

O HERALDO

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The illusion of peace

In the murky waters of global diplomacy, the recent phone call between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin seemed, at first glance, like a breakthrough. Putin's agreement to halt attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure was swiftly hailed as a sign of progress. But beneath the surface, the reality is far more sobering — the ceasefire remains elusive, the conditions imposed by Russia are unrealistic, and the war machine grinds on relentlessly.

For three years, Ukraine has withstood the brutal assault of Russian aggression. Millions have been displaced, thousands killed, and the country's infrastructure systematically dismantled. The latest turn of events underscores a grim truth: while the diplomatic theatre may change, the underlying conflict remains as entrenched as ever.

Putin's promise to stop attacking Ukraine's power facilities is a temporary gesture, not a genuine step toward peace. Russia's demand that Ukraine cease receiving foreign aid and intelligence as a condition for a broader ceasefire is not only unreasonable but strategically impossible. Ukraine's survival hinges on the support of its Western allies. To cut off that lifeline would be akin to

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surrender — something Kyiv cannot afford and its allies cannot morally justify.

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The phone call between Trump and Putin is a remarkable shift from the hardline stance the US took just a week ago. Trump's effort to broker a 30-day ceasefire in Saudi Arabia failed because Putin rejected it outright. Instead of securing peace, Trump has settled for a symbolic gesture — a temporary halt to attacks on energy infrastructure — that Russia can revoke at any time.

Trump may present this as a diplomatic victory, but the facts tell a different story. Russia continues its drone attacks and missile strikes on Ukrainian cities. Hours after the phone call, Russian airstrikes targeted a hospital in Sumy, leaving civilians dead and injured. In retaliation, Ukraine struck an oil depot in southern Russia, setting off a massive fire that spread across 20 square kilometres. If this is peace, it's an awfully violent one.

The Kremlin's carefully worded 500-word statement following the phone call reads like a propaganda exercise. It highlights the two leaders discussing ice hockey — an attempt to humanize the encounter and create an illusion of warmth. But there's nothing warm about a war that has reduced Ukrainian cities to rubble and forced millions to flee their homes.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has remained steadfast in his refusal to accept Putin's terms. While open to halting attacks on energy infrastructure, he has made it clear that Ukraine will not agree to any deal that weakens its security or compromises its sovereignty. His position is justified. The idea that Ukraine should stop defending itself while Russia continues its military operations is absurd.

Zelensky understands that any ceasefire without binding guarantees is simply a chance for Russia to regroup and launch a fresh assault. The fact that Russia is demanding Ukraine cut off ties with its Western allies is proof that Moscow's real goal is not peace — it's domination.

Trump's attempt to position himself as a peacemaker faces a harsh reality check. His declaration that he could "stop the terrible war" now rings hollow. Russia remains defiant, Ukraine remains vulnerable, and the conflict remains unresolved. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has already found Putin guilty of war crimes — yet here he is, dictating terms and setting conditions.

American diplomacy appears weak and fractured. Trump's willingness to engage with Putin without securing any concrete concessions risks emboldening Russia. If the US settles for a half-baked deal that favours Russia, it will not only damage Ukraine's prospects for peace but also weaken America's standing on the global stage.

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Let us continue to pray for peace, especially in the countries wounded by war: tormented Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Myanmar, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

One of the best pieces of advice I got was from my Guru 'Go slow to go fast.' Rushing leads to mistakes. Do things calmly and carefully, and you'll finish quicker—with less stress.

comment



MARIAN PINHEIRO

Tangential implementation of NEP 2020 in Goa

The process of implementation of NEP 2020 in Goa is a typical illustration of how politics and politicians can destroy, dismember and lay to waste things which are beautiful and beneficial.

They annihilated the beautiful environment of Goa and the green cover of the State, by misuse and abuse of the Town and Country Planning Act. Looks like, after the mining and tourism debacle, Education seems to be the next target of destruction.

