

O HERALDO

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Hotels, guest houses must be pulled up for negligence

The arrest of a 36-year-old man who allegedly kidnapped and raped a 16-year-old girl at a hotel in Calangute, has opened a Pandora's box where adherence to rules by hotels and guesthouses are concerned. According to reports, the accused man, hailing from Umta Vaddo, Calangute, kidnapped the teenaged girl from Assagao, the village in which she resides, warned her of dire consequences, took her to a hotel room in Calangute, and subsequently raped her.

Although the alleged crime took place late last month, the girl informed her family of it only this month. But even after her family members approached the police on April 3 to lodge a complaint and after doctors confirmed that the girl was indeed raped, the police are yet to take any action against the owner of the hotel to which the accused man took the girl. Interestingly, police sources disclosed to reporters that when the accused man took the girl to the hotel, he told the receptionist that the girl was his daughter. Therefore, it is to be construed

Unfortunately, while the police department continues to scrutinize the rule book and pass the buck, the ultimate sufferer is the survivor and her family. The absence of decisive action and the piecemeal punishment doled out could also serve to embolden other hotels and guest houses to continue violating the law where identification proofs of guests are concerned, thereby giving perpetrators that much more convenience to commit such crimes and other illegalities

that the man was given a room without being asked for photo identification of both, him and the girl by the hotel operator. If this did in fact happen, it is not only an absolute violation of the laws in force - which mandate that every hotel and guest house, notwithstanding categories, must seek valid photo identification of all their guests before providing accommodation - but also enables all sorts of crimes to take place, particularly sexual assault.

What further emboldens establishments to flout the rules is either lethargy or lack of will by the police force to bring errant operators to task. In the present case, the red tape revolves around jurisdiction for police action. While the Calangute police (in whose jurisdiction the crime occurred) said they would book the hotel operator only after the Anjuna police (from whose jurisdiction the girl was kidnapped) filed a complaint against the accused man, a police officer maintained that a first information report must nevertheless be filed against the hotel operator because the mandatory rule of seeking identification documents from guests was flouted. The officer also said that it is the duty of the police to seek cancellation of the hotel's license to operate. The cop is reported to have rightfully said, "Rape is a heinous crime and the owner has to be booked for dereliction of duty since the crime has occurred at his resort."

Unfortunately, while the police department continues to scrutinize the rule book and pass the buck, the ultimate sufferer is the survivor and her family. The absence of decisive action and the piecemeal punishment doled out could also serve to embolden other hotels and guest houses to continue violating the law where identification proofs of guests are concerned, thereby giving perpetrators that much more convenience to commit such crimes and other illegalities. In a bid to make fast money, many accommodation facilities, particularly small-time units, are known to let out their rooms to anyone and everyone without thinking twice about the likely repercussions.

"If a place is given to a criminal where a child is sexually abused, the owner must be booked. It amounts to violation of the Goa Children's Act. There is a specific legislation under which the owner can be jailed for three years for letting out his premises for illegal activity," a child rights activist is reported to have said. Rightfully so.

It is time the law enforcement agencies pull up their socks or be prepared to be caught with their pants down if there is a spike in the commission of such crimes.

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BY INVITATION
SUSHILA SAWANT MENDES

The death of dissent: Do we not deserve creativity and intellect?

A stand-up comedian cannot do parody based on current affairs, an artist cannot display his imagination, a Professor of History cannot write on history, and an intellectual cannot give his opinion-either. Persons venturing in critical thought get trolled on social media and this in turn has the sickening backing of the State.

Comedians use parody as a creative work designed to imitate, comment on, and/or mock its subject by means of a satirical or ironic imitation. It can be about a real life person, event or movement.

Comedian Kunal Kamra has highlighted a five point satirical post on X titled, "How to kill an artist: A step by step guide". He explains how outrage is used in different decibels, first just enough for brands to stop commission work, to venues not taking risks and the subsequent violence leading to even the smallest places shutting their doors. Finally the summoning of the audience for questioning turns art into a crime scene. He terms this as a political weapon and a 'silencing machine'.

In the inter-war period, fascists like Salazar, Mussolini, Hitler and General Franco did this openly and prided themselves following the diktat "Everything for the State". Hitler believed in the Nazification of art, literature, science, etc. All academic institutions, schools, colleges and universities, all means of communication and culture, such as the press, radio, film and stage were brought under the complete control of the State. All teachers, professors and churchmen, who were suspected to be anti-Nazis were removed and dispatched to concentration camps. The curricula were also revised accordingly.

The fascist motto was "Faith, obedience and fight because Mussolini is always right". Control of all educational institutions was done by appointing only fascist teachers and professors in schools, colleges and universities and their syllabus was also fascist oriented. The various youth organisations of the fascist party brainwashed young minds.

Salazar had his own secret police with the sole object of apprehending political non-conformists. Policia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (PIDE) existed during the Estado Novo regime



of Salazar. This was notorious for its use of censorship, surveillance and political repression to silence dissent and maintain control. The

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'Politics of Spirit' of Salazar during the first twelve years of his government, played an active role in the propagation of nationalist ideas and in the standardisation of culture.

General Franco was Prime Minister of Spain from 1939 to 1975 and ruled as a dictator after he had led the nationalist forces in overthrowing the Second Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil war. He developed a cult of personality around his rule by founding the Movimiento Nacional. Forced labour, torture in concentration camps and summary executions of political opponents were the methods he used to instil fear.

The fascist dictators secured the support of their people and used the radio in their agenda of the "glorification of the State". They were fascists not democrats, although Hitler came to power via the Weimar Constitution. Today however governments elected by the people stand in judgement on artists as in the case of Kunal Kamra. Are the pre-World War II trends coming back to haunt present day democracies whose leaders are intolerant to artists, intellectuals and writers? The Uday Thackeray faction of the Shiv Sena has used the terms gaddar (traitor) and Baap chori (stealing the father) for the present Deputy CM of Maharashtra Eknath Shinde. Kunal Kamra used the same terms without using his name. Shiv Sainiks destroyed the venue where Kamra shot his comedy show. He faces three FIRs in Mumbai, the BMC workers

tore down the unauthorised shed on the terrace of the Khar hotel where the controversial video was recorded. Both the CM and his Deputy were elected by the people and selected by the Mahayuti Alliance to form the government and both were contenders for the CM's post. The attack on Kamra has now enhanced the politics of free negative publicity for Shinde's opponents.

In the recent past, Goa was rocked with videos and counter videos, each subscribing to their own view on history. What was questionable was a group of Bajrang Dal and ABVP activists going to a veteran of the Opinion Poll activist very senior learned advocate's house at 9 pm, forcing him to come out and abusing him for countering the version of history placed by the CM on the occasion of Shiv Jayanti. Each had a right to their opinion. Govind Pansare, lawyer, author and activist of the CPI was assassinated at the age of 81. Pansare in his book, 'Shivaji kon hota?' (Who was Shivaji?) had said that Shivaji was a secular leader who appointed Muslims as his generals and respected women. It was a counter to the ideology of right wing organisations who use Shivaji for vote bank politics. Political parties across the world are driven not necessarily by goals of justice and fairness but by their immediate political gains. Govind Pansare, M M Kalburgi, Narendra Dabholkar, Gauri Lankesh all fell victims to the bullets of hate and hatred while the State looked the other side. They were shot dead for their beliefs. Not everybody has the tenacity of Sandesh Prabhudessai or Uday Bhemre.

Yesterday's newspapers had a report of an advocate making submissions before the Additional Sessions Judge in Delhi Court alleging two paintings of M F Hussain, displayed in the Delhi Art Gallery since the past thirty days as "depicting Hindu Gods and Goddesses

in an obscene manner", saying "Our Gods were insulted". Hussain's representation of Indira Gandhi as Durga was also chastised during the Emergency. From street plays held in the dead of the night to open rebellion, the story of the cultural resistance to the Emergency is one of many underground movements of artists and individuals. The revival of street theatre, as a tool of dissent, rose in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal during this clampdown. Even Kishore Kumar's songs were banished from AIR because he refused to perform at a political gathering of the Congress. Safdar Hashmi's theatre group was shocked into silence. Documentary filmmaker Anand Patwardhan, who was filming the JP Movement, went underground.

Shogdung ('Morning Conch'), is the pen name of Tagyal, the most high-profile of some 31 writers, bloggers, intellectuals and others were imprisoned after reporting or expressing views, writing poetry or prose, or simply sharing information about Chinese government policies and their impact in Tibet today. Some of them are still in prison. Arts organisations in the USA with art as a tool for social justice as the core of their mission are also disseminating information about constitutional rights to their communities. The Los Angeles Art Gallery began printing "Know Your Rights" posters, in both the tenures of Trump as his administration is turning more intolerant.

The acts of omission or commission of the fascist dictators led to World War II and destruction on a wider canvas involving almost the whole of Europe and by default their colonies, cannot never be forgotten or forgiven. World history is witness to a welcoming fact that whenever the fascists tried to subdue peoples' aspirations, crush humanity and force silence of the graveyard on society, writers-artists-intellectual stood together with other sections of the society in resisting it. An enlightened society needs to protect and nurture artists who shape our culture and history.

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Goa's Silent Struggle: Rising Crime, Vanishing Land

Goa, known for its breath-taking beaches, vibrant nightlife, and warm hospitality, has long been a paradise for tourists and locals alike. However, beneath this picturesque exterior, a silent battle rages. Crime is on the rise, land is being taken away, and the very identity of Goa is under threat. The once peaceful state is now grappling with issues that were previously unheard of, leaving Goans feeling vulnerable, unheard, and betrayed. As Goa's struggles intensify, it is time to bring these issues to light and question whether the land we cherish is slipping away before our eyes.

Despite its reputation as a safe haven, the statistics paint a different picture. Crime rates have surged alarmingly, with a staggering increase over the last decade. Many cases go unreported, while those that do often get caught in a sluggish legal system that fails to deliver justice. Thefts, frauds, violent crimes and land scams have become more common, yet the authorities remain slow in their response. Criminals, often emboldened by weak enforcement, exploit loopholes in the law and take advantage of Goans who are struggling to protect what is rightfully theirs. The influx of outsiders who do not respect local traditions or laws further exacerbates the problem, leading to an erosion of the cultural

CLETA LOURENCO

fabric that makes Goa unique.

One of the most disturbing incidents in recent times involved an elderly woman who was brutally attacked by a 23-year-old tourist over a minor altercation regarding a dog. This horrifying act shed light on a growing issue—many outsiders are coming to Goa with a sense of impunity, believing they can get away with anything. This was not an isolated case. In 2018, a shocking murder case surfaced when a young man killed a foreign national. Though he resided in Goa, he was not a Goan, yet his actions painted a negative image of the state. The trend of such crimes being committed by non-Goans has raised serious concerns, yet authorities have not taken firm action to curb this menace.

This misrepresentation fuels stereotypes and affects the perception of the local community. In reality, many of these crimes are committed by non-Goans who have settled here and exploit the system. The influx of people from outside has not only led to rising crime but also to the illegal acquisition of land, pushing Goans to the fringes of their own homeland.

The question remains—why is Goa bearing the burden of crimes committed by outsiders? The law must be enforced strictly, and those who exploit the system must be held accountable. If decisive action is not

UPFRONT

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taken, the Goa that we know and love may soon become unrecognisable. It is time for Goans to stand up and demand justice, to protect their land, culture, and identity from those who seek to exploit it for their own gain.

Parallel to the uptick in crime is the contentious issue of land conversion under Section 17(2) of the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act. The High Court of Bombay at Goa recently struck down the rules and guidelines associated with this section, citing that they granted "unfettered" and "unguided authority" to the TCP board, leading to arbitrary conversions of land, often from paddy fields and natural covers to settlement zones.

Activists have raised alarms over approximately 25 lakh square meters of land being converted to settlement zones between 2023 and 2025 under this provision. Such large-scale conversions pose significant threats to Goa's ecological balance, leading to the destruction of hill slopes, fields, and natural habitats. The confluence

of rising crime and environmental degradation has sparked public outcry. Citizens have organized protests and demonstrations, emphasizing the need to preserve Goa's natural heritage and ensure the safety and well-being of its residents. The "Save Mollem" movement, for instance, has garnered widespread support, highlighting the community's commitment to safeguarding the state's biodiversity.

The conversion of agricultural and eco-zone land into settlement zones is being done at an alarming pace, leaving farmers with no choice but to watch their livelihoods vanish before their eyes. If agriculture disappears, where will our food come from? Who will think about the farmers who work tirelessly to feed us? Yet, when they try to fight for their rights, they are silenced, threatened, or forced to comply with the powers that be.

A striking example in Tivim is witnessing strong opposition against a proposed private university by World Peace University (MAEER).

Villagers fear environmental damage, displacement, and allege forged signatures in the project's approval. MAEER has offered job preferences to locals, but concerns about ecological impact and land use remain unresolved. Even though voices have been raised against it, money often speaks louder than justice. Addressing these challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach. Goa stands at a crossroad where the choices made today will shape its future. By uniting as a community, raising informed voices, and advocating for responsible governance, Goans can strive to preserve the state's unique identity and ensure a safe, sustainable environment for generations to come.

Many such cases exist where Goans are tricked, threatened, or coerced into giving up their homes, only to see them turned into resorts, hotels, or private properties owned by wealthy outsiders. The worst part is that many locals support these transactions, failing to realise that they are contributing to the slow erasure of their own culture, heritage, and identity.

In the past, Goa was known for its religious unity, where people from different faiths celebrated each other's festivals with joy and harmony. However, in recent times, there has been a rise in religious disputes that threaten to disturb this long-standing peace. The once harmonious coexistence of different

communities is now being tested, with external influences creating rifts between religious groups. This growing intolerance is deeply disturbing, and many fear that if it continues unchecked, Goa might face the same fate as Manipur, where communal tensions have led to widespread unrest.

This silent struggle for justice in Goa is further worsened by the fact that crime is no longer just about theft or violence. It has extended to political and economic manipulation, where laws are bent to serve the interests of the powerful while the common people suffer. Environmental destruction is another crime taking place right before our eyes, with illegal land conversions, deforestation, and pollution threatening the very beauty that makes Goa unique.

Some Goans support wealthy outsiders, taking away the rights of fellow Goans, and in some ways, we create divisions among ourselves. We can start with small steps—when a Goan starts a business, we should support them instead of attempting to destroy them. When an outsider starts a business, we tend to encourage them more. It is time to change this mindset. We must stand together and support our Goan brothers and sisters. The government must take the necessary steps to protect Goa and its people before it is too late.