

## O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

## Start criminal proceedings against 'rotten fish' vendors of Seraulim

The right to safe food is non-negotiable and must be enforced as a fundamental right.

The brazen adulteration of food, exposed once again in Seraulim, Goa, is not just a public health concern—it is a scandal of alarming proportions. The multi-crore food adulteration racket, largely run by outsiders, has been allowed to fester with minimal accountability. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), tasked with protecting the health of the public, appears to be doing little more than symbolically cracking down on a few roadside vendors and small eateries, while the actual perpetrators of this health emergency operate freely.

It took the courageous action of Fatorda-based social worker Milagres Fernandes to shine a spotlight on the menace. On June 26, Fernandes exposed the horrifying practice of rotten, discarded fish—meant to be destroyed or converted into fertiliser—being washed in a sewage nullah, packed in ice, and sold at the Seraulim Circle. This fish was being repurposed by unscrupulous vendors and fed to unsuspecting Goan consumers.

Such acts are not only atrocious—they are criminal. Fernandes revealed that while a crate of fresh fish costs Rs 15,000, these vendors purchase three crates of rotting fish for just Rs 1,000, clean it in contaminated water, add chemicals, and sell it as fresh produce. This

blatant endangerment of public health calls for more than warnings or notices—it calls for criminal prosecution.

Why have no police cases been filed yet? The FDA must immediately initiate proceedings against not just the vendors, but also against those shielding them. Fernandes, who informed O Heraldo that no quality checks are in place, said, "It is appalling to see fish that should be destroyed being sold openly. This is a serious public health hazard."

This cannot be an isolated incident. It would be naive to assume that such practices are confined to Seraulim. In all likelihood, similar operations are thriving across Goa, hidden in plain sight. If so, where is the FDA's intelligence network? Was it unaware of this until Fernandes's exposure forced action?

Disturbingly, even some transporters have admitted that the fish brought in from outside the state is unfit for consumption. This raises urgent questions about the vigilance at Goa's border check posts. If rotten fish can pass through unnoticed, what is stopping explosives or dangerous chemicals from entering the state? The implications are deeply troubling.

Furthermore, adulteration in Goa is not limited to fish. Fruits such as bananas, mangoes, and watermelons are chemically ripened; vegetables and other staples are routinely tainted. What is the FDA doing to monitor this silent poisoning of the population? Shouldn't it have a strong presence in all markets and border checkpoints? In India, the Income Tax Department instils fear. In the United States, it is the FDA. That contrast speaks volumes

There appears to be a complete lack of fear of the law. This, in turn, suggests compromise—whether by negligence or complicity. It is time for mass raids across all markets in Goa, inspecting not just fish, but also meat, poultry, fruits, vegetables, grains, spices, and other essentials.

Goa's markets are increasingly being controlled by migrants, many of whom operate without checks or licenses. The way in which food is being handled and sold poses an existential threat to the health and livelihood of Goans. This is nothing short of a "conspiracy to kill Goans"—slowly, but surely—through food poisoning and long-term health hazards.

The Chief Minister, Cabinet, FDA, Police, intelligence agencies, and border officials must urgently recognise the gravity of this threat. The life expectancy in Goa may still be high, but the sudden spike in chronic illnesses is not a coincidence.

The Right to Safe Food must be enforced as an extension of the Right to Life. We urge the judiciary to take suo motu cognisance of this crisis. The scale of adulteration has reached epidemic levels, and only judicial intervention may compel a system-wide cleanup.

The Government's foremost duty is to safeguard the lives of its people. Every day of inaction deepens the danger. The time to act is now.



TALLULAH D'SILVA

Today, all across the world, we have more and more people building natural homes and structures. In India too, urbanites are going back to their villages or making the shift to build with mud



When I first started my design and build practice in 1997/98 as a young 23-year-old architect, I was mostly working with lay people, villagers and middle/low income families as my clients because my specialisation was in natural design and cost effective building construction. Most families at that time had really small budgets of 1-2 lakh or 4-5 lakh to build their humble homes. During this time, I would often offer to help most of my clients with the application processes at the different government departments like the Town and Country Planning Dept., South Goa Planning and Devp Authority, Mamlatdar/Collector/Land Survey offices as well as the Village Panchayats because they would often be helpless and most of the individual officiating staff would often harass the applicants with routine delays and additional documents to be submitted or making unnecessary changes in the submission drawings.

I would feel sympathetic to each of their predicaments and plight and offer to help voluntarily. I would make regular visits to these offices to understand what were the gaps, stand up for the rights of my clients and therefore often get at loggerheads with officers who were corrupt or lackadaisical in clearing the files. During the 1990's and 2000's, there was a clause introduced in the building construction sector that allowed the applicants to begin construction if there was a delay of more than 3 months at any of the government departments handling construction applications. This turned out to be a boon because all offices and its corrupt officers would expect to be paid some under-the-table

## No incentive for natural building in Goa

amount to process the file. So we would simply submit the applications and wait for 3 months to lapse to begin construction. And as you may have guessed, after we had nearly completed the structure, one or two years later the licence for building construction would be issued, possibly frustrated that the applicant had nothing to 'give'. Today this provision has not been notified and the scenario has changed for the worse.

All the government departments have become super corrupt. All the people working in these departments have also become corrupt, the system smells rotten. Perhaps there are a few who are honest and good. We don't know them because they are silent, terrifyingly silent and scared watching the misgivings of their corrupt bosses. Scared because they fear a transfer or 'punishment' from the 'higher-ups'. Over the years, we have not come across a single situation where the files have got cleared in the mandated time. Changes (mostly unnecessary), corrections (very arbitrary, every officer has a different perspective), delays are routine. Every officer handling the file will revert back saying, I don't want anything, but my boss (meaning Town planner, Deputy Town Planner or even the Minister) is waiting or expecting to be paid a bribe for passing the file! Ask each and every applicant, most will tell you that without paying a bribe, the file will not move, a number of changes or corrections will be requested as a way of arm twisting to get one to pay. And this kind of 'payment' is used as a cover for the utter incompetence of the officers. As professionals-Architects, Engineers, etc. it has been frustrating to work with the system that refuses to work on honesty and ethics. Now government officers are carelessly stating that all Architects, Engineers and such professionals are representing their clients and paying a bribe to the offices so that the files get passed quickly. Did you know that while the larger citizenry is struggling with permissions coming through in a year or two, Town plan-

ners/ Deputy Town Planners are granting permissions in 1 or 2 days max to those who are willing to pay and those that are proposing mega projects?

Today, all across the world, we have more and more people building natural homes and structures. In India too, urbanites are going back to their villages or making the shift to build with mud. There is also a growing number of citizens making the shift to integrate the use of locally available lateritic soil or mud- tambdi maati as the primary building material here in Goa. There are now modern mud buildings in our very own Goa- in Canacona, Salcette, Bardez and Tiswadi, both in rural areas as well as the city. These are sustainable using local materials, they are thermally sound- cool in summer and warm in winter and they have a reduced carbon footprint. Yet, there is absolutely no recognition of this fact, no benefit to the owners. All files for the building construction licenses are passed after more than 1-2 years, no policy rewards in sight, no tax benefits in sight, instead all the processes are tough or made difficult.

Every day we hear Ministers and other representatives make tall claims of new rules, amendments to the current regulations for increase in FSI/FAR, land conversions, Heritage Scheme and adoption of green systems, plants/trees in multi storied buildings but none of these take cognizance of the rich heritage we already have that is in ruins and needs urgent protection, the new emerging green homes that need recognition and due benefits from taxation. We will continue to design and build sustainably. Young architects are boldly practising with the tenets of good values, super ethics and making the shift to sustainability and natural materials, alternatives. We will continue to support sustainable development of Goa. We will continue to care for our Mankulem Goem. Will you too?

