

# Herald Cafe



SENSORY WELLNESS: HOW TOUCH, SMELL, AND SOUND CAN HEAL THE BODY



SUMMER SKINCARE ROUTINE: PROTECT, HYDRATE, & CLEANSE



## Study away from home: Students settle into college life in Goa

Each year, Goa welcomes a steady stream of students from across India. Though the transition to a new state brings with it challenges, many students gradually find a sense of belonging

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Krishna Kasera, a native of Lucknow and a student at BITS Pilani's Goa campus, died by suicide recently in his hostel room. A probe is currently underway. Just days before his death, Krishna had spoken with student counsellors on campus.

Arjun Harmalkar, Chief Manager of Public Relations at BITS Pilani, shared, "Krishna was a dual degree student pursuing an MSc in Chemistry and a BE in Electronics and Instrumentation. Mental health is still not talked about enough, but it's something everyone struggles with in some form. Details of sessions remain confidential and are

only shared with a nominated individual, or the head of the institution if intervention is deemed necessary."

With many students relocating from different parts of the country to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate programs in Goa, the challenges of living away from home—combined with academic pressure—can weigh heavily. While hostel life provides a shared space, students often face emotional isolation. Yet, there is a silver lining. One positive aspect is that students tend to quickly build friendships with their classmates. That initial support system can make a big difference in helping them cope.

### MOVING TO GOA FOR ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Students often come from states like Bihar, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana, to study in Goa while completing their undergraduate degrees and postgraduate studies.

"A majority of students opt for university hostels due to budget constraints. Not everyone can afford to rent privately, so they rely on hostel facilities. The most common concerns we hear are about hostel conditions and food," says Dhruv.

But students often feel comfortable enough to share these issues, especially when they have a good rapport with their teachers. The university ensures that mental health support is available. "We do have university counsellors and make sure students know where to go if they need help. We pass on the message that there is always someone available to talk," says Dhruv.

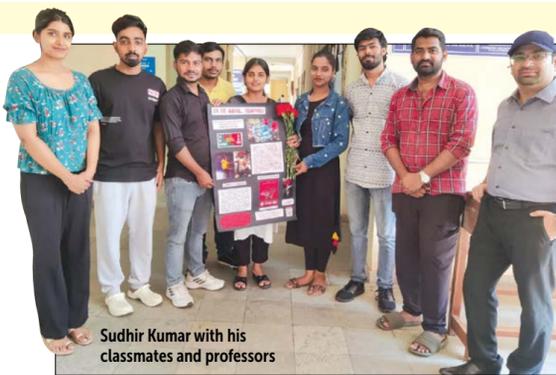
### WHEN GOA BECOMES A SECOND HOME

When Sudhir Kumar arrived in Goa from Bihar to pursue a BA in Portuguese, he wasn't quite sure what to expect. Initially, the quiet environment felt a little boring, but the natural beauty of the campus quickly won him over. Interested in studying a foreign language, he explored options at universities in Delhi such as JNU and DU, but a conversation in Delhi led him to discover Goa. Once in Goa, he slowly began to build a new support system. Although he made only a few close friends, their kindness made a significant difference.

"My friends here are very supportive. Some even bring me homemade food. I've been to

their houses and had Goan fish curry and chicken curry. I never really felt homesick because of them."

He adds that the professors at Goa University played a key role in his positive experience. "The faculty is very friendly. Some of my teachers give great advice and always make time to listen. One piece of advice at the right time can go a long way," he said. Now, he's applied for the Master's program



Sudhir Kumar with his classmates and professors

in Portuguese at the same university and plans to return in June for revision. Having explored

places like Vasco and Margao, Goa has become much more than just a place to study.

### FINDING LASTING FRIENDSHIPS

Vivek Saini from Haryana, spent three years studying in Goa and is now back home looking for job opportunities. "My uncle, who was also my senior at the University, suggested I take up a course in Goa. Knowing he was here made the transition easier. If I ever missed home, I could always talk to him."

"Ros omelette became a favourite. Before leaving, I made sure to eat it one last time," he recalls with a smile. Despite being in a new state, the student says he never struggled with language or

Vivek Saini with his friends in Goa



social barriers. "People here are friendly, especially your classmates. It was easy to talk to them and make friends. Language was never a problem." Now, as he looks back on his time in Goa, he's grateful for the memories, friendships, and support that helped him grow far from home.

### HELPING OUTSTATION STUDENTS SETTLE IN

Vaishali Kerker has been a student counsellor at Government College, Sanguem for the past three years. One student from Kerala, had initially struggled with homesickness, sharing a rented room near the college with a classmate.

"The biggest challenges are often language barriers and adjusting to food. Still, many adapt with time, especially if they're focused on their studies."

Students who are deeply dedicated to their education tend to stay immersed in academics, which reduces the space for homesickness. However, personal stress, isolation, and mental health issues still

surface. "Teachers often refer students to me when they notice signs of sadness or withdrawal. Some even accompany the students, creating a safe space for them to open up," she says.

Vaishali observes that many students rely heavily on AI tools like ChatGPT—even for simple communication. "Some students feel inferior in class because of economic disparities. They compare themselves to peers from better financial backgrounds and develop self-doubt. The good thing is that students are opening up, whether it's to me or to teachers they trust," she adds.

### SWIPE RIGHT

#### Kendrick Lamar leads 2025 BET Awards with 10 nods

BET has revealed its nominees for the 25th annual BET Awards with Kendrick Lamar leading with 10 nominations. Hip-hop artists Doechii, Future, GloRilla and Lamar's lyrical nemesis Drake, are next with six nominations each. Lamar received a nomination for album of the year for GNX and video of the year for 'Not Like Us,' as well as three viewer's choice award nods for 'Not Like Us,' 'Luther,' featuring SZA, and 'Like That' with Future & Metro Boomin, and an additional three nods for best collaboration for 'Like That,' '30 for 30' and 'Luther.' The ceremony will be held at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles on June 9.



#### A\$AP Rocky spills some tea about baby No 3's name

A\$AP Forever rapper, Rakim Mayers, shares sons RZA, 2, and Riot, 22 months, with the 'Umbrella' singer Rihanna shared some insight into their approach to naming their baby on the way. Seth Meyers congratulated Rocky on the baby news and inquired about some naming details. "Your first two kids have 'R' names, obviously you and Rihanna have 'R' names," Seth said. "Is this a lock that the third will have an 'R' name, do you think?" In response, the 36-year-old confirmed that the new baby's name would begin with an 'R,' sharing, "For sure." Rihanna showed off her growing baby bump at the 2025 Met Gala where Rocky served as one of the co-chairs.



Keith Urban and Nicole Kidman arrive at the 2025 Academy of Country Music Awards at The Star in Frisco, Texas

# Beware: The 'Gram' can kill you

Desperation for social media validation, tying one's self-worth to likes and followers, and the growing fear of losing them -- all of could be behind 24-year-old content creator Misha Agrawal's recent suicide. Have we stooped so low as to let these shallow metrics define our self-worth?



### HEARTS DON'T MEAN LOVE

In this era of the digital world, mere likes are mistaken for love, and the engagement one receives from these platforms is taken for emotional connection. "As a parenting creator, my content often comes from a personal space. So when someone likes, shares, or especially comments on their situation, it does feel like a connection. But you also need the maturity to differentiate between real-world bonds and social media engagement. Engagement can feel like love, but they aren't a substitute for real relationships," said Stuti Agarwal, an influencer and a journalist.

Elsa Angel Rose

The recent demise of Misha Agrawal, a young content creator, on Instagram is one of the innumerable

incidents that make us ruminate deeply on the detrimental effects of social media, especially Instagram. Likes are mistaken for love, and engagement for emotional connections.

### WHY DID MISHA TAKE HER LIFE?

Misha Agrawal was a 24-year-old entrepreneur and content creator on Instagram who tragically took her own life just two days before turning 25. A couple of days after her demise, her elder sister took to Instagram to share that social media had consumed her sister. The post read, "My baby sister had built her world around Instagram and her followers with a single goal of reaching one million followers and gaining loving fans. When her followers started decreasing, she became distraught and felt worthless. Since April, she has been deeply depressed, often hugging me, crying, and saying, 'Jijja, what will I do if my followers decrease? My career will be over.' It is heart-breaking what happened to Misha, but it makes us ask—how can we truly know if the people behind these screens are okay?"



### OBSESSION WITH LIKES AND FOLLOWERS

The majority of influencers are obsessed with the number of likes and followers they get. "If the likes are more, it's great, that means people are connecting with your content, and if it's not, then also it's okay for me, it doesn't make a difference," said Cecille Rodrigues, an activist who is also an influencer. Stuti said, "This is a business, just like any other. If a shopkeeper worries about fewer walk-ins, we worry when our reach drops. It

directly affects visibility, collaborations, and growth. So yes, it matters." She further elaborated that likes and followers are not just numbers but indicators of how well her content is resonating with her audience.



### ASSOCIATION OF SELF-WORTH WITH LIKES

It's unfortunate that in today's world, self-worth and dignity are often tied to likes and followers. "For us, performance shows up as numbers—followers, likes, reach. While self-worth shouldn't be dependent on them, it does affect our emotions," said Stuti. Letting something as shallow as faceless opinions of people affect one's life is a plight. She further added that "As an experienced creator, I can just tell you that you learn to manage it better with time and experience."

### PASSION OVER VALIDATION

"I've seen some of my best work get barely any traction, and then suddenly a random reel goes viral. Social media validation isn't something I seek or need. I've been creating content long before Instagram even existed—across different platforms and in different formats. Instagram just happens to be the platform I use right now. At the end of the day, the platform isn't what defines you. It's your passion, your consistency, and the life you live that truly matter," said Flexicia D'Souza, a travel content creator on Instagram. Tackling the toxicity of Instagram requires a conscious effort to maintain mental well-being in the face of unrealistic standards and constant comparisons.

