

O HERALDO

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The silent chess revolution: Time to make smart moves

A silent revolution is transforming India, where the ancient game of chaturanga, born on these shores, is propelling the nation to global chess dominance. In 2025, India has achieved a historic milestone: four grandmasters—D. Gukesh (No. 4, Elo 2782.3), Arjun Erigaisi (No. 5, Elo 2772.6), R. Praggnanandhaa (No. 7, Elo 2765.9), and Aravindh Chithambaram (No. 10, Elo 2753.5)—have secured spots in the world’s top 10 live FIDE ratings. Meanwhile, seven-year-old Evan Antonio Telles from Goa has clinched the National Under-7 Chess Championship with a stunning 8.5/9 score, embodying the grassroots talent fuelling this surge. This revolution, rooted in intellect and resilience, positions India not just as a chess powerhouse but as a beacon of human potential in an AI-driven era.

This ascent is no fluke but the fruit of decades of effort, sparked by Viswanathan Anand, India’s first Grandmaster and five-time world champion. From Chennai, Anand’s success in the 1980s ignited a chess movement that has spread to every corner of the country, from Tamil Nadu’s academies to Goa’s emerging hubs. His triumphs dismantled the Russian monopoly once defined by epic battles like Fischer vs. Spassky and Karpov vs. Korchnoi. Today, Anand’s legacy lives in prodigies like Gukesh, the youngest undisputed World Champion at 18, and Aravindh, whose recent victories over giants like Hikaru Nakamura and Alireza Firouzja mark his resurgence. India’s chess ecosystem, bolstered by the All India Chess Federation and local associations, now supports 85 Grandmasters and eight players above 2700 Elo, including veterans like Anand (Elo 2743).

Chaturanga, India’s gift to the world, has come full circle. With four players in the global top 10, India’s dominance is a fitting reclamation of its chess heritage. Yet, this revolution extends beyond elite achievements. Evan Telles’s triumph in Odisha, supported by Goa’s Chess Guru Academy, reflects a nationwide chess culture thriving in schools and local clubs

revolution extends beyond elite achievements. Evan Telles’s triumph in Odisha, supported by Goa’s Chess Guru Academy, reflects a nationwide chess culture thriving in schools and local clubs. This grassroots fervour aligns with India’s evolving sports landscape. While cricket reigns, athletes like Neeraj Chopra, who recently crossed 90 metres in javelin, prove India’s global prowess. However, chess offers a unique opportunity: unlike physical sports, it leverages brainpower, where India excels, as seen in Indian children’s spelling bee dominance.

In today’s AI-driven world, chess emerges as a vital counterbalance. As artificial intelligence automates repetitive intellectual tasks, there’s growing concern that overdependence could erode human cognitive stamina. Chess, demanding sustained strategic thinking, offers a remedy. Introducing it widely in schools could nurture critical thinking and resilience, ensuring future generations retain their intellectual edge. India, with its chess revolution, is ideally positioned to lead this charge, fostering minds that thrive alongside AI, not in its shadow.

Yet, challenges persist. Chess players, unlike cricketers, rarely enjoy comparable fame or funding. Magnus Carlsen, while praising Gukesh’s “fantastic” rise, noted flaws in young talents’ games, highlighting the need for sustained support. India must bolster its prodigies with sponsorships, international exposure, and tournaments like the upcoming Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour in Delhi. Goa, in particular, should champion talents like Evan, facilitating travel to events like the World Under-7 Championship.

This silent revolution thrives on dedication, not fanfare. From Anand’s trailblazing to Gukesh’s world title, from Evan’s national gold to four grandmasters in the top 10, India is redefining chess. In an era where AI reshapes intellect, chess offers a path to preserve human brilliance. By investing in its players—through schools, sponsorships, and global platforms—India can ensure this revolution endures, proving that the nation’s greatest move is yet to come.

Twitter World

António Guterres @antonio-guterres

The ocean covers most of our planet & sustains all of it. But today, the ocean needs our help. The distress signals are clear: from plastic-choked waters to loss of marine ecosystems, from rising temperatures to rising seas. We must sustain what sustains us.

Pope Leo XIV @Pontifex

May the strong wind of the Spirit come upon us and within us, open the borders of our hearts, grant us the grace to encounter God, enlarge the horizons of our love, and sustain our efforts to build a world in which peace reigns.

comment



CLEOFATO ALMEIDA COUTINHO

The provisions 16B, 17(2) and 39A to the TCP Act were all designed to sell what is left of Goa. The ‘case-to-case basis’ changes were always seen as ‘suitcase-to-suitcase basis’



down the rules and guidelines of the controversial Sec. 17(2) of the TCP Act, it was felt that the government shall find some sense in what the civil society has been saying. The High Court was loud and clear... “It cannot be forgotten that a change of zone directly has an effect on a planned development and that too in respect of an ecosystem which is as fragile as Goa. The environment concerns in a region like Goa which has 54.06% (188,59,43,700m2)

been much opposition to the type of development that Goa has seen in the last two decades in the old conquest areas. As the landscape in the old conquest areas is now dismantled like never before, the opposition is growing but there has not been a reversal of the destruction of the countryside, as the people in the new conquest areas are more dependent on the government largesse than the people in the old conquests. The unemployment levels in

Mourning over the loss of green cover

There is no light at the end of the tunnel. It has been nearly two decades that Goans have been fighting for the preservation of what is left of Goa. The latest news is that Goa has lost over one fifth of its tree cover in the last decade. Goans managed to scrap the Regional Plan 2011 but the Machiavellian legislative measures brought in to dismantle the idea of Goa through provisions like 16B, 17(2) and 39A have undermined the spirited fight by the civil society from 2006 onwards.

