

O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Goa's alarming road crisis

Every year, over 350 people lose their lives in road accidents across Goa. This is not just a statistic. It is a silent epidemic claiming lives in our neighbourhoods, our families, and threatening future generations. Despite repeated promises and campaigns, the State has failed to stem this rising tide of preventable deaths.

During the recent 8th UN Global Road Safety Week, a sobering statistic emerged from a traffic warden training programme jointly conducted by GOACAN and the Goa Traffic Police: 95 people died in road accidents in just the first 131 days of 2025. That means one death every 33 hours. We don't need more evidence; we need action.

It is true that not every road death can be blamed directly on the government. But when nearly 60% of these fatalities are young people between 20 and 40, and most are due to rash driving, lack of helmets, or drunk driving, it signals a systemic failure, both of governance and civic responsibility.

The roads have become battlegrounds, and the youth are the casualties. Traffic rules exist, but they are followed more in breach than in practice. An estimated

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95% of drivers in Goa routinely flout traffic rules. Even if half of them followed the basics wearing helmets, respecting speed limits, avoiding drunk driving, we would save hundreds of lives every year.

Yes, the government has made announcements. Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant and Transport Minister Mauvin Godinho have assured measures to curb road accidents. But the assurances have largely remained

lip service. The so-called "accident season" that began on January 1 continues unchecked, claiming lives as predictably as the calendar flips.

In recent years, even with the introduction of the amended Motor Vehicles Act and increased fines, enforcement has been sporadic and short-lived. Campaigns start with fanfare and fade within weeks. Meetings are held, but follow-ups are forgotten. Three months ago, the transport minister called for a multi-departmental meeting to address road safety. Orders were issued. Identify black spots, increase patrolling, tighten enforcement. But where are the results? No sustained action. No accountability. No real change.

The public, especially young riders and drivers, cannot absolve themselves. The roads are dangerous not just because of potholes or poor signage, but because recklessness is the norm. Overtaking on blind turns, riding without helmets, and speeding through narrow village lanes have become everyday habits. Tragic as it is, many of the dead are victims of their own disregard for life and law.

If we are serious about reducing accidents, the solution lies in consistent enforcement, civic education, and urgent infrastructure upgrades.

The road infrastructure itself is part of the problem. While national highways are being widened, roads in towns and villages remain narrow, potholed, and dangerously curved. Basic safety measures like convex mirrors at sharp turns, automatic signals, visible signage, and well-maintained footpaths are missing. In a state where tourism thrives and vehicular traffic keeps increasing, this is a recipe for tragedy.

Moreover, the process of issuing a driving licence needs an overhaul. It should not be a rubber stamp but a serious process involving mandatory training in traffic rules and road ethics. A person should know not just how to operate a vehicle, but where to stop, how to overtake safely, and what speed is appropriate. Licences should be suspended without hesitation for repeated violations, and violators must be penalised severely and consistently.

We must also stop treating traffic rules as optional. In India, and Goa is no exception, there seems to be a peculiar arrogance in breaking rules, as if it's a show of strength or influence. Until this mindset changes, until every driver understands that there is a life waiting at home, we will continue to count bodies instead of blessings.

It is time for Goa to rise above promises and token campaigns. It is time for real, relentless, and responsible action. Road safety is not a seasonal agenda. It must be a daily commitment. If we don't act now, the next statistic could be one of us.

Twitter World

Markandey Katju @mktju

Looks like all parties benefited by the recent Indo-Pak conflict. Pakistan got an IMF loan, China tested their jets and missile system, Turkey tested their drones, the BJP ensured a sweeping victory in the forthcoming Bihar and other elections, France tested Rafale, the Pahalgam terrorists got their 72 hours, and Trump got his credit and may get the Nobel Peace Prize.

Zafar Mirzo @zafarmirzo

Humanity's victory over war is possible with its victory over arrogance and shortsightedness in world politics.

comment



MARIAN PINHEIRO

India, with its vast and diverse polity, offers a compelling context for examining these dynamics of power and responsibility. As the world's largest democracy, it has built a constitutional framework that endows the State with considerable powers, while simultaneously emphasising the importance of accountability. However, the actual practice often reveals tensions and contradictions in this framework



Articles 50 and 245-255 of the Constitution, read with the Seventh Schedule, delineate the legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The Supreme Court in *Kesavananda Bharati vs State of Kerala* (1973) held that the basic structure of the Constitution includes the principle of separation of powers. Thus, while Parliament has sovereign law-making authority, the executive implements, and the

Harness solar energy

It is learnt that Union Minister for Power, Manohar Lal Khattar on Monday reportedly asked the Goa government to undertake a feasibility study for setting up a nuclear-based power plant in the State to meet its growing demand and to reduce its 80 percent dependence on the electricity imports.

The State has reportedly agreed to consider the proposal. The question that arises is whether a small State like Goa really requires a nuclear-based power plant to meet its power requirement.

In Goa there are fewer industries as compared to other States and the State relies largely on tourism for generating revenue. Having a nuclear plant in the State carries the possibility of great risk. An incident can devastate lives, livestock and landscape forever. Goa does not have the disaster-response capability to face such a calamity.

The Chernobyl disaster was a catastrophic nuclear accident that occurred in 1986. The accident released large amounts of radioactive material into the environment contaminating the surrounding area and parts of Europe. In the Fukushima accident in 2011 at a nuclear plant in northern Japan, the tsunami waves generated by the main shock of an earthquake damaged the backup generators. Instead of nuclear energy Goa should go for solar energy. Solar energy is

Power versus responsibility in democratic governance: An Indian perspective

When politicians on the ruling side are increasingly imposing their unpopular decisions counter to the interests of "WE THE PEOPLE" and even causing irreparable and irreversible damage to MOTHER NATURE, it becomes pertinent to remind them, that, after all they are just "People's Representatives" elected for a definite period of time and it's not within their mandate to cause irreversible damage to the idea of "WE THE PEOPLE" nor destroy MOTHER NATURE, but they have been entrusted with responsibility to preserve and protect MOTHER NATURE and to serve the welfare OF THE PEOPLE and the Nation. The exercise of their powers should be merely fulfilling this, their responsibility entrusted to them temporarily.

The INDIAN CONSTITUTION demands a judicious balance between power and responsibility. Power without restraint, transparency, and not in public interest. Exercising without responsibility, leads to authoritarianism; and, governance a farce.

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The Indian Constitution provides both the legal basis for the exercise of power and the framework for ensuring responsibility. The Preamble itself reflects the ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity — all of which presuppose that public power must be exercised responsibly.

judiciary interprets laws. This division, however, is not rigid but functional.

While Part III guarantees fundamental rights, Part IV-A (Article 51A) lays down fundamental duties. This duality underscores that while citizens enjoy protections, they also bear responsibilities. Similarly, public authorities must respect citizens' rights and act within constitutional limits.

The judiciary plays a vital role in keeping the other branches accountable. Through judicial review (Article 13), courts ensure that laws and executive actions do not transgress constitutional boundaries. The Supreme Court in *Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain* (1975) reaffirmed that even powerful political figures are not above the Constitution.

Perhaps the most stark example of power unmoored from responsibility was the declaration of Emergency under Article 352. In 2016, the Supreme Court held that excessive or retaliatory force by the armed forces is subject to judicial scrutiny, and that AFSPA does not override Article 21.

The Tenth Schedule, added by the 52nd Amendment (1985), was meant to curb political defections. However, its application has often been manipulated, with Speakers delaying disqualification proceedings. Recent incidents in Maharashtra and Goa show how the lack of prompt adjudication undermines democratic mandates.

The Election Commission of India (ECI), Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), and judiciary are designed to act as bulwarks against arbitrary power. The Right to Information Act, 2005, is a powerful tool for ensuring transparency.

India continues to grapple with populist politics, weakening of institutions, and increasing centralisation of power. The dilution of checks and balances, political interference in investigative agencies, and selective transparency pose grave challenges. A culture of constitutionalism must be embedded not just in laws but in the civic consciousness. This calls for legal literacy, strong institutions, and political will to uphold constitutional values.

The vitality of a democracy lies not in the mere exercise of power, but in its alignment with responsibility. The Indian experience shows that when power becomes absolute, it endangers liberty; but when responsibility is institutionalised, it strengthens governance. The future of Indian democracy depends on sustaining this balance through vigilance, participation, and fidelity to constitutional ethos.

Almost all the contemporary conflicts between the governments in power and WE THE PEOPLE, either individually or collectively through NGOs or even politically, at times, all could be measured with the yardstick of balance between power and responsibility. In almost all cases it is easy to ascertain that when the power is sought to be exercised, without equivalent quantum of responsibility, this tipping of scales is the ultimate cause of conflicts, even agitations and riots as well.

The second more pertinent factor is the unhindered environmental damage in various forms carried out as a result of government policies or at government initiatives, these are irreversible injuries to MOTHER EARTH and the consequences of which will negatively impact the generation of Indians. The fact that each of the elected representatives, is so elected just for a limited period that is five years only mandates that they have no power in any form whatsoever to cause permanent changes or damages to the environment in whatever form. These are clear cases of excessive power with least or no responsibility. Historically it has been proved when MOTHER NATURE is damaged it would repulse or avenge in its own way, at its own time, and for this, uncertainty the contemporary governments are responsible, to WE THE PEOPLE as well as generations of humans to come. Damage which no government or administration would be able to reverse or compensate however capable or powerful they think they are.

The Indian Express e-news of February 5, 2025, states that in 2024, nearly 3,000 Indians, were killed, due to natural disasters besides cattle deaths and building collapses. Whether nature reacts to these destructions through tsunamis, earthquakes and cyclones. Extreme heat waves or cold waves or rising ocean water level, famine or drought, the elected representatives cannot absolve themselves from their responsibility for any such calamities that result from their exercise of power without responsibility.

One Starke reality of the present times is that what the politicians want to do, is contrary to what THE PEOPLE wants them to do, and the consequences of their actions is neither created nor beneficial to THE PEOPLE but destructive of people's future, MOTHER EARTH and the Nation.

(The writer is a Professor of Law & an education consultant)

people's edit

MY PEN PAL

CHANDER GUPTA

Before the advent of the digital era, we used to send hand-written letters through postal services. The digital era commenced with the arrival of computers, emails, smartphones, etc. The digital devices and IT tools became commonplace in India only on the cusp of the millennium. Until the end of 1999, I had not owned a computer or a mobile phone. After mobile phones and emails became in vogue, the practice of hand-written letters has almost stopped.

The medium for distance communication in the pre-digital era was letter-writing. Until the end of the 1970s, only a few households had telephones. One could make only local calls instantaneously. Outstation calls had to be booked entailing long waiting periods. Till the end of 1980s, I remember writing letters to my parents to acquaint them with my well-being whenever I was away. I got engaged to my would-be wife in July 1986 but got married in January 1987. In the interregnum we used to keep in touch through letter-writing only.

We would drop hand-written letters in the letterbox. A postman would deliver the letter at the given address. Short and simple letters were written on open postcards. Blank postcards were sold in post-offices for less than 10 paise. Envelopes were also available from the post office for 25 paise, wherein you could put letters written on sheets of paper. If you used your own envelope, then 25 paise worth of postal stamps had to be affixed on the envelope.

In my teenage years there was a magazine by the name of JS, which was focused on the youngsters. JS carried a column 'Pen Pals'. Youngsters desirous of making pen friends could send their particulars to JS for publication in the column. The column carried names and addresses even from foreign countries. When I was around 16 years old, I chose one name 'Touko Kuba' belonging to Japan from the column. Both of us were in our mid-teens. I wrote a letter in English which I sent through an airmail to Touko Kuba. As a very pleasant surprise to me I received a reply to my letter. The text was written entirely in capital letters of English. The grammar was not flawless, but the meaning was unambiguous. The letter was written on a colourfully designed letter pad. I had only white sheets to write on. Regular exchange of letters ensued. During the course of our pen friendship, we exchanged our photographs also. Hers was a coloured photo, whereas mine was black and white. We also exchanged small-denomination currency notes of our respective countries wrapped in envelopes. I remember Touko Kuba having praised my handwriting and my photo too.

Later, she sent a Japanese doll made of some earthen material. It was a cute and colourful doll which adorned my study table. One day a storm hit our town. High velocity wind, entering my room from the open window, blew away the doll from the table onto the floor. It was broken into pieces. Seeing the scattered pieces, my heart also broke. Couple of years had flown by. I moved on to Chandigarh to join an MA (English) course. I do not now clearly remember how the pen friendship subsided gradually and stopped finally. Feeling nostalgic!

standing which is much needed at this point in time.

Elvidio Miranda, Panjim

Kohli walks out as a legend

King Kohli has finally hung up his Test boots. The man who once walked in as a rookie with spiky hair and raw nerves, walks out as a legend who gave Indian Test cricket a new lease of life by infusing fresh energy and dynamism.

Kohli demanded, and helped create a formidable pace pool in his single-minded pursuit to turn India into a team capable of winning tests anywhere in the world.

He revolutionised the fitness culture in the India dressing room, turning a somewhat lax fielding side into a crack squad of electric-heel fielders. The silky-smooth batting, the wild celebrations and a penchant to get under an opponent's skin - Kohli has often been at the centre of an unfolding drama, which injected fresh life into a fan's often-dreary experience of watching test cricket.

The whites may no longer bear Kohli's name, but Test cricket will forever bear his soul. Test cricket bows to one of its fiercest warriors, who gave his heart and soul to the game for 14 years. A feeling of melancholy has suddenly gripped Indian Test cricket after the vacuum created by the Hitman and King within just days.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai

letterstotheeditor

For letters to the editor contact us at editor@herald-goa.com.

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

Rainbow across Panjim sky

In my over five decades of living in Panjim, on May 13, for the first time I became witness to a resplendent arc of rainbow in the western sky from 6.46 am to 6.56 am when I was on my morning walk, a phenomenon which is extremely rare since rainbows usually occur in the evenings on the eastern sky and that too during October.

The rainbow which displays the seven main colours, violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red is normally associated with peace, love and understanding, something in these troubled times that we are sorely in need of.

May 13 was also the feast of Our Lady of Fatima, which is observed with great solemnity and spirituality not only across the Catholic world but by many across all faiths.

The appearance of a rainbow is normally followed by a period of understanding and it should be our endeavour to accept this message to make this world a better place to live in. Also, across the entire world, people are looking for a sign of better things to come and hopefully this rare occurrence will bring in a period of peace, love and understanding.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

Make peace, not war

War is a barbaric activity which only concludes in the loss of life and property. The violence of war is life threatening which can never resolve any dispute.

Both the parties practicing war end up in social and economic loss, as it is said by John S C Abbott that "War is the science of destruction." The one involved in war only ends up in loss of lives socially and economically. Therefore, peaceful talks would be more beneficial to solve the disputes.

Peaceful negotiations are safer to dissolve a conflict than to lead a war and end in cruelty. War brings death and destruction, merciless slaughter and butchery, disease and starvation, poverty and ruin in its wake.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

Eternal vigilance the only option

Being on permanent guard is the price we now have to pay to stay secure from the shenanigans of our Western neighbour Pakistan.

Though a ceasefire has been declared between the two countries, it will be premature for our defence forces to rest easy. Umpteen times in the past Pakistan has resorted to pushing in jihadis to achieve its avowed policy of bleeding India through a thousand cuts.

Why, just three hours after the cessation of hostilities, the Pakistan sent in armed drones to terrorise people in J&K. The jihadis are an expendable asset for the Pakistan army, if one mercenary falls 10 will rise up in his place, a la Rakhtbeej the demon in Hindu mythology.

The jihad factory will be churning out more fighters now in double quick time; the recent anni-

Make peace, not war

hilation of Pakistan at the hands of India has dealt a body blow to the ego of their army generals. They will be looking for another opportunity to wreak mayhem on India. Our defence systems have to be locked and loaded 24x7 to neutralise a rogue adversary, sometimes the Damocles sword of war is the only way to ensure peace. As Thomas Jefferson said, "Eternal vigilance is the price one has to pay for liberty."

Rekha Sarin Trehan, Benaolim

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