

O HERALDO

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A State without a shield

Another day, another brutal reminder that Goa's so-called "safety" is nothing but a fragile illusion. The recent armed robbery at a bungalow in Dona Paula has shaken the conscience of the state if there's any left. Burqa-clad assailants stormed the residence of a renowned businessman and his wife, beat up the sleeping security guard, bound and gagged the elderly couple, and looted Rs 70 lakh worth of gold along with Rs 2 lakh in cash. And how did our glorified protectors in khaki respond? With silence. With delay. With shameful negligence.

This incident didn't just expose the vulnerability of one household. It exposed the systemic rot in Goa's law enforcement and the staggering incompetence of our police force. What's worse? This robbery wasn't even reported until it went viral on social media. Yes, the police tried to suppress the news as if sweeping crime under the carpet makes it vanish. Shockingly, senior officers turned up a full *28 hours* after the robbery. If that doesn't scream dereliction of duty, what does?

This wasn't just a robbery. It was an indictment of everything wrong with Goa's policing. The Nagali Hills area, a well-known elite neighbourhood, has become a playground for criminals. No police patrolling for over two months. No deterrence. No presence. Just silence. Is this the price of prosperity?

Let's talk about the security guard. An elderly man, posted outside a millionaire's home, armed with nothing but hope. He was easily overpowered, beaten, and humiliated. And this is not an isolated case. Across Goa, security guards often retired, untrained, or desperate for a second income

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are thrown into the fire with zero preparation. No training, no weapons, no resistance tactics. Just a stick in hand and a prayer in heart.

Companies mint lakhs under the guise of providing "security services" and then hire the cheapest labour to maximise profits. These so-called guards don't stand a chance. It's like asking a child to hold back a tsunami. And where are the rules, the regulations, the minimum standards? Non-existent. The State is asleep while crime sharpens its knife.

Transferring 50 inspectors is a joke when the real power players remain untouched. Everyone knows why. Connections. Corruption. Cronyism. What we need is reform, not reshuffling. What we need is a force that serves the people. Not one that's busy escorting ministers, setting up pointless roadblocks, and collecting fines from helmetless riders while murderers, thieves, and goons roam free.

Let's not ignore the larger truth: Goa is on the edge of a law-and-order breakdown. Crimes are on the rise. Robberies in Panjim, break-ins in capital-adjacent areas, and now this daylight disaster in Dona Paula. What's left of the State's pride and security is crumbling faster than ever before.

And don't give us the tired excuse that "police can't be everywhere." True. But their fear can. Their presence must be felt even when they are physically absent. Criminals must think twice, not walk free. But right now? The police inspire no fear, no deterrence, no confidence. Just disappointment.

What's even more outrageous is the passive attitude of those in power. The government treats crime like a PR problem. Not a crisis. Statements are issued. Blame is shifted. But the rot continues. It's as if they've accepted that crime is just part of the landscape now.

This isn't just about Dempo's bungalow. This is about every home, every shop, every ATM, and every street in Goa that could be next. This is about every citizen who deserves better, but gets betrayal instead.

The police force must be rebuilt from the ground up. Training, accountability, patrolling, transparency. None of this is optional anymore. The security agency racket needs regulation. And political interference in policing must end. Now.

The Dona Paula robbery is not just a crime. It's a wake-up call. If the people of Goa don't demand radical change today, they better prepare to live behind bars tomorrow. Not to keep criminals out, but to keep fear in.

Twitter World

Fatima Bhutto @fbbhutto

Shashi Tharoor @ShashiTharoor

Pope Francis was the only public figure of conscience and compassion we had, the world is morally poorer without him. Even as he breathed his last breath, he spoke out for Gaza and called the parish daily to offer what comfort he could to Palestinians. I loved him and will pray.