The loss of tree cover is due to the increased development pressures. The development in our State is increasing concretisation and building of real estate housing projects for second homes for the rich and elite from other parts of the country without any regard to the requirements of the local people. Housing is beyond the reach of the local population.

Though courts can never replace public movements in a democracy, tired of fighting on the streets, civil society groups now find solace in some High Court verdicts. After a division bench of the High Court struck

of ECO zone-1 and 26.29% (116,34,42,300m2) of ecozone-2 will have to far outweigh the interest of private owners.” The provisions 16B, 17(2) and 39A to the TCP Act were all designed to sell what is left of Goa. The ‘case-to-case basis’ changes were always seen as ‘suitcase-to-suitcase basis’.

With the old conquest areas reaching saturation points, the new conquest areas are now the target of land mafia. The High Court had clearly ruled that conversions were not in public interest but concerned with the interest of private land owners. The High Court did not mince words when it said that almost all conversions were from paddy fields, natural cover, no development zones, and orchards. Even before the Supreme Court could consider the High Court judgement on Sec. 17(2), TCP has now approved one lakh sq. mts. of orchard and natural cover, despite the challenge to the provision of Sec. 39A pending before the High Court, with over 69000 sq. mts. from Parclem village in Pernem taluka. To hell with public interest and Goa!

Traditionally there has not

the State is a great factor that makes the young depend on the government, mainly for lowly paid jobs.

Why is the government not responsive to the people and the courts? In a democracy, the working of any government has to be completely transparent where citizens question the policies of the government and whether they are in the interest of the people and the State. There is neither display of reasoning nor any maturity in the spate of conversions since 2017. The present targets are Pernem and Bicholim talukas in the old conquest areas which provide hills, valleys and the required green cover to the State. The loss of forest cover is higher in North Goa. The State is becoming a poor image of itself. Who is bothered about Goa and its image as long as Goans can be managed at election time and that has put us in the pit.

It is sheer nonsense that when there is a demand for reversal of loss of tree cover and protection of remaining forest cover, the forest minister who presided over the loss of over 1/5th of the tree cover now tells us that even cities will get forests in high FSI building. That is the power of two constituencies in Sattari taluka with some influence in Bicholim.

Democracy is reduced to electoral victories in this land of election. The elected are neither responsive nor bothered about the society and its people. Electoral victory is seen as equivalent to handing of power to the elected as though the electorate has empowered the elected to make all choices for them. There is no dialogue between the electorate and the elected to find solutions acceptable to all and people are seen as hurdles in the path of what they perceive as development. The government is aware that the electorate is dependent on the government on one scheme or the other and those who do not buckle under submission can always be dealt with by the State machinery through one or more FIRs.

(The writer is a political thinker who taught constitutional laws for over three decades)

letterstotheeditor

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claim by panchayats that they are powerless to stop these mega projects.

Despite permission issued by the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department, Planning and Development Authorities (PDAs), NGOs and activists argue that panchayats do have the authority and responsibility to check if the projects are in the interest of their respective village.

It is argued that while TCP permissions are granted on technical grounds, it is the responsibility of the panchayat, which is the licencing authority to conduct thorough on-site verification and ensure that the project complies with all the norms. It is pertinent to note that Chicalim Panchayat became the first panchayat in Goa to launch a ‘Carrying Capacity Study Committee’. A committee consisting of all elected members and one nominated member of each ward has reportedly been formed to deliberate, plan, execute and measure the carrying capacity of the entire areas falling under Chicalim Panchayat.

Earlier, the gram sabha had passed a resolution to carry out a detailed carrying capacity study of the entire village. Carrying capacity studies will reportedly go a long way in conducting proper planning for the village in terms of infrastructure needs, population load, pollution load, electricity capacity needed, water needs, garbage management, sewage management needs, internal roads infrastructure, etc. Such ‘Carrying Capacity Study Committees’ need to be formed in each and every village panchayat in the State in order to keep a

check on all projects coming up in the respective villages.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Bengaluru stampede

There have been many recent stampedes in India starting from Kumbh Mela, Lairai Devi in Shirgao and now the latest one in Bengaluru.

If you look minutely, what you can see is that the number of people gathered in the particular venue is much more than what is controllable. Hence, people start pushing and shoving each other to enter/exit the venue without considering that they are walking over their fellow human beings and killing them. The organisers of such events try to wash their hands off like in Shirgao when they should be arrested like in Bengaluru.

From the safety aspect of the public, it is advisable not to attend such events because there is nothing more important than your own life and no event organiser can give you your life back.

