

O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Fatora festering over waste imbroglio

The fracas between the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) and the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) over garbage collection has been in focus over the past few days after the MMC refused to collect unsegregated waste from the SGPDA retail market at Fatora. Up to its gills with garbage, the inevitable then happened. Heaps of waste found their way out of the market area, into the parking zone, and even further away once stray cattle, dogs and birds began descending on them while in search of food.

What appears to have been lost on the authorities concerned is the fact that it is the common man and his well-being that has been caught in the crosshairs of the obstinacy of two government entities. Non-collection of large volumes of garbage that are generated on a daily basis at the market, and consequent indiscriminate dumping in the vicinity of the market and beyond not only creates an eyesore but, more seriously, poses severe health and hygiene risks to vendors and shoppers alike. Even the produce on sale at the market are not spared from contamination, which can easily be caused by flies that swarm around the festering waste mounds and make their way to the food items on sale at the market moments later.

The Margao municipality has dug in its heels over the issue and said it had to withdraw its waste collection vehicle from the SGPDA market because the garbage generated on the premises had not been segregated at source. It said that rotting fish waste and other wet garbage had been dumped by vendors in crates along the road due to a shortage of bins within the market complex, thereby indicating that the market lacked the required infrastructure as well as a system by which to segregate and responsibly store the waste for collection by the municipality.

It was suggested that the matter be resolved by the SGPDA assigning labourers for at least a week specifically to sort and segregate the existing waste, without which it would be virtually impossible to transport it to treatment plants at either Sonsoddo or Cacora. This is over and above the nine workers that the SGPDA has

already engaged to manage the collection and segregation of waste at the market, whose work, the MMC says, has not been satisfactory.

On its part, the SGPDA has lashed out at the MMC for allegedly defaulting on rent for a biomethanation plant that has been set up on land owned by the former for the past five years. In response, the municipality said that the SGPDA owes it a considerable amount of money - which has not been paid for over 10 years - for the garbage management services it offers.

The issue threatens to snowball into a great public health scare if the two authorities do not stop bickering. Segregation at source is essential if garbage is to be processed efficiently, failing which it will just be stacked up as another festering mound elsewhere in the state. If segregated, dry waste can easily be routed to recyclers. But if it is fouled by wet garbage, no one wants to have anything to do with it, resulting in widespread dumping as the only option, given the fact that huge manpower and space is needed for sorting complicated piles of mixed waste.

Also, since segregation of waste is done manually, it is important that the SGPDA's officials put themselves in the shoes of workers sorting out garbage at waste treatment plants to understand what a difficult and thankless job it is. Where the human angle is concerned, imagine people sorting out masses of decaying wet waste from dry waste with their hands while also having to deal with horrid sights and the foulest of odours during the process.

It is high time that not only the SGPDA market but also Margao - which is widely known as the commercial capital of Goa - goes the Panjim way by implementing a 16-way segregation system that categorises waste into biodegradable, non-biodegradable, sanitary, and hazardous waste, further divided into 16 distinct fractions. Such a system must be supported by a robust collection service. If set in motion in right earnest, it is considered to be best practice in municipal solid waste management.

Also, for the sake of the wellbeing of the general public, it is incumbent on both - the Margao municipality and the SGPDA - to bury the hatchet and join hands to sort out the mess at the market before it attains epidemic proportions.

comment



BINAYAK DATTA

It's ultimately a question of balancing but it's certainly not essential that questions of national priorities like defence, sovereignty and international credibility be viewed through the prism of Deals! Address our issues as seniors along with nations who have similar priorities, share common values and are home to people with similar aspirations

I hate to admit, but in my seven decades of interest in post-WW2 international affairs, I've rarely come across a situation of profound flux in the all-pervading international landscape upsetting all accepted understandings, logic and protocols as we see now taking shape and I'm almost certain Berty Wooster would have repeated... "It was a confusion of ideas between him and one of the lions he was hunting in Kenya that had caused A B Spottsworth to make the obituary column. He thought the lion was dead, and the lion thought it wasn't! In PG Wodehouse's "Ring for Jeeves". Some such spectacle we fell privy to, of late when President Trump went on claiming each alternate week it was really a "Deal" for trade at his behest that called off the recent Indo-Pak armed conflict! No doses of polite and veiled rebuffs from our side would reboot sanity in the system!