The New Education Policy 2020 has some well thought out ideas and policies but calling it a perfect plan may be a political euphemism. However, it's a policy plan purported to be prepared by experts and therefore needs respectful consideration.

The NEP 2020 is said to be founded on the five guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability, to prepare youth to meet the diverse national and global challenges. It fosters a multidisciplinary, student-centered approach that encourages creativity, critical thinking and lifelong learning, while also ensuring inclusivity and equity.

The Policy statement highlights that "The teacher must be at the center of the fundamental reforms in the education system. The New Education Policy must help re-establish teachers at all levels, as the most respected and essential members of our society because they truly shape our next generation of citizens."

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Yet no efforts have been made to consult the teachers at all levels as to how to implement this idea of all round development, especially skill development. No institution has been consulted or their opinion sought as to how to implement the key areas. Instead of that, the Government chooses to adopt a peripheral approach, the 'dress change' options, with

no change in substance. No efforts are made to recruit sufficient number of teachers for the skill development of students either. The salary of many teachers in Goa, even at the post graduate level is pathetic and less than the minimum wages a manual labourer would earn. There is a stoic silence both by the Union as well as the Goa government as regards the mandatory policy direction at para 26.2 of the policy document.

In order to attain the goal of education with excellence and the corresponding multitude of benefits to this Nation and its economy, this Policy unequivocally endorses and envisions a substantial increase in public investment in education by both the Central government and all State Governments. The Centre and the States will work together to increase the public investment in Education sector to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest. This is considered extremely critical for achieving the high-quality and equitable public education system that is truly needed for India's future economic, social, cultural, intellectual, technological progress and growth". Without fulfilling these basic requirements of the NEP, the efforts by the education department remains mere curtain dressing just to show off? For whom? one wonders!!!

To be true to Goa and the children of the State, it's not enough to carry out a publicity campaign on NEP. Unlike states like UP or Bihar, the parents of children in Goa are mostly educated some even highly and professionally and are well aware what are the future needs of education and how education could navigate their children to a successful career and a happy life. They need true and dedicated transformation in Education, not just make them same as children from other states but make them competent and competitive; to face the challenges the world offers in their career search.

Goans are looking for that kind of expertise and transformation, therefore some of those recommendations of NEP are neither relevant to Goa nor are they of any use to the children. Some recommendations are indeed not just useful but needed in the emerging world of technology. Goans should be equipped by the

government and provided with required infrastructure, trained and competent teachers, ensuring fair wages and proper service conditions to teachers. This is precisely the government's responsibility in education, certainly not to tinker with day today teaching or subject content or the manner of teaching. These fields should be left to the experts and to those teachers, who have dedicated their lives to training students under their care. What is required is not a top to down model of planning but a down to top kind of planning for effective and true implementation of NEP.

What is required is encouragement and finances to educational institutions in Goa, to discuss, deliberate, debate, by seminars, symposiums and workshops to critically consider every aspect of the NEP and provide suggestions and recommendations by teachers and Institutions as to what all would benefit Goa and its children and what are the best ways to implement them and how and when.

With such proper and purpose-oriented consultation, definitely some very useful and practical ideas will emerge, which could be easily implemented as they will be automatically accepted. Merely getting some so-called experts who merely eulogise NEP, just to please the political bosses and calling it a training programme is all, an eye wash. If the government is genuinely interested in improving the quality of education in Goa, the methodology and process have to be different and pragmatic, without which government meddling in education is not only going to harm the education in Goa but irreparably damage the future of our children. The world is becoming more and more competitive and meddling with the future of children for political purpose is not just mean but dangerous and will have huge repercussions.

It will be a worthwhile exercise for the Education department to ask itself, whether the changes so far recommended by them or adopted by them, will they, in any way, improve the quality of education in Goa? If not, why such an exercise?

