

O HERALDO

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Master plan for Goa is missing

A quiet crisis is boiling over in South Goa. In the talukas of Salcete and Canacona, taps have been running dry for ten to twelve days at a stretch. Families are now forced to buy water from private tankers. Frustration is rising and protests are brewing. But this water crisis is not a sudden disaster — it is a result of long-term, systemic neglect. And the most painful truth is that it was entirely preventable.

South Goa's Congress MP, Captain Viriato Fernandes on Wednesday confronted the PWD demanding immediate action. But his real question hit at the heart of the matter: Why has this crisis emerged in a state that was declared "water-certified" by the Prime Minister just three years ago?

In August 2022, Goa was hailed as the first Indian state where every household had tap water access. Yet, in 2025, people still face the grim irony of having taps but no water. Promises of 16,000 litres of free water per household were quietly dropped. Even the reduced assurance of four hours of daily supply remains unfulfilled in many areas. What good are certifications when the basic needs of citizens remain unmet?

The truth is stark: Goa lacks a long-term master plan. Not just for water but for electricity, housing, roads and every key pillar of infrastructure. The water shortages are just one symptom of a much larger disease called planning paralysis.

Take the Tilari Dam in Maharashtra, for example. Crores have been spent by the Goa government, yet the state continues to get little in return. Meanwhile, over one crore tourists visit Goa each year, putting enormous pressure on local infrastructure. Yet, the needs of the 'original sons of the soil' Goa's residents are repeatedly ignored. Local anger is not just understandable; it's justified.

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Electricity is another gaping wound. Goa imports its power and subsidises it, but with mounting financial losses, a new tariff hike was recently imposed. While the increase may be economically necessary, the government's selective enforcement is infuriating. Ordinary people face swift disconnection for non-payment, while influential defaulters with crores in arrears go untouched. The opposition claims outstanding dues have reached Rs 600 crore, a figure the administration has neither confirmed nor denied. Where is the accountability?

Recovery mechanisms have failed. Even when courts ruled against defaulting cable operators, bureaucrats who attempted enforcement were punished instead of supported. The electricity department suffers from mismanagement and political interference. It's time to consider a separate, professional recovery and audit body to bring financial discipline to this critical sector.

Meanwhile, talk of setting up a floating nuclear power plant in Goa sparked public outcry and rightly so. Energy Minister Manohar Lal Khattar's suggestion drew sharp criticism until the Chief Minister backtracked. But the larger question remains: why are such controversial ideas even being floated? Once again, it's due to the absence of a comprehensive master plan rooted in sustainability and public interest.

Despite subsidies, solar energy adoption remains low. Recovery periods are too long, and awareness is lacking. If the government truly wants to promote green energy, it must make solar technology affordable and educate the public. Goa had once announced plans to generate power using the waters of the Mhadei, but that, like many other green promises, has vanished into thin air.

The same refrain echoes across sectors: no planning, no foresight, no execution. Every time Union Minister Nitin Gadkari visits Goa to inaugurate a new flyover, he reminds the state government about its missing master plan. Perhaps next time, the government should listen.

Goa's identity, culture, and future are being sacrificed at the altar of unregulated development. Residents now say with pain and resignation, that Goa no longer belongs to Goans. They are not wrong.

If the government wants to regain public trust, it must plan for the next 50 years, not just the next election cycle. This master plan must be transparent, people-centric, and inclusive. Otherwise, the state will continue to stumble from one crisis to another, and the people already weary, will seek justice not from their representatives, but from the courts.

Twitter World

Yashwant Sinha @YashwantSinha

I admire Justice Khanna for announcing that he would not accept a post-retirement job. A great step towards maintaining the independence of the judiciary in India. I hope it becomes the norm for future.

comment



PETER FERNANDES

'Goa of dreams', does it still hold for those who dare to dream?

Many adjectives have been attributed to Goa to describe its beauty and serenity, but which adjective would perfectly describe Goa the best? A quick glance over Goa allows one to behold the beautiful and world-class beaches and the land covered with lush greenery, waterfalls and winding rivers with beautiful mountains that hold an eternal credence. It is difficult to identify a particular adjective, so let the dreamer dream. There are X number of songs and poems written, which captivate the mind, heart and soul, yet remain unsatisfied; let the song play on. However, a question has arisen in many people's minds: how long will the Goa of dreams endure, and will the next generation have a chance to dream a dream? Sad but true, post-liberation, Goa has not fared well in the hands of its own sons and daughters; in fact, it has taken an ominous turn. Who is responsible, and who will take the responsibility? "I Dreamed a Dream" is a song from the musical Les Misérables.

Does it still hold "the Goa of dreams" for those who dare to dream? Although the current scenario appears to be bleak, there are rays of hope in those who are sincerely giving themselves to protect and fight for Goa's beauty, environment and heritage



The song is a lament, sung by the anguished Fantine, who has just been fired from her job at the factory and thrown onto the streets. She thinks back to happier days and wonders at all that has gone wrong in her life. Is it time for Goa to write a musical like "Les Misérables"? In view of the headlines from recent times, we have read, "Goa going, going, gone! Therefore, the question is, "Does it still hold, 'Goa of dreams', for those who dare to dream?"

Goa could have been an education, music, sports and medical hub; besides, tourism, fishing and agriculture industry back-up the economy substantially. Is it a lost opportunity, or can Goa still make good of it? Who misguidedly Goa and its people with a shady economic plan, which is intended to destroy the very essence of Goa? Portuguese who were and who are unduly demonised had a balanced plan for Goa and

Goans. Maybe while throwing out the bath water, we have thrown out the baby as well. The Portuguese established the first college in India, and perhaps in Asia, and introduced the printing press in the year 1542 at Old Goa. St. Paul College was founded by Jesuits, who also had a school for 450 local students, teaching them reading and writing; there, too, was a hospital. However, this institution fell prey to the plague and was then moved to a new location. What remains of the original college is the facade, known as the Gate of the College of St Paul. Portuguese taught western music to enrich the Goan and Indian music. And what a contribution it turned out to be. The movie "Nachom-ia Kumpasar" depicts the grandeur of Goan music and documents its contribution to Bollywood, meaning for the whole of India. The oldest medical college in Asia, established in 1842 during Portuguese rule. Initially named "Escola Medico Cirurgica da Goa", it was later renamed Goa Medical College in 1963. In addition, Goa was called the "Brazil of India" in football due to its strong football culture and presence. It is a dream, and many are still dreaming as FC Goa is yet to win the maiden ISL trophy, since its inception in 2013. Maybe 'Churchill Brothers' may fulfil this dream of many Goans.

It is sad to know that, barring a few, most of the Goan politicians turned out to be charlatans and corrupt to the very core. Post-liberation, the Goan politicians were comfortable with a cosy dwelling provided by the mining industry. The wealth projected and generated by mining companies mesmerised the leaders, who were blinded from seeing clearly the future. It was foolishness, for they knew the non-renewable resource (like mining) was going to be exhausted sooner or later. A tribute to the true crusaders for the protection of the environment and illegal mining in Goa, Claude and Norma Alvares had the grit and determination to stop the loot and plunder of Goa's minerals. The nature's gift to Goa, which attracts many visitors from around the world, tourism could have sustained the economy for generations to come. However, our politicians could only think of Casino's, nightclubs, and Sunburn, a detriment to our culture and traditions, instead of world-

class infrastructure. Still more tragic, instead of learning the lessons from the past mistakes, our politicians have sold their souls to Adani and land mafias. Since the income from mining has dried up, selling Goa's land, legally and illegally, to outsiders for a huge kickback is the new normal for our politicians. Turning Goa into a coal hub is not their lookout as long as their pockets are well taken care off. What stupidity? Velsao villagers are actively protesting and fighting against the double-tracking railway project. Orville Dourado Rodrigues has taken on the mantle of Claude and Norma Alvares in this fight against double tracking, even as our politicians continue to back Adani.

Does it still hold "the Goa of dreams" for those who dare to dream? Although the current scenario appears to be bleak, there are rays of hope in those who are sincerely giving themselves to protect and fight for Goa's beauty, environment and heritage. Be it the issue of coal transportation, railway double tracking, large development projects, illegal fishing using LED boats, sugarcane farmers waiting for the restart of the methanol plant at the Sanjivani sugar factory, or the demand for restarting mining, there seems to be a protest by the common people at every corner of the state against the Goa government. But these protests are not gaining momentum. Therefore, the million-dollar question is, are the people of Goa willing to come out of their comfort zone and support and fight both in court and on the streets for just cause? Sant Andre MLA Viresh Borkar has launched an indefinite sit-in protest against the illegal constructions on hill slopes and on the beach at Bambolim. The precarious situation in which Goa itself at this time, is not Portuguese making, but our own creation. Still, we have to perceive it as an opportunity, otherwise, it would be a grave misfortune if we allow it to pass without giving it a serious thought. Clearly, the present path is not working for our state, of which we are well aware. It is an imperative that we strongly resist our lethargic attitude and get involved to create a master plan and move forward with a clear and definite vision for a better future. Therefore, will Goans ever dare to dream a dream?

(The author is a Priest based at Pilar, Goa)

Contradictory scenario on water availability

Stating that Goa's rivers and dams currently hold sufficient drinking water reserves, the government reiterated that the present water storage capacity can comfortably meet the state's water needs for the next one-and-a-half to two months. The government has assured that the buffer extends beyond the anticipated arrival of the monsoon in June, ensuring no water shortage even in the absence of immediate rains.

The WRD Minister reassured that there is no need to worry. "Biupachi garaz na". However the ground reality appears to be quite to the contrary. Salcete is reportedly reeling under a major water crisis. Several parts of the district faced a fresh spell of water shortage on Tuesday with taps running dry in several localities for hours. The unannounced disruption sparked public anger, with many locals reportedly stepping out in protest. The water shortage was acutely felt in places like Majorda, Betalbatim, Fatorda, Raia and Verna.

In Curtorim constituency, water tankers had to be deployed in order to ensure basic supply. There was no communication with regards the water shortage and citizens across Salcete were left anxious and inconvenienced as they waited for the complete restoration of water supply. If the state has enough water for

two months then what is the reason for taps running dry and frequent restriction of water supply? How much water is present in the water reservoirs and rivers is irrelevant if continuous water does not flow through the taps of the consumers. The government needs to assure the general public that there will be no disruption of water supply in the coming days.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Say no to proposed nuclear power plant

Union Minister for Power, Urban Development and Housing Manohar Lal Khattar during his visit in the state on Monday has said that the Centre has asked the State government to consider the possibility of establishing a nuclear power plant as a long-term measure for energy security and sustainability in Goa.

Goa is not a big state like Haranya, UP or Gujarat but is totally dependent on tourism. Now, if the Centre in collaboration with the state government does go ahead with the idea and sets up the proposed nuclear power plant, then tourism industry, which is the backbone of Goa's economy will definitely be doomed forever.

Goans should therefore take a

letterstotheeditor

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

very serious note of the above implications, come out in large numbers and say a big 'no' to the proposed idea of setting up a nuclear power plant in the state.

The State government has already destroyed Goa's sensitive eco system, has turned the state into a garbage dump and due to which tourists too have slowly stopped coming. It's therefore time to say 'enough is enough' for the misdeeds of the state government and to save what is still left of Goa.

Jerry Fernandes, Saligao

Weapons lab for the world

Reports suggest, although it has been officially denied, that the Indian Air Force hit the nuclear missile storage facility in Pakistan and as a consequence of this, a special jet of the US Army, capable of nuclear fallout containment was seen in Pakistan.

Maybe that is the reason why US intervened, Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire and India too agreed double quick. The truth will remain hidden for years to come or maybe forever.

Nevertheless, for the entire world, this 'war' became a case study for many reasons. Nations across the world, espe-

cially those with a deep interest in defence tactical manoeuvres will take a detailed look at how the various weapon platforms performed, how military assets were deployed and who came out on top after the dust settled. This case study is at the expense of both India and Pakistan and the innocent people who died on both sides of the border.

We became a weapons laboratory for the world to learn from. Rekha Sarin Trehan, Benaolim The Vandhe Bharat trains are very popular. Such is their popularity that even the PM goes out of his way to flag off a new Vandhe Bharat train virtually every other week! These trains cater to about 10 percent of the population (140 million travellers).

Normally, these people would fly, but the Vandhe Bharat offers a cheaper alternative. At the other end of the spectrum, we have 60% of the poor population who can barely afford to travel by second class or general class. To placate them, the railways have introduced the Amrit Bharat trains. But it's mere lip service as there are currently only 2 such trains and they don't run every day. As against this, there are 136 Vandhe Bharat trains many more in the pipeline.

Unfortunately, no one exposes this blatant injustice. The rich are

people's edit

THE ARMED FORCES AND THE SPIRIT OF ONE INDIA

SUKRITI KAUL

On April 22, 2025, the serene hills of Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir were shaken by terror.

Tourists from across India—families, students, pilgrims—were enjoying the tranquil beauty of Baisaran Valley when militants opened fire. The brutal attack, reportedly carried out by members of The Resistance Front (TRF), a Pakistan-backed group, claimed 28 innocent lives and left many more injured. Among the victims were tourists from Goa, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and several other states. What was meant to be a peaceful retreat turned into a national tragedy.

Yet in those chaotic and fearful moments, something remarkable emerged: the unwavering presence of the Indian Armed Forces. Swift and selfless, they moved in—not asking where anyone was from, not drawing lines between languages, cultures, or regions. For them, every civilian was an Indian, and every Indian was worth defending.

The response in Pahalgam was just the beginning. As tensions escalated between India and Pakistan, the threat widened across multiple fronts. In the days that followed, border regions in Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, and Punjab came under fire. Drone sightings, cross-border shelling, and night-time blackouts became the new reality. Civilians remained indoors, fearful and anxious—but they were not alone. At every vulnerable post, Indian soldiers stood their ground.

From the very beginning of their training, these soldiers are instilled with a single powerful idea: the nation comes first—always and every time. The principle of selfless service isn't just taught; it becomes who they are. They are trained to rise above personal interest, regional identity, or

recognition. Their only allegiance is to the nation, and it is this unwavering sense of duty that carried them through those tense and dangerous days. The Indian Armed Forces are a living example of national integration.

Soldiers from the remotest corners of the Northeast, the coasts of the South, the plains of the North, and the plateaus of the West serve together in unity. When a battalion comprising people from diverse backgrounds safeguards civilians—whether from Kashmir or Kerala, Gujarat or Goa—it reaffirms a vital truth: India is one.

That same truth lived in the relief of those rescued, in the security felt behind shuttered windows in border villages, and in the gratitude that quietly echoed across the country. Integration is not just a constitutional ideal; it is a lived practice. And nowhere is it better exemplified than in the selfless actions of our armed forces. When they evacuate civilians, defend homes, or stand vigil through cold nights under threat, they do so not for people of a particular region—but for Indians. This moment offers us more than reflection—it offers us direction. The values our soldiers embody—duty, unity, equality, and service above self—are not exclusive to battlefields. They must inspire our daily lives. Beyond the uniform, the spirit of one India depends on each of us seeing past our differences and standing up for one another.

Let us not wait for tragedy to rediscover our unity. Let us honour our forces by living what they defend every day—a truly integrated, compassionate, and united India.

happy with their Vandhe Bharat, while the poor never complain as they are resigned to their lot in life. That's how the system works. I think that further production of Vandhe Bharat trains must be stopped and all resources be diverted to the mass production of Amrit Bharat trains for the poor. The rich can fly.

Robert Castellino, Calangute

Will BJP not do U-Turn on nuke power plant?

Facing huge public opposition to the proposal of setting up a nuclear power plant in Goa, the Chief Minister immediately issued a clarification, that the BJP government would not allow such a plant in Goa!

However, going by the past credentials of the BJP, the ex CM's particularly Late Manohar Parrikar clearly opposed double tracking for coal but the current CM is aggressively pursuing double tracking (for coal) even by passing legal frameworks/procedures! So many Goans

are severely affected by the betrayal of the BJP! The BJP earlier had even opposed casinos but now the stench of environmental destruction of Goa by land and water based casinos is there for all to see!

So can we be sure that the U-Turn specialist BJP party will not do the same and proceed aggressively on the nuclear power plant in Goa in the near future?

Arwin Mesquita, Colva