

# O HERALDO

## Don't limit village child committees to paper

The directorate of panchayats, in a recent order, has asked all block development officers in the state to make sure that village child committees are not only formed but also remain functional in each village panchayat. The order comes on the heels of rising incidence of crimes against children in Goa, which the government, by way of village child committees, hopes to address.

In truth, the directorate of panchayats shouldn't have had to issue the order because it is compulsory, under the Goa Children's Act, 2003, for each village panchayat to constitute a village child committee to protect the rights of children and promote conducive environments for them to discuss the problems they face and to help find a resolution to these.

The matter gained prominence following the brutal murder of a six-year-old girl by her father at Macasana in Salcete, and the assault of a 10-year-old boy with a steel rod by his mother at their home in Bordem, Bicholim.

If one is to understand the role of a village child committee, it is important to first understand the definition of a child. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as, "Every human being below the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier". According to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, a child, "by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth".

Therefore, a village child committee should adhere to core child protection principles such as the best interest of the child, child participation, confidentiality, non-discrimination, coordination and collaboration, and accountability. In case of a problem, it should consider the possible solutions that would promote the child's care and development and opt for the solution which protects the child's best interests under the circumstances.

Child participation, on the other hand, involves the provision of opportunities to children to express the opinions freely and to give these opinions due weightage by taking into consideration the child's age and maturity when taking decisions that could affect their lives. Actively involving children in village child committees can increase awareness in their young minds about their rights within the committee and the community they live in too.

In case of an issue, village child committees must prioritise children's needs and opinions in decisions where a solution may appear to be in conflict or compete with the needs of caregivers in particular or the community in general. Such committees should also inform children about their right to participate and facilitate opportunities for meaningful participation, invite children or representatives of children's clubs to the committee meetings, allow children to raise concerns whenever necessary and work with them to develop and implement plans to address the concerns raised.

Village child committees can also contribute greatly to make arrangements for children with disabilities to participate in consultations and activities, to ensure that there is a balance of diversity, especially in gender, and to empower and provide equal opportunities for both girls and boys to participate in activities.

When problems arise, it is binding on the village child committee concerned to protect information and ensure that it is only shared after explicit permission of the child and/or his/her family is obtained. Committees are also expected to withhold identification information from anyone not directly involved with the child, including information shared during informal conversations.

Adult members of the village child committees should also ensure that the intervention to help one child does not cause conflict between individuals, families and communities, and expose the child and his or her family to further harm such as revenge or violence. Particularly, children who disclose abuse should be referred to the relevant officials who are responsible for the care and protection of children.

The committees are also expected to ensure confidentiality, follow up on referred cases, close low risk cases in a timely manner, ensure actions do not harm the child, and implement the annual action plan it chalks out. Good relationships with government agencies and other stakeholders must be maintained and information must be shared regularly.

A great concept it may be, but it is binding on the government and its relevant authorities to ensure that village child committees are set up in right earnest and function to their fullest if our young population is to be protected and given a voice of their own. Else, it will turn out to be just another great intervention only on paper which is thought about only in times of tragedies and injustices inflicted upon children.



BINAYAK DATTA

We must remember in silence the innocent 26, we lost in the Greens of That Valley, let's remember the local unsung youngsters, the pony-riders the Syed Adil Hussains never for a moment looked back, went all out to help and never returned!



The Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan co-signed also by the World Bank is the charter for Water Allocation, Dispute Resolution, Financial Contribution and Data Sharing (eg. fore-warning of floods and droughts) between the parties, with regard to the Indus Water. As on date, we are well within our allocations of our share. In fact, we can

No other village than this, keeps reminding me of "Everywhere was singing, all over the house was singing, and outside the house was alive with singing, and the very air was song", as Huw Morgan narrates adoringly of his tiny village "Gilfach Goch" of the Edwardian South-East Wales in Richard Llewellyn's "How Green Was my Valley"! And then...the AK47s and M4s cruelly shatter the tranquility, terror reigns supreme for a nightmarish half-an-hour, slaughtering 26 innocent unsuspecting, unprotected, revealing tourists on the lush greens of Baisaran, Pahalgam in full view of the social media.

I don't intend spending time in finding faults today, the Union Government having already spoken out on lapses in security and I'm quite sure adequate corrective actions would follow in time. I let the matter rest. Let's look at: a) The Indian response and impacts foreseen; b) The Pak retaliation and impacts foreseen; c) The Economy after all this; d) The Global Community and its support; and the way ahead!

**a) The Indian response:** India's reactions came the very next day. A crisp four-point proclamation: i) The Indus Water Treaty 1960, be held in "Abeance" until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism; ii) The Attari Checkpost shuts immediately; iii) Inactivation of visas of most categories held by Pak visitors here in India and iv) Downgrading and downsizing the Pak diplomatic offices in India.

take much more. To consume or store more, we need more investments in infrastructure which are already in the pipelines. That needs fast-tracks to productively use the water now wasted downstream excess of our past allocated share on to the Arabian Sea and to the hinterlands in between.

This position will improve with better desilting of the link-canal and the catchments. Moreover, the Indus and the Sutlej actually have their origins in Tibet. There is a China angle also looming outside this treaty!

I do not think therefore there would be an effective impact as the situation stands today. What can stop is the data sharing part as of now, but yes in the long-term, water is as important as it is, and there are needs say, in Rajasthan and Haryana for the paper Industry and for strengthening the Yamuna in Eastern Haryana.

The other diplomatic actions are already in place and they would play their roles effectively as neighbours being shown their places!

**b) The Pak response:** The usual denial mode, they state they have "no connections with the terrorist groups" in Kashmir, they close the Wagah Border, block overflights of Indian Aircraft, suspend all trade with India and suspend all Bilateral Treaties eg. the Shimla pact and more!

I don't know what they gain by blocking over-flights, other than plain harassments to the already harrowed passenger having done an eight-hour travel belted to his seat having paid more for rerouting his ticket. Whom are they targeting really?

**The Shimla Agreement 1972:** This agreement laid down that bilateral issues would be settled by the two nations through bilateral negotiations or by other peaceful means as mutually to be decided; Non-interference in each other's internal affairs and the Line of Control shall be honored and not unilaterally altered.

By the act of suspending this agreement, the bilateral machinery would be put to rest and Pakistan could cry help of a third party for a settlement. Also, understand, if the veil of the LOC is lifted, the entire Border issue could be up for re-negotiation or hostilities and isn't it open for marchers to march thru to the POK and Gilgit & Baltistan? I seriously doubt the wisdom in this action of theirs!

That would of course mean hostility, complicated now by the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), but now with an internationally acceptable excuse!

Scrapping the other Treaties like "Prevention of Inadvertent Nuclear attacks" and "Pre-Notification of Ballistic Missile Testing" could spell veritable dangers to the whole world, similarly the cooperation on drug trafficking being swept away!

The two shots they fired on their own feet are the one on Maritime Disasters and the one on Telecom Links! Nobody loses more than Pakistan themselves!

**c) The economy and its impacts:** Whereas bilateral trade impacts are not significant, there could be disruptions in future trade through South Asia in areas of regional integration like the TAPI Gas Pipeline. Defence spendings could stifle Viksit Bharat time-lines. Losses in Investor Sentiments, particularly FDI's, Tourism and Aviation.

**d) The global community and its support:** Whilst every nation which will issue a Statement, did issue a Statement unequivocally condemning the act of perpetrating this horrific incident - I should have seen more nations condemning Pakistan (even indirectly) for participation in its heinous program of cross-border terrorism. Very few seemed to have even cared to notice the trashing up of the Nuclear Apocalypse and Drug Trafficking open-door possibilities arising from the junking of the two agreements I explained. The question here is reaching out with data and numbers to nations with meaningful support, particularly those with veto-powers at the UNSC.

I think an outreach programme is fast called for in this area! At least for Israel, France, Japan, Australia, UAE and Saudi Arabia. France holds a veto at the UNSC.

And before I part, whilst we must remember in silence the innocent 26, we lost in the Greens of That Valley, let's remember the local unsung youngsters, the pony-riders the Syed Adil Hussains never for a moment looked back, went all out to help and never returned!

Let the guilty of this anti-humanity crime not get lost in the maze of shameful divisive narratives!

(Binayak Datta is a finance professional)

## Of bursting pipelines and water scarcity

A major water pipeline reportedly burst along the main road in Nuvem on Monday that led to the wastage of thousands of litres of water. It has led to flooding, disruption of traffic and wastage of large amounts of drinking water.

This is one of the numerous incidents of pipelines bursting that have been reported in the state in the recent past. The bursts have been linked to ongoing construction work, including underground cable installation and the laying of new water pipelines.

We are in the middle of the hot summer season which has significantly deplete precious water sources due to increased evaporation and higher water usage.

This can lead to lower ground-water levels and drying of rivers and lakes with potential challenges for agriculture. Rapid population growth, urbanisation, and industrialization are putting stress on water resources. In Goa, reservoir levels in key dams have been rapidly depleting. Many reservoirs in the state have fallen below 40% capacity. However the government has stated that current water reserves are sufficient for 150 days and that residents will not face drinking water shortage.

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## letterstotheeditor

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

pattern has become unpredictable which could even lead to a delay in the arrival of the South West monsoon.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

## Rattled Pak engaging in war mongering rhetoric

In the wake of Pahalgam attack, Pakistan have issued warnings about possible Indian military action. Those occupying the responsible ministerial positions in Pakistan are resorting to cheap war-mongering. Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Railway Minister Hanif Abbasi have raised the spectre of a nuclear conflict amid heightened tension between the two countries. In response to the escalating situation, both nations have taken reciprocal measures. India has suspended the Indus Waters Treaty and expelled Pakistani diplomats, while Pakistan has closed its airspace to Indian flights and suspended the Simla Agreement.

By raising the nuclear bogie, Pakistani leaders may hope to attract the attention of the global powers and persuade them to intervene in the matter. As of now, it appears that South Asia is facing a serious threat owing to the politically motivated and highly provocative environment being created by both nations.

The international community has expressed deep concern over

the rising tensions urging both the warring nations to exercise restraint and engage in dialogue to prevent further escalation. The rabble-rouser ministers must therefore avoid such irresponsible statements that may bring the two neighbours closer to the much-dreaded nuclear threshold.

Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai

## Of science, religion and peaceful coexistence

If an opinion contrary to your own makes you angry, it is a sign that you are subconsciously aware of having no valid reason for thinking as you do. If a friend claims that three plus three is seven, or that Greenland is situated on the equator, you should feel pity rather than anger, unless you know so little of mathematics or geography that your colleague's opinion shakes your own belief.

The most drawn out and toxic controversies are about issues regarding which there is no credible or definitive evidence either way eg. is there an entity such as God who controls us and our actions. Persecution, victimhood and gas lighting is used in religion and matters of faith, not in mathematics and science because the latter two fields are knowledge led, but the former is only driven by subjective opinion, dogma and might I say

drivel. Whenever you find yourself getting worked up about a difference of opinion, pause and take a step back. Using the tools of logic and introspection you will probably find that your belief is going beyond what the evidence warrants. But it is scary how the politicians today have hijacked the agendas of both science and religion, if they need your opinion they wouldn't solicit it, they will give it to you. One is just not capable of independent thought, you are indoctrinated into hating each other for no reason.

Choose science over faith, logic over subjective belief, brotherhood over bigotry; in this world riven by war and strife give peace a chance.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaullim

## Keep Chinese firms at an arm's length

Our industry moghuls like Mukesh Ambani and Sunil Mittal should cease and desist from tying up with Chinese Cos like Haier and offer them easy access into the India market or provide them strategic assistance to beat international trade restrictions.

It is not all about money when it comes to trade with China and we should take into account the overall context of our relations with them including the border tensions before we offer them

people's *edit*

## SERGIO CARVALHO – A PASSIONATE FIGHTER FOR GOA

JOSE MARIA MIRANDA

The passing of Sergio Carvalho, on Sunday 27th, removes from our midst an ardent and intrepid fighter for many causes, affecting Goa. Though he had settled in Mapusa, he hailed from an important family in the village of Betalbatim, which he chose to be his final resting place.

I had known Sergio from early 60s, when he and I were studying at Chowgule College in Margao. Sergio was an intellectual with a good academic record, he participated in various activities especially in debates, which were a regular feature then in the College. Alongwith many of us, he was over-active during the Opinion Poll campaign, although some of us had not attained majority and were not entitled to vote. I also recall that the youth of the college and some other citizens had promoted a protest in Margao Municipal garden against a remark made by a MGP Minister calling us "second class citizens". Some participants were also detained for a while.

Sergio's love for Goa and his tenacious activism led him to take up very forcefully the opposition to Government's tourism policy and unplanned development, which he felt would sound the death knell to Goa. He fought shoulder to shoulder alongwith Mathany Saldanha in defence of the rights of the fishermen. There was no agitation in Goa, which was alien to Sergio. He was passionate about environment and was always vocal on the damage being caused to it, promoted or supported by our rulers.

Another facet of his activity was his devotion to teaching. It was really heartening to read the testimonies of many of his past students at Nirmala College of Education, who spoke warmly of Prof Sergio's amiable nature and style of teaching, which endeared him to his colleagues and pupils alike.

Sergio, like many of us, felt very strongly about the denial of special rights and privileges to Goans, to which they were entitled, after Goa's merger with India in 1961. Very rightly, he felt that many of the problems Goa faced wouldn't have existed, had safeguards been provided. Sadly, some physical disabilities kept him away from vigorous activism, which deprived us from his wise counsel and tenacity, which he earlier displayed in abundance.

Sergio and I shared the same views and ideas about Goa and his regular visits to me, some years back, whenever he was on his trips to Salcete, were always a pleasure and I will cherish them for many years to come. Talking to me about a prominent late lawyer from Margao, who had serious differences with the Portuguese Government in Goa and later about Goa's occupation, and whom we both had known well, Sergio once lamented: I don't know why God made Antonio Bruto da Costa blind and me deaf, depriving us from our genuine pursuits. Sergio wrote a book, which he told me would be titled "Cry beloved Goa, cry". We hope that though posthumously, the book will soon come to light.

In the death of Sergio Carvalho, Goa loses a valiant fighter for all good causes, a passionate lover of Goa and a dedicated pioneer in activism, who, though disabled for some years, was still an inspiration to many of us who feel that Goa deserves better.

Rest in peace, dear friend.

trade conveniences. In fact, we should ban all trade with China. It is not understood why our government is not doing that?

Imagine with China already under pressure from the US with the high levies of import tariff and if we had stopped trade with them, China would have been isolated with only the rest of the world markets to access.

This would have put a severe pressure on their economy. Is this not the way you deal with your enemy? If we freeze trade with China, you will find them becoming more amenable to us on other matters. Wars are today also fought on the economic plains and China is an enemy. We should therefore make every effort to defeat them not help them survive and flourish.

In Haier's offer of controlling equity in its India operations to local investors, China is just attempting to circumvent the high tariffs imposed on them by the USA lately in trying to locate apparently locally owned manufacturing in India.

When it comes to Haier, the technology is not so much high end and hence given the financial clout that Reliance and Airtel possess, they can easily establish such manufacturing within India in a short time on their own. There is therefore no need to buy-in into Haier's India operations. One hopes that better sense will prevail with Ambani and Mittal. They need to think about the nation and not just increasing the size of their coffers.

Srinivas Kamat, Mysore