(The writer is a Professor of Law & an education consultant)

March 31 deadline for Smart city work

It is learnt that contractors of Panaji Smart City work are excavating roads at sporadic locations in the capital city on which claims were made that all work was completed and a fresh black-top carpet laid. Meanwhile with the March 31 deadline pledged by the Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited (IPSDCL) before the High Court fast approaching, contractors are reportedly with their backs to the wall to finish all the projects, especially the tail-end stretch where the entire city's sewerage network converges.

However, looking at past delays, it's hard to believe that the deadline will be met. Roads are being dug, paved and then dug up again ostensibly for some other work. All this extra work could have been avoided with proper planning. There have been multiple missed deadlines and widespread public frustration over the slow pace of the project.

Traffic snarls have become a daily occurrence, particularly after working hours. Some vehicles are even seen violating no-entry zones, further exacerbating the congestion. Despite many roads being designated as pay-parking areas, there is simply no space for parking, leaving motorists frustrated.

The rainy season is not too far

letterstotheeditor

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away. If the work is not completed in its totality before the pre-monsoon showers, there could be further delays and the work may have to be halted due to the rains. This will further escalate the inconvenience caused to the residents, business community and visitors to the capital city.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Empower police to dispense justice

The polarisation of our nation via majoritism is relentless. The recent Nagpur riots over Aurangzeb who existed more than three decades ago and his ASI classified tomb was manufactured by politicians and vested interests to keep the hate pot boiling! Streets historically named must be changed etc and in this case a remark by a politician that no one agrees with, a movie Chhava (not a documentary) on the life of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj and communally loaded remarks made it a national issue!

A FIR was filed against the VHP secretary in charge of Maharashtra and Goa and others but no arrests made. Violence erupted in Nagpur during a VHP agitation. They wanted the tomb destroyed like the

Babri Masjid and FIRs were filed against the Bagrang Dal, VHP and others after violent riots where scores of policemen were injured, vehicles and property burnt/damaged, stone pelting, outsiders involved clearly shows administrative and police failure!

If this was a pre-planned conspiracy as now alleged, why was there no intelligence and preventive action taken? Curfew has now been imposed and security forces are patrolling. It is reported that more than 50 persons have been arrested! This state of affairs is bad for business, law and order, peace and damages the democracy we are so proud of having in our country! It is high time Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Mohan Bhagwat of the RSS rein in the over zealous politicians, fringe arms of the BJP and empower the police to dispense equitable justice. The Opposition and minorities will reciprocate, so trust is built by deeds. The world is watching India!

John Eric Gomes, Porvorim

Edu sector plagued with scandals

The allegations that an assistant professor of Goa University alleg-

edly stole a question paper to help a female student secure high marks in the examination is shocking. The University had not taken any action despite knowing that the paper was leaked. Perhaps this shows that he has acted in connivance with other politicians and officer of the Goa University, to facilitate the same, for illegal benefits received by him directly or indirectly. The theft of the paper amounted to injustice to several other students who had appeared for the examination. Such issues raise critical questions about corruption and favouritism within academic institutions. It is a stark reminder of the importance of maintaining academic integrity and fairness in educational settings.

The education sector, particularly universities has been plagued by scandals impacting the integrity of the system and the future of students.

India's examination system is in chaos. To be sure, cheating and paper leaks have long plagued exams. The universities are playing with the future of students. While policies and regulations aim to ensure quality and accessibility, the ground reality paints a different picture. These issues highlight the irregularities in the system.

K G Vilop, Chorao

people'sedit

GOA GROWING TO UNBORN TOMORROW FROM DEAD YESTERDAY

JOSEPH LEWIS D'SILVA

A local person once told me a biblical story: According to the Bible, at first, the people of the whole world had only one language; as they wandered about and settled in Babylonia, they started building a tower to reach heavens, desiring fame and power. Seeing their arrogance, God confused their language and they could not understand one another. So, they stopped building the tower. (Gen11: 1-9).