(Tallulah D'Silva is an Architect and silver awardee of the Golden Door Award 2020 for truth and integrity)

### Jail inmates partying deplorable

Time and again, the Central Jail at Colvale has been in the news for all the wrong reasons. Recently the Colvale police have reportedly arrested three persons and detained a minor boy for allegedly attempting to smuggle ganja into the jail by throwing balls of the contraband over the prison wall. According to the police, ganja, weighing 1.397 kg and valued at Rs 1.4 lakh has been recovered. Incidentally this is not the first time that attempts have been made to smuggle drugs into the prison.

The police need to get to the bottom of the matter by carrying out a thorough investigation and book the culprits. Be that as it may, prisons also need to operate as correctional centers so that the inmates undergo a behavioral change and become better citizens after serving their term. However inmates at the Central Jail in Colvale were reportedly caught partying in the cattle shed within the jail premises. It is learnt that a smart mobile phone, a bluetooth speaker, two packets of undisclosed substance, and food items were found at the site.

The inmates were reportedly originally escorted to the cattle shed for cleaning and milking duty. Disciplinary action has reportedly been initiated against the security guard citing gross negligence in the performance of

duty since the inmates were left unsupervised. There cannot be party zones within the jail premises. The inmates have to be incarcerated and undergo necessary punishment for their misdeeds and not partying. However, alleged smuggling of drugs and partying by the inmates cuts a sorry picture of this detention center.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

### Safeguarding Goa's image

This letter is in reference to the concerning headlines carried in today's Herald, highlighting how criminals are entering Goa disguised as tourists and continuing their illegal activities while residing here.

Goa has always been cherished as a peaceful and hospitable land that attracts visitors from across the globe. However, such disturbing incidents are slowly tarnishing our beloved state's image. It is deeply worrying that individuals with criminal backgrounds are exploiting Goa's welcoming atmosphere to carry out illegal activities, putting locals, genuine tourists, and the very reputation of our state at risk.

While we proudly welcome visitors who appreciate Goa's beauty and culture, those with

malicious intentions must be identified and stopped. It is imperative that our authorities intensify vigilance, conduct strict verifications at tourist hubs, and work proactively with law enforcement agencies to keep Goa safe and clean.

Goa's image as a peaceful and secure destination is vital — not just for tourism, but for the well-being of every Goan. Let us act swiftly and unitedly to protect our beautiful state from becoming a breeding ground for criminal activities.

Gabriel Crasto, Navelim

### Crack the whip

A scheduled domestic flight having worn-out tyres, resulting in its cancellation; multiple cases of reported defects reappearing, suggesting ineffective monitoring and inadequate rectification action; non-adherence to proper work order and safety precautions during aircraft maintenance: these are some of the findings and actions of the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) as it conducts comprehensive surveillance at major airports including those of Delhi and Mumbai.

The findings come as a part of the surveillance launched by the

aviation safety regulator in the aftermath of the June 12 crash of the London-bound Air India flight 171 outside the Ahmedabad airport shortly after taking off. There is a lot that is rotten with airlines in India, the DGCA should crack the whip and cancel the licenses of two of the worst faring airlines, that would automatically make the others fall in line. Passenger safety is paramount, and the aviation regulatory bodies and watchdogs must take stringent action to ensure it.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulim

### Undeclared Emergency

There is no doubt that declaration of Emergency by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975, is a dark chapter in the history of Free India. Atrocities committed by the then authorities in power and the cruel excesses of the police, can never be condoned. However, realising the blunder committed by her, Mrs Gandhi had the guts and stoicism to accept the grave mistake committed by her and own responsibility for the excesses committed during the Emergency days. She also openly apologised to the people of the nation. Finding her apology genuine to the core, the people of India not only pardoned her but

## people's edit

## ENGLISH IS NOT THE ENEMY

CS KRISHNAMURTHY

India is a country that speaks in several languages—but if there is one language that manages to bring us all together on a common platform, it's English. It may not be native to our soil, but it has certainly grown to become a part of our everyday lives, like tea, trousers, or the traffic jam.

