

O HERALDO

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Did Goa benefit from Statehood?

This year, Goa steps into its 39th year of Statehood. The Constitution (56th Amendment) Bill — Goa, Daman and Diu Reorganisation Bill 1987 — passed by Parliament at a midnight session on May 6, 1987, fulfilled the aspirations of the majority of the people as expressed through the Opinion Poll of January 16, 1967. However, by the late 1980s, a prominent political leader who had spearheaded the Opinion Poll movement for Goa himself regretted the separate status of Goa, as he felt that the Niz Goenkar had lost out. It is therefore pertinent to collectively take stock of what the State set out to achieve, what has been accomplished, the kind of society that is envisioned, and the ethos that such a society should embody.

Statehood was intended to fulfil the aspirations of the people of this territory, who had their own land, distinct culture, social heritage, and historical background, and the need to maintain this separate identity. As Jawaharlal Nehru said at a mammoth public rally in Goa on May

Though a political entity was created through Statehood, in terms of civilisational identity, the contrary seems to have occurred. Since there is freedom of movement under the Indian Constitution, Statehood opened the floodgates for in-migration from other parts of India, owing to Goa's prosperity, good quality of life, and relative peace

23, 1963, at the height of the Merger (with Maharashtra) agitation: "Goa has a distinct personality and we have recognised it. It will be a pity to destroy the individuality and we have decided to maintain it, we have decided to preserve the separate identity of Goa." Though a political entity was created through Statehood, in terms of civilisational identity, the contrary seems to have occurred. Since there is freedom of movement under the Indian Constitution, Statehood opened the floodgates for in-migration from other parts of India, owing to Goa's prosperity, good quality of life, and relative peace. This has had a severe impact on the culture, social values, and ethos of Goan society. The issue of non-Goans was hotly debated immediately after the Liberation of Goa, in the form of the 'Deputationist issue'. Today, the tension between the bhailo and the Niz Goenkar lies just beneath the surface of everyday life. It appears that the lifestyles adopted by Goans have, in many ways, contributed to in-migration. The entire labour force—fishing, bread-making, vegetable vending, retail businesses, and project contracting—has moved into the hands of migrants, while upwardly mobile Goans, many of whom have acquired Portuguese passports, migrate to Europe.

A more serious concern is the influx of wealthy non-Goans buying prime real estate across Goa at exorbitant prices, driving up village land rates. The mushrooming of housing societies and the proposal to set up two gaming cities in Pernem threaten to radically alter the rural landscape. However, beyond a total policy failure, the problem also lies with Goans selling land to 'outsiders'. In Hiware Bazar village in Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra, the gram sabha has resolved not to sell land to outsiders. Hence, the preservation of Goan identity, society, and culture is to some extent still in our hands.

Earlier, Goans were selling their own land. Today, the ominous reality is that elected representatives have become brokers of vast tracts of land. The government is leasing out public properties and contemplating the legalisation of encroachments on Comunidade land by migrant vote banks.

The environment is under serious assault. The Mhadei river water issue has become a political chess game; coal transport through Goa is playing havoc with people's lives. While a huge highway project, two mega bridges, and Mopa airport have been constructed, basic infrastructure and amenities—such as regular water supply, stable electricity to villages, a reliable and cost-effective transport system, and decent internal and city roads—are crumbling.

With the infiltration of rowdy and drunken tourists, the law-and-order system has virtually collapsed, especially along the coastal belt. Street fights, attacks on security guards, taxi drivers and locals have become common. Accidents and crime have surged, creating the impression that Goa is a soft state or a banana republic.

People in the hinterland are still fighting for their livelihoods, as the auction system of mining has gone to nearly the same old bidders, whose contractors hire outside labour and trucks, leaving locals in the lurch. Age-old systems such as kul mundkar cases, evacuee property claims, and the mokaso issue have been dragging on for decades without benefiting locals.

There is no doubt that the quality of life for Goans has improved considerably after Statehood. However, it is the political class—both ruling and opposition—that has benefited the most, with their assets and bank balances increasing to unimaginable levels, from State-level politicians down to the panchayat level. Much of this money comes from illicit and illegal activities.

Although Goa is rated as one of the best-performing small states, state rankings are mired in methodological controversies. Therefore, the most honest report card on Statehood, ahead of its 40th anniversary next year, would be for the current government to commission a professional, statewide survey (provided it is not doctored) to reflect the opinions, fulfilled or unfulfilled aspirations of the people, and the real stories that make up the fabric of Goan life.

comment



ROHIT SINHA

The commons can't carry this

The idea that a village can only hold so much—of people, buildings, cars, and consumption—may sound obvious. But Goa has been acting otherwise. Across the state, we've seen a steady rise in large gated complexes, holiday homes, and speculative construction projects that pay little attention to the stress they place on local infrastructure. The term "carrying capacity" may sound bureaucratic, but it is fast becoming central to the conversation about Goa's future. At its core, it asks a basic question: how much development can a village sustain without degrading the quality of life or depleting the natural systems that make it livable in the first place?

For years, planning decisions in Goa have been driven by top-down imperatives. Regional plans, investment priorities and ad hoc approvals that often reflect commercial rather than communal interests. But something is shifting. Villages are beginning to push back. In Nuvem, the gram sabha recently passed a resolution demanding a moratorium on new multi-family housing projects until a formal assessment is done of how much more the village can handle. Residents there have pointed to dwindling water supply, landfilling of floodplains, and an overstretched road network as immediate consequences of overdevelopment. Their message is simple: until we know what our village can bear, no further construction should be allowed.

This is not a conflict between locals and outsiders, or between development and conservation. It is, at its heart, a capacity management problem



Taleigao has followed a similar path. In November 2024, its gram sabha called for a detailed evaluation of the village's carrying capacity. Concerns raised included blocked air flow due to high-rises, untreated sewage entering fields, and the mounting burden on basic infrastructure. What's striking in both these cases is that the push is not coming from technocrats or environmentalists alone—it's coming from ordinary residents who understand what's at stake when local systems are stretched too far.

This is not a rejection of growth, but a demand for balance. For too long, growth has been measured in square meters and approvals granted on paper, without evaluating what the land, water and people can actually support. In

the absence of such assessments, we risk building villages that look complete on the map but are hollow in function. Where roads flood after a short shower, power supply falters during peak demand and water tankers become the norm. Where the social fabric frays as residents find themselves living in places that feel less like communities and more like unregulated construction zones.

The idea of carrying capacity also embodies a deeper principle—it is a social contract between the past, present and future users of a place. What we build today cannot come at the cost of the rights of those who will live here tomorrow. Villages that have survived for generations have done so by respecting the limits of their local ecology and social rhythm. When those limits are ignored, we break that intergenerational contract and saddle future residents with depleted resources, fraying infrastructure, and a degraded quality of life.

Current models of growth often subtract from the commons. Groundwater is pumped to feed luxury pools, open spaces are paved over to make way for gated compounds, and walkable village lanes are widened and asphalted to accommodate more private vehicles. These are not just aesthetic changes—they are erosion of shared resources and collective well-being. Carrying capacity assessments, when properly executed, act as safeguards for these commons. They force planners and developers to account for cumulative impacts, rather than treating each project as an isolated exception.

The technical aspects of carrying capacity assessments deserve closer attention. These are not abstract exercises; they involve evaluating the capacity of local aquifers, the strength and reach of sewage systems, the resilience of roads and transport networks, and the ability of solid waste systems to handle rising volumes. They also require a view on how much open space and ecological buffer a village needs to remain healthy. Done right, these assessments can become the backbone of planning decisions, ensuring that development is guided by what the land and infrastructure can reasonably sustain.

One reason these assessments haven't become standard practice is that they require coordination between multiple agencies—planning departments, panchayats, water resource authorities, and urban development bodies. But coordination cannot be an excuse for inaction. What villages like Nuvem and Taleigao have shown

is that even without state support, communities can take the first step: pass resolutions, articulate demands, and make clear that unchecked growth is not an acceptable path. The state must respond by making carrying capacity evaluations a non-negotiable part of every planning exercise—especially in ecologically fragile or high-growth areas.

This is not a conflict between locals and outsiders, or between development and conservation. It is, at its heart, a capacity management problem. When planning fails to acknowledge limits, every new project becomes a flashpoint. But when capacity is measured, shared, and respected, villages can grow in a way that benefits everyone—newcomers and long-time residents alike. Framing the issue as a technical and governance challenge, rather than a cultural or identity-based conflict, allows for solutions grounded in data, transparency, and accountability.

There's also a broader political point here. If planning continues to ignore capacity, it will only fuel resentment. People will see their roads clogged, their water rationed, and their environment degraded, and they will begin to resist every new project—regardless of its merit. But if communities are given tools to understand and define their limits, they can shape a future that is both welcoming and sustainable.

Some might say this sounds too idealistic. But the fact is, many of the world's most livable neighbourhoods, those that balance density with dignity—are guided by frameworks that cap development based on local capacity. These frameworks allow for growth, but not at the cost of livability. Goa has long had the advantage of strong village identities and community-driven governance through gram sabhas. The time has come to harness that strength toward a new planning framework. One that respects ecological thresholds, protects public goods, and aligns future construction with the carrying capacity of each village.

This will require political will, technical investment and a shift in how we think about land. Without it, we will continue to witness unregulated construction that strains the commons leading to more resource conflicts and a Goa that becomes harder to live in, even for those who claim to love it most. If we want our villages to remain vibrant and resilient, then carrying capacity cannot remain a buzzword. It must become the baseline.

(The author is a strategy consultant and writer living in Goa)

letters to the editor

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.

Government must maintain roads

Our roads are becoming extremely dangerous with reckless driving being a major contributing factor to rising road accidents and fatalities. While there's a complex interplay of factors, including poor infrastructure and lack of enforcement, reckless behaviour, particularly speeding, is a significant cause. Every morning, our newspapers are filled with reports of road accidents -- passen-

ger buses plunging into rivers and mountain gorges, drunk drivers mowing down pedestrians, cars crashing into stationary trucks and two-wheelers being knocked down by larger vehicles.

To reduce road accidents, the government must focus on improving road infrastructure, enforcing traffic laws, and promoting safe driving practices. The government must also maintain roads, including fixing potholes and replacing worn-out pavement, to

ensure a smooth and predictable driving surface.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

Beyond elections – development for all

The Prime Minister's unveiling of massive development projects in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh is encouraging — but also revealing. Is progress now a political privilege, reserved for poll-bound states? India's vision of inclusive growth risks distortion if Jharkhand, Odisha, and the North-

east remain sidelined. Infrastructure is a citizen's right, not a campaign tool. Selective investment sends the wrong signal — that federal fairness is negotiable. Bihar and UP need development, no doubt, but so do dozens of neglected districts. A truly developed nation must rise together, not in electoral patches. The government must ask itself: are we engineering equity, or simply engineering elections?

Mohammad Hasnain, Muzaffarpur

people's edit

GOA STATEHOOD

EDUARDO FALEIRO

On May 30, we celebrate the Goa Statehood Day. On this day, in 1987, Goa ceased to be a Union Territory and became the 25th State of the Union of India.

Goa was liberated from the colonial rule in December 1961. After Liberation, a significant controversy arose as to whether it should remain a separate territory or should merge into a neighboring State, Maharashtra or Mysore. In 1967, an Opinion Poll was held, the only such referendum in independent India. It decided that Goa, Daman, and Diu should remain a separate entity with the status of a Union Territory. After that, all the three major political parties, the United Goans, the Congress, and the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party sought statehood for Goa.

This demand was raised in March 1971 by A N Naik of the United Goans Party who moved a private members' resolution to this effect in the Legislative Assembly of Goa, Daman, and Diu. It was approved unanimously. Sometime after that, Purushottam Kakodkar of the Congress introduced in the Lok Sabha a Bill demanding statehood for Goa and in October 1976, R L Pankar of the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party moved a private members' resolution in the Legislative Assembly also seeking statehood for Goa. Leader of Opposition Dr Jack de Sequeira, Law Minister Pratapsingh Rane, A N Naik, Dr L P Barbosa, Chandrakant Chodankar, Roque Santana Fernandes, Punaji Achrekar, Teotonio Pereira, Luta Ferrao, Leo Velho, Dr Silverio D'Souza, Jagdish Rao and this writer participated in the debate. Replying to the discussion, Chief Minister Sashikala Kakodkar stated, "In the early years after Liberation, the MG Party stood for a merger with Maharashtra and fought for it through the Opinion Poll in a democratic way. The verdict of the Poll went against the merger, and the M G Party accepted the people's verdict because it believes in the wisdom of the electorate. Goa, Daman and Diu are and should be what the people of this territory want to make of it."

When I was elected to Parliament in 1977, the Union Government was led by the Janata Party. While Prime Minister Morarji Desai was opposed to small States, Home Minister Charan Singh supported them. Jayaprakash Narayan, the patron of the Janata Party, also supported small States. In 1969, in an article in a National daily, he called for "breaking up oversized States such as UP, Bihar, MP and a few others... The breaking up of large States, apart from resulting in a more compact, efficient and close to the people administration, should also go far to mitigate linguistic jingoism" he wrote.

My first speech in the Lok Sabha on April 4, 1977, and several of my subsequent speeches in Parliament dealt with the need to provide statehood to Goa. I submitted that "Union Territories came into existence under peculiar circumstances. In 1957 or thereabouts, a States Reorganisation Commission was formed to reorganise the States on a linguistic basis. It was found that there were some small pockets which for some reason or the other could neither be constituted into separate States nor could be joined or annexed to existing States. These were areas like Manipur, Tripura, NEFA, and so on. It was understood that after these areas had attained a certain level of economic and educational development, they would be merged into a neighboring State. It so happened that years went by, and the people of those areas affirmed unanimously that they did not want to be merged into any of the existing States. This is how Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, and the other North Eastern States came into existence.

"The case of Goa is quite different, so also that of Pondicherry (or Puducherry). Pondicherry which was under French rule and Goa, Daman and Diu which were under the Portuguese rule joined the Union of India. Here you have two territories, small in area but with a reasonably high level of economic development, literacy, and cultural development. These were people who just came out of the colonial rule and who for centuries had been denied self-governance.

"In this country, no one is deliberately discriminated against, no people, no region, no creed is deliberately discriminated against in this free and democratic country of ours. But sometimes, unwittingly, discrimination creeps in and then it is incumbent upon the sovereign Parliament of this nation to correct such anomaly. Unlike in the States, in the Union Territories, the Lt. Governor is the authority who yields all the power. The Chief Minister and the entire Cabinet of a Union Territory are put at the mercy and disposal, as it were, of the Lt. Governor. This is a very abnormal situation.

"On the floor of this House, I appeal to the conscience of the members that this type of situation, taking people from the colonial rule and not giving them full rights which their brethren enjoy in the rest of the country should not be allowed to continue. It runs against all the tenets of our polity and the conscience of this House should be aroused to grant statehood to at least some of the Union Territories. The people of Goa must be granted statehood. This is the birthright of the people of Goa."

In 1980, Indira Gandhi returned as Prime Minister. In 1981, I introduced in Parliament the Statehood of Goa, Daman and Diu Bill 1981. Rajiv Gandhi, then General Secretary of the AICC, assured me that the subject would be considered sympathetically by Government. When Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister, I felt that I should obtain an assurance from him regarding statehood for Goa on the floor of Parliament. I could not personally raise the issue in Parliament since I was a Union Minister. Hence, I asked my colleague from Goa, Shantaram Naik, to mention the matter in the Lok Sabha. Shantaram agreed. I took him immediately to the chamber of the Prime Minister in Parliament House and informed Rajiv Gandhi that Shantaram Naik would raise the issue of statehood of Goa in the Lok Sabha and Government may reply favorably. Accordingly, the matter was raised by Shantaram Naik and Chintamani Panigrahi, Minister of State for Home Affairs indicated that Government was favorably inclined in this regard. The statehood for Goa followed.

Goa has achieved remarkable progress over the last five decades, particularly in core sectors such as education. Significant headway has been made in the fields of healthcare and development of infrastructure though there are obvious deficiencies in all these sectors. We must face the multifarious tasks that confront us today with courage and determination, with a rational outlook and commitment to a value system anchored on work ethics and the quest for excellence.