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Those responsible must pay for crippling our Kala Academy

The once regal Kala Academy, which has hosted many a celebrity and has been the venue of numerous big-ticket events, including the international Film festival of India, has now been reduced to a joke, or rather, a comedy of (contractual) errors.

Just days after the media reported that Kala Academy was likely to be closed for two whole months for 'rectification' work, the state government was slammed for continuing to delay the upgrade of the iconic centre of the arts. But what probably evoked widespread public ire was chief minister Pramod Sawant recently saying that the current contractor will complete repairing the rectifications themselves at no additional cost, in keeping with the Kala Academy's task force suggestion, and complete the work by October this year, in time for Iffi. "Once that is done, the contract will be terminated and the contractor will be blacklisted," Sawant is reported to have told the media. If this was not enough to enrage citizens, Sawant went a step further by blatantly declaring that new tenders will be floated for additional works that were not covered in the original contract.

Instead of taking the government's announcement at face value, several quarters have rightfully lashed out at the impunity of both, the authorities and the contractors roped in to repair Kala Academy, over the recent past, highlighting large-scale corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and close to no accountability.

"Why was a contractor with such poor work ethics selected in the first place? What about the officials and decision-makers who approved these tenders? Who will ensure taxpayers aren't further burdened by such blatant mismanagement?" a local political party asked while demanding a probe into the entire tendering and execution of these works by the government.

An artiste group asked a more poignant question. "Why will a contractor carry out proper work if he knows he will be blacklisted?" This is an excellent point of view that exposes not only the chief minister's intention to fool the people but also his cheek to believe that the people will in fact be fooled.

However, Sawant has failed to understand that the people have had enough as they have had to endure witnessing the state's ambassador of the arts being pummeled time and time again by governmental corruption and contractors who seemed to have no clue about what they are doing, which has led to one contractor being roped in to correct the other's work, however shoddily.

In the past, the Charles Correa Foundation (CCF) itself had said it was concerned about the restoration of the renowned architect Charles Correa's masterpiece along the River Mandovi. It has claimed that structural repairs and architectural changes were being undertaken in a manner contradictory to Correa's ideas, while urging the government to put its plans regarding restoration in the public domain and be transparent about it.

"We would like the building to not be changed way too drastically and the restoration to be done in the right spirit," the CCF had said. "One of the reasons for the deterioration of the Kala Academy building is the overloading of the structure with multiple coats of waterproofing. Repairs need to be done by keeping in mind the architectural spirit of Charles Correa."

The artiste group has gone ahead and presently demanded a forensic audit of the open-air auditorium that collapsed in 2023, which has only furthered concerns over the integrity of the renovation at Kala Academy. It isn't wrong making such a demand when amid restoration work in July 2023, the entire slab of the open-air auditorium came crashing down, resulting in the greatest damage to the structure. Then, a few months later, in December, a mirror in the green room suddenly crashed to the floor and shattered, while in January 2024, leaks in the roof of the once awe-inspiring Dinanath Mangueshkar Kala Mandir saw staff drying seats and carpeted floors with electric fans. The Sharad Ponshe incident and a similar one thereafter are the most recent slip-ups in a structure that the government has spent crores of rupees to refurbish and which should have been operating at its very best.

So, no! The contractors can't be merely blacklisted. They need to pay up, and pay up dearly for reducing such a meticulously planned structure into a pile of brick and mortar that has been struggling to stand steady. If Sawant continues to be docile where this matter is concerned, it will certainly amount to him being complicit in the utter destruction of the Kala Academy.

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BY INVITATION

Sushila Sawant Mendes

War and peace: Celebrating the ceasefire

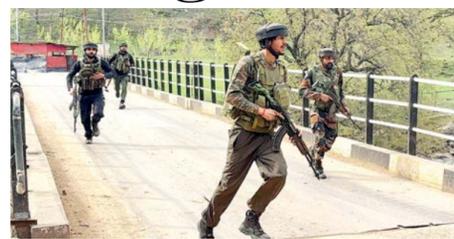
The wars will end and the leaders will shake hands and that old woman will remain waiting for her martyred son and that girl will wait for her beloved husband and the children will wait for their heroic father, I do not know who sold the homeland but I know who paid the price," are the words of Mahmud Darwish, a Palestinian poet, author and a creative writer beyond political boundaries. I received this quote from a friend on a group after the announcement of the ceasefire on May 10, an indicator that people's minds were thinking and analyzing the aftermath of a war.

Ceasefire is always the result of a diplomatic effort worked out behind the scenes. But to expect Donald Trump to honour the nicety of these diplomatic efforts is just too much! When a war ends or a ceasefire is announced, at any point of time, even from a position of strength it is always a welcome move. It has brought the rainbow at the end of the savagery by the terrorists. The Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, with thirty five years of experience was however subjected to online trolling by the hatemongers who wanted the war. The National Commission for Women strongly condemned the "reprehensible" online abuse of his family especially his daughter! The Border area Indians were facing the fire and the hinterland jingoists charged by mass media and the TV debates want new geographical boundaries without any understanding of the cost and loss of human life involved.

Azmeem Banatwalla, the comedian Youtuber, said, "that we send these directly to the LoC and that some people need less TRP and more TheRapPy".

'War and Peace' is the name of Leo Tolstoy's magnum opus set in 1805, though much of this story begins with the French Revolution of 1789, it focuses on Napoleon Bonaparte's conquest of Europe, causing fear in Russia, as it then centers around the French invasion of Russia in 1812. The famous line from this novel is, "The strongest of all warriors are these two — Time and Patience. If everyone fought for their own convictions there would be no war."

As a tourist in Kashmir some years back, I have seen the goodness and the poverty of the Kashmiri



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people from close quarters. The waiters who served us food in the hotel that we stayed were students who supplemented the family income and they would ask us if there were any job opportunities in Goa. When the brutal attack on Pahalgam took place on April 22, the first reaction was of sadness at the senseless killing of 26 innocent lives but it was also sadness writ large on every wage earning Kashmiri, that the tourist season which had just begun, would be badly affected. This is how war and uncertainty result in children going to sleep with hungry bellies. The Misery of Civil War is a 1680 tragedy drama by the English writer John Crowne which exemplifies this kind of a situation.

Baisaran Valley in Pahalgam, was strategically selected by the terrorists as this place referred to as mini Switzerland, is accessible only by foot or horseback. Many tourists who are afraid of heights or sitting on ponies or horses do not even venture on this journey. I recall the coaxing required to be done by at least one member in each family, including mine, to motivate the less adventurous to venture this journey. The path uphill is very mucky and steep and immediate help would be very difficult, thus giving sufficient time for the armed terrorists to escape. This green plateau is beautiful almost the same as the green valleys and slopes that one can see in Switzerland but pleasantly cool, not like the snow capped plateau of Jungfraujoc, advertised as the 'top of Europe'. Gulmarg on the other hand has chilly snow slopes most of the times.

After the attack, Nasir Khuehami of the Jammu and Kashmir Students Association told CNN that, "Kashmiris have always faced violence and we know what it is like to lose a father or son, we empathise with these families". Pakistan's Army Chief Air Marshall, had made speeches just before the attack he had spoken of the two-nation theory first and referred to Kashmir as the "jugular vein" of Pakistan which worsened relations with India. Unfortunately there was an outburst of a strong anti-Muslim sentiments.

Kashmiri students studying in India were senselessly attacked. We need to make a difference between Pakistani and Indian Muslims and not merge the lines between the two and the terrorist.

The world has seen so many wars, like the Crimean War, the two World Wars and the ongoing Ukraine-Russian conflict. In a war, nobody wins, as there are losses on both sides in terms of human and animal life caught in the cross fire and also large scale destruction which takes years to rebuild. Women and children are the first victims of any armed conflict. The war between Palestine militant outfit Hamas and Israeli forces, has claimed thousands of lives so far — many caught in the crossfire. Thousands of Palestinian children have been killed and this war has given birth to thousands of orphans and widows. Gaza City is today traumatized with the land attacks by Israeli airstrikes. In fact, the first signs of normalcy in the recent India-Pakistan ceasefire was that the children have started going back to

schools.

Former Army Chief General M M Naravane, while addressing a function in Pune on May 10, cautioned that war should never be celebrated or entered into lightly, "War is not a romantic Bollywood movie. It is a very serious and expensive last resort". He said that diplomacy should always come first. When war breaks out, there is death and destruction. Children loose parents. Families carry emotional trauma for generations. People subjected to combat wake even 20 years later, bathed in sweat needing psychiatric care. He also warned of war's long term human and economic toll.

Gen Naravane gave the example of the Kargil conflict's cost of Rs 1,500 crores, including Rs 800 crores incurred by the IAF alone. Rebuilding bunkers and border infrastructure added hundreds of crores more.

I am reminded of the words of the Red Indian Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce tribe when he surrendered in Montana on October 5, 1877 to the US Army General Nelson A. Miles "I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed... It is cold, and we have no blankets; the little children are freezing to death. No one knows where they are - I want to have time to look for my children and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs! I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."

Be it armed conflicts waged in African countries or the recent wars fought in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Ukraine, and Kashmir, these have brought unimaginable suffering and trauma to the inhabitants of these lands. War has brought poverty to its victims. It kills people and destroys business, trade, economy, property, hampers diplomacy and ushers in political instability. The bar is now raised to the use of nuclear weapons. The Orange Gas Effect in Vietnam and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki led to deformed births in four generations thereafter. We need to learn from the lessons of history and not repeat its mistakes.

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Understanding fatty liver disease: A modern epidemic

Over the decades, the causes and prevalence of fatty liver disease have undergone significant changes. From the 1940s to the 1990s, alcohol was widely recognised as the most important cause of fatty liver. However, from the early 2000s onwards, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) has emerged as the leading cause of this condition, mainly due to dramatic shifts in lifestyle patterns. The rise in sedentary behaviour, unhealthy dietary habits, and chronic stress have all played a major role in this transformation.

The liver is a vital organ responsible for numerous essential functions. It aids in digestion, stores energy, manufactures important proteins and enzymes, detoxifies the blood, and stores nutrients. A healthy liver is indispensable for maintaining overall well-being.

Fatty liver disease is a condition in which excess fat accumulates in liver cells. In medical terms, this means fat constitutes between 5% and 10% of the liver's total weight. When this occurs in the absence of significant alcohol consumption, it is termed non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). This condition is now being referred to as a silent epidemic—not just in Goa or India, but globally.

It is estimated that 30% of the world's population is affected by NAFLD. In India, the number is slightly higher, with 33% of the population

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believed to have some form of fatty liver disease. A 2022 study by Dr P A Vagurmekar and colleagues in Goa found that the local prevalence of NAFLD stood at 34.8%. Alarmingly, another study showed that 84% of IT professionals surveyed had NAFLD, highlighting the serious impact of sedentary work environments and digital lifestyles.

The major risk factors contributing to NAFLD include a sedentary lifestyle, prolonged hours of desk work, lack of physical activity, poor dietary habits, inadequate sleep, mental stress, smoking, alcohol consumption, and regular intake of aerated sugary drinks. The condition is often found alongside diabetes, hypertension, high blood lipids, and obesity. It is also occasionally associated with underlying conditions such as hypothyroidism and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). Studies suggest that up to 71% of IT professionals are either overweight or obese—making them particularly vulnerable to NAFLD.

Urban populations, which are generally exposed to fast-paced and often unhealthy lifestyles, show higher prevalence rates. Fatty liver is often asymptomatic in its early stages. However, as the disease progresses, individuals may experience symptoms such as dull or aching pain in the upper right abdomen, persistent fatigue, weakness, jaundice, and swelling. If

UPFRONT

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left untreated, the liver undergoes progressive damage including inflammation, fibrosis, and eventually cirrhosis. Cirrhosis, or scarring of the liver, can ultimately result in liver failure, hepatocellular carcinoma (a form of liver cancer), coma, and even death.

Diagnosis of NAFLD begins with a thorough history and clinical examination, supported by blood tests and imaging studies. Modern imaging technologies, including high-resolution scanners and elastography machines, can now measure fat accumulation and fibrosis levels in the liver with remarkable accuracy. These systems are non-invasive, offering an effective way to monitor disease progression. However, the definitive diagnosis is still made through liver biopsy, which provides detailed insight into the nature and extent of liver damage.

Normally, fat is not visible in the liver cells of a healthy individual. However, in fatty liver disease, fat accumulates in the form of vacuoles within

the cells, giving them a characteristic "signet ring" appearance under the microscope. In routine histopathological tissue processing, fat is typically dissolved by alcohol and other chemical reagents, making it appear as empty spaces or vacuoles. To demonstrate fat deposits more clearly, frozen section biopsies and special fat stains like Oil Red O, Sudan III, and Sudan IV are used.

Fat can accumulate in any part of the liver lobule but is usually distributed in a generalised pattern. In addition to identifying fat, liver biopsies also reveal the presence and extent of fibrosis. For this, special stains such as reticulin and Mason's trichrome are employed. When fibrosis increases, it signals the onset of cirrhosis. Cirrhosis is irreversible and indicates advanced liver damage, which can eventually lead to liver failure, hepatic coma, and death.

The advanced form of NAFLD is called NASH—non-alcoholic steato-

hepatitis—which includes inflammation and varying degrees of liver cell injury. The progression from NAFLD to NASH is dangerous, and early intervention is critical. Once fibrosis and cirrhosis have set in, the damage is largely permanent, reinforcing the importance of prevention.

NAFLD is increasingly being seen in younger populations, particularly those in their 30s and 40s, which is a troubling development for public health and the economy. Affected individuals often require time off work, reducing productivity and increasing healthcare costs.

The key to controlling NAFLD lies in prevention. Lifestyle modifications are of paramount importance. This includes a healthy, balanced diet rich in fibre from fruits and vegetables, sufficient intake of lean proteins, and minimal consumption of fats, sugars, and salt. Refined carbohydrates and simple sugars should be avoided. Meals should be smaller, and individuals should be encouraged to eat only until they feel about 80% full.

Regular exercise, good quality sleep, stress management, and avoiding harmful substances like tobacco, alcohol, and narcotics are crucial. Even alcohol in small quantities can exacerbate liver conditions and should be avoided or minimised. Adequate hydration is equally important. Children, in particular, should be encouraged to spend more time playing outdoors, limit screen time, and eat healthy

home-cooked meals rather than processed or fast foods.

There are also natural remedies that have been found to support liver health. Beverages like ginger tea, green tea, aloe vera juice, amla juice, turmeric milk, beetroot juice, lemon juice, and black coffee (unsweetened) are considered beneficial. Foods like garlic, broccoli, cabbage, sprouts, walnuts, and apples help reduce liver inflammation and promote fat metabolism.

Incorporating positive lifestyle habits such as maintaining social relationships, spending time in nature, engaging in intergenerational conversations, and regularly monitoring blood pressure and blood sugar levels can go a long way in preserving liver health. A nutritious, vitamin- and mineral-rich diet forms the foundation of prevention.

In conclusion, fatty liver disease, particularly NAFLD, is a growing health challenge that mirrors our changing lifestyles. As society continues to evolve with modernisation, automation, and increasing dependence on technology, the importance of conscious living cannot be overstated. Prevention remains the only reliable cure. By adopting a holistic approach to health and making informed choices, we can protect not just our livers, but our overall quality of life.

(The writer is a professor of pathology, former Dean of Goa University and president of the Asian Society of Cytopathology)