

O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Lost voices

The familiar argument of the Opposition, that the ruling party is stifling their voice and obstructing crucial discussions in the House has once again resurfaced. Their complaints are not without merit. The government, through procedural manoeuvring, such as shortening the session under the pretext of the budget, has skilfully dodged difficult questions. Furthermore, the opposition alleges that they are not receiving the full time allocated by the Business Advisory Committee. While these claims hold truth, the underlying issue is not just government interference, the Opposition itself is failing to present a united and effective front.

Despite initial efforts to strategise before the session, the opposition has faltered in executing its plan. This admission comes from within their ranks, as Goa Forward MLA Vijai Sardesai on Tuesday candidly stated that the Opposition lacked proper planning. His suggestion of forming a shadow cabinet to hold the government accountable is intriguing, yet his frustration was palpable when he remarked that people get the government they deserve. His words reflect the desperation of the Opposition, which now appears fractured, disoriented, and ineffective.

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This raises serious concerns: Has the Opposition lost faith in itself? Are they incapable of uniting against the ruling party? Do they truly intend to challenge the government, or are internal rifts preventing them from doing so? Recently, senior Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders have made visits to the state, issuing statements that starkly reveal their mutual distrust. Congress, through its Goa in-charge Anjali Nimbalkar, has twice declared its intent to contest elections independently, while AAP leaders have emphasised the necessity of an alliance for survival. This contradictory messaging confuses voters and benefits only the ruling party. The opposition, though aware of the dangers of disunity, seems unable or unwilling to bridge its divides.

Adding to the disarray, Congress itself is dealing with growing internal turmoil. Party workers have repeatedly voiced dissatisfaction with their leadership, and in an attempt to hold the party together, Congress is choosing to contest alone. This may be a tactical move to prevent defections, but the party's senior leaders must recognise that denial of reality is not a strategy. Ignoring internal wounds will not heal them; it will only deepen the crisis.

Meanwhile, AAP's local leaders have been equally vocal in their criticism of Congress, frequently referencing past betrayals by its leaders. Instead of working toward reconciliation, both parties are widening the rift, weakening their collective impact.

Outside the assembly, Opposition parties fail to organise effective, united protests on pressing issues. Rather than mobilising people as a single force against government mismanagement, they conduct isolated demonstrations with their respective party workers. The result? A fragmented and ineffective Opposition that lacks the power to truly challenge the government.

This lack of coordination is precisely why the ruling party remains unchallenged. With its overwhelming majority, the government faces little real opposition. To counter this dominance, Sardesai's suggestion of a shadow cabinet deserves serious consideration. However, it is not merely a structural adjustment that is needed—what is required is a genuine shift in mindset among Opposition leaders. Collaboration cannot be built on suspicion; it demands trust, shared purpose, and a commitment to the people, not just party interests.

If the Opposition remains divided, if their fighting continues to overshadow governance issues, and if they fail to inspire confidence in voters, then the ruling party will continue to dominate unopposed. The voice of the opposition is, ultimately, the voice of the people. If they allow it to be drowned out by internal discord, they will have no one to blame but themselves.

Twitter World

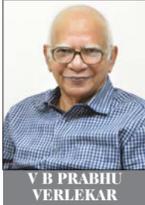
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Sarah Wilkinson @swilkinsonbc

Don't fear failure. Fear being ordinary. Fear regret. Fear playing small. Your purpose is to chase dreams, build deep connections, and leave the world better than you found it. Go big. Live boldly.

The Israelis say they fired on the Red Cross building by mistake despite the massive Red Cross flag on top: yeah, tell that story to the tooth fairy.

comment



V B PRABHU VERLEKAR

Technology and willpower transform I-T assessment to a faceless wonder

Till the late nineties, each and every case of taxpayers were scrutinised for assessment. For this, on the appointed date, he or his representative was required to visit the income tax office with loads of books of accounts and other records (usually tied up in a red cloth) and wait anxiously for his turn which could sometimes go up to late in the evening. The Officer would then scrutinise the hand-written records and after several hearings would always find faults to reject the books and make additions with hefty tax demand.