So, when Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently declared that those who speak English in India will soon feel ashamed, it caused quite a stir. Many people were puzzled, others outraged. Some wondered if such a statement was just political drama. But in a country where language connects, empowers, and helps people climb up the ladder of life, such words matter a lot.

Consider some basic facts. Over 100 million Indians speak English, and many more understand it well enough to get by. It's one of the most popular languages in the country, even more than many regional tongues. In schools across India—from Chennai to Chandigarh—millions of children are studying in English-medium classrooms. In fact, in many southern states, more students now attend English-medium schools than those taught in their mother tongues.

Why? Because English opens doors. Whether it's a job in a multinational company, a chance to study abroad, or even simply filling out a passport application, English often gives people an edge. It's the reason why Indian software engineers are highly sought after around the world. It's why our authors are published worldwide, our films are reviewed internationally, and our diplomats can stand tall in global meetings.

Calling English a "foreign language" misrepresents India's linguistic landscape today. Like cricket and railways, it arrived with colonisers but stayed by public demand. English is now woven into our identity—evident in Parliament debates, punchlines, and primetime. From Shashi Tharoor's eloquence to IPL quips, English isn't just accepted—it's indispensable, and irreversibly Indian.

Remember, learning English doesn't mean forgetting your mother tongue or other tongues. Languages are not rivals—they are companions. A person can speak Bengali at home, Hindi with neighbours, and English in college—all in the same day. Most Indians are multilingual by nature. In fact, our strength lies in this ability to switch between languages with ease.

Let's say, a student from a small town, say Salem or Solapur, studies in an English-medium school. She dreams of becoming a doctor, a scientist, an engineer, or a journalist. She watches YouTube videos in English, prepares for entrance exams in English, and reads newspapers in English. She may still speak Tamil or Marathi at home with her parents. But it is English that helps her step into a bigger world.

If you take that tool away—or shame her for using it—you're building a wall between her and her future.

Also, English helps us connect not only with each other but with the rest of the world. English unites business, science, tech, aviation, medicine, and diplomacy globally. It's how India talks to the world—and how the world listens to us.

Our External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, conducts major international negotiations in English. Indian scientists publish research in scholarly journals written in English. Even cricket, our most beloved sport, has English commentary that reaches fans from Delhi to Durban.

Of course, regional languages must be protected, promoted, and celebrated. There is beauty and richness in Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Malayalam, Kannada, and every language spoken in India. But promoting them should not come at the cost of demonising English. Let's not turn this into a battle of "us" versus "them." It's not about choosing between India and Bharat, between tradition and modernity.

Rather, let's aim to raise a generation of confident, multilingual Indians—who can write essays in English, sing songs in Punjabi, and crack jokes in their native tongues. Let's take pride in our diversity.

Lastly, English is not the villain. It is just one of the many tools we have to express ourselves, to grow, and to connect. Instead of being ashamed of it, we should be proud that we have made it our own. English will stay where it belongs—in classrooms, careers, conversations, and dreams.

also voted her Congress party to power with a thumping majority in the next General elections and brought her back the Prime Minister of the nation.

While Mrs Gandhi came forward to own responsibility for the Emergency, has any of our present-day leaders come forward to take responsibility for the gruesome death of our 40 CRPF personnel in Pulwama in a terrorist attack and for the cold-blooded murder of 26 innocent tourists by the terrorists in Pahalgam, both of which happened, only and only because of security lapses in both the venues? When the right-wing groups and the saffron clan call the 1975 Emergency a shame on the nation, doesn't it appear more shameful that the ruling BJP dispensation is digging it up 50 years after its burial, to gain political mileage and polarise the voters? Further, when Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has alleged that the country is witnessing undeclared emergency for the past 11 years with almost all the constitutional bodies compromised, voices of the opposition are silenced and journalists who oppose the government jailed under the Modi rule, what right the saffron government has, to accuse the Congress for the 1975 Emergency?

Doesn't it remind one of the adage, 'the pot calling the kettle black'!

Tharcus S Fernando, Chennai