

O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Government can take the bite out of stray dog menace

Cavelossim panchayat's recent request to villagers to help rein in the area's stray dog population has once again brought to the fore the widespread issue and the government's apparent struggle to control it. The Cavelossim panchayat's stand is simple: Stop randomly feeding the dogs, but rather route feeding efforts through the authorities concerned.

Panchayat members said stray dogs, especially those scattered all over the beach area, have been turning aggressive due to irregular feeding by beach-goers, and have consequently been attacking tourists. In fact, Cavelossim reported 14 incidents of dogs biting tourists on the beach in just a matter of weeks, mostly during the evenings.

Earlier this month, the tourism department announced that it would team up with the department of animal husbandry and veterinary sciences, and the Indian Reserve Battalion to decide how to stem the issue of stray dogs and cattle wandering along Goa's coastline, following several complaints from tourists and stakeholders. Tourism minister Rohan Khaunte had said that starting from February 1, 2025, the two state government departments would monitor the situation in a bid to arrive at measures to combat the 'menace'. How successful they will be is yet to be seen.

In a similar situation, India's commercial capital, Mumbai, had last year reported growing concerns regarding the repercussions of feeding pigeons. Although it is seen as a pious act (feeding the birds is likened to paying homage to one's ancestors), pulmonologists maintained that access to easy food sources led to an exponential rise in pigeon populations in certain areas

of Mumbai, and that the birds' excreta triggered an allergic reaction among some individuals. However, while the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has not banned feeding of pigeons, it can impose a Rs. 500 penalty for feeding animals and birds in non-designated areas. If some action on these lines is taken in Goa, it is likely that random feeders will be dissuaded from giving strays, particularly on beaches, tidbits of food every now and then, leaving the task to dedicated feeders and NGOs that are already on the job. At Cavelossim, for instance, the panchayat has its own shelter for dogs, where strays are brought in and provided with meals twice a day. The panchayat also has regular feeding programmes through which hygienic food and water are provided to stray dogs in designated areas. By bringing feeding efforts under one umbrella and tapping its shelter to provide care to stray dogs, the panchayat hopes to achieve the two-pronged result of reducing aggressiveness among packs of dogs while also making sure they are properly cared for.

Assuming that the Cavelossim model is replicated in panchayats across the state, it is almost certain that the stray dog issue will be considerably controlled. How keen the government is to strictly implement it all over Goa is the question.

Khaunte also recently said that beach-goers could use the Beach Vigil app to report stray dogs and cattle on the coastline. Launched on January 25 last year, the app was aimed at giving people an easy way to report illegalities on beaches. All they have to do is take a photograph of any illegal activity on the beach, and upload the photo on the Beach Vigil app. The app will then forward the complaint to the relevant agency for the necessary action.

The intention may be noble, but it is time the government did a survey to check how many complaints were recorded on the app through the course of 2024, and how many were actually resolved. If the resolution rate is good, then the app itself is probably a safe bet to help stem the issue of strays on beaches. However, if negligible action was taken through the app, the government needs to relook its efficacy and come up with other ways to tackle the problem through, perhaps, community involvement.

Strays cannot be eliminated entirely, but Goa definitely can lead the way in controlling their populations and ensuring that they and the people around them are safe. All the government needs is the will and a tough follow-through approach.

FREDDY FERNANDES

The 58th Anniversary of the Opinion Poll is a time for introspection as to where we are heading. The government and people have to decide how to save Goa for posterity

On this 58th Anniversary of the Opinion Poll, we need to be aware of the Damocles sword that was hanging over Goa, that of merger of Goa with Maharashtra. Although the Opinion Poll battle for identity was won, today the political class and people individually and collectively have to do some soul searching on whether and how long, Goa as we knew/know it, with all its beauty, its unique culture and identity, will survive for us and for our future generations, especially in terms of inter-generational equity.

Can the Union government, the State Government and the people of Goa redeem the pledge of the great Statesman and Visionary Jawaharlal Nehru who said "Goa has a distinct personality and we have recognised it. It will be a pity to destroy that individuality and we have decided to maintain it..."? The answer lies in each one of our hearts and in the hands of the government and the present Cabinet. What if we have swanky highways, and signature bridges? What if we have crores in our bank accounts and finally forfeit Goa and sell our motherland? The Pramod Sawant cabinet must act to make policies and legislation to save our lands and identity. The people must resolve not to sell lands to outsiders. Otherwise, we will have only ourselves to blame and the landmark Opinion Poll will be just another date in history.