The only option available to taxpayers was either to go on appeal with uncertainty and costs or to settle with the assessing officer under or over the table depending on maturity and experience of the officer and negotiation skills of the tax consultant. However, there were honourable exceptions of honest, intelligent officers who safeguarded the interest of the revenue and also taxpayers who would fight even for small additions suffering heavy legal costs. I was personally witness to a case of prominent businessman-cum-politician from Panjim known for high integrity and honesty, who brought his entire office records systematically arranged in pickup outside income tax office and whenever any document or proof was asked for, it was produced through human chain of assistants since office was on the second floor. This verification went on for three consecutive days and the officer could not find a single discrepancy. The frustrated officer suffered a stroke in the process.



The shift to technology advancement

This scenario started changing slowly over the years with the computerisation of the income tax department and the continuous upgradation of technology. The Income tax law was also amended simultaneously from time to time, making it compulsory to quote PAN for opening and operating bank accounts, investments, mutual funds, high-value cash, and fi-

nancial transactions, purchase and sale of properties, vehicles, hotel and travel expenses, consumer goods, precious metal; TDS/TCS provisions were introduced for payments and collections; Mandatory furnishing of Annual Information Report (AIR) by various regulatory authorities like Registrar of immovable properties, motor vehicle registration department, postmaster general, stock exchanges, depositories etc.

The information based on PAN, AIR, TDS, and such other sources about different transactions made by a person at different times, at different places, and with different parties is collated and is available in a single database. Based on this, "Annual Information Statement (AIS)" is prepared in respect to each person based on his PAN. These statements are electronically linked with the data of return / assessed income and tax payments of the taxpayer.

Based on this data, the department was able to build a 360-degree profile of every taxpayer with complete information of all his income and assets leaving no scope for hiding or suppressing income. Shortly, the Income Tax Department will have a complete pre-filled income tax return form for non-business taxpayers with provision for changes and corrections, dispensing the need to have a tax consultant to file tax return.

Revolutionary change: Introduction of E-Assessment system

Armed with the latest State-of-the-Art digital Technology, tools of data mining, machine learning, artificial intelligence, a revolutionary change is brought in by the Government of India by introducing Faceless E-assessment Scheme from August 13, 2020 which does not require taxpayer to visit Income Tax office or meet income tax official for the purpose of assessment. Personal assessment hearings, harassments, and bribery are now history.

New faceless assessment procedure

As soon as the Tax return is filed by a taxpayer electronically, it is automatically processed and accepted if there are no discrepancies u/s 143(1). Refunds are credited directly to a designated bank account within 48 hours. In case of any apparent mistakes in a tax return as compared to the Form 26AS or AIS, adjustments are made

after giving an opportunity to the assessee for online clarification before raising demand/ refund by issuing notice under 143(1)(a) or 139(9). However, in case a discrepancy is noticed for under-reporting of income, or omission of transactions, or for any abnormality, the case is selected for scrutiny assessment or best judgment assessment under 143(3) or 144 respectively or under the E-verification scheme.

Under the new Faceless Scheme, assessments of such cases selected for investigation or best judgment assessment are made in a very transparent seamless, painless and faceless manner without any human intervention with the help of State-of-the-Art digital technology automated examination tools without any human intervention, artificial intelligence, and machine learning.

Process of the faceless tax assessment

The Scheme works as under - The selected case with an identification number will be assigned to officers in different locations through an automated allocation system without human intervention. For example, the case of a Goa assessee identified with a Specific Number can be assigned to assessment unit in Assam, for legal support to Technical Unit in Bengaluru, for examination to the Verification unit at Pune and draft assessment order may be reviewed by Kolkata unit. In the entire process, no one will know the name or see face of the income tax officer of the units thereby preventing any possibility of influence or corruption. Thus, all scrutiny cases will be completed in a faceless way in a faceless environment, without any chance of bribery giving relief to honest taxpayers and thereby helping ease of doing business and encouraging taxpayers to file tax returns voluntarily. Filing of tax returns are increasing every year as also tax collection. Cost of administration has come down. Litigations are reduced significantly. Taxpayers are happy.