I thought I'll take a look at the multiple military face-offs the world has it on its plate today, not simplified by the super-powers that be and their apparent compulsions, tragically in many cases induced through ambitions and aggrandizements through sanctions and tariff-deals rather than long-term considerations and apparent interests of common countrymen in those places, and more importantly the unseemingly abruptness thereof in most cases.



Let's take the Russia - Ukraine war first. We understood that the War would be stopped by a US initiative in "24 hours". The deal here was the "Joint Reconstruction Investment Fund" focussed on development of Ukraine's billions in mineral reserves of critical minerals like lithium, titanium, uranium, graphite, oil and natural gas. The deal was a much contentious one and ultimately Ukraine did sign with USA end of April.

Till now however, hostilities with Russia not only continue unabated, but with renewed strength at spells! Though the "Deal" was on "Long-Term strategic alignment" on the part of the US and it specifies "US interests in Ukraine's economic future" only a meek \$50 million weapon sales is all that have taken place ever since.

The second one comes from the US-Canada trade deal. Canada had maintained, they would put in a "Digital Services Tax" 3% on all software imports from US Tech Companies (imports of around \$15 million a year). A Law to this effect was also passed in the Canadian Parliament last year. "End all Trade Discussions with Canada", thundered Trump and Lo! Off it went from Canada's lists. The EU which was banking on this for their FTAs were left red-faced! Strangely however the G7 also recently signed off an agreement of exempting the US from elements of a Global Minimum Tax which could be in the offing. Now, whether it was a May-Day reaction triggered by Trump's abrupt departure from the G7 summit last month is not known.

Third: The most intriguing "Deal" was the EU shift against Iran from its stated postures as soon as the US dropped its first bomb in Fordow last month. First, we understood Trump would take a call in "2 weeks" on US participation in the Israel-Iran armed conflict but the US B2 bombers were in action on the very second day, trashing reports from the US National Intelligence that there wasn't in fact, an evidence Iran was indeed building a nuke. As abrupt as ever, there was a cease fire in place within a couple of days.

The Fourth is as interesting as Berty's Kenya expedition! Early after the conclusion of the Indo-Pak air-trikes, the man who was never found wanting in his hard-line stance on Kashmir, the Pak Army Chief, being hosted by Trump to Lunch at Whitehouse. Not commenting on the purely coincidental, nomination of the POTUS for the Nobel Peace Prize, a couple of days later.

The Fifth: A grand build up "A Very Big Deal for India in the offing": The last date for the Indo-US trade deal (or any "Deal" that the dozen of them

still outstanding) was grandly announced as the 9th of July and thereafter the basic 10% +reciprocals 26% + sector - specifics 25% (mostly), would start applying (in place of today's 4%). I had indicated my views on individual strategies in my last month's column here, not repeating them once more today, but I fully understand our concern on freeing up or lowering tariffs on agricultural produce. It's heartening to note that India on its part is not stately "desperate for the deal unless its interests are protected and it gets a good agreement".

Where does all these "Deals and more" leave us? 20% of our exports go to the US and we import from them about 6% of our total imports. To us, the export numbers and tariffs thereon are important as much as our scopes for tariffing our imports suitably. It's ultimately a question of balancing but it's certainly not essential that questions of national priorities like defence, sovereignty and international credibility have to be viewed through the prism of Deals!

And before I conclude, it's important I think, we address our issues as seniors along with nations who have similar priorities, share common values and are home to people with similar aspirations. I often remember the days of the Non-Aligned Movement, and how a powerful Europe couldn't deter Egypt in "nationalising" the Suez Canal or a towering US, couldn't stop India from decimating an unfriendly neighbour to put an end to regional instability or say South Africa and Namibia standing up to the mighty West in their anti-apartheid movements. I think in the present context, it's important that we prioritise our role in facilitating the Global South in initiatives in Climate Change, in Global Governance Reforms thru International Institutions like the UNO, the WTO, the World Bank and the WHO standing up to Developed Countries, making them pay-up and go on nurturing strategic alliances and finding new Markets, South-South.

Along with our goal for being a developed nation by 2047, we should concentrate on leadership roles for the Global South!

(The author is a retired Finance professional)

Of wheels & deals-diplomacy!

people's edit

ASK THE STATE, EVEN TO FIND ONE'S MATE!

ANANTHA PADMANABHAN

While laws like India's Right to Information (RTI) Act and the US/UK's Freedom of Information (FOI) Act are serious business, made to reveal how public-funded bodies work, some information requests seem to turn rather boring paperwork into unexpected laughter!

Unsatisfied with mere public records - one Delhi citizen wanted to know a local official's paan-chewing habits, right down to every last ingredient in their chew!

Seemingly quite concerned about their Governor's spiritual and culinary life, a Hyderabad resident demanded details of his daily temple visits and official dinner menu.

A man in Gujarat who, apparently, believed government service also had a dedicated matrimonial division, asked an officer to find him a wife from any official department!

From Uttar Pradesh, came a truly diplomatic query from a young girl who wanted the National Human Rights Commission to explain why the sweets she'd sent to the US President never actually reached him.

Punjab University faced a query that would stump any economist: Calculate the "price of time" according to ancient texts like the Ramayana, and while they were at it, the "price of a pretty, religious bride" from the same stories. Talk about a nuanced information request!

Across the globe, peculiar requests are aplenty. Cornwall Council, the local authority in South West England, was once asked for a breakdown of the most overdue library books - specifically the top three most overdue for each library in the region.

In the US, there was an inquiry about the number of pigeons trained to deliver mail.

Beyond the chuckle these requests induce, they subtly reveal a profound human truth: humour is a powerful connecting force. Eliciting a giggle isn't just charming; it's strategically invaluable! A well-placed joke builds rapport, makes people more receptive, and significantly boosts your ability to be heard. Genuine wit signals intelligence and agility, elevating your credibility, whereas mere antics risk undermining it. While humour can brilliantly diffuse tension and make communication memorable, its savvy deployment demands mindfulness. It's a conscious, thoughtful tool to augment your professional standing, not a sloppy crutch for discomfort.

Now, for the absolute best part. Who'd have thought that officially requesting government details could unearth not just curious tidbits, but, hilariously, lead one, rather seriously, straight to a future spouse?

Yes, for one of my friends who was a public information officer, a young researcher came into his office to inspect colossal, dusty files under the RTI Act.

But while she was neck-deep in bureaucracy, he, it turns out, was clearly more interested in her "data" - specifically, her personal details.

Who knew sifting through government documents could be such an effective aphrodisiac?

Simply put, the RTI Act rather impressively proved itself a matchmaker, as both families met and the entire information-seeking process culminated in a rather delightful wedding!

Isn't it amazing that while seeking information under the RTI Act is not meant for satisfying someone's curiosity, it at times could also be so... binding!

Absurdly awesome!

Utter failure of AI traffic signal project

In March 2023, with much fanfare, an artificial intelligent (AI) traffic signal management that included 16 cameras and e-challan system was installed at the busy intersection of Mercers junction. The Rs 40 lakh system was set-up by a Bengaluru company and 30% of the revenue from fines was to be shared with the government. A mock run for a month 'caught' 3,000 violators. Within days, the system became non-functional and worked in fits and starts and since this March stopped working, perhaps the guarantee period got over!

Now, based on a District Road Safety Committee North, the non-working unsafe AI system would be dismantled by the Public Works Department (PWD). The faulty system had led to traffic confusion, violations and near-miss accidents rather than helping to streamline the traffic. Reportedly, the company has not bothered to repair, restore nor respond to the PWD. This is a mockery of the Goa government. During the Aug 2023 Assembly as per a written reply by the Minister for Urban Development, a proposal to install 15 more AI system was shelved. Else, these would have burdened the exchequer.

Sridhar D'Iyer, Caranzalem

Prevention of LPG Theft

In a major crackdown on the gas agencies involved in the sale of underweight LPG cylinders, the Directorate of Civil Supplies re-

portedly seized over 1000 cylinders during a raid at Sancoale. It is learnt that several cylinders were found unsealed. There is a complete ban on sale or distribution of LPG cylinders below or in excess of standard weight under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. Those involved were allegedly carrying out illegal LPG decanting without authorization or proper safety measures, posing a threat to human life. It is learnt that commercial cylinders were found weighing more than their standard weight. Over-filling of LPG cylinders can prove very dangerous as they can explode. If absolutely necessary, decanting needs to be carried out by careful handling due to the hazardous nature of LPG and should only be performed by trained personnel in a safe environment.

However decanting for the purpose of theft is unacceptable and the culprits need to be booked. It is learnt that an FIR has been lodged against those involved in the theft. Distribution of underweight LPG cylinders means that the consumer is getting less of cooking gas for the price paid. This amounts to cheating. It would be in the fitness of things for the consumer to weigh the LPG cylinder when it is delivered at their doorsteps. But then, all consumers may not possess a weighing machine. Hence it would be prudent for every delivery van supplying LPG cylinders to carry an elec-

tronic weighing machine. The cylinder should be weighed by the delivery boy when it is delivered. The consumer should ensure that the weight is as per specification.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Goa deserves good governance

Good governance is the cornerstone of any thriving society - but it cannot exist without educated, accountable leaders who possess vision, integrity, and a genuine commitment to the needs of their constituents. Only then can they draft and enact laws transparently and effectively, in the public interest.

Sadly, today's governance in Goa is a far cry from this ideal. Law and order in the state has been steadily deteriorating, and the situation is disheartening. From the unsolved murder of Siddhi Naik to the alarming rise in heinous crimes since then, the rot in governance is evident. Every morning, when we open the newspapers, we are greeted by shocking headlines: a mother kills her own child and flees, a neighbour murders a child, fathers killing sons, sons killing fathers, spouses killing each other, lovers turning murderous, acid attacks on young boys, toddlers raped, even super-senior citizens assaulted. The list seems endless - and each new case is more disturbing than the last.

Even more distressing is the apathy of the system. FIRs are often refused when common citizens approach the police. Those in power appear more focused on buying properties and amending land laws for their own benefit than addressing the collapse of law and order. What became of the high-profile land grabbing cases involving Pooja Naik and Suleman Siddiqui? Who is the so-called "godmother" still shielded in anonymity?

Goa desperately needs capable lawmakers who will make good laws and ensure their fair implementation - only then can we restore law and order, and give Goans the governance they deserve. Until that happens, our beloved state will continue to suffer under the weight of neglect, corruption, and violence.

Natividade Fernandes, Cavelossim

Truth about GDP and employment

In 2015, India's total workforce was estimated to be around 503.8 million. This figure is based on the International Labour Organization (ILO) model, as per the World Bank's World Development Indicators.

In 2025, India's working-age population (typically 15-64 years) is projected to be around 961 million. The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in April 2025 was 55.6%, with ru-

ral areas at 58.0% and urban areas at 50.7%. The Worker Population Ratio (WPR) was 52.8% overall, with 55.4% in rural areas and 47.4% in urban areas. So, the working population increased from 503 million to 961 million.

Almost double in 10 years. The GDP increased from 2.1 trillion USD to 4.2 trillion USD, an increase of 105%. What is clear from the available data is that there has been no improvement in per capita income in these 10 years. And what is shown as 105% is actually 8% compounded annually. Thus the actual increase per year is just 8% and not 10.5 as one would calculate if one divides 105% by 10 years. What is the government celebrating then? All this talk of being the fourth largest economy in the world is simply misleading information, totally out of context. India's per capita nominal GDP rank is 144th out of 196 countries and income inequality is amongst the most skewed in the world. Propaganda too has a shelf life, and hopefully people will open their eyes come 2029.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulim

Save birds

Bird populations in India are declining due to exposed electrical wires, mobile towers, and poor management. High-voltage lines and tower collisions pose lethal threats.

Unlike countries like Germany with underground wiring, India lacks safeguards. We must act - cover cables, regulate towers, and manage urban planning better.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

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We are witnessing with despair the iniquitous use of hunger as a weapon of war. Burning crops, stealing livestock, and blocking aid are tactics increasingly used by armed militias. As civilians languish in misery, political elites grow fat with impunity. It is time to sanction these abuses and hold accountable those who are responsible for it.

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