The Opinion Poll was a Red Letter day in Goa's fledgling post colonial history. 16th January 1967, was the first such referendum ever held in India.

NEHRU'S PROMISE TO PROTECT THE IDENTITY OF GOA

The Congress party under the towering and charismatic leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru assured to retain the language (Konkani) and identity of Goa. On 22nd May 1963, Nehru declared "Goa has a distinct personality and we have recognised it. It will be a pity to destroy that individuality and we have decided to maintain it... No agitation against it will be of any purpose."

THE MGP STANCE

While the Congress put a 10 year moratorium on the political future of Goa, the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), appeared to thrive on primarily the contentious issues that the Congress wanted to steer clear of. The party which was a conglomeration of organisations, decided to espouse the cause of Marathi as the official language of Goa, as a corollary toward the larger goal of merger of Goa with Maharashtra, in the context of linguistic formation of states in India.

However, it is very interesting to note after Bhandodkar's transformation encounter with India's iconic Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in Bombay, in December 1963, Bhandodkar, decided to go slow on Merger and gradually veered away from the Merger Agenda, as he would be the master



Red Letter Day: People wait in queue to vote in Goa's Opinion Poll on 16 January 1967

of the political destiny of his own Union Territory --Goa.

THE UNITED GOANS PARTY

A virtual antithesis to the pro-merger MGP was the United Goans Party (UGP). The UGP was born in 1963 from the merger of like minded parties committed to preserving the Goan identity, more specifically by working for separate Statehood, within the Indian Union. Stalwarts and men with tremendous foresight, such as João Hugo Eduardo de Sequeira popularly known as Dr. Jack de Sequeira, leader of the Goencho Paksh, Dr. Alvaro de Loyola Furtado, leader of the Partido Indiano, J.M. D'Souza, leader of Goan National Union, merged their parties with other parties such as the United Front of Goans and Democratic Party to form the United Goans Party.

Thanks to Jack de Sequeira and others who fought for the Opinion Poll and won it, Goa is today a separate state whose fruits the politicians and the people of Goa are enjoying.

It has also to be acknowledged that the Karnataka factor especially Chief Minister S. Nijalingappa and Karnataka M.P., Hanumanthayya, played a strong role in neutralising the Maharashtra Factor.

THE OPINION POLL OF 1967

Due to the continuous unrest and agitations in Goa right from 1963 to 1967, even as the Central Government had agreed on a 10 year moratorium, on the political future of Goa, the Centre finally decided to hold the first ever referendum in India, in Goa called the Opinion Poll, to settle the Merger issue. Four years of uncertainty prompted by the MGP agenda for Merger ended on 16th January 1967 when the Opinion Poll was conducted.

TABLE 1: VOTING/PERCENTAGES OF OPINION POLL 1967

	Votes	%
Total Voters	388392	--
Votes Polled	317633	81.70
UT Status	172191	54.20
Merger	138170	43.50
Invalid Votes	7272	2.30

Source: Goa Opinion Poll 1967, Suresh Amonkar and others

VOTERS WHO SAVED GOA FROM MERGER

Which are the constituencies majority of whose voters sought to save Goa, its unique identity and culture and which are the constituencies majority of whose voters sought to wipe out Goa and its identity and culture are seen from the Table 2 and Table 3

Majority of the people from nine constituencies of North Goa New Conquests, three constituencies, North Goa Old Conquests and just one constituency of

TABLE 2: CONSTITUENCIES FROM WHICH MAJORITY OF THE VOTERS, VOTED TO 'WIPE OUT GOA'

Region	Constituency	For Merger	Against Merger
North Goa New Conquests (9)	Pernem	5,967	2,304
	Marcaim	8,408	3,671
	Mandrem	8,993	3,767
	Ponda	8,082	3,090
	Bicholim	7,741	2,183
North Goa Old Conquests (3)	Pale	6,308	3,668
	Sattari	4,974	4,505
	Sanguem	4,660	4,500
	Shiroda	6,369	4,165
	Tivim	6,110	3,526
South Goa New Conquests (1)	Calangute	8,924	8,146
	St Estevam	6,903	4,636
	Canacona	5,832	4,622

South Goa New Conquest voted for Merger and to effectively wipe out Goa from the map of India. However, the extreme right column shows that many people from these constituencies also voted to Save Goa and in some constituencies the margin was very narrow in favour of merger.

However, we owe a very big and deep debt of gratitude to majority of the people of one constituency of North Goa new Conquest, six constituencies of North Goa Old Conquests and five constituencies of South Goa Old Conquests and two constituencies of South Goa New Conquests majority of who voted to Save Goa, its land, identity and culture built over centuries of human evolution in this ancient land, on that sultry 16th January 1967 day.

Generations to come will salute these now unknown voters and leaders who worked tirelessly for three years to save Goa and gave their sweat blood and toil. Goa continues to exist due to the vision, toil and tears of these brave men and women who came out and braved the January heat, stood in long queue and voted in large numbers recording perhaps the highest ever voting percentage in the history of Goa which is 81.70%.

It is to be noted that a substantial number of voters from Curchorem, Mapusa, Siolim, Aldona, Panjim, St Andre, Margao, Navelim and Mormugao and Quepem also voted for merger. However the majority voted to save the Union Territory Status of Goa. But at the end of the day it was Salcete, Mormugao and Cunclim which tilted the scales in favour of retaining Goa as a separate political entity. The region-wise voting has been analysed for academic understanding of the voting patterns. In ac-

tual fact, it was the majority of all of Goa and Goans irrespective of religion, caste and colour and irrespective of regions whose majority vote counted for the overall verdict against Merger of Goa with Maharashtra.

Besides, Jack de Sequeira, the UGP leaders, Rashtramat Editor Chandrakant Keni, many Konkani writers, tiatrists (Konkani drama artistes) and singers and most importantly the voters from all the regions of Goa whether North or South, whether Old or New Conquests, who voted for a separate Union Territory that saved

Goa from the disastrous foray of Merger of Goa from Maharashtra.

The suicidal Merger move was orchestrated not only by the MGP alone but the entire mergerist forces comprising MGP, PSP, Jana Sangh (forerunner of the BJP), RSS, Maharashtra Vilinikaran Aghadi (ex-MGP dissidents), CPI, political parties from Maharashtra, a small pro-Merger group of Goa Territorial Congress Committee, Goa Vilinikaran Sahayak Samiti (Bombay), the Government of Maharashtra which opened a Maharashtra Parichaya Kendra at Margao, and the Marathi Press including Gomantak (published from Goa), the Goa Press, the Maharashtra Press and Information Department of Maharashtra Govern-

ment. Similarly the victory of anti-Mergerists forces comprised the UGP (Sequeira), UGP (Furtado), the other section of Goa Territorial Congress, the action council of the Anti-Merger Convention, the UG party (Bombay) and a significant group centered around the Marathi daily Rashtramat and its editor Chandrakant Keni and effective propaganda enunciating the social, political and economic benefits of not merging with Maharashtra carried out by Rashtramat, the Konkani, Portuguese and Kannada press contributed to their success.

HAS THE OPINION POLL VERDICT BEEN NEUTRALISED TODAY?

Today on the 58th Anniversary of the historic Opinion Poll and in the years to come, Goans have to collectively do an exercise in contemplation and introspection. We have to contemplate whether we have been worthy of the sacrifices put in by great leaders such as Jack de Sequeira, Chandrakant Keni and other great and visionary men and women and the voters of Goa have gone in vain. If not for the victory in the Opinion Poll, there would be no State of Goa, no Chief Minister and council of Ministers. Goa succeeded in retaining its separate political, territorial, cultural and linguistic identity, through the Opinion Poll

secular and multicultural ethos of India right from times immemorial, has the right to preserve it land, culture, and identity. Government after government in Goa have stood as mute spectators and have done nothing to save Goa from the onslaught of immigration. Instead of protecting Goa and its lands, politicians today have become land brokers in league with the big real estate brokers, as exposed by the Opposition itself. People themselves are selling their lands. So the question is how Goa can be saved and whether individually and collective, as a government and as people we will work to save Goa.

(Excerpts from the forthcoming book 'Post Colonial Politics of Goa, from Liberation to Statehood')

the formation to the state of Goa. Out of the 30 constituencies, 19 voted in favour of two leaves symbol of the anti merger forces, largely supported by constituencies in Salcete which voted overwhelmingly for Goa to remain a separate entity. It is a matter of great pride that the two life size statues of the Dr. Jack de Sequeira have been installed, the first one in Calangute and the second one at Dona Paula circle. A bust of Dr Jack de Sequeira has also been installed at Mercers. Two roads one from Miramar to Dona Paula and the other at Mercers has been named after the stalwart of the Opinion poll Dr. Jack de Sequeira. It would be in fitness of things to install his statue in Salcete.

Stephen Dias, Dona Paula

but was it a victory for all time? The answer is obviously no.

Today, the short sighted marketing of Goa as a beautiful, peaceful and Golden Goa and the blitz on social media of Goa as Maldives of India and a real estate haunt with grandiose villas, has led to thronging of the rich and famous and also the labour class from other parts of the country into Goa. Today the ill thought out and reckless sale of land of Goa by comunidades and Goans themselves assisted by mega brokers from outside the state has destroyed the very things that we sought to preserve -- Goan land, language and identity. As per unofficial statistics the non Goan population of Goa is more than the ethnic population of Goa. People from all part of the country are flocking to Goa and settling down in this so called Paradise and Rome of the East. The real estate boom has in fact been the real life doom of Goa. The flood of mega housing projects and the rage of high end villas and their sale has spelt doom for Goa.

CAN WE STILL SAVE GOA?

At the time of Liberation, unlike in the case of Hyderabad and in Jammu and Kashmir there was no Treaty signed to ask for any Special Status for Goa or any concessions to protect Goa. Unlike Hyderabad and Jammu and Kashmir, Goa more than any other State in India needed a Special Status right from 1961, due to its tiny size. Goa joining the India Federation and due to

TABLE 3: CONSTITUENCIES FROM WHICH MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE VOTED TO 'SAVE GOA'

Region	Constituency	For Merger	Against Merger
North Goa New Conquests(1)	Curchorem	5,425	6,856
	Mapusa	5,859	5,889
	Siolim	5,583	5,868
	Aldona	4,700	7,609
	Panjim	4,175	6,245
North Goa Old Conquests (6)	St Cruz	4311	8609
	St Andre	3,930	7,590
	Cortalim	1,376	10,411
	Margao	3,241	7,157
	Benaulim	629	10,769
South Goa Old Conquests (5)	Navelim	3,061	10,355
	Curtorim	926	12,547
	Mormugao	7,654	8,072
	Cuncolim	1,774	9,080
	Quepem	3,447	4,217

secular and multicultural ethos of India right from times immemorial, has the right to preserve it land, culture, and identity. Government after government in Goa have stood as mute spectators and have done nothing to save Goa from the onslaught of immigration. Instead of protecting Goa and its lands, politicians today have become land brokers in league with the big real estate brokers, as exposed by the Opposition itself. People themselves are selling their lands. So the question is how Goa can be saved and whether individually and collective, as a government and as people we will work to save Goa.

(Excerpts from the forthcoming book 'Post Colonial Politics of Goa, from Liberation to Statehood')

Check chicken entering Goa

Chicken suppliers from Maharashtra reportedly observed a one-day strike alleging harassment by the All Goa Poultry Farmers and Traders Association which led to shortage of chicken in the Goan market. The association had alleged that vehicles coming from Maharashtra did not possess fitness certificates for the birds. It is learnt that the issue is for suppliers from Maharashtra and not with suppliers from Karnataka.

It is claimed that some suppliers were attempting to supply chicken without proper checks and selling it at cheaper rates. It is pertinent to note that various tests and strategies are used to screen for avian influenza or

confirm its presence in poultry species. Research indicates that the avian influenza virus can contaminate the surface of eggshells, emphasizing the importance of thorough egg handling, hand hygiene and proper cooking to eliminate risks. One cannot contract the virus from eating poultry that has been cooked properly. Avian influenza harms poultry flocks especially if it's highly pathogenic.

One should not eat birds that appear sick or have died for some unknown reasons and may show signs of depression, have ruffled feathers, and be quieter than

normal. Symptoms of bird flu infections in people have ranged from mild eye infection, upper respiratory symptoms to severe illness like pneumonia. This can happen when the virus gets into a person's eyes, nose or mouth, or is inhaled. It is absolutely necessary to conduct all checks for chicken coming into the state so that Goa gets disease-free chicken.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Architect of Goa's unique identity

There should be no doubt in the minds of Goans that Dr Jack de

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.



Twitter World

M K Venu @amkvenu1

The biggest distortion of Modinomics last one decade is that it provided tax relief to big corporates, gave free food to bottom 40% but left the middle class(engine of consumption/growth) to fend for itself with high energy/GST taxes. This has been singularly disastrous!

Pope Francis @Pontifex

May the #Jubilee2025 be for Christians and non-Christians alike an opportunity to rethink the relationships that bind us as human beings and political communities. Let us overcome the logic of confrontation and embrace the logic of encounter, in order to build a future of peace.