

O HERALDO

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A theatre of neglect and corruption

The Dinanath Mangeshkar Kala Mandir at Kala Academy, once the crown jewel of Goa's cultural landscape, now stands as a tragic monument to bureaucratic apathy and blatant mismanagement. What was envisioned as a world-class performance venue, renovated at a staggering cost of over Rs 50 crore, has turned into a symbol of broken promises and systemic rot.

The recent chaos during the performance of the acclaimed Marathi play 'Purush' has thrown this failure into stark relief. With audiences from across Goa seated in anticipation, a major lighting malfunction disrupted the show, halting it for nearly half-an-hour. Actor Sharad Ponskhe, visibly disturbed, had to publicly apologise from the stage. But the true outburst came later, when Ponskhe openly criticised the government, echoing the frustration long felt by Goa's artist community. His remarks sparked a wave of outrage, not just locally, but nationally; an embarrassment for a State that prides itself on its cultural heritage.

This isn't a one-off incident. The Kala Academy, after being closed for more than two years for renovations, continues to crumble from within. The sound system, despite crores being spent, remains unusable for professional performances. Lighting, as painfully evident during 'Purush', is unreliable. There are water leakages, stage defects, and infrastructure failures at every corner.

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So dire is the situation that organisers are forced to rent external equipment just to stage basic productions.

Artists and technicians have been raising red flags for months. Cultural groups like 'Kala Rakhan Maand' protested. The issue reached the Goa Legislative Assembly. In response, the government formed a task force led by veteran theatre artist Vijay Kenkare, and later, even three technical experts; Sheetal Talpade, Roger Drago, and Rajan Bhise were appointed to assess and recommend repairs. Yet, very little has changed.

Minister for Art and Culture Govind Gaude has now acknowledged the gravity of the situation. Following the 'Purush' debacle, he ordered an

inquiry and demanded a detailed report from the Kala Academy's member secretary within two days. Gaude was candid in stating that the Public Works Department (PWD) is primarily responsible for these failures. While his response is appreciated, it has come far too late for comfort.

The government's sluggishness is baffling, especially considering multiple committees including the PWD and an engineering college have already submitted reports highlighting these deficiencies. Why, then, is action still pending? What more does the government need to be convinced of what the entire artistes' community already knows?

The tragedy here isn't just structural; it's emotional. Kala Academy is not just a building. It is the soul of Goa's artistic expression. Generations of talent have bloomed under its roof. The artists aren't seeking political mileage. They are pleading for dignity for a functional space where creativity can flourish without being sabotaged by technical failures and institutional negligence.

One cannot help but ask; how can a Rs 50 crore renovation result in a venue that cannot even host a basic theatre production without glitches? The irony is stinging. What was meant to preserve and elevate Goa's cultural identity is now actively undermining it.

Let there be no more excuses. The government must act with urgency. The task force's findings, the expert recommendations, and the audit reports; all point to a single conclusion: the Kala Academy needs immediate and professional restoration. A full technical audit must be conducted. Till the repairs are complete, organisers should be transparently informed of the ongoing issues. The audience should never again have to endure what happened during 'Purush'.

More importantly, the government must learn to listen. Artists are not adversaries. They are stakeholders. Their insights must be valued, not dismissed as political noise. Minister Gaude's recent response suggests a glimmer of accountability. But apologies and inquiries mean nothing without swift and visible action.

The longer this shameful state of disrepair continues, the deeper the cultural wounds will grow. If this government fails to restore Kala Academy to its rightful stature, it will not only lose the trust of Goa's artistes but will also be remembered for letting one of the State's most cherished institutions fall into ruin.

comment



How did China get to where it has? An analysis from last year framed the reality in this way: 'China is now the world's sole manufacturing superpower. Its production exceeds that of the nine next largest manufacturers combined.' A lot of this is down to what the government did, through industrial policy and statecraft



The history of business in India will show that the mercantile communities primarily were traders and bankers till the 20th century. It was in 1919 that the Birlas came into manufacturing, and before that it was a few Gujaratis including Parsis — Tata Steel came up around 1910.

This historical association with trading rather than manufactured goods and its extension to things like delivery apps was likely what Goyal was

referring to, and again I agree with his broad point. The question is: what would it take for India's start-ups to look more like China's? It is right to ask that question to businesses. It is equally right to ask the government.

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It established relations with mineral-rich nations in Africa and Latin America, and it set up ports and railway lines in many of these nations. Its public sector companies, owned by the government, built commercial ships and commercial airplanes to not be dependent on anyone else. China managed to convince all its neighbours, including those it had fought wars with and those it has ongoing disputes with, to not let these issues get in the way of trading. China's largest trading partner is not the United States or even the European Union, but the Association of South East Asian Nations, many of whom China has serious disputes with.

Against the US's military alliances like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the AUKUS and Quad and so on, China set up a development alliance strategy through the Belt and Road Initiative. Along with western criticism of this initiative, we should also examine what the nations participating in it say and think of China.

Now consider that the whole world has been worrying about climate change for decades, but the Chinese government was the only one to build an industrial strategy to both tackle the problem and take advantage of it. Having concluded that its automobile sector could not compete against the experience of and patents held by Japanese and German firms in internal combustion engines, China decided to focus on elec-

tric cars. It produced 5 lakh new energy vehicles in 2016, 10 lakh in 2018 and last year it produced 1 crore. It exported 58 lakh cars last year.

A similar story is to be found in solar panels, where again China's government looked into the future and saw opportunity. Today it produces more than 80% of the solar cells used around the world and two-thirds of the planet's electric vehicle batteries.

The world's supply chains from mining to refining to manufacturing and assembly run through China. It is dominant to the point of monopoly in entire sectors, and particularly those sectors which will be even more important in the future.

It is true that its entrepreneurs have done remarkable things, as we have seen most recently with Deep Seek. And it is also the case that Chinese entrepreneurs' success in things generally seen to be America's domain, such as social media and retail can be seen in the popularity in America of TikTok, Shein and Temu.

But it is the Chinese government that organised the strategy and industrial policy that produced these wins. It is the opposite of what is generally understood to be liberalisation, which is that the State largely does not intervene in the economy. The Chinese government's interventions are precisely the reason why the country is where it is and why its entrepreneurs have been able to shine.

This is the reason US stock and bond markets react violently to the impact of tariffs on only one nation in this war Trump has started and that is China.

China has the confidence to stand up to the US because it knows that what it has built through planning and work is difficult to replicate. And it has the comprehension that the world will depend on it no matter the decoupling fantasies of the people currently governing America.

(Aakar Patel is a writer and columnist)

people's edit

UNENDING SAGA

SANDHYA VASUDEV

My colleague once expressed that if not for her mother in law's support she would not have advanced in her career.

This was a new version of the "saas" for me, as from time immemorial the relationship between a girl and the mother in law (mil) has been generally a difficult one. It is not an exaggeration that the mil has either nursed the idea that the daughter-in-law (dil) is a free maid or an adversary out to snatch her son from her. Little wonder that the TV soaps depict the tradition rather than the exceptions. My mother had told me about an incident of the 1940s, where the neighbour's sole motto was to see that her dil did not sit idle for a moment. Once the harassed girl unexpectedly got the mil's permission to visit her mother's place. But as the girl was stepping out, the mil dropped a box of mustard seeds, which spread all over the floor, and ordered the girl to pick each one up before leaving!

The thought of being deprived of a maternal home visit made the girl plucky enough and she immediately took a large damp towel and gathered up the mustard, and in a trice put them into the box, even as the older woman's jaw fell apart. The girl rushed away before a word could be spoken proving that despair leads to innovation!

Recently I met a lady, well into her fifties, who expressed, "As a new bride, I had a mil who matched the aforementioned one in character. Once I was ordered to slit a mound of green chillies into small pieces when I was convalescing, that left my hands burning all over. Yet another time during my postpartum period she undertook to make a dish to restore my energy. Apart from dry fruits, the main ingredient was a copious amount of desiccated coconut, which entailed grating the coconut kernels for hours together. She heaped around ten-twelve such kernels and ordered me to grate them and rushed off to a neighbour's place for her daily dose of gossip. Being fatigued after a sleepless night with the two month baby, I absolutely had no energy to do the arduous work. It flashed to me that I could do the same with a mixie in a jiffy, so I cut the kernels into pieces and the mixie did the rest."

The Indian jugaad in action! I asked curiously, "What had the mil to say?" She replied, "Oh, she was irritated and expressed that it was an improper way of doing it, but the neighbour who had accompanied her supported me, looking at the infant in my arms."

Such tales may appear far-fetched in modern times where the dil may be matching swords. But for that lady in question it seems there is no respite as yet, for despite juggling a laudable career and domestic responsibilities exceptionally well, she is at the mercy of her aging mil, who, notwithstanding her frail physique, has maintained her whiplash-like tongue as strong as ever, never missing a chance to backbite about or berate her dil. Having sailed in the same boat, when I hear about a warm hearted mil, I really am impressed. Let such an unusual strain increase amongst us is all that I can say.

FDA's excellent work

The officers of Goa's Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) are doing a commendable job by raiding and shutting down food joints, sweet shops, bakeries and juice centres where the conditions are unhygienic, no proper storage facilities or do not have licences. They also check the artificial ripening of fruits since the chemicals are injurious to health (O Heraldo report dated April 13).

Food business operators, whether street vendors, in retail, distribution, storage, transport, catering, and manufacturing of food items; need to have trained food handlers.

The FDA has notified that for every 25 food handlers or less, there must be at least one trained and certified Food Safety Supervisor. Hence, the FDA conducts a course on Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) to ensure food safety and hygiene in the operating premises.

FoSTaC is an excellent initiative and should be strictly implemented by the FDA.

The FDA needs to approve and check events such as cake and wine making where tens of people participate. Do people wear gloves while mixing the cakes? Are the feet clean when people stomp on the grapes to make wine? What if someone has a contagious skin disease or is suffering from cold and cough during the event? Better still would be to stop such public events!

Besides food and drinks, the FDA could verify pharmaceutical products and prevailing conditions in the factory. People work to earn for food and depend on medicines when unwell, but if these basic necessities are contaminated then the FDA in every

letterstotheeditor

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

State needs to crack the whip and book those involved in adulterations.

In several countries, adulteration is a serious offence and punishment is severe that includes jail and monetary penalties.

Sridhar D'Iyer, Caranzalem

Parked vehicles can cause accidents

Two youth from Karnataka reportedly lost their lives in a road accident at Nandran, Mollem, on early Sunday morning after the two-wheeler they were riding rammed into a truck parked on the road after suffering a mechanical breakdown.

There have been numerous accidents reported wherein a speeding vehicle has dashed into the rear of a parked vehicle. It must be said that wrongly parked vehicles on the road can be as dangerous as a speeding vehicle as far as causing an accident is concerned.

There could be incidents when a four-wheeler or a heavy vehicle is parked at a blind turn due to a technical snag. This can prove very dangerous for vehicles speeding on the highway. At times branches of trees are displayed on the vehicle which has broken down on the road in order to warn other vehicles from imminent danger.

This step could prove to be too little too late as a speeding vehicle could have very little time to stop in order to prevent an accident. It is absolutely necessary to move the vehicle which has developed a mechanical break-

down to the road shoulder immediately.

The threat is all the more imminent if the breakdown takes place at night and the streetlights are either not functioning or absent. Even keeping the parking lights of the vehicle on may not prove adequate enough to prevent an accident.

If the vehicle cannot be moved to the side, then a towing vehicle needs to be requisitioned from the nearby police station. Traffic cops need to see to it that no vehicles are parked on the road which can be an obstruction to traffic movement.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

RTI Act weakened

The Union government has needlessly meddled with the Right to Information (RTI) Act by amending it through the implementation of the Data Protection Law.

Through the amendment, the government can decline any information relating to a person requested via RTI. Besides this, the government has also removed an important clause from the RTI Act which states that "information which cannot be denied to a Parliament or State legislature will not be denied to any person".

Although the original sections in the RTI Act balanced privacy and transparency while adding safeguards and ensuring accountability, the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) amendment only removes any such protections.

Over the years, the RTI has been slowly weakened due to unwarranted amendments, over-

reach of the executive and restrictive judicial interpretations.

Ever since its ratification, several attempts have been made to deliberately dilute this law and hamper access to information by the public.

In the administration and functioning of a democratic government, the right to access and seek information is a sine qua non for transparency, openness and accountability. Unless citizens are empowered with the right to ask questions, democracies cannot and will not survive. Said late Justice V R Krishna Iyer: "A government which functions in secrecy not only acts against democratic decency, but also buries itself with its own burial."

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai

Haemophilia merits attention and awareness

Frank Schnabel founded the World Federation of Haemophilia (WFH) and went on to be a trendsetter in creating an acute awareness about haemophilia and other bleeding disorders.

World Haemophilia Day is observed annually on April 17 (Schnabel's birthday) to heighten awareness among the discerning about haemophilia.

A genetic bleeding disorder, haemophilia has suffered from a dearth of knowledge. Haemophilia is a disorder where blood clotting is affected by the scarcity of clotting factors.

An excruciating pain, in and around the joints, is the dominant symptom. Since it is a genetic disorder, nothing can be

done to prevent haemophilia but much can be done to reduce its repercussions.

It's common in men, and women are mostly haemophilia carriers. Such women have a significant risk of giving birth to babies with haemophilia. Minor haemophilia may merit a mere observation. The life expectancy is relatively good for those with haemophilia if they receive treatment early with blood clotting factor replacements.

The "Royal disease" thought to have originated from Queen Victoria of England in 1837, indeed requires royal attention, care and management.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

Eliminate plastic pollution

The World Economic Forum predicts that by 2050, our oceans will contain more plastic than fish, leading to significant plastic consumption. As a fossil fuel product, plastic doesn't biodegrade but breaks down into particles that contaminate our food chain when ingested by fish. Furthermore, plastic waste in landfills pollutes groundwater with toxic chemicals.

Therefore, we must commit to ending plastic pollution daily as a simple and cost-effective way to protect our planet.

Celebrated annually on April 22, Earth Day began the modern environmental movement in 1970. It raises awareness and promotes action to protect our planet, with people engaging in clean-ups, tree planting, rallies, and educational programmes.

This year's Earth Day theme is "Our Power, Our Planet." Let's embrace this theme and eliminate plastic pollution together.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai