

O HERALDO

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Adapt agriculture guidelines according to changing climes

A few days ago, the India Meteorological Department predicted an 'above normal' monsoon across the nation and upgraded its rainfall figure. It said that June's average rainfall was very likely to be 'above normal' as well, and that the month - which historically heralds the start of the rainy season - was expected to be cooler than usual too.

Similarly, the department said rainfall for the country's monsoon core zone - which are essentially areas where farming largely depends on seasonal rainfall - will be above normal. Despite the early onset of the monsoon season in Goa, however, the State agriculture department has advised farmers to stick to their traditional paddy sowing timelines and to refrain from premature sowing operations. It has warned that hastening cultivation could not only impact crop health but total yield too, thereby affecting the growth cycle of paddy, which is grown extensively across North and South Goa during the monsoon.

Nationally, ample rain during the monsoon greatly boosts not only kharif crops but also rabi crops by ensuring that water bodies which are used for irrigation are replenished and continue to remain adequate even during the lean season. As such, acreage and production of different crops is expected to increase nationwide, thanks to the widely forecast 'above normal rainfall'.

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Farmers in some parts of Goa, especially in the Salcete taluka, have decided to go with the pulse of the season and have already begun sowing paddy seeds in their respective fields. Given that the monsoon pattern is clearly shifting, courtesy climate change triggers, the farmers concerned have clearly decided to tap the bountiful rain early to ensure better crop output. However, the State agriculture department has doggedly maintained that farmers who follow traditional schedules have consistently seen better crop yields during harvest season. "Although the rain assists in field preparation, the success of the harvest largely depends on adhering to the appropriate timeline," the director of agriculture recently told the media. The advisory, which has come amid constantly changing weather patterns, needs to be given more thought. The monsoon is no longer sticking to its routine like it did during the decades of the past, when the pace of climate change was not as rapid as it is now. Recent years have seen rain in Goa during each calendar month, which was never the case in the past. Also, this is probably the first time that the sunshine State is witnessing such torrential downpours during May, which was traditionally considered to be its peak summer month, both for mercury levels and business.

Stating that its advisory comes on the heels of widespread damage of farms and consequent financial losses caused to farmers in villages like Velim and Assolda-Chandor by heavy and unseasonal rain in May, the Goa agriculture department says that it continues to monitor weather patterns and field conditions closely. However, what explanation can it give to the 107 farmers of Collem who have claimed that approximately eight acres of their good quality paddy crops, which were ready for harvest, were significantly damaged by the recent spells of incessant rain?

They have claimed that they are staring at considerable challenges not only in harvesting whatever remains of their crop but also ensuring that the harvested grain is safely stored in a dry area to protect it from rotting. Many have even lost hope of any income from this season's cultivation and have requested financial assistance from the government. They have subsequently said that the zonal agriculture officials concerned have assured them of an inspection and potential compensation. Agriculture Minister Ravi Naik later himself told the media that financial assistance will be provided as compensation was provided in other parts of Goa for similar losses last year.

With approximately 31,000 hectares across Goa are under paddy cultivation currently, which occasionally expands to 36,000 hectares depending on seasonal conditions, it is important that the agriculture department finetunes its monsoon cultivation guidelines to sync with the changing times and changing climes. As the weather keeps getting erratic by the day and the monsoon itself is poised to eventually shift to a different period annually given the current weather trends, the department has no choice but to adapt, or else it may find itself and the hapless farmers at the receiving end of Mother Nature's wrath for choosing to doggedly stick to timelines that were set several decades ago.

Agriculture is at the core of our survival, so it would be wise to dole out guidelines in the best interests of the farmers and the consumers.

comment

ANTONIO LOBO

For the past many years it is not unusual to regularly read reports in the papers of injuries or even deaths occurring due to the collision of motorcycles on cattle which are occupying roads. The police has completely failed to take any action against the owners of stray cattle, who ought to be prosecuted criminally under the penal provisions of the law

Why are there so many deaths on Goa's roads?

The troubling statistics referencing deaths on the roads of Goa make for depressing reading. Often obituaries announce the funeral of young people, many just out of their teens, whose cause of death is not disclosed. One can often read in the papers about a death occurring in a road-accident and then we read the obituary and we can connect the dots.

For the past many years it is not unusual to regularly read reports in the papers of injuries or even deaths occurring due to the collision of motorcycles on cattle which are occupying roads. The police has completely failed to take any action against the owners of stray cattle, who ought to be prosecuted criminally under the penal provisions of the law. This would put an immediate end to cattle moving on roads freely.

There are also frequent instances of two motorcycles travelling in opposite directions colliding which has resulted in fatalities or serious injuries to one or both riders! Such accidents are impossible if both vehicles were travelling on their own side of the road. Evidently one of the riders was on the wrong side. The fact that one did not see the other and thus avoid the accident indicates that there was a blind turn on the road and one of the riders moved to the wrong side prior to taking the turn.



It is not unusual to see two wheelers moving on the wrong side of the road, even in urban areas and in villages and even on highways. Bad habits of this nature, where short cuts are the order of the day and over-taking from the left is a common feature, are bred in everyday driving, and then they become second nature, until that fatal day one meets that serious

accident.

This is especially true of motorcycle riders. In fact, this writer has met many drivers, owning a car and a motor bike who opt for the latter vehicle, not due to economics but because one can move faster, generally by adopting risky, and mostly illegal, driving methods such as overtaking from the left or by driving on the right-hand side of the road when approaching a right-hand side turn.

The doctrine followed seems to be: the quicker one reaches the destination the better. Unfortunately, the law of averages catches up, sooner or later, and it needs only that one fatal error and you (or the other poor rider) reach the cemetery or the crematorium faster.

There is no enforcement (or education) of the applicable laws by the police. Many a times one cannot help but wonder whether the traffic police know the rules or whether they are least concerned about their enforcement, for it is not uncommon to see a motorcycle taking a turn from the wrong side of the road, right in front of a policeman, or a car or bike driving over a zebra-crossing, whilst a pedestrian is on it or vehicles criss-crossing on a roundabout in a free-for-all frenzy, akin to the manoeuvres in a circus globe. There is no signage to indicate which vehicles have priority and which need to give way. The police at such points, if at all present, are busy manning their mobiles.

To make matters worse, there is a culture of speeding, promoted in advertisements, by car or motorcycle manufacturers, that encourages fast driving, which is associated with a macho image and the society, especially the younger generation (and the not so young) is carried away by it.

There are no apparent curbs, as one cannot see any enforcement of speed limits (the radar gun seems to belong to a forgotten past). Placement of speed cameras at strategic locations followed by imposition of fines, for infractions, would go a long way in bringing discipline on the roads and in curbing other illegalities.

Though there are traffic safety weeks annually, this

writer has yet to see any educational programmes taking place on a regular basis for on the spot education, such as at zebra-crossings where there are no traffic lights nor any instructions as to who, whether a pedestrian or a vehicle, gets preference.

Many times it happens that a conscientious driver may stop for a pedestrian, but the vehicle coming behind overtakes the one that has stopped, putting in danger the life and limb of the person who is using the crossing at the time, after seeing the first vehicle stop. Rarely do the traffic lights in Goa have signals to allow pedestrians to cross the road safely whilst simultaneously stopping the movement of vehicles.

Road engineering and other features are important for safety, but without enforcement of the traffic laws, nothing will work. That is the key to reducing the death toll and the sooner our traffic controlling authorities realise this fact, the better we will all be.

One of the many features that are incorporated in the traffic laws in developed countries, to curb reckless or drunk driving, apart from the punishment prescribed in the rules, is the suspension of the driving licence of the transgressor from six months to longer periods. And, depending on the frequency of the infractions and/or their degree of seriousness, the licence can be cancelled permanently. Secondly, the value of the insurance premium goes up, thus affecting the pocket of the transgressor on a more permanent basis. These two measures have been responsible for curbing the misbehaviour and reckless or undisciplined driving on the roads abroad. We need laws of this nature locally. Both the Central and the State Governments need to amend the laws suitably to incorporate such stringent measures. That is, if we honestly wish to reduce/eliminate the mayhem taking place on our roads.

(António Lobo is a practising advocate based in Mapusa. He is an activist and has led the Movement for the Special Status for Goa (MSSG) and Mapusa Nagrikancho Ekvott.)

people'sedit

ULTIMATE COURTESY AND EFFICIENCY

SATHAPPAN NARAYANAN

During my tour in Japan in April '25, I experienced two cultural surprises that left a lasting impression. It was an early morning in Tokyo, and I decided to step out of my hotel for a quiet stroll, hoping to absorb the city's atmosphere before the day's adventures began. As I approached a small lane near the hotel, I noticed a van approaching from the opposite direction. Instinctively, I paused, expecting the vehicle to speed past - a common occurrence in many other places I've visited.

To my surprise, the van came to a gentle stop. The driver waited patiently, making no gesture of impatience, no honking, not even an urging wave of the hand. He simply stopped, allowing me to cross first. For a moment, I hesitated, wondering if I had misread the situation. But then, realising his intention, I smiled, gave a slight bow of thanks, and walked across. The driver responded with a nod before continuing on his way.

This small interaction was a striking departure from my experiences elsewhere. In many countries, pedestrians often have to dodge speeding cars, endure impatient honks, or wait endlessly for drivers to yield. Yet here, in one of the world's busiest cities, a van driver chose courtesy over haste. It was a beautiful example of 'omotenashi' - the Japanese spirit of selfless hospitality - where even in mundane daily interactions, respect and consideration prevail.

At the end of my tour I realised the unusual second surprise: there were no speed breakers on the roads. In most countries I've visited - especially in crowded urban or residential areas - speed breakers are everywhere, often jarringly abrupt and poorly marked. They are a necessary evil, installed to force drivers to slow down where they otherwise wouldn't.

Yet in Tokyo, smooth roads stretched ahead without the usual bumps and ridges. At first, I wondered how Japan managed traffic speed without them. The answer, I soon realised, lay in a combination of factors: self-disciplined driving with pedestrian priority culture. Well thought out smart urban planning, smooth roads with clear signage and strict traffic rules and enforcement.

Absence of speed breakers wasn't just about convenience; it reflected a broader societal commitment to efficiency and mutual respect. Instead of relying on forced interruptions, Japan's system trusts drivers to follow rules and prioritises smooth, unobstructed movement - a philosophy that extends to many aspects of Japanese life.

These two experiences - the courteous van driver and the speed breaker-free roads - highlight a fundamental difference in how societies approach shared spaces. In many places, infrastructure and behaviour are shaped by a lack of trust: speed breakers exist because drivers can't be relied upon to slow down, and pedestrians brace themselves for aggressive traffic because yielding is not the norm.

Japan, in contrast, operates on a foundation of mutual respect and collective responsibility. Drivers slow down because it's the right thing to do, not because a bump in the road forces them to. Pedestrians can cross streets without fear because courtesy is ingrained in the culture.

For those visiting Japan, don't just focus on the temples, sushi, or neon lights. Take a moment to observe the small things - the way people interact, the flow of traffic, the unspoken rules that make life function smoothly. Sometimes, the most profound travel lessons come from the quietest moments.

any paradigm shift in policy. The absence of media coverage in the West is a troubling reality; these missions have totally failed to resonate on the international stage. Meanwhile, pseudo nationalists are busy boycotting Turkey, where Indian tourism is going to have a zilch impact on the local economy.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulim

System is working as designed

If you keep people exhausted and distracted, they won't organise, if you keep them struggling and divided, they won't resist. The system isn't broken, it's working as designed. In short this is the story of India today.

The politicians conjure up distractions from time to time to hold on to power while the people fight among themselves instigated by rhetoric from the netas. Hate has blinded them to such an extent that they don't realise their life has been reduced to a bed of thorns. Politicians rule and the crony capitalists are in clover, while the masses subsist on 5 kg of free rations monthly and sing praises of the man who brought them to such a pass. The aam janta is gaslit into believing they are at fault for everything wrong with the country, all they are supposed to do is worship the supreme leader while he goes about dismantling the country brick by brick.

Yes !!! The system is working as designed.

Rekha Sarin Trehan, Benaulim

letterstotheeditor

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and air defence systems supplied by China, Pakistan was probably worried because of targeting errors the nuclear bombs may fall in their own territory!

Srinivas Kamat, Mysore

Bowlers: Endangered species in T20s

Voices are being constantly raised that something should be done to provide a more level playing field for bowlers in T20s, where the format is heavily loaded in favour of batters, who go hammer and tong with the bat right from ball one.

Lamentably, tailor-made pitches, smaller boundaries, and the impact player rule have all made bowlers an endangered species in T20s and in the IPL.

The following methods can be tried out on an experimental basis which will ensure legitimacy and fairness for bowlers in T20s. a) reduce or even abolish the 'powerplay' overs, so that batters cannot take advantage of fielding restrictions, b) boundary ropes can be moved further back to reduce the length between the advertising boards and the fence, so that hitting a six often, even in smaller venues, will not be all that easy, and c) throw the 'impact player rule' into dustbin, as it kills the value of all-rounders. Like the other two formats, T20s should also have parity between batters and bowlers to ensure

more vivacity in the game, as watching hits of sixes and boundaries with every other delivery has become boring and soring to the eyes.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai

Minors taking to the wheel must end

This is in reference to the report 'Minor's dad, pillion rider held in Mapusa hit-and-run case' appearing in O Heraldo May 29 2025 edition.

The death of a 12-year old girl on account of a minor riding a two-wheeler knocking her down while crossing the road, was very unfortunate. The enthusiasm of minors craving to ride two-wheelers and even 4-wheelers needs to be curbed. At their age, they don't seem to understand the consequences of their actions.

It's easy of course, to blame the parents for permitting minors to take to the wheel. I know, in fact, I've witnessed how difficult it is to dissuade minors from doing so. Their enthusiasm, stubbornness and determination are so strong that they will find some way to do what they wish to do and the consequences are there for all to see.

Perhaps counselling could help. But, minors taking to the wheel must be stopped. There are too many lives already lost on

the road due to rash and drunk-driving. We could do without minors committing such crimes. Let's hope good counsel prevails.

Melville X D'Souza, Mumbai

Lack of support for India on critical issues

India's position on the global stage has increasingly come under scrutiny, particularly in light of its recent diplomatic challenges.

The disconnect is stark when the Prime Minister touts personal relationships with world leaders (forced hugs, never ending handshakes, cheekshakes and vigorous backslapping etc), yet the reality reveals a lack of support for India on critical issues.

Not one single major power has extended support to us during the recent conflict, other than our dubious new friend the Taliban in Afghanistan. This situation is further compounded when the Foreign Minister falters in conversations with Western journalists, often contradicting himself within weeks, illustrating a dissonance in India's foreign policy narrative.

Sending a contingent of talking heads (mostly erudite MPs from the Opposition parties) to articulate India's stance appears more geared towards domestic consumption (given our fondness for memes and WhatsApp forwards) than it does to being a genuine diplomatic effort or