

## O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Nurture nature  
back to  
health first

A slight drop in mercury has brought a wave of relief to the sunshine state which was reeling under the wrath of the summer heat since late February and early March. The humidity too was particularly stifling recently, amplifying discomfort and even causing heat strokes in some people.

Hospitals across the state also said they saw a marked rise in ailments triggered by the heat wave. These included nausea, palpitations, fatigue, muscular cramps, and even fainting due to increased sweating. Doctors' doled out the same, sound advice: Hydrate with water, wear cotton and linen clothes, eat fresh fruits and vegetables, and avoid venturing outside without a head cover or an umbrella.

The crux of the situation, however, is being missed... that of climate change and the direct impact it has on health. Until five or six years ago, warnings of rapid climate change were largely dismissed as propaganda, with many powerful governments around the world claiming that its effects would not be as devastating as made out to be by already alarmed experts. Meanwhile, here in Goa, the bulk of the population was in the throes of the 'not in my backyard' syndrome, which meant that citizens and the government alike breathed easy because they assumed that climate change was affecting the rest of the world and country, and not them specifically.

**Apart from damaging property and disrupting the schedules of agriculture and even tourism, weather vagaries eventually brought with them a slew of health conditions**

As a result, life continued as usual. Hills were scalped of their forest cover, water bodies were either filled up with rubble or polluted, and the air was laden with dangerous emissions and mineral dust. Gradually, summers began getting hotter, monsoons became heavier and featured a spate of unseasonal rain, and cyclones brewed in the ocean more regularly than usual.

Apart from damaging property and disrupting the schedules of agriculture and even tourism, weather vagaries eventually brought with them a slew of health conditions. Suddenly, the common cold became all too common and even worsened into flu and other serious respiratory tract infections, several cases of electrolyte imbalance surfaced and even urinary tract infections became more frequent.

If this trend continues, it will put undue pressure on the state's healthcare network. Haunting memories of the struggles and despairs Goa endured during the Covid-19 pandemic are all too fresh in the minds of the people, which is why no one would normally want to put themselves in such a precarious situation ever again.

How do we ensure this? First, it is imperative that we take care of nature if we would like nature to take care of us. The fact that February 2025 witnessed sweltering temperatures and Goa and Maharashtra became the first states to report a heatwave in 2025, is nothing short of alarming.

Doctors have already been sounding alarm bells regarding the effects Goa's climate can have on health. Because it is already a relatively more humid state, excessive sweating is expected. But when the humidity is way above normal, electrolyte and fluid imbalances in the body can be more serious than generally perceived. Medical practitioners say that something as common as diarrhoea can pose a great risk of acute kidney injury if dehydration in the patient is not treated immediately. Then there is also the fear of life-threatening diseases like cholera, typhoid and hepatitis breaking out due to accelerated food and water contamination during extremely hot weather periods.

It is obvious that apart from staying indoors and keeping ourselves hydrated to stay away from diseases, it would be in the best interests of ourselves and the state itself if each one of us, starting with the government, took proactive steps to nurse nature back to health first. Planting more trees can no longer be considered rhetoric. It is now a necessity.

Also, the government should seriously consider tweaking its legislations, particularly where conserving green cover and regulating construction activities are concerned. Now is not the time to allow the mushrooming of mega projects and hacking of trees willy-nilly in exchange for briefcases of currency and other such temporary gains when life itself, as we know it, hangs in the balance.

The government and its ministers should snap out of their myopia and see the larger picture if they are truly keen on being at the forefront of ensuring the health and longevity of all. The heat is already on.

## comment



BLAISE COSTABIR

**Goa is often perceived as the El Dorado of India, especially for migrant labour in search of employment opportunities in the manufacturing, fishing and tourism sectors. This trend reflects a rising need for rental accommodations, leading to the construction of unauthorised dwellings for residential purposes**



The unmistakable indicators of an illegal construction commencing become glaringly apparent; initially, debris will be deposited to elevate the ground to the level of the road, followed by the emergence of a provisional structure under the noses of the authorities. Water and electricity connections are

Encroachments:  
The elephant is still  
in the room

In July 2021, I wrote 'The recent demolition of the encroachments in the area outside GMC opened a Pandora's box', that put the spotlight on the proverbial, ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM, that authorities cannot see. We will soon see all the structures back in place in a few days. That is the nature of our approach to illegalities, eyes wide open but seeing nothing'.

If you were to explore the GMC area today, you would witness the realisation of these predictions. The encroachments have been officially sanctioned. The entirety of the area and beyond has been encroached upon. This pattern persists throughout Goa - encroach-legalise-encroach.

We have regressed to square one in 2025, and this time the High Court mandate concerning illegal constructions has brought to light a more pressing concern. It is not solely unauthorised makeshift structures, but rather unlawful edifices for commercial or residential purposes encroaching upon open spaces, no-development zones, paddy fields, areas designated for road widening, Government or comunidade lands, and the like. Wherever a space exists, an illegal construction or business seems to take root.

We need to determine whether parking constitutes an encroachment, particularly in light of the road widening projects that have been undertaken. These initiatives often involved the removal of trees, reduction of house frontages and loss of garden space. However, upon completion of the widening process, the newly available space is predominantly occupied by vehicles such as cars, rental cars, buses, and trucks. Consequently, the effective width of the road remains unchanged. This raises the question of the initial purpose behind the road expansion - was it primarily for parking facilitation or to accommodate the escalating traffic flow? Such a scenario prompts reflection on the fairness to the residents who willingly relinquished their land under the assurance that the road widening would serve the common good.

secured easily, even though fully legitimate requests face challenges for the same. The initial commercial establishments typically involve a marble dealership, a greenhouse vending plants, or a garage, among other entrepreneurial endeavours. This initiates the process for a comprehensive construction project in a brief period of time.

Will this judicial order prevent the Government from legitimising encroachments/illegal constructions on government land, comunidade land, etc., in exchange for political support during elections? The rationale is evident: the encroachers have made investments that must be safeguarded. In a separate ruling in 2021, the High Court questioned the authorisation of new encroachments while issuing notices to long-standing encroachments. It also challenged the legitimacy of officials who fail to uphold the law. In the 2025 ruling addressing the same issue, the High Court has stipulated that health officers are prohibited from granting permissions under the Goa Public Health Act if the applicant lacks all necessary construction permits. Consequently, this will prevent the provision of water and electricity connections. Good move for sure.

The Court has mandated the Government to establish a dedicated hotline for an expedited response unit. Grievances can be lodged through this contact number and the authorities are required to promptly intervene to stop any unauthorised construction activities. This effectively serves as a warning to the Municipality and Panchayat administration, compelling them to oversee this matter vigilantly. The contentious issue at hand is whether the individuals responsible for turning a blind eye or aiding in illegal constructions by granting unwarranted permissions will be held liable. Will government officials face disciplinary measures, termination for neglecting their duties, or financial penalties? The absence of consequences would signify a continuation of the status quo.

The individual who lodges a complaint with the flying squad, what safeguards will they receive? We can recall how those who reported traffic violations on the 'sentinel app' of the Government of Goa were assaulted because they reported offenders. Later, the Government issued guidelines protecting them. Similarly, when notifying the flying squad numbers, the Government must issue guidelines and regulations to safeguard the informants.

The court seemed to believe that mobile enforcement teams could be operational during weekends when unauthorised builders are active since government offices are shut. However, this assumption is not entirely accurate; the majority of illegal constructions emerge right under the noses of those

in power. Nonetheless, having a designated contact number to report violations along with providing photographic evidence would compel the officials to fulfil their responsibilities diligently and justify their remuneration.

Goa is often perceived as the El Dorado of India, especially for migrant labour in search of employment opportunities in the manufacturing, fishing and tourism sectors. This trend reflects a rising need for rental accommodations, leading to the construction of unauthorised dwellings for residential purposes. In essence, individuals are profiting from renting out these illegal structures whilst leisurely seated in a rocking chair. Typically lacking proper sanitation facilities, these constructions result in residents of such illegal settlements discarding their waste along the roadside.

This issue must be addressed urgently as these illegal settlements are encroaching upon Goan villages and altering their demographics and essence. Based on this address, residents obtain ration cards, aadhaar cards, voters' cards, etc. These inhabitants then form the vote bank. The attraction of securing a vote bank motivates politicians or those with political inclinations to promote illicit construction as it not only yields financial gains but also political influence.

We must uphold a stance of 'ABSOLUTE INTOLERANCE' towards any encroachments in any shape or form. There should be no provision for regularisation, as it only serves to incentivise further encroachments and functions as a tactic for securing votes, especially in our current political landscape where vote banks hold significant sway over electoral outcomes. To achieve this, it is imperative that we hold the authorities responsible for unlawful constructions, as only when they are held accountable will they cease to heed the directives of political leaders who refrain from issuing such instructions in documented form. Another crucial aspect is that once an illegality is pinpointed, it must be rectified without exception, rather than being legitimised through regularisation.

The High Court has acknowledged the severity of the situation and the detrimental impact these unauthorised constructions have on Goa and its residents. The elephant in the room has once again been brought to light, emphasising the imperative for authorities to prioritise the well-being of Goa and ensure that the perception of Goa as a lenient State where unlawful activities are tolerated is eradicated. Upholding the rule of law should take precedence over individual authority, safeguarding the integrity of the legal system.

*(The author prefers to write rather than chat in a balcao)*

## people'sedit

SUNITA WILLIAMS  
RETURNS:  
A MISSION  
ACCOMPLISHED

BY C S KRISHNAMURTHY

The successful return of Sunita Williams and her fellow astronauts after an extensive 286-day mission in space, marks yet another milestone in human space exploration. Their journey, which started as an eight-day mission aboard the space station and extended to an extraordinary nine-month sojourn, stands as a testament to human resilience, scientific ambition and the unyielding pursuit of knowledge. Their safe landing is not merely a personal triumph but a celebration of the collective expertise of scientists, engineers, and space agencies, most notably NASA, in advancing human spaceflight.

Sunita Williams, a veteran astronaut with a distinguished record of spaceflights and record-breaking extravehicular activities, has once again demonstrated her exceptional capabilities. Her previous missions to the International Space Station (ISS) solidified her reputation, and this latest expedition further accentuates her legacy. This mission, in particular, was of profound significance, involving an extended duration in space that tested human endurance and the robustness of cutting-edge spacecraft systems. Her leadership, composure under pressure, and steadfast commitment played a pivotal role in ensuring mission success.

Accompanying Williams were three equally remarkable astronauts, each bringing specialised expertise in engineering, biology, and astrophysics. Their contributions facilitated critical research, including studies on the effects of microgravity on the human body and the evaluation of advanced space technologies. Their prolonged stay in space was instrumental in scientific inquiry and the preparation for future deep-space missions, particularly those concerning Mars exploration.

Despite the uncertainties surrounding their return, the crew remained unwavering in their mission. Through meticulous experimentation and technological assessments, they significantly advanced the understanding of long-duration spaceflight. Their work has paved the way for future generations of explorers, reinforcing the necessity of sustained research and development in space science. Each crew member played a crucial role in fulfilling scientific objectives, and their seamless coordination with ground teams underscored the importance of international collaboration in space endeavours.

NASA's role in this mission was nothing short of exemplary. The agency's precision planning, engineering prowess, and problem-solving capabilities ensured the astronauts' safety and mission efficacy. From continuous life-support monitoring to resolving unexpected technical anomalies, NASA's mission control teams exhibited relentless dedication, highlighting the expertise and commitment that underpin human space exploration.

Moreover, this mission reaffirmed the significance of global cooperation. The astronauts worked in tandem with international space agencies, exemplifying unity in the face of formidable challenges. Their safe return is not solely a national victory but a triumph for the entire global scientific community invested in space exploration.

As we celebrate their remarkable achievements, we are reminded of the boundless potential of human ingenuity. Their return symbolises hope and inspiration, demonstrating that through perseverance and collaboration, we can transcend limitations and expand the horizons of human knowledge. It is a powerful reminder that the sky is not the limit but merely the beginning. Their mission compels us to reflect on how far we have come and how much further we can venture in our collective quest to explore the cosmos.