Matias Lobo, Tivim

‘Unfair’ selection trials

The 22football academies in Goa advertise selection trials for various age categories, but do not mention if admissions to the academy are free of cost or fees have to be paid.

After a player gets selected, he will be called in private and asked to pay admission fees. Firstly, I wonder if the academy owners are aware of this practice. Secondly, this practice is to-

tally unfair and non-transparent as Goan parents working in other parts of the country bring their sons for trials to Goa with high hopes of getting them nurtured in the academy.

If there is a mention of fees in the trial advertisements itself, I am sure no Goan parent would bring their ward for such trials which also gives me an impression that these academies are meant for non-Goan players whose parents can easily afford to pay any such fees albeit for reasons other than football.

Praxy Fernandes, Sankhali

Goa’s chess prodigy

Goa celebrated a historic moment in chess as seven-year-old Evan Telles clinched the prestigious title at the 38th National U-7 Open Chess Championship 2025 at Odisha recently. His outstanding performance, scoring an impressive 8.5 points, not only carved a niche for Goa in the national chess arena, but also showcased the immense potential of young talent in the country.

Despite facing higher-rated opponents from various States, Evan navigated the championship with remarkable precision, demonstrating maturity and strategic prowess well beyond his years. His success is a testament to his dedication, guidance from his mother, Jean, and the unwavering support of the Salcete Taluka Chess Association.

On his return to Goa, Evan was met with a warm reception from the Goa Chess Association team and a jubilant crowd of

people’sedit

TREES IN OUR LIVES

K S S PILLAI

Many people are concerned about pollution these days. Political bigwigs, after confirming the necessary publicity, collect garbage from beaches, water bodies, and other areas, and urge people to keep the environment clean. Trees have become sacred and their felling is considered a sacrilege.

In the past, every house in my village had several coconut, cashew, and mango trees in the compound. Their dry leaves and twigs were used as fuel in hearths. During the winter, the entire family huddled around bonfires and narrated tales till someone became drowsy.

Tall coconut trees carried bunches of nuts of different ages. Some were rented to the local toddy shop, whose employees extracted toddy from the unopened flower-pods.

Every village had traditional tree climbers. A bare-chested climber, carrying a long bamboo pole as a ladder, visited each house at regular intervals. He had a machete to cut coconuts and dry leaves from trees. We, the children, would assemble near the tree, pick the scattered coconuts and dump them in one place. Some tender coconuts were cut open and the sweet water and the soft kernel offered to us.

Another favourite tree was the cashew tree standing at a corner of the compound. The children spent most of their time under it. The sprawling tree had some branches over the paddy field in front of the house. Although the farmer fenced off the field, children would break through it whenever a fruit fell there, and some crops were damaged in the process. Our parents were requested to cut off those branches, but they never did. We also tied rope swings from the low branches and used to swing for long hours in the shade.

No one dared to climb the cashew tree as it was infested with red ants. Those who climbed trees were attacked by the ants, forcing them to climb down in a hurry. Even daredevils who boasted the ants would not bite them as their bodies were covered with ashes would not last long on the tree. The ants were ineffective against squirrels and crows that pecked at the ripe fruits. Sometimes the crows would pluck the cashew apples and fly to a nearby coconut tree, consuming the fruits there at leisure. Children scouting the grounds would pick up the remnants of fruits with nuts at the end. They would put the nuts in their pockets after throwing away the remnants of fruits.

All mango trees were of native origin. They grew tall and provided mangoes of different varieties, used for specific purposes. The tender mangoes of some were used as pickles, while the fruits of some other trees were preserved in salty water in big ‘Chinese’ jars and used for the entire year. Some mangoes were colourful and sweet from their tender stage. They were strongly attached to the trees. Crows and squirrels that tried to detach them from the trees always failed and had to eat parts of the hanging mangoes until the nuts remained.

When I visit my native village now, I feel sad to see that most of the trees have disappeared as the village turned into a modern town.

well-wishers, eager to celebrate his incredible achievement. This enthusiastic welcome underscores the pride his victory has instilled in the local community and the growing recognition of chess as a sport that deserves greater encouragement and institutional support.

While national newspapers and local tabloids widely covered his triumph, the conspicuous absence of regional television networks at the event was a missed opportunity to amplify recognition for budding talent. In an era where media plays a crucial role in shaping young prodigies’ journeys, greater visibility could inspire more promising players to emerge from Goa’s vibrant chess community.

Business houses, too, have the power to uplift young talent. Corporate initiatives like Mahindra and Mahindra’s recent support for World Chess Champion Praggnanandhaa set a precedent, proving that investing in young stars can yield extraordinary results. Evan’s success presents a golden opportunity for local enterprises and government bodies to step up and nurture future champions through sponsorships, scholarships, and infrastructure development.

Now, the young chess maestro is set to represent India at an international event later this year, an achievement that further cements his place as a rising star in Indian chess. With the right institutional backing, Evan’s journey could inspire a new generation of players from Goa and beyond.

It’s time for stakeholders—media, businesses, and government alike—to rally behind such prodigies and propel them toward global success.

Everette Assis Telles, Margao