

## O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

## King or not, Nepal is at the crossroads

Over the past few weeks, Nepal has been hell-bent on showing that the king (as a titular figure) is far from dead, and indeed, there are still many in the Himalayan country shouting 'long live the king' nearly 17 years after the monarchy was abolished.

Over the past few weeks, Kathmandu has been the epicentre of massive protests, with thousands demanding the return of the monarchy. This surge in pro-monarchy demonstrations has been fuelled by widespread dissatisfaction with the political establishment, economic instability, and corruption that have plagued the country over the past two decades or so. The protests that led to violent clashes with police on March 28 have left three dead and over 100 under arrested, as the country grapples with the challenges of an increasingly divided political landscape.

**The allegations of corruption and mismanagement have left many citizens feeling betrayed, especially as economic conditions continue to deteriorate. Thousands of youths are leaving the country in search of better opportunities abroad, while the country's unemployment rate remains high**

At the heart of this royalist resurgence lies the figure of former King Gyanendra Shah. Though he has not openly sought to reclaim the throne, his messages, which express concern over the country's deteriorating political and economic situation, have struck a chord with many Nepalese, who see him as a symbol of stability in a time of turmoil. When Shah returned to Kathmandu in February after a two-month pilgrimage, thousands of

supporters greeted him at the airport, chanting slogans such as "Raja Aau Desh Bachau" ("Come back and save the country, O King").

However, the political leadership has largely resisted these calls, with ruling coalition members voicing strong opposition to any return to king's rule. On March 28, as royalist protesters clashed with police, leaders from the ruling coalition used the opportunity to demand the arrest of the former king, accusing him of inciting unrest. Former Prime Ministers Pushpa Kamal Dahal or Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal of the Maoist Centre warned Shah not to even think about reclaiming the throne. They called for action from Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, who faces his own share of controversy regarding corruption allegations.

But as the protests escalate, it's clear that the anger brewing on the streets is a direct response to the political elite's failure to deliver on the promises of the republican experiment that began in 2008. Since the abolition of the monarchy, Nepal has seen 13 governments in 17 years, each one unable to offer the country political stability. The promise of a more democratic, secular Nepal has not materialised in the way many had hoped, with the country instead plagued by political infighting, corruption scandals, and economic stagnation. From Prime Minister Oli's involvement in a land scam to accusations against former PMs Prachanda, Sher Bahadur Deuba, and others, it is clear that the political establishment's credibility has eroded.

The allegations of corruption and mismanagement have left many citizens feeling betrayed, especially as economic conditions continue to deteriorate. Thousands of youths are leaving the country in search of better opportunities abroad, while the country's unemployment rate remains high. The feeling that the political elite is more interested in enriching themselves than in addressing the needs of the people has given rise to a swelling tide of pro-monarchy sentiment. Durga Prasai, a former Maoist guerrilla, has become one of the most vocal advocates for a restored monarchy. Prasai, whose past includes helping unite the Maoist factions and being involved in key political negotiations, has pivoted from Left-wing politics to embrace royalist ideals. His campaign, "Protect the Nation, Nationalism, Religion, Culture, and Citizens", has attracted tens of thousands of supporters, many of whom are disillusioned with the republican system.

Prasai's rhetoric, which mixes national pride with a critique of the political system, has resonated with those who feel that the promise of democracy has not lived up to expectations. His fiery speeches and social media campaigns have thrust him into the limelight, eclipsing other more traditional royalist leaders. However, this movement faces significant challenges. While there is growing support for the return of the monarchy, it is unclear whether this support can coalesce into a viable political force. The royalists remain divided on the specifics of what a restored monarchy would look like - some favour a full restoration, while others advocate for a symbolic, constitutional role for the king. On the other hand, pro-republican forces are likely to resist any moves that would roll back the gains of the last two decades.

Nepal's future hangs in the balance. The return of the monarchy may offer a sense of stability and unity, but it is not a panacea for the deep-seated issues that have plagued the nation. It is clear that the country needs leadership that can break free from the cycles of corruption and political instability. Whether that leadership comes from the monarchy, the political establishment, or a new movement entirely remains to be seen.

## comment



SIDDHARTH DESAI

## Nine months in space: The return of NASA's Space Heroes

NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore made headlines with their return to Earth on March 19 after an unexpected stay of over nine months at the International Space Station (ISS). They were aboard a SpaceX Crew-9 Dragon spacecraft carrying American Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov. The mission began in June of the previous year, originally planned as an eight-day journey to test Boeing's Starliner during its first crewed flight. However, the Starliner was deemed unfit for return due to propulsion issues and subsequently returned empty. This unforeseen extension resulted in Williams and Wilmore spending 286 days in space, completing over 4,500 orbits and traveling more than 121 million statute miles. Now, they will undergo NASA's 45-day post-mission rehabilitation program to help them readjust to Earth's gravity after such a prolonged period in space. Their safe return not only marks the successful conclusion of their mission but also serves as an inspiring tale of human endurance and perseverance.

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Upon their return, the astronauts were welcomed back to Earth in pleasant weather, with wind speeds of 2-3 knots and dolphins greeting them during their smooth landing at the designated spot. While their nine-month stay is remarkable, it is not the longest on record; that distinction belongs to a Russian astronaut who spent 662 days in space, although details of his experiences remain scarce. The lengthy duration of their stay will have both physiological and psychological impacts. For instance, bone density may decrease while their weight could increase, leading to muscle atrophy. These changes will complicate their adjustment to Earth, necessitating a rigorous rehabilitation program lasting 45 days to two months, supported by a team of experts and a variety of sensors. Damage

incurred during their time in space can be categorised as either reversible—such as muscle atrophy and potential decreases in bone mass and height—or irreversible, like radiation exposure, which is significantly higher at an altitude of 400 km.

The complexities of rocket science contribute to the challenges faced by space scientists, whether in manned or unmanned missions. Rocket science encompasses intricate programs with numerous variables to consider, including propulsion, control, guidance, navigation, payload integration, and trajectory determination. The entire system is expected to meet Six Sigma standards, with redundancies built in to ensure that backup systems are available in case of failure. The unexpected extension of the astronauts stay illustrates that such exigencies are not routine and can present significant physical, physiological and psychological challenges, as well as logistical concerns regarding food supplies. Astronaut selection involves assessing candidates personality traits, stress tolerance and resilience to ensure they can withstand these challenges.

Rigorous training prepares astronauts for the demands of space travel, addressing both physiological and psychological aspects to make them more robust. Mission planning is crucial and must account for all potential exigencies. In this case, the initial challenge was successfully docking with the ISS, complicated by a propulsion system failure and helium leakage that delayed their return. SpaceX, in collaboration with NASA, effectively managed the challenge of sending a recovery vehicle, facilitating its safe return.

Upon their return, astronauts will face several physiological challenges, including vascular deconditioning that affects the hemodynamic system and equilibrium issues that may lead to disorientation and falls. Restoring hemodynamic stability is essential during the first 45 days to prevent syncope, while muscular atrophy is another concern, as any unused organ will undergo atrophy. Psychological adjustment to the circadian rhythm is also significant. These challenges underscore the importance of the rehabilitation period in restoring acclimatization to the terrestrial environment.

This experience provided

valuable lessons for ISRO, highlighting the need to address various challenges, contingencies and crisis management in future missions. For human flights, whether involving a launcher or spacecraft modules like Dragon or Starliner, systems must be certified for human rating. This entails that most systems include triple redundancy and established procedures. The astronauts on this mission are not newcomers; each has completed three flights. The Dragon spacecraft has previously carried supplies, while a Soyuz spacecraft that could have been used remained parked, perhaps deemed unnecessary for this mission. The ISS can accommodate six astronauts, and supplies are stored for longer periods to prepare for emergencies.

The astronauts conducted about 200 experiments and completed 62 extravehicular activities for maintenance. Their landing was meticulously planned, with the tracking network—including the Tracking and Data Relay Satellite System (TDRSS) and ground networks—functioning precisely. The descent engine operated gradually, ensuring a safe return to a suitable environment. However, one concern is that acceleration can create issues in the blood and brain. When Gaganyaan launches, ISRO should leverage the experiences of NASA, Russian space agencies, and other allies to enhance its mission planning.

ISRO has programmes aimed at fostering interest in space among schoolchildren and college students aspiring to join ISRO or DRDO, both of which are heavily involved in space work. The Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST) in Thiruvananthapuram plays a significant role in this, offering numerous programs and establishing cells in various educational institutions. ISRO invites students to witness launches, significantly stimulating interest in space exploration and technology, suggesting a bright future for the field in the country.

To further this interest, the Prime Minister has invited Sunita Williams to visit India once she recovers. We hope she accepts the invitation, returns to her country of origin, and inspires the next generation of scientists eager to excel in space research and exploration.

*(The author is an advocate by profession)*

## people's edit

## APRIL FOOL PRANK LEFT SIMPLETON SPEECHLESS

JOSEPH LEWIS D'SILVA

April Fools' Day, celebrated on April 1 each year, is a day filled with pranks, jokes and light hearted mischief. Here below is one memorable prank associated with April Fools' Day.

On April first, wise employees; bright workers; meanest of mankind enter the office with the whole intention of fooling others.

A Bank officer named Simpleton received a transfer order to a proposed branch in Karnataka. It was an April Fools' prank. Excited and anxious, Simpleton went and showed the transfer order to his colleagues.

Mr. Innocent Flash who read it said, "Good. It is a pleasant place." Simpleton, looking dejected, uttered: "I do not want to go there."

"But why?" asked Mr. Innocent Flash. "Because, I do not know Kannada; I do not know Tamil. I do not want to go to any South Indian branches of the Bank. I can only speak in Konkani, English and a little bit of Portuguese. I do not want to leave golden Goa," said Simpleton, who by now looked like a grieving widow.

"In that case, why don't you approach our Head Office? Explain your difficulties and request, to transfer you to our Panjim Branch instead. Our Head Office might agree," advised Mr. Innocent Flash.

Hope dawned in Simpleton's eyes. The thought of his transfer being cancelled lifted his spirit. He muttered, "Good advice is beyond price." Simpleton thought that he would be a fool if he did not follow it.

Some colleagues pitied Simpleton. To prevent him from unnecessary mental stress; someone, softened by guilt; suggested that he verify the signature at the bottom of his transfer order.

There it was! The signature didn't match. The realisation struck him! He had been fooled on April Fools' Day! His face turned red with anger and shame. He rose from his chair like a rocket at lift off.

"Who wrote this Letter?" Simpleton thundered! His voice booming through the office, piercing everyone's ears to a deafening pitch.

The room was as still as the office clock on the wall. There was pin drop silence. No. It was dead silence, Simpleton, scanned the faces around him, searching for signs of guilt. Alas! He could find none. A few suppressed their naughtiest smiles fearing that the blame would jump on them.

Miss typist Tip, did you type this letter?" Simpleton roared like the roaring waves of turbulent tsunami.

There was a pause. There was a denial. Mr. Typist Top, did you?" Simpleton's voice yelled like a swimmer in his agony.

Mr. Typist Top, shook his head, so fast in denial; and said in a voice which sounded like a cat whose tail had been stepped upon.

Simpleton continued his search. But, to everyone he went, they shook their head negatively; with another denial; with another pause! Saying, 'not I'. And everyone, in the Bank, he asked; denied making a sound like cream-cracker biscuits.

Evidence could have been unearthed, if Simpleton had systematically carried the investigation; but he was too furious and could do nothing about it. His shocked mind started thinking illogically: 'could it be some ghost making fun of him?' he imagined in fear.

That evening, Simpleton went home; drowning in a sea of doubt; wondering who had pulled off the prank; a ghost or one of his colleagues.

Dear Reader, such office pranks are enjoyable — but only when the Big Boss tolerates such things. Otherwise, which staff would choose to fool Simpleton in this way?

So, the mystery remained unsolved. Simpleton, despite all his efforts, did not discovered who played the prank on him. April Fools' Day continues to be a celebration of humor and creativity.

## April school calendar draws heat from parents

In a powerful display of unity, citizens, children, and parents gathered at the historic Lohia Maidan in Margao to voice their opposition to the Education Department's decision to commence the new academic year on April 7. The campaign, aptly titled "No Schools in April," resonated strongly among the attendees, who criticised the lack of stakeholder consultation and the absence of orientation regarding the National Education Policy (NEP).

The fraternity argued that the decision disregards Goa's unique realities, particularly the challenges posed by the state's scorching summer. They accused the government of blindly implementing policies from Delhi without considering the intricacies of Goa's time-tested educational fabric. The slogan "No Schools in April" resonated through the Maidan, symbolising the collective frustration of the stakeholders.

Speakers at the event highlighted the need for a more inclusive approach to policy-making, emphasising the importance of understanding regional differences. They warned that applying a uniform policy across states risks undermining the delicate

balance that has been carefully maintained over the years.

The campaign has sparked a broader conversation about the importance of tailoring educational policies to suit the specific needs of each state, ensuring that the voices of stakeholders are heard and respected. As the debate continues, the fraternity remains steadfast in its commitment to preserving Goa's educational heritage and advocating for a more thoughtful approach to policy implementation.

Everette Assis Telles, Margao

## Shortage of staff in govt departments

When visiting a government office, it is not uncommon to encounter a shortage of personnel, with employees expressing their concerns about limited resources and the burden of additional work. The government departments in the state has revealed significant staff shortages thereby presenting challenges to effective service delivery and administration. Police, PWD, Health Department, University needs a swift recruitment.

The shortage has been ex-

## letterstotheeditor

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

the school and college level, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your Editorial "Education Dept. should help students discover aptitudes" on March 31. Your insightful perspective on the said topic was both thought-provoking and well-articulated. It provided a balanced and compelling analysis that truly resonated with my beliefs and thinking. Thank you for shedding light on such important issues.

Menino Furtado, Fatorda

## Urban areas expose higher temperatures

Increased urbanisation in metropolitan cities has given rise to what is termed the heat island effect. With vast tracts of open land being covered by buildings, roads, pavements, parking lots and other hardscape there is a quantum increase in ambient temperature due to heat reflecting off these surfaces and slowing down of wind speed.

Hard surfaces also ensure that ground water recharge is next to zero, thus exacerbating the water crisis. A case in point is Mumbai where a difference of 13°C in

temperature was recorded between dense congested suburbs like Ghatkopar (33°C) and the relatively more green areas like Powai (20°C). Heat islands like Ghatkopar are complex urban phenomena, destructive micro-climate zones within mega cities. Yet city planners, builders and government regulating bodies do nothing to check the cancer of construction, most of it illegal for the simple reason that there is money to be made all around.

An analysis of 14 cities in 13 countries has established that heat trapping infrastructure such as concrete roads, asphalt, poor vegetation cover, air pollution, stubble burning, garbage incineration etc amplify the difference in temperature between urban sprawls and rural areas. To beat the heat, city dwellers resort to air-conditioning which in turn dials up the temperature, it is a vicious cycle. But there seems to be no sense of urgency to tackle this climate crisis. The simple act of planting trees will provide shade and heat insulation which will also have a direct impact on energy consumption. But we are busy cutting down trees for 'development' and 'progress'; this won't end well for humankind, we have reached a point of no return.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulim