

O HERALDO

The plastic truth we can't ignore

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Every year, World Environment Day on June 5 is an opportunity to reflect, reassess, and recommit to protecting the environment. The 2025 theme, "Beat Plastic Pollution," could not be more relevant or more urgent for Goa. This small coastal state, India's tourism crown jewel, is drowning in plastic. Not metaphorically. Literally.

According to one estimate, Goa's per capita plastic waste is eight times the national average. That statistic should shock any conscientious citizen into action. But it isn't just a number, it's a mirror: One that reflects systemic failure, administrative lethargy, and our own apathy toward environmental responsibility.

Goa, despite being one of India's smallest states, generates an average of 29,000 tonnes of plastic waste every year, about 12 kg, per person annually, the highest in India. The irony is stark: a state marketed for its natural beauty is now one of the most polluted.

The tourism industry - Goa's economic lifeline is a major contributor to this plastic avalanche. In 2023 alone, more than 80 lakh tourists descended upon Goa's beaches, rivers, forests and towns. And with them came single-use bottles, plastic packaging, disposable cutlery, straws and wrappers; all discarded, often without

Goa's plastic crisis is not tomorrow's problem. It is today's emergency. Without immediate and systemic action, the state risks destroying the very soul of what makes it special. Nature has long been Goa's biggest asset. But if we let it suffocate under the weight of our convenience and carelessness, the damage may soon become irreversible

thought, into an already overwhelmed waste management system.

Statistics show that while a local resident generates 46 grams of plastic waste per day, a tourist generates over twice that amount: 102 grams. This glaring disparity underlines a crucial problem: visitors, unbound by local civic responsibilities, are inadvertently burdening the land they come to enjoy.

The Goa Waste Management Corporation (GWMC) is tasked with controlling this spiralling crisis. But the facts speak

otherwise. Many village-level plastic processing units remain non-functional. Funds from the central government lie unused or are poorly deployed. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan's plastic-free rural goal is still stuck at the planning stage.

A two-year study (2022-24) conducted by Amethi University on five major beaches — Palolem, Colva, Baina, Miramar, and Calangute reveals a dismal picture. Baina beach topped the pollution charts with 76.5% of collected waste being plastic, while Calangute recorded 66.4%. These aren't just polluted beaches; they are the frontlines of an environmental emergency. Plastic doesn't just mar beauty; it chokes marine life, disrupts ecosystems, and ultimately threatens the very economy that relies on these scenic shores.

If tourism is part of the problem, it must also be part of the solution. Goa needs to introduce an Eco-Tourism Tax; a nominal fee that directly funds waste management, beach clean-ups, and recycling projects. A surcharge on single-use plastic packaging could discourage retailers from distributing them altogether.

For real change, the battle must begin at the grass-roots. Local panchayats must be empowered with both authority and funding to take charge of waste management in their regions. Public-private partnerships can accelerate the setting up of smart waste collection systems, mobile recycling units, and 'waste-to-energy' pilot plants, especially in high-footfall zones like beaches and markets.

Equally important is tourist education. Clear signage, segregated bins, beach volunteers, and hotel awareness campaigns should be made mandatory. If we expect tourists to respect Goa, we must teach them how.

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The message this World Environment Day is clear: Goa is choking, and plastic is the noose. We can still loosen it through strong policies, strategic investment, and social responsibility. But time is slipping away, just like the tides that now return our waste to us.

The choice is ours: continue on the path of apathy, or act now to reclaim Goa's glory for ourselves, and for the generations who still deserve to see it unspoiled.

Twitter World

Bernie Sanders @SenSanders

The Republican reconciliation bill which makes massive cuts to Medicaid in order to pay for huge tax breaks for billionaires is not just bad public policy. It is not just immoral. It is a death sentence for struggling Americans.

comment



STEVE CORREA



RONALD D'SOUSA

For peace to become more than just a brief reprieve between conflicts, we need to rediscover the art of listening and make space for understanding the other side



In today's world, the single narrative dominates. From geopolitical propaganda to social media feuds, we are flooded with curated truths. In the battle between Israel and Palestine, for instance, it is tempting—and common—for individuals to align with a side, often based on their community, religion, political affiliation, or news source. One of the co-authors reads both The Palestine Chronicle and Mosaic; I watch Al Jazeera and the BBC, each of them steering to 'multiple truths'. However, the truth is not found in balance alone—it requires empathy. It is only when I listened to the voices of two grieving women—Hala

Al-Bukhari, who lost 33 family members in Gaza, and Liat Atzili, whose husband was murdered and whose remains are still held hostage—that I understood the sacred and painful ground of shared loss. Hala and Liat, both members of the Parents Circle, speak not of vengeance, but of conversation. Their words are filled with sorrow, yet also with a resolute insistence on dialogue. They do not speak for their sides; they speak from their wounds. This difference is everything. For what they embody is not compromise, but courage—the kind it takes to sit across from your enemy, knowing you both carry unbearable grief, and still choosing to speak instead of scream.

Conflict, in many ways, is not the absence of peace—it is the crucible in which peace is tested. We tend to glorify war, mythologise battles, and reduce history to a sequence of victories and defeats. Yet every war, every violent rupture, leaves behind it not just corpses and ruins, but distortions. For instance, World War II is remembered in the West as a moral triumph against fascism. Yet few recall that Russia, despite its own atrocities like the Katyn Massacre, bore the heaviest human cost. Tens of millions dead. Cities razed. Generations scarred. Who gets to tell the story? Who is heard, and who is forgotten?

Even in personal relationships, conflict often manifests in subtle and persistent ways. We hold on to slights, real or imagined. We assume motives. We argue from our wounds. Often, we don't seek truth; we seek victory. And here too, empathy becomes both the solution and the threat. To empathise with someone who has hurt you is to risk undermining your own sense of moral certainty. It is to open the possibility that they, too, were in pain. That they too had a reason, even if not a justification. And that is terrifying.

And yet, to be human is to have the capacity to pause. Unlike animals bound by instinct, we can choose. We can breathe before we act. We can listen before we speak. This ability—to discern, to delay, to defer our certainty—is the essence of maturity, both personal and political.

In modern public life, however, restraint is often misread as weakness. Leaders like Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh, who led through quiet reflection rather than noise and bluster, were dismissed as indecisive. But real strength lies

in patience. It lies in knowing that peace is not born of dominance, but of the painstaking work of dialogue. That to hold one's counsel is not cowardice, but a form of service—to the nation, to the relationship, to the future.

Nations too, carry memories—often bitter, sometimes noble, always selective. But reconciliation is not forgetting. It is remembering differently. It is the willingness to sit with history's contradictions without being paralysed by them. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not erase the horrors of apartheid. But it created a space where victims and perpetrators could be seen, where stories could be told—not to determine one truth, but to acknowledge many.

This does not mean that all sides are equally just. But it does mean that no one side has a monopoly on suffering. That dignity and grief are not tribal. That every child killed in war is a tragedy, whether they were born in Tel Aviv or Rafah, and that the dead deserve more than our allegiances—they deserve our humility.

There is an old African proverb: "When the elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers." In every conflict, it is ordinary people who carry the burden. Mothers. Children. Farmers. Shopkeepers. The ones with no armies, no microphones, no say. What they need is not our righteousness. What they need is for us to remember that humanity is not divisible. That pain, when heard, becomes less lonely. Those stories, when shared, become bridges.

We must be willing to ask: What is the story I'm not hearing? What is the truth I'm unwilling to consider? Who is the person I have dehumanised in the name of justice?

If we can do this—even once—we create the conditions for peace. Not peace as the absence of noise, but as the presence of understanding. Not as a treaty, but as a posture. Ultimately, dialogue is not about achieving agreement. It is about recognition. It is the radical act of saying: "I see you. I do not agree with you. But I will not erase you."

And perhaps, just perhaps, that is where peace begins.

(Steve Correa is an Executive Coach and Author of The Indian Boss at Work, Thinking Global, Acting Indian. Ronald D'Souza has Corporate and Consulting Experience and mentors new startups)

cal abuse can take wicked forms and the society is witness to the same. Children are not safe even in their homes let alone at schools and elsewhere. Sexual attacks, horrific killings and unbearable maiming: children especially in war zones have seen it all. In 2023 alone, 11649 children were killed in war zones according to UN Secretary General Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflicts.

Then there are the cases of abduction and denial of humanitarian access. It is said that the "push and pull factors" that drive children to conflict zones or propel them to stay put in warring areas should be identified and eliminated. Children have their rights and they want peace, and it is the onerous responsibility of the countries to protect them.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

Ukraine's deep strike

The Russia-Ukraine war has entered a new phase, marked by intensified military attacks and

direct negotiations. Ukraine's latest drone offensive deep with- in Russian territory marks not just a military milestone, but a psychological and strategic inflection point in the on-going war where the Ukrainian forces launched a massive drone attack on Russia's bomber fleet, reportedly destroying more than 40 heavy aircraft. Dubbed 'Operation Spiderweb', the attack is being compared by some to Pearl Harbor.

That Ukraine managed to carry out such an attack is a morale booster for its troops and a tactical setback for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Prior to Kyiv's attack, Russia had launched massive drones and missiles across Ukraine, significantly straining the country's air defences. From its side, India too needs to invest in drone R&D. When drones are so cost-effective to fight war, then why procure sophisticated bombers worth millions of dollars.

If Russia chooses to respond with escalation, especially with the support of allies like Iran or North Korea, the fallout may not remain confined to Eastern Europe. Ukraine's attack may not end the war. But it has ended the illusion that this conflict can be managed through patience alone.

Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai

The other side of the story: A call for dialogue and reconciliation

people's *edit*

BE A CHILD AGAIN

STEVEN DE SOUZA

Imagine a baby looking at a curtain moving in the wind. The baby doesn't try to name it or understand it. It just watches. This quiet, open way of looking at the world is how babies learn—not by knowing, but by wondering.

Adults learn differently. We often rush to give answers, label things, or explain what we see. We speak before we really listen. We say 'I know' even if we don't. We're so eager to look smart that we forget the power of simply not knowing and being open.

Babies have what some people call a 'beginner's mind' or 'childlike awareness'. Their minds are quiet, open, and ready to learn. They don't judge or expect things to be a certain way. They just take in the world as it is. That's why babies learn so quickly and deeply—they are fully present and curious.

But as we grow up, our minds become crowded with past experiences and a desire to be right. We think knowing things makes us wise, but sometimes it just makes us less open. We're scared of being wrong, and we compare ourselves to others. This can make learning harder and more stressful.

Why does learning feel tougher as we get older? One reason is how society shapes us. From a young age, we're praised for giving answers, not for asking questions. We're taught to impress, not to quietly watch and understand. Over time, we lose the natural curiosity we had as children and replace it with the constant need to know.

Real learning begins when our minds are calm. When we stop and say, 'I don't know, but I'm ready to watch and learn,' we open the door to real understanding. Our brain becomes more flexible, our ego gets quiet, and we truly experience the world instead of just thinking about it. This is the space where great ideas are born; whether by scientists, artists, or children.

The philosopher J. Krishnamurti once said, "The ability to observe without evaluating is the highest form of intelligence." In other words, just watching without judging is a powerful kind of learning. But many adults struggle with this because we think not knowing makes us weak.

To learn better as adults, we need to return to the childlike mind-set we once had. That doesn't mean acting childish; it means being curious again. We need to find silence inside ourselves, not just around us. We can try watching our thoughts without believing them and looking at the world without quickly naming or judging what we see. Only when we stop pretending to know everything can we truly start to learn and grow.

We should also learn to ask honest questions. We should be okay with being wrong, because every mistake teaches us something. Instead of reading about big ideas like love, truth, or language, we should try to experience them in real life; with attention, silence, and openness. And above all, we should say "I don't know" more often and really mean it.

This way of learning is also helpful when learning a new language. If you watch a movie in another language with full attention and without subtitles, your brain will start to notice the rhythm, emotions, and meanings naturally. Just like a baby, you begin by listening and feeling, not by memorizing grammar. Later, the rules help you understand what you've already started to absorb.

In the end, silence is where all learning starts. Even language comes from silence. This idea isn't just about babies or school, it's about life, growth, and how we continue to change. If we can return to that childlike sense of wonder and not childishness, but deep curiosity, we will find the courage to say "I don't know" and the wisdom to truly listen.

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.

six Goans had drowned at Nagar-madi waterfalls in Karwar when water in the creek started rising suddenly. In such cases the best of safety measures and presence of lifeguards will not serve much purpose. Hence entry in the water at the base of the waterfall should be totally banned. Warning signs need to be put up at such sites.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Law and order going for a toss

A shocking incident was reported at Bastora junction, wherein a pregnant woman and her husband (both of whom who operate a shawarma van at the same junction) were brutally attacked by around 20 persons with iron rods, wooden sticks, choppers and knives late Monday evening. According to the complaint, the attack stemmed from a minor argument earlier in the day over a parking issue.

What is most shocking in this whole entire episode is that though the victim's husband has identified and given the names of all the 20 accused, the police

has so far arrested just three persons. What about the other 17?

The Mapusa Police should stop maligning their own image wearing by allegedly protecting these upcoming local self-styled 'rowdy-goons' involved in the above attack at the behest of some politicians and instead should get them all arrested at the very earliest and finally give justice to the victim couple and their family members.

Jerry Fernandes, Saligao

Protecting children is govt' responsibility

Protecting the rights of children and ending all forms of violence against them is critical for their overall development. In 1982, the United Nations decided to put in place the "International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression" on June 4 as a mark of protest against the invasion of Lebanon and its broad impact on children.

Mental, physical and emotional rights of children are addressed all over on this day. Across the globe, different types of violence are inflicted on children. Physi-

cal abuse can take wicked forms and the society is witness to the same.

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