The willpower of the government and implementation of advanced technology has transformed the image of the Income Tax Department from being the most corrupt to complete corruption-free on August 13, 2020; a glorious day for India.

(The author is a Chartered Accountant by profession)

Intensify drive against underage riding

A tragic accident reported in Pirna on Sunday claimed the life of a 14-year-old boy and left a 16-year-old seriously injured after their motorcycle crashed into an electric pole.

It is learnt that the minor boy was riding a bullet motorcycle, one of the heaviest Indian motorbikes and even adults may struggle to ride it. In India, the minimum age to ride a motorcycle with an engine capacity not exceeding 50 cc is 16, while it is 18 years for all other vehicles. Underage riders face a fine of Rs 5,000. They are barred from obtaining a driving license until they turn 25. Section 199A of the Motor Vehicle Amendment Act of 2019 holds guardians or vehicle owners responsible for offences committed by juveniles.

Underage motorcycle riding is not just illegal, but extremely dangerous. For teenagers, motorbikes represent the freedom to go further and faster. Speed can be thrilling. In certain circles, having a bike can elevate social status. Teenagers often struggle to accurately perceive and assess risks. Goa roads pose significant challenges even for experienced adult riders, due to infrastructural issues.

When underage adolescents attempt driving, these risks are exacerbated. They lack the requisite knowledge of traffic rules and driving techniques, increasing the chances of crashes. Preventing underage driving requires a multifaceted approach involving

education, awareness, and strict enforcement of the laws.

Empowering children with knowledge and fostering a sense of responsibility ensures that they value their safety and that of others, creating safer roads for everyone.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Old Goa agitation: A strong impact

Citizens pledging to save Old Goa heritage is really an eye-opener and very heart touching.

It's nice to see our Goan brothers and sisters coming out in large numbers to join the agitation, a peaceful agitation to save Goa our beautiful paradise. We, Goans were called usegad people because first our Goa was not turning into a concrete jungle and there was lot of peace. Our Goans now will no longer be usegad, but will remain alert and try to save our beautiful paradise from turning into concrete jungle.

Anita Fernandes, Verna

Old Goa controversy

This is in reference to the report 'ASI slams brakes at Old Goa construction site' appearing in O Herald edition dated March 25, 2025.

It seems like our country is never going to fall short of unnecessary controversies, the

letterstotheeditor

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

latest is the construction activity in the vicinity of Bom Jesus Basilica at Old Goa. What we need today, is a complete moratorium on construction activity at all heritage sites, whether in Goa or elsewhere. With regard to the present construction activity in Goa, from the news report it seems like the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. Who gave the permission? For what? Why? What is being constructed? Somebody needs to be answerable to the people.

Melville X D'Souza, Mumbai

setting a good example. We need to recognise that children mimic what they see. So, let's be mindful of our own habits and create a more supportive atmosphere for them to thrive in. After all, our actions speak louder than words.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaullim

Trump's Overreach: A threat to global order

Donald Trump's expansionist ambitions are growing bolder, disregarding international law and sovereignty.

His push to merge Canada as the 51st State, absorb Panama, and now sending a delegation led by Second Lady Usha Vance to Greenland after expressing interest in annexing the island, signals a dangerous precedent. His recent focus on a Greek island raises further alarms.

Meanwhile, his plan to displace Palestinians from Gaza to build an exclusive city while they struggle for survival is a grave violation of self-determination. His so-called peace proposal for Ukraine, contingent on Kyiv handing over indefinite mineral rights to the US, echoes economic colonialism. Such aggressive overreach reflects a Don-like attitude that endangers global stability. Silence from world leaders only emboldens this reckless pursuit of dominance. If unchecked, this sets a

Parents as digital role models

In today's digital age, it's all too easy to blame kids and young people for their social media use and digital addiction. But let's take a step back.

Children are constantly observing their parents, teachers and their surroundings. This influence shapes their behavioural patterns significantly. For instance, if parents are glued to their phones 24x7, expecting their children to read a book seems a bit unfair, doesn't it? Role models play a crucial part in how children adapt to their environment. If they see adults engaging positively with technology, they're quite likely to follow suit.

It's about striking a balance and

people's edit

CAN NATURE COPE WITH GLOBAL CO2 EMISSIONS?

ELVIDIO MIRANDA

Pollution across the globe is assuming alarming levels. From data available, it could be calculated that the extent at which carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is due to production of crude oil, coal for power generation as well as due to steel production, the emissions of this major Greenhouse gas that has driven temperatures to a record high in the present times is a cause for concern.

In 2023, 96.4 million barrels of crude oil were produced which means that a total of 35.18 billion barrels were produced that year. By burning one barrel of crude oil 403.8 kg of carbon dioxide is generated, thus if one calculates that all the oil produced was used, it means that 14 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide was released into the air that year.

Now, in 2024, 8.77 billion tonnes of coal was produced. Knowing that each tonne of coal produces 2.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide, it would mean that if all that coal was used for power generation, then 22.8 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide was released into the atmosphere.

Again in 2023, 1,888.2 million metric tonnes of crude steel was produced globally and since each tonne of steel releases 1.89 tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, then 3.4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide was totally emitted into the atmosphere. These three highly polluting products together emit 39.4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide that needs to be absorbed by the 3.04 trillion trees that are now known to be existent on earth. Since each mature tree absorbs 22 kg of carbon dioxide assuming that 50% of the total trees are mature, it would mean that 33 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide would theoretically be converted to oxygen by the process of photosynthesis. During the summers as well as in parts of the world facing drought, which would normally be devoid of trees, the effect of the net amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would create a vicious cycle of warming which would result in temperatures in arid regions increasing to a very high degree. The process of photosynthesis is nature's way of dealing with the emissions of carbon dioxide, and during the rainy seasons due to chemical weathering carbon dioxide dissolves in the rainwater producing carbonic acid which reacts with rocks leading to the storage of carbon dioxide in the oceans and on land. The extent of global warming is such that even now the average temperature increase is already higher than the mandated 1.5 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels, in the Paris Climate Agreement.

To add to the heating of the earth, the occurrence of heat waves and the consequent wildfires are leading to such high levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere which has already affected many cities and towns wherein the extent of pollution is such that the ambient air quality is deteriorating fast aggravating global warming and climate change. Normally higher the mercury levels, higher should be the extent of evaporation and thus if precipitation occurs it would mean that the temperatures should be under control in places where rain or snow occurs. It has been noticed that rain forests have been subject to the axe of the lumberjack as well as unusual patterns of heavy rains and drought alternately have led to climate change, altering the pattern of climate across the world. Could nature be able to reduce the extent of heating of the earth, to a certain extent and in some places, yes, but not everywhere?

precedent for territorial annexations under diplomatic and economic pretexts. The world must act before Trump's unilateral ambitions spiral into a new era of imperialist expansion.

Gopalswamy J Chennai

Protect Old Goa heritage Amcho Serkar, Amche Khatir (our government is for our purpose) was the slogan at Old Goa against a proposed mall expected to come up at the heritage site just behind Basilica of Bom Jesus.

The intention of the Goa government, Tourism Department is very clear, to take advantage of the annual feast and decennial Exposition of St Francis Xavier for monetary gains at the cost of destruction of world heritage declared by UNESCO and protected for preservation.

It appears that the heritage protection doesn't matter to the Tourism Ministry, but pushes the said project in prohibited areas under the guise of development.

As indicated, some historical findings have proved the existence of history relating to the past which needs to be protected and preserved. The clearance of the site by cutting down trees and making a road without the permission of the local authority speaks of the government's audacity against the wishes of the people. The Tourism Department must take heed of the people protesting against the proposed project of the mall and refrain from the world heritage site for such unwanted development.

Ayres Sequeira, Salvador do Mundo