A great loss to humanity. Pope Francis was a man of great compassion, breadth of knowledge and depth of experience, who brought a humane understanding to the problems of ordinary people around the world. May his great soul rest in peace.

comment



VASANT PEDNEKAR

Impact of online apps on students: Balancing progress and well-being

In an increasingly digitised world, online applications have transformed education from a classroom-bound experience into an interactive, borderless phenomenon. From mobile phones to tablets and laptops, students are more connected than ever before. This integration of technology into the educational landscape has enabled real-time learning, global collaboration, and access to a plethora of knowledge. Apps like Google Classroom, BYJU'S, Duolingo, Khan Academy, and others are guiding students across age groups and academic levels.

With this sweeping digital transformation comes a new set of challenges that are changing not just how students learn, but also how they think, behave, and feel. The benefits of online applications are clear: increased flexibility, greater resource accessibility, and a personalised learning environment. But the disadvantages, too, are increasingly evident: reduced attention spans, mental fatigue, addiction to screens, and significant behavioural changes.

As educators, parents, policymakers, and citizens concerned with the future of our youth, we must pause and assess: Are online apps truly benefiting our students in a holistic sense? Or are they quietly reshaping young minds in ways we do not fully understand?

This article explores these complex dynamics through the lens of a study conducted among students in Mormugao taluka, supported by existing research, expert opinions, and real-life student testimonies. It aims to strike a balance between enthusiasm for digital progress and the need to address its impact on student well-being.



The 21st-century classroom is a far cry from the blackboard-and-chalk setting of the past. Today, a student can learn algebra through interactive videos, practice English with AI chatbots, and conduct virtual science experiments—all without stepping into a school. Educational apps have democratised learning, allowing students in rural areas to access resources that were the privilege of elite urban schools.

"These apps helped me catch up during the pandemic when I couldn't attend mathematics classes," shared Shreyash Parab, a second-year college student. "Without them, I might have fallen behind."

Yet, the same students reported spending over four hours a day on non-academic apps, with social media and online games being the primary culprits. The behavioural implications of such usage patterns are immense. While one half

of their screen time is spent on productive learning, the other half drags them into endless scrolling, gaming loops, and superficial content consumption.

Students are not just using technology; they are being shaped by it—their habits, attention spans, social interactions and mental health are being moulded by these digital interfaces.

Apps like Coursera, Unacademy, and Google Classroom have made significant contributions to academic learning, catering to multiple learning styles—visual, auditory, kinesthetic—through videos, quizzes, gamified modules, and interactive interfaces. During Covid, these platforms proved indispensable as traditional schooling came to a halt. Students continued learning, submitting assignments, and appearing for exams from their homes.

The line between learning and distraction is thin. The same device that hosts a math app also pings with TikTok updates. A YouTube tutorial often ends with a recommendation for music videos or vlogs. Multitasking becomes the norm, not the exception.

"Sometimes I attend a class while scrolling Instagram," admitted Samia Jakati, B Com Third Year student. "It feels like I'm managing both, but in reality, I miss out on important points."

Numerous studies suggest that multitasking reduces information retention and impairs the ability to apply knowledge critically. Students may appear engaged on-screen but are mentally absent.

The need of the hour is not more educational apps, but more structured guidance on how to use them effectively. Schools and colleges must take the lead in teaching digital discipline.

The behavioural shift triggered by excessive app usage is perhaps the most visible yet least acknowledged aspect of the digital era. Instagram, Snapchat, and Discord have become modern-day hangout spots. While they offer social connectivity, they also breed comparison, isolation, and sometimes even bullying.

In the study, students reported changes in their sleep cycles, reduced physical activity, and shorter attention spans. Many confessed to checking their phones first thing in the morning and last before sleeping. The need to stay connected is leading to app dependency, bordering on addiction.

"There are days when I feel like I can't function without checking my phone every few minutes," said Natasha, an undergraduate student. "It's exhausting but hard to stop."

Apps designed to be engaging end up becoming entrapping. Notifications, endless scrolling, and dopamine-triggering designs make it difficult for students to disengage. What starts as a five-minute break often turns into hours of mindless consumption.

Behaviourally, this leads to procrastination, reduced interpersonal communication skills, and an erosion of real-world social etiquette. Students who enjoyed team sports or reading now prefer isolated screen time. This has

far-reaching consequences for personality development.

Mental health is the silent casualty in the digital education boom. According to global studies, students with high screen time report more symptoms of anxiety and depression.

The reason is not just academic pressure but also the psychological design of non-academic apps. Social media presents idealised images of life, fuelling insecurities and lowering self-esteem. Constant peer comparison, fear of missing out, and the need for online validation are becoming stressors.

"Seeing my friends post about their achievements constantly made me feel like I wasn't doing enough," shared Deepak, a B Com student. "It affected my confidence."

Even academic apps can cause anxiety, especially when deadlines, grades, and assignments are visible and tracked. Students feel perpetually on display, their progress (or lack of it) being measured in real-time.

Some students are using apps like Headspace and Calm to manage stress. These apps promote mindfulness, offer guided meditations, and help regulate emotions. Their growing popularity shows that technology can also be a part of the solution—if used with intention.

One of the promises of online apps is to make education accessible to all. But this promise falls flat in the face of the digital divide. Not all students have high-speed internet, modern devices, or digital literacy. In low-income households, children often share a single smartphone among siblings or lack a stable internet connection.

The very apps meant to equalise learning are reinforcing existing inequalities. Students who have better access perform better, while others lag. This gap becomes academic, social, and eventually, economic.

"I had to borrow my neighbour's phone to attend some classes," said Ram (Name Changed). "I felt embarrassed and left out when I couldn't complete assignments on time."

Government schemes, public-private partnerships, and community-led efforts can bridge this gap. Providing free data packs, affordable tablets, and community Wi-Fi zones can go a long way in levelling the playing field.

The key question is not whether we should use online apps, but how we should use them. If wielded wisely, these tools can become powerful allies in the quest for knowledge and growth. But without regulation, reflection, and responsibility, they can become stumbling blocks that hinder holistic development.

Let us champion a digital culture that values well-being as much as it does achievement. Let us build an educational ecosystem where technology is a bridge, not a barrier.

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people's edit

COMPLIMENTING WORKS WELL DONE

JOSE MARIA MIRANDA

In a State or system, where good governance seem to be words unknown to our rulers, where law and order issues, drug proliferation, murders, unnatural deaths, suicides, deaths on the roads or by drowning, etc, are regular occurrences, with an insensitive government paying little or no attention, good and laudable decisions or steps are an exception and should not be ignored or go unnoticed.

I have been extremely critical of the government for the complete breakdown of governance and consequent mess the State is in, with the CM behaving like a peacock as if everything is fine. But, today let me compliment the establishment for some exceptionally good works executed. It is no secret and everyone acknowledges it that every government project or work is sub-standard, with hardly any transparency in tenders or amounts spent. We blame contractors, but generally they are blameless for reasons, we all know.

On a walk from Mathany Saldanha Complex in Margao, I was happy to observe that the work of building the footpath was well executed and appears to be a good structure, on the side of main road, though, on the side of the drain, the work appears shabby and may not last long. It was also a pleasure to see that the drain on the northern side of the complex is being covered with good slabs, which will take away the stench, which passers-by and visitors to offices were subjected to, and which was tolerated by the Collectors for too long. Contrast these with those around the garden and elsewhere, executed by MMC. Even in other areas in Margao, where new footpaths are constructed, the job is badly done.

I must also register my appreciation that the generally hot mixing of roads in Fatorda constituency is well done and lasts longer than other roads in Margao. I am not insinuating anything, but that is a fact which could be vouched by the residents. When I asked an Engineer of PWD, he told me that it is because of the interest shown both by engineers and Councillors of the area. I could only wish that the same happens in Margao and councillors of the respective areas take similar interest.

Various roads in Margao and Fatorda are being dug so frequently, especially for sewage, that Margao city resembles a big cemetery. Whereas in Margao constituency, the sewage manhole is closed, leaving it much higher than the road level, perhaps awaiting a fresh coat of hotmix, in due course. Meanwhile, if someone hits the manhole on a bike, it seems to be the victim and his family's problem, with irresponsible and insensitive rulers around.

In contrast, big trenches on St Joaquim Road were dug for sewage work and surely everyone appreciated that the dug stretch has been closed, taking special care to ensure that both the trench and the manhole are kept at the road level. Care, however, needs to be taken to ensure that the road doesn't sink after the rains, as no curing seems to have been done. Must really commend the contractor and the supervisor, though there are still some manholes to be resurfaced.

Hope these few lines will encourage and motivate contractors and engineers to ensure that roads are resurfaced keeping the levels, so that speeding motorists and even pedestrians are safe and we see our roads less soiled with the blood of our fellowmen.

Mysterious moves at Malim

This is reference to reports published in O Herald edition dated April 19, during a special meeting of the Penha de Franca panchayat on April 13, the people strongly objected to a jetty project at Malim, sanctioned to a Mumbai-based company.

The Rs 8-crore project was issued an NOC through the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) portal for the construction of jetties or terminals. The company claims that there would be 14 or 15 floating pontoons for yachts. The Captain of Ports denied issuing any NOC for the project. The company's representative in Goa admitted that the proposed site is opposite the run-down Tourism Department premises, beneath the Mandovi Bridge and is not for a marina. The Tourism Minister claims to have learnt about the project through the media. Finally, there

letterstotheeditor

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is a board on the site proclaiming it to be a private property.

There seems to be so many twists and turns and undercurrents in the mysterious affair, then in the Mandovi River! Only when something concrete comes up would the people know as to whether the project is for a marina, pontoons, resort, house, apartments or may be a land casino. Hopefully, the authorities would crack the mystery, if they are interested to get to the bottom of the truth.

Sridhar D'Iyer, Caranzalem

Abandoned vehicles

South Goa District Magistrate, Egna Cleetus, has issued a proclamation to dispose of around 115 abandoned/unclaimed vehicles in Margao and Vasco via auction, should the owners fail to

submit their claims.

These vehicles are breeding grounds for mosquitoes, which cause a rise in vector-borne diseases, leading to health hazards for the general public. The abandoned vehicles within the jurisdiction of Margao are causing obstruction, inconvenience, and potential hazards to the public.

I welcome the same as a good move (should it be implemented effectively), but I wonder why this is not covering the villages as well?

In Colva, for instance there are numerous abandoned vehicles including (at least one commercial vehicle) within just a few metres of Colva Village Panchayat (near the wall of a Government Primary School and very close to Infant Jesus School!) Is this not a health hazard to the school students (as breeding ground for mosquitoes)

particularly now with the monsoon's approaching!

I hope the relevant authorities address this menace sooner rather than later; in the villages as well!

Arwin Mesquita, Colva

Decline in cashew production

Summer is synonymous with the cashew season in Goa. The cashew season is packed with the summer extract of niro, urrack and one of the strongest drinks, feni. This crop provides livelihood to many Goans who survive on just the produce till the next season. With irrigation, the plantation can give up to 30 percent higher yield. However, over the years there has been a steady decline in the production of this summer fruit for various rea-

sons. This year one can hardly find any cashew apples being sold in the market. However the markets are flooded with bottles of niro which is the first distillate of the cashew fruit. This makes one wonder whether this drink enjoyed by Goans is really made from cashew apple or is a flavoured drink. The Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) which has of late been conducting raids on several eateries and other manufacturing units needs to investigate how the drink sold in the market as 'niro' is being produced. Be that as it may.

Unfortunately, there have been incidents wherein cashew plantations have been destroyed in fire. Since Goa's cashew production is far below the national average, it is learnt that the Goa Forest Development Corporation (GFDC) will take up rejuvenation of nearly 1,780 hectares of cashew plantation in the coming three years which is the need of the hour.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco