

O HERALDO

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Is it downhill for Goa's cashew industry?

If not already apparent, it is now quite clear that Goa's cashew industry, which was once among the state's thriving economic sectors, is quietly fading into oblivion. The reasons for this are many: cut-throat competition from the neighbouring states, cheaper nuts being imported into Goa, and the most concerning: Climate change.

Recently, cashew farmers in the Sattari taluka claimed that production from their plantations dropped by 40-45% in the present season when compared to 2024. This was confirmed by Sattari's zonal agriculture officer, Vishwanath Gawas. They are apprehensive of a cashew drought because of this even as the agriculture department has attributed the drastic decrease in cashew output to extreme heat which, it says, has been affecting pollination.

Blistering heat that swept across Goa towards the end of February and remained more or less constant for a better part of March, also sparked fires that affected a number of cashew plantations. A plantation at Chikne, a village in Bicholim, was among those that was allegedly affected by this phenomenon recently. The plantation was owned by four people and apart from cashew trees, mango, banana and coconut were also cultivated there. The farmers said they racked up at least Rs two lakh in losses. A similar instance of fire at a cashew plantation was also reported at Verla, Canca.

South Goa wasn't spared either. Just a few days after

Several other factors have been seriously impacting the state's cashew industry too: The real estate boom which has led to more and more land being given up for development, thereby shrinking plantation areas, infestation by pests and unscientific methods of farming. Studies indicate that the Goan cashew tree gives an average yield of 1kg, as opposed to 12kg in some countries, and hence, most cashew farms in the state are on the decline

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The state government has been aware of this decline and has begun offering a Rs 10 lakh subsidy for new units in a bid to boost the tottering cashew industry. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant also promised that import of cashew nuts from neighbouring states would be reduced, what with around 500 cashew nut processing units having been established in just a 100km radius from Goa in Karnataka and Maharashtra.

However, the intervention appears to be the bare minimum on the part of the government. If it is keen on not only saving but also resurrecting Goa's once thriving cashew industry, it should take immediate and decisive steps to alleviate the plight of farmers who are still toiling to keep the legacy alive. Offering awareness programmes on better farming practices, coming up with solutions to tackle pest infestations and also keeping specialized teams at hand to douse fires at plantations during the cashew season are some of the measures the government should consider taking.

Goa stands to lose a lot if its prized cashew plantations bite the dust not only due to fires but also due to apathy. It is hoped that the government wakes up and takes action to thwart this before it is too late.

comment



SOTER D'SOUZA

What was once a paradise with a colonial flavour has been lost in the spillover of a crude culture from a 'bimaru' republic



crude culture from a 'bimaru' republic.

The local Konkani language is hardly heard spoken in the marketplaces. The once calm and cozy 'vaddo' has given way to a deculturated and rowdy 'nagar'. The public spaces are flooded with settlers spitting paan, screaming, fly-tipping and squatting as and where they like with merchandise, least bothered about the nuisance caused or hurting sentiments of the locals. Spotting a native Goan in the city crowd is now difficult. For those who have experienced the pre and post liberated Goa of the 20th century, it is no more the paradise with a unique culture which is being showcased to the world.

Goa is reduced to a trash bin for

A paradise lost: How a crude culture is changing Goa

The social and environmental costs of Goa's filthy politics and vulgar tourism are now showing. The Government has been taking offence to the bad publicity given to Goa by social media influencers. But what is being cleverly evaded is how many of these reviews are reasonable or exaggerated. In an era of Artificial Intelligence, for how long will Goa be able to defend a lie as the truth by resorting to dark marketing tactics?

The face of Goa has been disfigured with flyovers and other ugly grey monsters dirtying the landscape. With a demographic change sweeping the State, the traditional 'patrao' and 'bhathkar' have almost vanished. What the paradise is witnessing is migrant invasion, which is far from respectful of or contributing any positive value addition to the traditional culture; a covert cultural colonization. It is the 'setji' and 'saab' who now determine the social, political and economic future of Goa. The welcoming and hospitable social atmosphere - of what was once a paradise with a colonial flavour - has been lost in the spillover of

the promised paradise of the right wing forces would look like.

Amidst all this turmoil is a growing mental health crisis. What we are increasingly being confronted with in our institutions and on the streets are antisocial behaviours which are normalised. Whether it is political corruption, drugs, dangerous driving, land scams, sound and air pollution, hate brigades, fake news and the rest of the public nuisance, all these are fuelled by an antisocial mindset which lacks concern for the rights of others and is devoid of any regret or remorse. Such anti-social patterns of behaviour are even celebrated as signs of a dynamic political leadership.

A community which has been mentally enslaved by abusive and exploitative systems in religion and politics over a period of time cannot recognise the normal from the abnormal, and abusive behaviour from healthy behaviour. The 'Ahimsa' and 'Satyagraha' mindset which won us our freedom from colonial rule is now overtaken by a psychopathic mentality that is at war with truth and reason. The political circus with statues, foods and religious sentiments has become a smoke screen for an emerging anti-social class to legitimize its lawlessness under a banner of nationalism.

Both public health and public security are now the last priority for a toxic political regime which is obsessed with power and economic progress irrespective of the costs. The intoxication of Goans from a nostalgia of the past and preoccupation with festivals and feasting has resulted in a democracy which exists only on paper. This paradise is handed over to merchants who work for investors and get endorsed by consumers every five years.

At least for now, the consumers of such politics seem content with their religiosity of showing their other cheek when slapped on one and forgive the betrayers seventy times seven, to enjoy those crumbs thrown their way from destructive governance.

(The author has worked with community initiatives related to Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention, HIV/AIDs Prevention, Panchayati Raj, Anti-Corruption, Environment Protection and Social Justice)

Case of missing files in Municipalities

Deputy Speaker and Mapusa MLA has reportedly lodged a complaint with the Mapusa police over the increased incidents of missing files and alleged mismanagement of the Municipal Council. It is learnt that several files related to public works have disappeared from the municipal office and in many cases citizens were forced to submit duplicate documents to get their work done.

Such episodes of files going missing is not restricted to only the Mapusa Municipal Council but is also witnessed in other civic bodies across the state. Last year the frequent disappearance of important files and citizens' records from the Margao Municipality had raised serious concerns about the civic body's administrative efficiency and accountability. Such lapses need to be addressed in order to restore public confidence in the civic administration.

In the past, there have been several cases wherein even important files from the office had gone missing. What could be the reason for files going missing in the civic bodies? Is it negligence on the part of the authorities concerned or is it a deliberate attempt to shelve a particular project. Is it due to corruption that is plaguing the particular civic body?

It must be said that once the file is given inward, it becomes the responsibility of the municipal staff. File tracking system plays a critical role in safeguarding important paperwork. People should not be made to come to the municipality several times to get their work done. Such a situation reflects badly on the municipal administration. Dis-

appearance of important files invariably puts spokes in the wheels of development proposed by the municipal bodies and is a matter of grave concern.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Show of strength by Southern states

The excellent manner in which the Fair Delimitation Meeting of the Chief Ministers, Dy Chief Ministers and other leaders of all the Southern states, Punjab and Odisha has been conducted by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin has proved his organising capabilities and his talent to bring all the leaders of the states that are going to be affected by delimitation process if given effect at the format envisaged by the BJP government at the centre under the same roof.

The response to the clarion call made by CM Stalin has been overwhelming looking at the participation of all the leaders invited which included Chief Ministers and Dy Chief Ministers and tall leaders of the respective states.

The deliberations were proactive and pertinent to the issue and all leaders unitedly objected to the efforts made by the BJP government to disrupt the federal set up of our nation through delimitation now proposed by them on the basis of population.

Realising the dangers awaiting all the Southern states and few other states in the North, it was decided in the meeting to suggest to the central government to postpone the delimita-

tion exercise by another 25 years which sounds very reasonable.

However, it is unfortunate that leaders of the TN unit of the BJP like K Annamalai and Tamilisai Soundararajan have objected to the efforts taken by the TN Chief Minister to stall the delimitation process. Does it mean that for them their party is more important than the interest of the people of Tamil Nadu?

Tharcisus S Fernando, Chennai

Commission for senior citizens

Kerala has become the first state in India to pass a law creating a commission for senior citizens. This new commission would focus on protecting the rights, welfare and rehabilitation of the elderly. Today's elderly face a lot of difficulties, including neglect and abuse and in many cases denied safety and peace of mind in the last phase of their lives.

The commission will address the hardships and problems faced by the elderly, including neglect, exploitation, and loneliness. It will be responsible for providing the necessary guidelines to tackle issues faced by the elderly. This initiative worth emulating helps in tackling the challenges of the aged. The commission besides safeguarding the elderly ensures their rehabilitation, legal aid, and social integration. The commission will be playing a vital role in matters related to the aged - advising the government on new welfare programmes for senior citizens, address complaints related to elderly

abuse, denial of rights or violence against them and also provide legal aid through authorised agencies in cases where elderly citizens face rights violations and overall monitoring of the well-being of the elderly. The commission no doubt will act as a saviour to senior citizens.

M Pradyu, Kannur

True wealth is not measured by money

Steve Wozniak, the co-founder of Apple, has always maintained a unique stance on wealth. Unlike many tech giants who chase financial success, Wozniak has openly expressed his dislike for excessive money, believing it can corrupt personal values. In a 2017 interview, he shared that he intentionally distanced himself from wealth to maintain his integrity and principles.

When Apple went public in 1980, Wozniak demonstrated his generosity by giving away \$10 million worth of Apple stock to early employees who had contributed to the company's success. He felt they deserved to benefit from Apple's growth, even if they weren't initially allocated shares. His decision highlighted his belief in fairness and loyalty over financial gain.

Despite being one of the key minds behind Apple's early innovations, Wozniak never sought to amass extreme wealth like his co-founder, Steve Jobs. Instead, he prioritized engineering, education and philanthropy. His actions continue to inspire en-

people's *edit*

NOISE POLLUTION

KSS PILLAI

I have disliked loud noise since my days as a college teacher. I wanted complete silence in class while delivering lectures, but some students, confined to the lecture hall for hours, wished for some relief. They wanted at least to whisper to those beside them. When I sent them out, it seemed like they liked it. I could understand their feelings, as I had behaved the same way when I was in their shoes.

Those who live in Delhi are fortunate that cracker bursting has been banned there, though the air remains so polluted that it is unsuitable for breathing most of the time.

The Diwali season takes the cake, turning into a festival of noise rather than light. Since there is no ban on crackers where I live, children start bursting them days before Diwali. They do it on the road near my bedroom at night, depriving me of sleep. Clenching my teeth, I endure the assault silently.

It seems to be the wedding season year-round. Even poor families spend lavishly on weddings, making them noisy and using filmy music as a form of publicity. The business of renting high-decibel sound systems, DJs, and singers thrives here.

When a pandal comes up nearby, I brace myself for the noise. They keep the music at the highest volume to ensure everyone in the vicinity knows about the wedding. The ear-splitting sound continues until midnight, when they switch it off due to legal restrictions.

I don't protest, as it would be futile and only create enmity. Marriage processions, starting late at night, move at a snail's pace, halting repeatedly. Everyone dances to the blaring music from an accompanying vehicle. I lie on my cot, trying to sleep, cursing them. Since I like fresh air, I keep the windows open while sleeping under the ceiling fan, but the noise forces me to close them and switch on the air conditioner. I spend the night tossing and turning, relieved when the morning light finally enters.

My immediate neighbour's contribution to noise pollution is not minor. An elderly man with a hearing deficiency, he is a cricket enthusiast. He keeps his television volume so high that everyone nearby can hear the commentary. Another irritant is visitors who, assuming all elders are hard of hearing, speak to me loudly—even on the telephone.

There is an airport nearby where aircraft make deafening noises while landing and taking off. Planes flying to distant airports leave long streams of smoke that spread slowly and drone at a low volume. There is also a helipad nearby. When it is used, mainly by politicians, I am assaulted by the loud noise of helicopters. Children rush out, shouting excitedly. Policemen accompany the politicians in their vehicles, their sirens wailing.

My favourite sound is that of flocks of birds flying high to their nests at twilight in battle formation, calling intermittently, mixed with the chimes of temple bells and the call from mosques summoning believers to prayer.

trepreneurs and tech enthusiasts worldwide, proving that success isn't solely measured by money.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulum

Steps to prevent railway stampedes

After the NDA government took over, shrill cries over privatisation of Railways grew in some quarters. When the government opened up new projects and technology for private players, the cries only grew louder. It was believed that privatisation would bring into being a semblance of order in an elephantine public sector unit mired in disorder.

That said, Railways is a huge employment provider and privatisation posed a serious threat to job security and job opportunities. Be that as it may, recent stampedes at different stations called for an urgent action and the Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has announced a slew of measures in that direction.

It is planned to allow only bonafide confirmed ticket holders onto the platforms at 60 important stations and a pilot project is being undertaken at 4 major north Indian stations. Sealing of unauthorised entries, setting up of war rooms and multiple cameras at strategic locations, and appointment of a station director, with full independence to control of ticket sales, are a few other proposed steps.

One problem with the Railways is the issuance of too many tickets and the provision for station director may sort out things. Working on practical implementation of the proposed changes is, however, critical for changes on the ground.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola