

O HERALDO

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Civic sense going down the drain

In recent times, raw sewage flowing out in the open or into water supply pipelines appears to have become the order of the day. What is appalling is that while citizens across the length and breadth of the state have been raising alarms and protesting the severe risks this could pose to their health and that of their immediate environment, the government's lackadaisical attitude in zeroing in on and pulling up the perpetrators is highly condemnable.

Just a couple of days ago, a sewage leak near the South Goa District Hospital got farmers and residents at Danvoddem-Fatorda worried over concerns that it could damage fields and cause health issues due to drinking water contamination. The seepage was the result of damage to sewage chambers and a nearby water pipeline during excavation undertaken by the electricity department for underground cabling works. Barely a day before this, sewage overflow was reported near the PjN Stadium at Fatorda after a tanker was allegedly caught discharging sewage straight into gutters near the stadium, which caused it to spill onto the adjoining roads. Amid widespread outrage, the local legislator warned of a potential epidemic at Fatorda if the matter was not addressed and the sewage overflow was not stopped immediately.

A little up north, several parts of Agasaim in the Tiswadi taluka have also been reeling from the clandestine discharge of hazardous chemicals into stormwater drains that was reported at the start of June. The transgression prompted a group of activists to investigate the matter. The group later pointedly said that large portions of the agrarian village, particularly near the border it shares with Pilar, had been poisoned by the discharge. Its members' concerns appear to be valid as black fluid, allegedly laden with toxic substances, stained the water and transformed it into foul-smelling streams and left paddy fields coated in black residue.

Further northward, again in the Tiswadi taluka, a similar instance was noticed as the drains running through Taleigao's Vodlemhat began filling up with raw sewage in April. Shockingly, this went unnoticed by the authorities until irate residents complained that the obnoxious discharge had somehow gotten mixed with their potable water supply. When officials of the PWD and the health department rushed to inspect the area, they even found human excreta floating in the drains. The area consequently went without water supply for well over a month even as the authorities and the local panchayat struggled to locate the source of the contamination amid the work of laying a new water pipeline to replace the damaged one into which sewage had been seeping. The health department also failed spectacularly in getting individual households to clean their overflowing soak pits, which were suspected to be the root cause of the problem.

Earlier in the year, in the middle of January, the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) directed the South Goa magistrate to seal several establishments, primarily restaurants in Margao for releasing wastewater directly into stormwater drains. At least 46 establishments were asked to down their shutters after the GSPCB, during an inspection, saw for itself how waste and kitchen water were blatantly being discharged into drains meant for rainwater. It was also found that domestic wastewater was being released into these drains as well.

Just a day after the new year, people of Ponda complained that drains and gutters in some parts of the town, including Upper Bazaar, were overflowing with sewage, emanating an unbearable stench. This included sewage from some residential buildings and hotels, despite the town having a centralised sewerage network. Officials of the sewerage corporation said that although the 15 MLD sewage treatment plant for Ponda had begun operations and the corporation was releasing sewage connections, response from the locals was poor despite connections being mandatory.

The catastrophic effects that raw sewage discharge could have on the environment and the health of people haven't appeared to hit home, going by the government's near apathetic attitude. By now, given the numerous reports of sewage discharge virtually all across the state, the government should be identifying the offenders immediately and coming down on them with an iron hand. It must also make non-negotiable the availing of sewerage connections in areas where a centralised network has been laid and made operational and must fine heavily those who refuse such connections.

The least citizens can do is to ensure that the septic tanks and soak pits in their individual residences are regularly emptied or cleaned to prevent an overflow and consequent contamination of large swathes of area by raw sewage, because in the end, the extent of wrongdoings and transgressions will definitely come full circle and hit everyone where it hurts the most: Health and sustenance.

comment



BINAYAK DATTA

Not an easy choice at all, with uncertainty all around particularly in the US where it's profoundly difficult predicting what Presidential Order comes along suddenly tomorrow, with 137 of them already issued in 100 days

War and peace and...
truce on tariffs!