Similarly, Goa was known the world over as a prime example of Communal Harmony. Its strength lay in its diversity and the capacity of its people to coexist peacefully. It was a true 'Garden of Eden' full of greenery and hillocks; Rome of the East' with Churches dotted all over the place. It was Paradise on Earth'. Here, our ancestors had built their homes with their sweat and blood; they manually cultivated their fields painstakingly, which provided them a square meal. These cherished, past identities are fading.

Of course, nothing ever remains the same. Goa is not exception. Goa's yesterdays' peace and serenity are almost dead and gone. Now, Goa is growing, to unborn tomorrow. Its modern days, are often associated with sex tourism, drug abuse and rising crime rates. Law and order situation is deteriorating. Its golden sands, its virgin beaches --- are turning into killers, looters, thieves, robbers, burglars, attackers. Goa's tropical paradise is transforming into a blood drenched battleground.

Goa's religious harmony, is collapsing. Goa was the symbol of unity in diversity. Goa was a great melting pot of cultures and faiths where Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and others lived in sharing lives and festivals. Now, it is changing with man-made problems; divisive forces are anxiously waiting for an opportunity to disturb the long existing peace and communal harmony with insults that hurt the sentiments of Religious community.

The real estate lobby convert Goa's green fields into concrete jungles to reap rich harvest through multi housing complexes. The very existence of Goa's dwelling houses are under threat due to modern development; coal transportation by trains and a concrete jungle of flats, bungalows and swimming pools. The rush-hour traffic of rail-roads and motorways shake Goa's, old, fragile homes and cause dust pollution.

The natural scenic beauty of Goa is dwindling; hills-mountains, rivers-lakes and water bodies, have been disappearing. The very charm that once made it a global attraction is rapidly fading; garbage is scattered in streets; out landscapes which was once-pristine environment is stinking with wet and dry trash.

Goa was epitome of peace. Now, it has been shattered by greedy politicians with anti-social policies, which have encouraged outsiders to pour in for work, leisure and pleasure; thus the menace of drugs, gang-wars and prostitution have mushroomed. A few individuals, encourage gambling; a small number usher casinos which destroys families.

Goa will not be destroyed by those who plot and plan to rape her; but by those who stand and stare in silent tolerance as philosophers; dreaming like Nero playing the fiddle while Rome was burning. God, has seen what is happening to Goa. Just as the people who were building the tower to reach heaven and God mixed their language, similarly, nature is reacting to Goa's destruction with 'rising temperature, environmental degradation and social unrest; that are warning signs of the damage we have caused. Now, wild animals stray from their forest and move closer to human habit, in search of its prey; after all the right to live is not a prerogative of human beings. It applies to animals as well.

But Goa still maintains significant cultural harmony despite rising tensions. We have to protect and conserve Goa; re-wind Goa and re-build a green, balanced, organic Goa. God save Goa. God save Goans.

Riots in Nagpur

A dispassionate assessment would reveal that ever since the BJP came to power in 2014, India is witnessing frequent communal and religious flare-ups including lynching of people, most of the time innocent public by the so called cow vigilantes and the criminals also escape from the long arms of law.

The latest to be added to this list is the riots and arson that followed the unapproved procession and protest taken out by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal demanding the removal of Aurangzeb's tomb in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar district of Maharashtra and the protesters burning an effigy resulting in grievous injuries to many, stone throwing, rioting and torching of vehicles.

That Chief Minister Fadnavis called the attack 'planned and premeditated' which was also confirmed by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde leaves one with the question why the Home department has failed to gauge the situation well in advance and stall the riots on time! Nagpur, the epicentre of the present riots and violence is also where the head quarters of the RSS too is situated is also a case in point.

One only hopes that such religious riots are nipped in the bud and never allowed to spread to others parts of the country where too monuments of the past rulers remain.

Tharcus S Fernando, Chennai