The safe return of these astronauts also underscores the imperative for continued investment in space research and the necessity of international cooperation in pushing the boundaries of human understanding. As humanity sets its sights on deeper space missions, the bravery and accomplishments of Sunita Williams and her crew serve as guiding beacons for the future of space exploration.

In another shocking incident, a group of tourists was involved in a late-night brawl with locals after a drunken driving dispute, creating chaos in the area. Such incidents not only endanger lives but also disrupt the peaceful environment of Calangute.

The growing issue of reckless driving by tourists in Calangute is putting lives at risk. Many visitors, unfamiliar with local traffic rules, speed through narrow roads, drive under the influence, and ignore safety measures like helmets. This has led to frequent accidents, endangering both locals and other tourists. Authorities must enforce stricter traffic rules, increase patrolling, and impose heavier fines on violators. Rental agencies should also ensure tourists are aware of road safety before handing over vehicles. Calangute's charm should not come at the cost of safety. Urgent action is needed to curb this menace.

Asten D'Souza, Calangute

## letterstotheeditor

For letters to the editor contact us at editor@herald-goia.com.

All letters must contain correct postal address and telephone number. Letters are liable to be edited for brevity.

Safe return of  
Sunita and Butch

Everybody heaved a sigh of relief when Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore returned safely from the space where they were stranded for 268 days and their survival/safe return to the earth became a big question mark.

Elon Musk who rose to the occasion and organised to bring back Sunita and Butch safely in his Space X Crew Dragon Spacecraft deserves all appreciation and accolades. The mental strength, stoicism and optimism shown by the stranded astronauts are unmatched and worthy of emulation by the other astronauts who would be venturing into the space odyssey and travel to the moon and other planets in future. NASA and

other space agencies like ISRO have a lot to learn from the travails of Sunita and Butch and the contingency plans in case of any technical failures of their space ships.

Tharcus S Fernando, Chennai

Need to curb  
reckless driving

One of Goa's most popular tourist destinations has recently witnessed a disturbing rise in reckless driving incidents. Several cases of hit-and-run accidents, road rage, and even violent altercations have been reported, raising serious concerns among locals. Just last month, a tourist driving a rented scooter carelessly rammed into a pedestrian near Baga junction and fled the scene, leaving the victim injured.

Minors also involved  
in drug trade in Goa

Recently in the biggest catch in its history, the Goa police reportedly seized drugs worth Rs 11.6 crore and arrested a 23-year-old Bengaluru resident. It is learnt that on an average, one person was arrested in Goa in connection with a narcotics case every second day in 2024. Of the 188 persons arrested possessing narcotic substances, 54 were Goans.

Over the past few years several women have also been arrested for possessing drugs. But what has come as a shocker is that minors are also involved in drug-related crimes. The other day, a 15-year-old boy was apprehended by the Konkarn Railway police with 8.184 kg of ganja at the Margao Railway Station. The minor boy was later produced before the Juvenile Justice Board for appropriate legal action.

With so many drug seizures, Goa has probably become a ma-

for conduit, a trading point and a hub for the international drug trade. Kudos to the Goa police, crime branch and all officials involved in apprehending the culprits. However, much more needs to be done in order to strengthen intelligence networks, enhance surveillance and crack down on drug-related crimes to safeguard our youths and society. The rise in seizures is not just a point of success for authority. It is also a warning sign of how seriously Goa has sunk into the drug trade quicksand. Authorities involved in investigating and acting against the international and national drug lobby operating directly or through agents in Goa have reportedly absolutely no doubt that Goa has become the focal point of psychotropic drugs.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

## Twitter World

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra  
@priyankagandhi

Tarun Gautam  
@TARUNspeaks

The cold blooded murder of over 400 innocent civilians including 130 children by the Israeli government, shows that humanity means nothing to them. The more criminally the Israeli government acts, the more they reveal themselves for the cowards they truly are.

Aurangzeb died in March, 1707. Maratha Empire ended in 1818. Aurangzeb's grave wasn't destroyed by Marathas despite ruling for 111 more years. If you still think it's about Aurangzeb, you're a fool.

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