There are occasions you get to hear that uncanny voice of Pierre Bezukhov reaching out to Natasha in Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace" contemplating the limits of human knowledge and historical analysis and he says "Human science fragments everything in order to understand it, kills everything in order to examine it." Far and centuries away from the Borodino War, I often wonder how true Pierre was!

I thought I'd discuss the tariff wars of the day a little bit! When in early February this year, PM Modi was visiting President Trump at the US, in his part of a joint presser, Trump mentioned three lines, that India charges very high tariffs, India's going to purchase a lot of gas and oil from the US and that "we're going to do a lot of trade!"

I'll first like to recapitulate here that the US happens to be our largest export customer with a purchase of about \$87 bn a year (around 20% of our total exports) and India imports from them around \$45 bn (around 6% of our total imports). To the US, there's obviously a sharp adverse balance of \$42 bn. Throughout his "Agenda 47" he had spoken of a "Universal Baseline Tariff of 10%-20% with additional tariffs on specific countries. He had promised additional tariffs on countries causing higher trade deficits like China Canada and India. The US incurs deficits of \$150bn from China and \$80bn from Canada.



The ask with India, suggest (some are confusing though), a Baseline Tariff of 10% applicable on all imports from India, and reciprocal tariffs of an additional 26% (or was it 27%) held in suspension until July 9, to allow for trade negotiations.

Add to this, sector-specific tariffs: Steel and aluminium: 25% (increased from 10%), and automobiles and

auto parts, 25% already from March 2025.

Before February, our exports were paying 3.4% average. The US cites our import tariffs of 70% on American cars, 50% on apples and a \$42 billion trade deficit.

It's important therefore to come to an agreement before July 9.

I think there has to be a three-pronged strategy on this: a) Our Imports where indigenous industry needs safeguards eg dairy and agriculture, MSME segments like machineries and appliances, critical technology e.g. medical equipments and organic chemicals and balance the revenues lost with the LNG to be additionally purchased from the US. b) Our exports where added-values are higher, competition is higher and the demand is elastic we will perhaps not accept the tariff-hikes and look for alternative markets in say East Africa, South Asia, etc, or c) Gems and jewellery, sea food, basmati (ask 80%), tea and coffee could be better options for a tariff-hike acceptance with riders like quality specifications, supply reliability, etc, in line with international competition. Vietnam and Brazil are certainly not better off! India should negotiate from its position of inherently strong domestic-market and its stability and decidedly not give in to ambiguities and inappropriate semantics! One reported just yesterday at a discussion forum from the US Commerce Secretary, and he laid out a virtual "with-us-or-against-us" in context of India's association with Russia and the BRICS!

In terms of a report from the Global Trade Research Institute (GTRI) worked on the World Bank WITS Platform (World Integrated Trade Solutions), if the new tariffs are not accepted, we lose exports to US of about \$10bn, and if we do, US reciprocal tariffs on us add up \$7 bn annually. Not an easy choice at all, with uncertainty all around particularly in the US where it's profoundly difficult predicting what Presidential Order comes along suddenly tomorrow, with 137 of them already issued in 100 days, compared with Biden's 40, Obama's 20 and tailed by George W Bush with just 16 in similar periods! That's in a nutshell is the US versus India snapshot.

A peep into the US versus China. Surprisingly in the case of Russia and China you often get to see the "Kid Glove syndrome" at play. China runs a deficit with the US of \$150bn. The US "volley'd and thunder'd, stormed at with shot and shell, but China "Rode its 600"! It slapped equal and opposite tariffs on US Imports and at a time everything looked so very childish with tariffs of 245%! Now guns on both sides cease fire and only the universal 10% applies till the "bad" day of July! If the US does hold on, India has a very good chance to significantly gain ground in value-added products and light engineering items.

China on its part has its role to play in the tariff war cross-currents! They have put export curbs on rare-earth magnets (its near-monopoly) to ensure "they are not used by buyers for making weapons". A laudable initiative on the face of it, but as a result our car manufacturers here predict complete stoppage of production by mid-July. These magnets are essential I gather, for components and sub-assemblies.

Next; The EU treaty might be slightly difficult. It's a key partner with India exporting €65bn and importing around €48bn. I suppose a lot of probable losses from the US could find balance in textiles, garments and pharma in the EU. The only sticking points would be the EU's climate change regulations-linked-trade proving environment conditions linked with economic priorities and the tough carbon border adjustment mechanism. But I think this would be essential for us in any case, particularly in the export of heavy engineering items to eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, far away from the sabre-rattling of the tariff war, in Goa shines a golden opportunity for its cashew to be marketed at 36% tariffs in the US (with now a 46% tariff on Vietnam)! Let's see ourselves making the best of it! Before I conclude, the real challenge lies in change and its speed! Peace times are never rest times; they are meant to be spent in preparing for the next battle, in Tolstoy's words in order to "fragment everything to understand it!"

(The author is a retired Finance professional)

people's edit

WHY ARE YOU DIFFERENT?

JOHN MALVINO ALFONSO

God created us in His image, but as we grew, worldly influences pulled us away from that divine nature. Many claim to believe in God yet don't live by His teachings, while others reject God entirely, relying only on themselves and often losing their way.

We often accept our culture and traditions as simply "how life is", forgetting that these can distance us from our true selves. Though different in dress, language, and customs, these differences shouldn't divide us or separate us from God.

While we openly celebrate these cultural differences at public events, in daily life, living by deeper values or standing against injustice is often met with resistance. Those who dare to do what is right frequently face the question, "Why are you different?" Unfortunately, this reflects a widespread attitude in our society.

Our attitude and behaviour shape our relationships. Whether in a family, group, or community, these qualities matter. But living by principles in a world that often chooses convenience over conscience is a challenge. People ask themselves, "If everyone else is doing it, why should I be the one to act differently?" And under peer pressure, many shy away from the harder, nobler path.

Still, some do try. They aim to live a life rooted in values, even if it doesn't match the norms around them. And when they do, the question resurfaces: "Why are you different?" Should we abandon a meaningful life just because it sets us apart? Should we stay quiet just to avoid breaking relationships or losing acceptance?

The answer is no. We must learn to live distinctly—not in isolation, but with integrity. Living differently doesn't mean being alone; it means living with purpose, even if others don't understand.

When you choose to live by your values in a world that prizes conformity, certain realities may follow; people may distance themselves from you. You may be excluded from certain circles simply for not going along with the crowd; others may question your motives, spread false impressions, or even fabricate stories to discredit you; you may not receive the respect or admiration often given to those who follow popular opinion; living a principled life can make it harder to connect with others at times—but this distance is often temporary.

These realities can be painful. People can challenge your reputation or even harm your opportunities—but they cannot touch your inner truth. Loneliness may come. Doubt may creep in. But if you are willing to live by your values and stay rooted in the truth, you'll find strength—not only in yourself, but also in something higher.

Even in hardship, those who live differently can experience a life of meaning and peace. Many people desire to live by principle, but along the way, they lose their footing—usually because they fear being different. Most conform, believing that if their behaviour is widely accepted, it must be right. But what's popular isn't always what's right.

That's why a steady mind is essential. Just because most people choose one path doesn't mean it's the best one. Real happiness doesn't come from being accepted—it comes from living a life that reflects truth, love, and humanity. By staying true to these values, we not only find personal fulfilment but also inspire others to pursue a more meaningful, compassionate existence.

Govt schools sans proper rooftops

Caught off guard by an early onset of monsoon, the Public Works Department (PWD) has reportedly put a temporary halt on roofing work across a majority of government schools in the State as several schools are struggling to accommodate students.

Government schools have been scrambling to make last-minute arrangements as class-rooms remain roofless or under repairs. The situation has caused distress among teachers, students and parents raising concern about safety and readiness for the new academic year. The incessant rains have prompted the authorities to temporarily relocate educational institutions to alternative premises including temples and panchayat halls on the very first day of the new academic year.

This reshuffling of the premises does not augur well for the students. It is learnt that around 250 schools were undergoing repairs and roofing work remains incomplete at approximately 40 institutions. It is true that the monsoon has arrived early this year, but this cannot be an excuse for non-completion of repair work in the various schools. Pre-monsoon showers are not a new phenomenon in the State. The repair work of the school rooftops should have been completed much before the pre-monsoon showers. This would have prevented hardship for the students, teachers and parents. The pending work needs to be completed on pri-

ority basis as and when weather permits. When the State has achieved 100 percent literacy, it is an irony that several government schools do not have proper roofs.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Check tree growth

Environment Day was recently observed with various events emphasising the critical need for environmental preservation. A common activity during these occasions is the planting of saplings by institutions, organisations, clubs, and associations.

However, it's important to note that often, the efforts seem to end there. The crucial question remains whether the nurturing and growth of these saplings are adequately tracked. The initial enthusiasm and photo opportunities associated with planting frequently do not extend to the long-term care required.

While the successful growth of saplings into mature trees is undoubtedly beneficial, unchecked growth can lead to potential hazards. Overgrown trees can become a public menace, posing risks that necessitate intervention.

Therefore, the concerned authorities and organisations responsible for planting must also commit to their maintenance through regular pruning or even removal when necessary to prevent future mishaps.

letterstotheeditor

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Planting saplings as part of celebrations should not be viewed as the culmination of their responsibility. These organisations must consider the potential consequences of unchecked growth, such as damage to infrastructure like electric posts, buildings, and roads, which can endanger lives and property.

It is imperative to move beyond simply planting and adopt a proactive approach to ensure that today's saplings do not become tomorrow's hazardous "green monsters" due to neglect.

M Pradyu, Kannur

Wake up, save Goa

Our history books remind us that our beloved Golden Goa has faced numerous invasions and rule by outsiders, from the Mughals and Marathas to the Portuguese. Today, while our State is governed by Goans, we are witnessing a different kind of encroachment, as individuals from Delhi, Haryana, Mumbai, and other places increasingly acquire our land and resources.

If this trend continues unchecked, the very essence of Goa risks being altered irrevocably. Even our cherished beaches are under pressure, as evidenced by the growing agitation of villagers in their gram sabha meetings to protect their coastal belt.

The question before us is whether we, as Goans, will succeed in safeguarding our home-

land and our beaches, or if they will gradually disappear, much like what has happened in Mumbai.

Now is the time for us to unite and rise up in defence of Goa and its precious coastline. Let us work together to ensure that the Goa we cherish remains Goan for generations to come.

Natividade Fernandes, Cavellissim

Go green, save environment

Our entire planet suffers from pollution, global warming, deforestation and extinction of biological species. The phrase "going green" has become a part of everyday discussion and people are being told to plant trees, switch off the lights whenever they leave the room, buy energy-saving appliances and drive less. June 5 being World Environment Day, I have already taken the decision to use reusable shopping bags, instead of plastic whenever I go shopping and switch off the lights whenever I leave the room.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

Forest right claims

The Chief Minister has made tall claims that all forest rights claims will be settled by December 2025. Many forest depart-

ment officials from Collem have encroached on government land and have constructed houses without any permission from authorities. The same forest department officials harass people who want to build irregular houses on their own property.

The sanad given to forest rights claims clearly mentioned that all permission is required to construct a house but nobody is following the rules of the government.

Are there two sets of rules—one for the common man and the other for government official's we wonder?

Elvis Colaco, Collem

A stick to beat India with

Through Adani, Trump has a stick to beat India with. He knows that Modi will do anything to save Adani's skin, note that the summons served by the US Department of Justice through the Indian government has still not found its way to Adani.

He is also aware that Modi will sabotage BRICS and the possibility of an independent BRICS currency, something that poses a challenge to the hegemony of the US Dollar just to keep his buddy out of jail.

Trump also knows that Modi will buy F-35 jets which his good friend Musk has declared as junk and also accept any other trash that the US wishes to sell to India. He knows that he can make Modi crawl and in turn make India crawl. It seems the blackmail has finally met its match.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulim

Twitter World

Mohamad Safa @mhdkksafa

Gaza has taught me that a lot of people who claim to be human rights activists are only active when it applies to people of a specific background or ethnicity. It's not war. It's genocide.

Adam Schiff @SenAdamSchiff

The American public deserves to know that those serving at the highest levels of government are free from financial conflicts of interest. Needless to say, this administration appears to be awash in such corruption. I'm determined to get answers.

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