. Like a 'hybrid regime'—that is, neither a full democracy nor a full autocracy. In 2021, Freedom House dropped India's rating from Free to Partly Free, the same year, the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project relegated India to the status of 'electoral autocracy'. The Economist Intelligence Unit moved India into the 'flawed democracy'.

The question of whether India is a democracy today is pivotal to the country's political future. A truly democratic system is one where governance is transparent, inclusive, and accountable to the people.

The mere presence of democratic institutions does not guarantee the health of democracy. India's democracy is increasingly skewed in practice. The need for democratisation within Indian democracy is not just desirable but essential for its survival and relevance.

India's democratic framework was designed to reflect the ideals of equality, justice, and representation. Over time, this vision has faced challenges from systemic inequalities, centralised power structures, and socio-political hierarchies. The growing influence of money and muscle power undermines the democratic process. According to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), 43% of MPs elected in 2019 had criminal cases against them, raising questions about the quality of representation.

The growing centralisation of power at the Union level has undermined federalism, a cornerstone of India's democracy. State governments often face constraints in decision-making due to financial dependencies and overreach by the Centre. Restoring the balance of power between the Centre and states is imperative for democratisation. Institutions such as the Parliament, Election Commission, and Judiciary form the backbone of democracy. Their perceived erosion through political interference, inefficiency, or lack of transparency weakens democratic governance. Strengthening institutional autonomy and fostering a culture of accountability are critical. The most fundamental link between democracy, development and participation of the community is in deep confusion and great stress today. It has tended to become accountable to none, and responsible to nothing.

The most recent example is the 'Swachh Bharat Yojana' (Clean India Project) could have transformed India into a global entity with a cascading effect on education, health, development and orientation of the younger generation of Indians. But it has largely failed because the implementation agencies were the same old unaccountable government entities.

In fact, the bureaucracy itself has become the main hurdle for delivery of goods and services to the poor. There is much less accountability, horrendous leakages and no capacity-building. There have been negligible efforts to empower the grass roots and the downtrodden across anti-poverty interventions. There are two main challenges in injecting democracy at the grass roots. First, the empowerment and participation of local people and their ability to handle the activities so far run by the governmental machinery, besides having institutional infrastructure and integrity in taking collective responsibility is lacking.

The more serious question is that the grass roots have joined the larger corruption dynamics centralised bureaucracy, thus spreading of roots of corruption, wider and deeper in almost all aspects of the life of the Nation, compelling one to recall the words of, one who is most hated by all Indians, the Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

"If Independence is granted to India, power will go to the hands of rascals, rogues, freebooters; all Indian leaders will be of low calibre and men of straw. They will have sweet

tongues and silly hearts. They will fight amongst themselves for power and India will be lost in political squabbles. A day would come when even air and water would be taxed in India."

A statement every Indian would want to prove as untrue, but the reality of the country and the unprecedented enrichment of the politicians and the increasing poverty of the common and the less privileged in India makes one rethink, and realise that the present reality of the nation is entirely different from what was promised and what was dreamt by the people of India. Yet the present day politicians boldly and shamelessly continue this tirade of being mere dream merchants, promising great things but doing precisely nothing except looting the Nation to fill themselves and their families with wealth and privileges.

Goa is a sad illustration of how a wealthy and progressive State could be made poorer by bad politics and greedy politicians. Goa's total outstanding debt at the end of March 2023 was Rs 31,104 crore and Goa's gross fiscal deficit has increased by 680% since 2004.

The political manoeuvring in Goa is a worrying sign of the shrinking democratic spaces. The absence of a transparent and consultative process in policy making deprives Goans of their rightful voice in decisions that shape their future. Goa's electorate has repeatedly expressed frustration with defections, yet the lack of strict penalties allows such behaviour to continue unchecked. Goa, being a tourism-dependent State, has seen the growing influence of powerful business lobbies, raising concerns over environmental sustainability and public welfare. The people of Goa have consistently shown their willingness to engage in public discourse, be it the protests against the coal corridor in Vasco or the agitation against uncontrolled tourism expansion. A structured mechanism, such as citizen referendums or participatory town hall meetings, should be institutionalised to give people a direct say in major policy decisions.

As Goa stands at the crossroads of rapid urbanisation, environmental challenges, and political realignments, it is imperative that the voices of its people are not drowned out by political opportunism and corporate interests. This beautiful earth is what we all have in common. Let not a few greedy ones destroy it.

(The writer is a Professor of Law and an Education Consultant.)

## people's edit

## THINKING OUT OF THE BOX...

MOLLY FERNANDES

This piece of writing was inspired by a personal experience where I observed how people often become fixated on fulfilling one specific task, neglecting another equally important one due to prior engagement. It struck me that both tasks could have been accomplished seamlessly, had the individual taken a step back and thought out of the box. This realisation led me to explore the power of creative thinking and its potential to transform not just tasks but our entire approach to problem-solving.

In a world that thrives on innovation, "thinking out of the box" is more than just a buzz phrase—it's a mindset that drives progress and sets individuals and organisations apart. But what does it truly mean to think outside the box? It's about breaking free from conventional boundaries, challenging norms, and embracing unconventional ideas to find unique solutions.

Thinking out of the box involves approaching problems from fresh perspectives. It requires us to step away from the familiar, question assumptions, and explore uncharted territories. It's not about rejecting tradition but about complementing it with bold and creative ideas that go beyond the expected.

For example, the legendary story of the invention of the "Post-it Note" (Press and Peel) is evidence of out-of-the-box thinking. Initially, a failed experiment to create a strong adhesive led to the development of a weak one. Yet, this "failure" paved the way for creating a product that's indispensable in homes and offices worldwide.

The importance of thinking out of the box fosters innovation as in today's fast-paced world, innovation is the cornerstone of success. Organisations like Apple, Tesla, and Google are pioneers because they challenge norms and embrace creative ideas. It solves complex problems like conventional approaches don't always work, especially when faced with unprecedented challenges. Thinking creatively often uncovers solutions that were previously overlooked and also encourages growth on a personal level, out-of-the-box thinking broadens horizons, nurtures curiosity, and leads to self-improvement, etc...

We can cultivate an out-of-the-box mindset, by questioning and challenging assumptions. Instead of asking "Why is it done this way?" ask "What if it were done differently?" This shift in perspective often sparks innovation. It is said curiosity fuels creativity. We can learn from different fields, read widely, and seek inspiration from unexpected sources. It is an opportunity to collaborate with diverse minds and foster unconventional thinking. While out-of-the-box ideas often involve taking risks. Engaging in brainstorming sessions, mind mapping, or even daydreaming is a practice of creative exercises.

To boost we have examples of out of the box thinking like the:

Wright Brothers: While others were focused on improving ground-based transportation, they dreamed of flying. A beautiful sight to behold the museum in Bangalore. Their unconventional thinking gave us aviation.

Netflix: By shifting from DVD rentals to streaming, Netflix revolutionised the entertainment industry, becoming a global phenomenon.

Elon Musk's SpaceX: Instead of accepting the high costs of space exploration, Musk's team developed reusable rockets, reducing costs and redefining the future of space travel.

While thinking out of the box is essential, it isn't always easy. It demands courage, resilience and openness to criticism. Society often resists change, and unconventional ideas may initially face cynicism. However, history has shown us that persistence and belief in one's vision can overcome these challenges.

So, thinking out of the box is not a skill reserved for a select few, it's a mindset that anyone can develop with practice. In a rapidly changing world, the ability to innovate and adapt is more valuable than ever. Whether you're solving a personal challenge, contributing to your organisation, or striving for global impact, the greatest breakthroughs often begin with a simple question "What if?"

## Clogged toilets in A-I flight

This is in reference to the news report 'Clogged toilets force A-I flight to return to Chicago' appearing in O Herald edition dated March 12, 2025.

How much more bizarre can it get, clogged toilets forcing an Air India Delhi-bound flight to turn back to Chicago after being airborne for more than 10 hours.

According to the report, polythene bags, rags and clothes have been flushed down the toilets. How could anybody do such a thing?

Possibly they may be used to doing such things back home as well. So it seems like our air travellers have a lot of wealth, but their brains are clogged.

How else does one explain such acts on their part? This is certainly unpardonable, unacceptable behaviour. Will the flight attendants now have to monitor and check each passenger visiting the toilet to check what he or she takes into the toilet? Do they understand only the language of the whip? Disgusting scenario indeed!

Melville X D'Souza, Mumbai

## 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.

## Web of black magic

The recent murder of a five-year-old child at Usgao with the accused confessing to sacrificing the child based on the advice of an occult practitioner reveals an alarming number of websites openly offering black magic and Vashikaran services in Goa.

People are vulnerable and fall for this disgusting scam. This is because these people are greedy and think the so-called babas would suggest to them some shortcut to success.

In an era of technological advancement and scientific progress, many people still resort to black magic and believe in superstitions. Strictly avoid believing in black magic which is not scientifically proved. Even some families have ruined their life due to such disgusting beliefs. The person who is practicing black magic will eventually receive it back a hundred fold. This is the law of karma. Unless there is a change in

people's mindset, these practices would continue. If the executive is serious about curbing such practices, implementation and enforcement of laws need to be made more effective.

K G Vilop, Chorao

## Free trade regime- The best way forward

Is it possible that leaders of the world will resort to logic and reason to tame high inflation, cost of living and tension by bilaterally and multilaterally resorting to stopping of wars in a fair and equitable manner, lifting sanctions and easing tariffs to allow the world to enter a new phase of freer trading which will benefit the world?

Ideally, a global free trade regime would be the best way forward. Countries like the United States, China, the European Union, Russia, Canada, India and Mexico should resort to intense dialogue to sort out the

issue of tariffs and customs duty so that prices of manufactured goods, services will considerably reduce.

For example, the United States could buy cheaper Chinese steel and manufacture goods that would be competitive even to export to China making use of its better technology that would make it possible to sell US goods which would be attractive as far as quality and with a greater technological edge. Also, tensions should be reined in with Iran with respect to its nuclear programme so as to reduce the chances of a conflict which could spell division and doom for the world.

World leaders should transform into men and women of goodwill to lead to a world wherein each and every soul is provided for adequately.

Elected representatives are bound to protect those who elect them. With mutual agreement, all problems can be resolved.

Elvidio Miranda, Panjim

## Congrats Team India

Team India has secured the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy, beating New Zealand by four wickets in the final in Dubai. This is the third time they have won the competition. The entire Indian team performed well to take the title home.

Skipper Rohit Sharma played a crucial role, scoring 76 runs to guide his team to the title. However, the spin department of India was on top.

New Zealand also deserves recognition for their impressive performances throughout this tournament, particularly in the semi-finals against South Africa, where they secured a 50-run victory. Other teams can draw valuable lessons from these two sides and work on improving their weaknesses to come back stronger in future competitions.

India's spectacular victory in the Champions Trophy is a testament to the team's disciplined performance, strategic gameplay and sportsmanship. Their victory is a testament to the team's disciplined performance, strategic gameplay and sportsmanship.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai