

# Herald Cafe



ATHOL FUGARD'S 'A PLACE WITH THE PIGS' CAPTIVATES AUDIENCES AT MAJORDA



SANTOS PASSOS OBSERVED AT ST LAWRENCE CHAPEL, AROSSIM

## Defying Odds & Discovering a Purpose

Goa's sportspersons with intellectual disabilities are not just winning medals but gaining much-needed confidence

Ajit John [ajit@herald-goa.com](mailto:ajit@herald-goa.com)

We often hear about the incredible feats of athletes and cricketers and can't help but admire their achievements. What many of us overlook, however, is another group of sportspersons quietly making their mark: children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Their journey is not just about the medals they win – it's about building self-belief, transforming lives, and showing the world what true grit looks like.

At the Special Olympics World Winter Games held in Italy in March this year, the Indian contingent secured 33 medals. At the 2023 Special Olympics in Berlin, India won a remarkable 202 medals, with athletes from Goa contributing 19 of them.

### Nurturing Talent and Inclusion

Victor Vaz, CEO of Special Olympics Bharat Goa, explains that athletes are selected from 25 schools across the state that cater to children with special needs—both government and private. Even schools without sports teams are encouraged to send their students for trials. He lets on that the goal is inclusivity and training expenses are supported by donors, and once selected for nationals, the state body handles their training.



### GAYATRI FATERPERKAR: FROM THE GOALPOST TO GREATER CONFIDENCE

Gayatri Faterperkar, goalkeeper of the team that won bronze at the Berlin Special Olympics, discovered football in 2016 while watching an international match on television. She began training in school, qualified for the nationals, and earned a place on the national team.

"Playing in Berlin was an amazing experience. It made me more confident," she says. Her mother agrees, "She's changed a lot!"

Gayatri has a younger sister and an older brother who also plays football. "Playing for the country and against international teams made me feel really proud," she says. Though she doesn't play as often now, she says she'll always treasure the experience.



### JOEL RODRIGUES: FOOTBALL, FRIENDSHIP, AND FINDING HIS VOICE



Joel Rodrigues, a defender who clinched gold in the seven-a-side football tournament at the Berlin Special Olympics in 2023, fell in love with football at the age of ten after watching a match featuring New Zealand.

A resident of Aldona, Joel started playing at the school level, then progressed to the nationals before being selected for the Indian team. "I liked how the game was played, and that it was all about teamwork," he says. "The boys in my village encouraged me and never treated me differently."

Now 23, Joel trains daily and remains passionate about the game. "Everyone in my area has been helpful. I now help at events and feel proud to be part of this group." He is currently preparing for an international tournament in Texas, where a team from Goa will face off against teams from around the world.

His mother, Milli, is proud of his journey. "Football has made him confident," she says. Joel hopes to stay involved in the sport, even after his playing days are over.



### GITANJALI NARVEKAR: FROM SHY SPRINTER TO CHAMPION

Gitanjali Narvekar's story is one of quiet determination. She won gold in the 800 metres and silver in the 400 metres at the Special Olympics, even though she was originally scheduled to run the 100 and 200 metres. A month or two before the event, the organisers informed the team that those events wouldn't be held. The coaches decided to try her in the longer distances instead.

In the sweltering heat of May, Gitanjali trained on the beach alongside her teammates. Her natural ability began to shine, and with patient encouragement from the coaches, she adapted to the new challenge.

An orphan adopted by guardians, Gitanjali faced personal and logistical challenges. Obtaining a passport required intervention from the Chief Minister, and she had to travel to Mumbai and Delhi before flying to Berlin. The experience transformed her—once withdrawn, she now smiles easily and engages with others.

From her hometown of Nerul, she now awaits a promised government job. Her journey is a testament to the power of sport to open doors and build strength, both physical and emotional.

### AMAN NADAF: A GOLD MEDAL AND A NEW BEGINNING



Aman Nadaf, the goalkeeper who helped India win gold in Berlin, began playing in school and was drawn to the energy and responsibility that comes with being a goalkeeper.

"It's the most important position—everyone counts on you to save the game," he says. Aman still practices every day and occasionally plays with friends.



"Winning the gold was special. My mother cried—it was a very emotional moment," he recalls. The confidence gained from the experience has led him to start his own upholstery business. "I want to thank my teachers. They put in so much effort to train us," he says gratefully.

## Receiving sacraments gracefully

**Lenten show: 'Funkea Ghe'**  
**Cast:** Franky Gonsalves, Candida, Malita, Jennifer, Fr Benjamin Victoria, comedian Sally, Mathew, Aveena  
**Director:** Fr Doel Dias  
**Band:** Senon/Nolvert (trumpet), Trian (bass), Cliya (keyboard), John de Maddel (drums)  
**Stage/Lights:** Pedro Santan, Saude  
**Background music:** Fr Doel Dias

Pio Esteves

The story revolves around Paul (Franky Gonsalves), who works for a pharmaceutical company, his spouse, Mary (Candida), who is a housewife and their only teenage daughter, Abby (Jennifer), who is pursuing college studies.

Paul holds a good post in the private company drawing a good salary, but is an alcoholic. His wife Mary is a devout woman involved in various associations, but always worried about her family. Abby is a carefree girl, who is mostly involved with her friends and bowing down to all her demands, Paul has turned his daughter into a spoiled brat. Rachel (Malita), comes in as a Good Samaritan. After she lost her parents, Paul and Mary cared for her and she is grateful to the family. Taking note of Abby's weird behaviour, Rachel



advises her to give up on bad habits, but to no avail.

Over a period of time, untoward incidents result in the unity of all the members of the family. Paul's grievous illness, besides sacking from the company leaves him broken down and depressed. On the other hand, Abby meets with an accident, leaving her blind.

Now, who comes to their aid and how? Will Paul find a donor for his kidney transplant? Will Abby regain her sight?

Lenten show 'Funkea Ghe' written and directed by Fr Doel Dias and managed by Fr Benjamin Victoria is a family melodrama which lays emphasis on seven



sacraments provided by the Church to the faithful to receive graces in abundance and free of cost. It also highlights the importance of prayer in individual and family life and the mercy of God flowing through confession and reconciliation.

There are good performances from the limited cast, but each of the artists has given their best. Franky Gonsalves is good as Paul, but this time around he carries a totally different role. Candida as Mary is equally good, expressing worry and

displaying her staunch faith when problems come knocking on the door.

Jennifer as a fun-loving teenager does justice to her character and the change-over is equally good. Malita as loving and caring Rachel is cool in dialogues and body language. Fr Benjamin makes brief entries as a priest, but is strict and helpful too.

Special scenes from the Bible such as the marriage in Cana, the prodigal son, Jesus healing the blind beggar and other miracles find place in between the acts. But a little of originality in them would have had a better effect on stage and impact on the minds of the viewers.

For some lighter moments, there's comedian Sally coming along with Mathew and Aveena and they carry laughter pills under their sleeves, with good advice and messages wrapped around them.

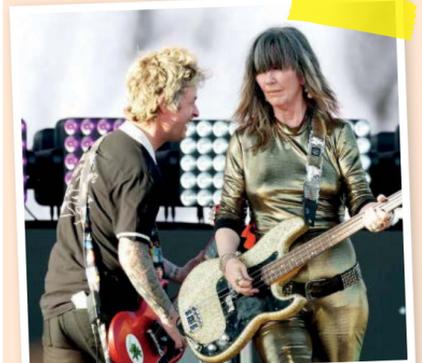
In the category of songs, Fr Benjamin, Candida, Gabriel and Malita step on stage for the opening song, followed by solos from Xavier Gomes, Evaristo de Arambol, Fr Benjamin Victoria, Saby de Duvar, Malita, Lawry Travasso, Jennifer and Mathew de Souza. Other songs are rendered by Lavina and Gabriel, Evaristo de Arambol and Candida. The concluding song by Xavier, Lawry and Saby de Duvar was more of sheer entertainment than reflection during the season of Lent. Instead of eight solos and two duets, a duo and a quartet would have made a complete package.

The stage sets by Pedro Santan and light effects by Saude were appealing. The background music by Fr Doel Dias deserves a mention.

### SWIPE RIGHT

Eva praises Ryan as Oscars to finally honour stunt teams

Eva Mendes is praising her husband, Ryan Gosling, for his contributions to getting stunts recognized by the Oscars. This came one day after the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced it had established a stunt design Oscar, which would start in 2028. Eva took to her Instagram, writing, "My man is the F best! Unfortunately, success is almost only measured by box office. So I'm extra proud of my man for turning his entire Fall Guy press tour into a campaign to get stunts recognized by the Oscars. And now after Almost 100 years of stunt design not being acknowledged by the Academy, it's officially a category!! This is a HUGE success! And an achievement that will last. Congratulations to the incredible stunt community!!"



Billie Joe Armstrong and Kathy Valentine of The Go-Go's perform at the 2025 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California.