

AN INDEPENDENT WEEKLY

GOAN OBSERVER

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PRAMOD SAWANT VETOES RANE!





To,
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TCP MINISTER, SCRAP PERNEM ZONAL PLAN

THE Goa Bachao Abhiyan (GBA) on Oct 11,2023 has rightly demanded to immediately de-notify the controversial Pernem zoning plan, stating that there is no provision in the Town and Country (TCP) Act to keep the plan in abeyance.

The GBA has further demanded to know since when the Union Home Minister became part of planning process in the state and to invoke people of the State in the planning process as per the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. It has also said that if the TCP Minister Vishwajit Rane wants to rely on the dictates of the Union government on decisions pertaining to the zoning plan, then he should step down immediately.

Vishwajit Rane is currently heard giving his own silly excuses and refusing to scrap the said controversial draft zoning plan despite strong protests from the villagers of

Pernem taluka, does he want to turn the whole of Pernem into one concrete jungle by slowly auctioning it to the builders/ real estate lobby, to make some quick bucks for himself in the long run in Goa?

I feel that if Vishwajit Rane wants to really prove his own innocence in the above matter then he should scrap the controversial zoning plan of Pernem taluka immediately and go to draft a new one after consulting/taking the people of the same taluka into full confidence in future. Hope better sense prevail...

—Jerry Fernandes,
Saligao

RESTORE OUR SUGARCANE FACTORY!
SUGARCANE is indigenous to India and is the main source of sugar, Jaggery (gur), brown sugar (khandsari) molasses, biofuel, fiber, fertilizer and a myriad of by-products. India is the world's largest



RACING IS LIFE!
LIGHTER MOMENTS AT THE IRONMAN 70.3 ENDURANCE TRIATHLON.....How light is my aero bicycle? Participant Tim Sharma's brother Ankush (in pic) dared a reporter at miramar beach circle to pick up the cycle with two fingers but she managed with two hands to her wonderment! These bikes cost Rs1 lakh plus, plus, shared Ankush...And the bike weighs only 7.02 Kg! They're only comfortable for speeding though and not gentle cycling around! Most aero bikes are made in China.

producer of sugar and the second-largest producer of sugarcane in the world. The sugarcane industry is a significant source of employment in India.

It is so very unfortunate that Goa's only sugarcane factory has been inoperative for some years. It would be beneficial for our Goan sugarcane cultivators, and the economy of our State if the government could take concerted measures to revive this much needed factory instead of burdening our cultivators to take their crop to the neighbouring States.

The production of sugar locally would incentivise our growers to grow more and ensure a readily available product with multiple uses, at a favourable price for consumers. The operation of the sugarcane factory when it restarts would have to be restructured and run efficiently as a profitable venture and not as a white elephant.

It is hoped that our Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant will take the necessary steps to ensure that our Sugar Factory is

fully restored, updated and equipped with adequate human and technological resources to take full advantage of a thriving and lucrative national and global sugarcane industry. Let's enjoy the sweet taste of success from a local thriving sugarcane industry as soon as possible!

—Aires Rodrigues,
Ribandar

PEDESTRIAN WALKS NOT SMOOTH!
THE Corporation of the City of Panaji are unable to maintain good footpaths for pedestrians to walk. Since there exist lots of obstructions such as trees,

stray animals and the uneven tiles that could be the main reason. Let me suggest here that CCP instead of engaging women manpower, they can hire special made footpath-clearing vehicles similar to those in other developed countries and this will be more economical in the long run. May be a few trees which are the most obstructive may be removed or trimmed. Hope they take note of this and improve the pedestrian walks or footpaths starting from Miramar up to the Ferry Wharf in Panaji or Panjim.
—Stephan Dias, Dona Paula

OBSERVER
FREEDOM FROM FEAR

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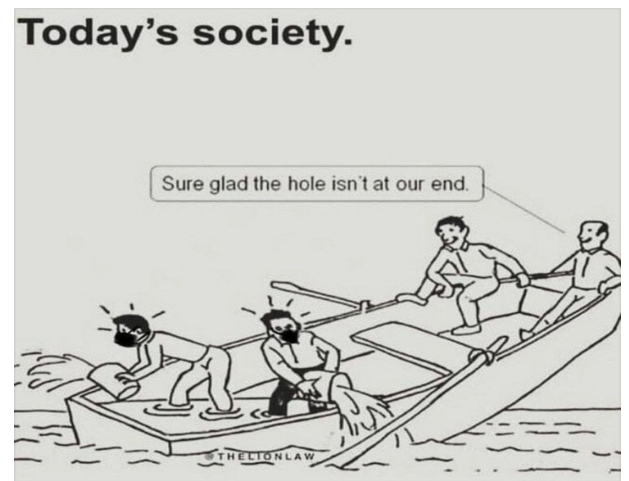
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AGING IS A TERRIBLE BUSINESS!



By RAJAN NARAYAN

AT 77 years of age I can speak from personal experience. I was beaten up savagely on the spine with iron rods by goons hired by a politician. This was on September 16, 1989 when I was exposing the politician's sins of omission and commission in the OHeraldo of which I was the founder editor for 20 years. My experience later on in and out of hospitals was compounded by heavy doses of steroids the presumably well-meaning doctor at the GMC prescribed.

It's a long story now mostly forgotten. But my

medical situation was such that that I had to detox with my weight falling from 180 kg to 30 kg while de-toxing courtesy Dr Shrikanta at Mallya hospital in Bengaluru over some months. He saved my life. But all the treatments destroyed my gastrointestinal system and today I have a crushed spine and a severe rectum prolapse made worse with two surgeries. It means my rectum comes out and I have to literally do my morning ablutions painfully every time in the bathroom and clean up after that...it is unimaginable situation. I am sitting practically on my bones on the Western toilet and this is a very painful thing for whatever buttocks

I have left because I thought by cutting down on my food intake and liquid intake I would suffer less. It is not so.

CRUSHED SPINE

LAST year in October I was in severe pain at my neck region and consulted neurosurgeon Dr Ajay Netalkar of Manipal hospital. He arranged for a three-hour long MRI for me at Radiance Centre which is very professional and the best. Besides acute cervical spondylosis it was suspected that I may have tuberculosis or Koch's disease of the spine and referred me to Goa Medical College dean, Dr

Shivanand Bandekar, as it was clear that I could not afford treatment at the private Manipal hospital.

Dr Bandekar thoroughly had me do all the X-rays and CT scans. Discovered a small in the lymph node under one armpit. An ultrasound and fine needle biopsy was done and various doctors quickly jumped the gun and said I should be given the standard treatment for tuberculosis...the treatment started in a private room of Ward No121 at the GMC which I was forced to take for want of a bathroom for myself which I always need for some comfort level. The TB treatment started and its side-effects were terrible for I was hit by nausea,

vomiting and delirium with other medicines.

The sputum test, the gold standard test was done. There were no signs or evidence of TB and it was presumed I was suffering from clinical symptoms without proof, whatever that means. My discharge certificate insisted I suffered from TB of the spine along with other age-old health issues which crept up after my spinal beating up while I was editor of the OHeraldo over 20 years (and the newspaper I built up is now celebrating 40 years)...I was sure I didn't have TB but suffered the agony of thinking that I may be just because the doctors said I must be, because I looked so famished and degenerated in body because of my starving myself.

NOT TB, THANK-YOU!

THEN someone referred me to neurologist Dr Sanat Bhatkar, son of my old friend Dinar Bhatkar. He has studied abroad and got impressive PG degrees. He checked me thoroughly and meticulously and studied my MRI scans and said: No TB, no Koch's disease. It lifted the burden of sadness in my mind with his evaluation. Dr Sanat treated me and told me physiotherapy was best for me and to improve my nutrition.

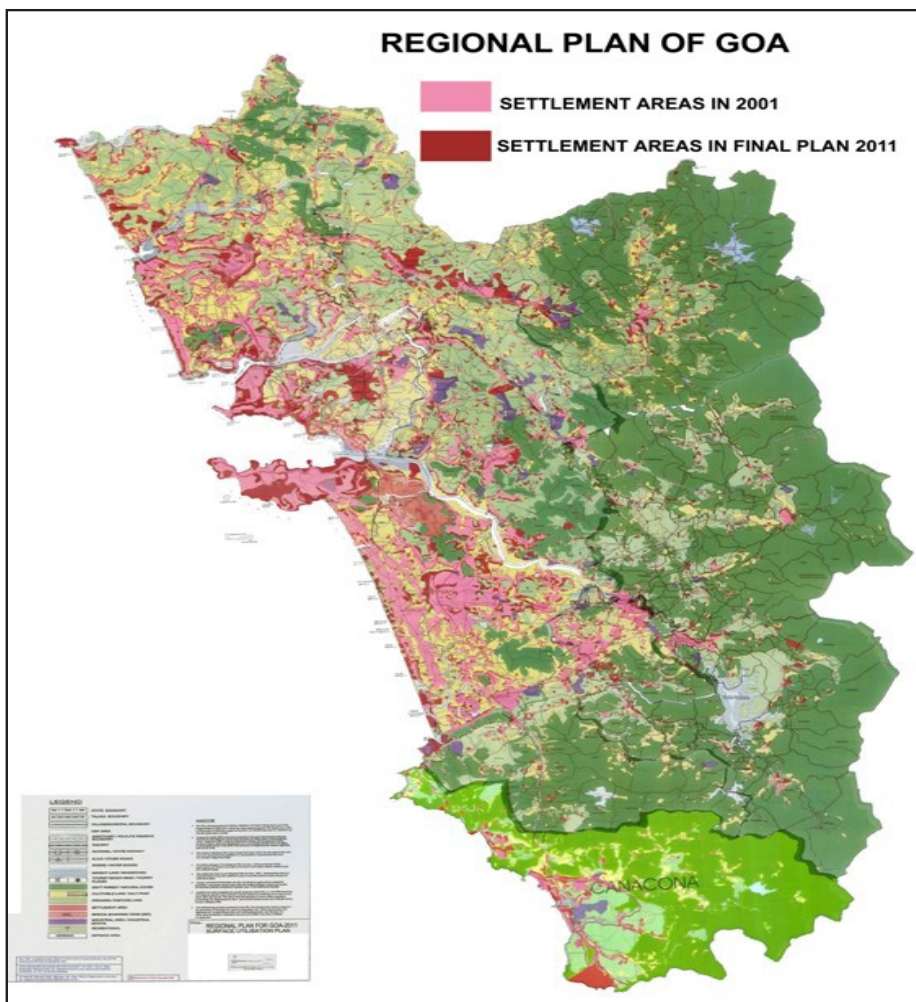
However, my other earlier problem of prolapsed rectum became worse day by day. Then I had a fall in the washroom and injured my head at the collar bone although there were no fractures. Dr Sanat had told me that I was suffering from a "crushed spine" and so all the muscle and nerve pain was going haywire. My old beating up continues to haunt and trouble me and this time the impact was on my right leg and foot. I feel like I am semi-paralysed and soon I was not able to walk without the help of a walker even at home.

END OF SOCIAL

STATE-SANCTIONED ENCROACHMENT OF GOA'S AGRICULTURAL LAND & NATURAL COVER!

Protests are rising against any further industrial development of Goa through confusing and half-baked twisting of the zoning plan by Industries Minister Vishwajit Rane...

By Solano Da Silva and Tahir Noronha



Increases in Settlement in Final RP-2011

THE Government of Goa has introduced a slew of land use policies. These include amendments to the GTCP Act, such as 16B and 17.2; a revamped IPB Act; a host of new PDAs with accompanying ODPs; and most recently, a standalone zoning plan for an entire taluka (personified in The Pernem Zoning Plan). All of these new 'land' policies either explicitly or implicitly claim that the existing regional plan, the RP-2021,

is defective or insufficient. Specifically, in May, the TCP Minister claimed that 6 crore sq. m. was taken out of settlement zone by RP-2021. This claim requires scrutiny. When comparing the RP-2021 with the RP-2001, one finds that the RP-2021 actually expanded settlement zones but also clearly demarcated settlements from agricultural and natural cover. Corrections to the RP-2021 by systematically surveying natural cover and agricultural ODPs with the RP-2021 were

required. However, these are not the corrections that the TCP Minister is pursuing. Instead, he, like his predecessors, has unleashed a host of new land policies that are essentially state-sanctioned tools to encroach into the state's shrinking agricultural land and natural cover. Further, he has tried to execute them in a manner that lacks transparency and public participation. Finally, on revisiting the controversial history of land-use planning in Goa,

one finds that RP-2011, a plan that the people of Goa had vehemently opposed, is the only case where land use changes similar to the minister's figure of 6 crore arises.

PART- I RP-2021 DID NOT REDUCE SETTLEMENT ZONES BUT ADDED

THE RP-2001, notified in 1986, designated a total of 41,669 ha for construction purposes. In other words, 11% of the state's land surface was set aside for various development purposes. As shown in Table no. 1, This comprised 39,673 ha designated for settlement and 2,596 for industrial purposes. Moving to RP-2021, notified in 2011, if one sums up the areas demarcated for settlement, institutional, industrial, MIZs, and transport purposes, one arrives at a total developable area of 62,219 ha. Thus, approx. 17% of Goa's land surface was set aside for various construction purposes. Since the RP-2021 was more detailed than RP-2001, settlement zones were bifurcated into settlement zones and institutional zones, which together add up to 50,643 ha (13.68%), as shown in Table no. 1. When comparing RP-2021 with RP-2001, one finds that RP-2021 actually added 10,970 ha to settlement zoning, contrary to the TCP Minister's claims. Further, the RP-2021 also added another 1,699 ha for industries. This is not to mention that yet another 9,252 ha (or 2.52 % of Goa's land) is under mining activities.

There are a number of reasons that were given for the increase in settlement zones in RP-2021. Amongst them was that the zoning needed to be updated with the hundreds

of individual zoning changes that Goan politicians had made to RP-2001 between 1988-2005. The gazette zoning changes were the reason for the TCP earning the tag of a 'lucrative' portfolio. This unscientific and corrupt practice was brought to an end in 2005 when Goa came under Governor's rule. 16B, 17.2 and the power to change land zoning through the IPB Act are recent avatars of the gazette zone change practice.

One has to realise that the RP-2021 detailed settlement zones clearly and, to avoid ambiguity, marked the settlement areas with survey nos. It simultaneously also marked areas for Eco-1 And Eco-2 to protect agricultural lands and ecologically valuable areas.

There were lapses in planning in RP-2021. Substantively, some verification was hurriedly done. RP-2021 missed the opportunity to survey natural cover zones in tandem with the forest department, survey agriculture lands, and develop an agriculture policy; and critically, include 'urbanised' areas which had ODPs into the regional plan. Procedurally, two approaches also led to less trust in the planning process, namely: a relatively opaque process followed by the State Level Committee to process 8,500 suggestions and objections, The reluctance of the state to send the final plan back to village panchayats for their ratification.

Despite these shortcomings in the plan, we could not find a "large-scale zone conversion to the tune of 6 crore square meters." The minister presented a report on the floor of the assembly, which makes circumstantial allegations but does not reasonably find any widespread fraud. So how

STATE-SANCTIONED ENCROACHMENT.

PG 4 ▶

did the TCP Minister come up with a figure of 6 crore sq m.?

PART - II INSTRUMENTS TO ZONE AWAY AGRICULTURAL AND NATURAL COVER

WHILE pointing out flaws with RP-2021, the TCP Minister follows a trajectory which is very similar to that of the previous TCP Minister, Vijay Sardessai. Recall that Sardessai also pointed out flaws with RP-2021, but instead of correcting the plan – a promise of the BJP – he notified the plan. Importantly, he amended the TCP Act with 16B, enabling him to make spot zoning changes to RP-2021. Sardessai also created new PDAs and ODPs, which the BJP allocated to different politicians. Now, Vishwajeet Rane has created his own version of the very same tools: introducing section 17(2) to the TCP Act, amending the Goa Building Construction Regulations to circumvent zoning provisions, and introducing section 17D to enable the department to prepare new zoning plans such as the Pernem Zoning Plan.

Most importantly, a scrutiny of the new land policies – 16B, 17.2, the ODPs and the Zoning Plans – reveals that they are essentially tools that the TCP ministry has used to arbitrarily re-zone agricultural and natural cover zones for settlement and commercial purposes. The manner in which they have been used to convert land lacks transparency and sound scientific basis.

An analysis of zoning changes processed under 16B for just one year (January 2019 to December 2020) indicates that over 7 km² were sought to be converted in just one year. An overwhelming majority of the changes proposed converting agricultural land. 90% of all 16B changes seek to be diverted for real estate development purposes towards settlement or commercial zoning.

The current TCP Minister's 17(2) amendment to the GTCP Act enables private property owners to request changes in zoning. A simple scrutiny of the first 20 cases approved under section 17(2) indicates that 54% of agricultural land and 46% of Natural Cover is sought to be converted. 17.2 goes even further by dispensing with the practice of inviting objections from the public prior to finalisation.

There have also been a series of drafts, and

Talukas	(1) Settlement zone in Draft RP-2011	(2) Settlement zone in Final RP-2011*	Added settlement zones in Final RP-2011 (2-1)
<u>Tiswadi</u>	3,133	4,228	1,095
<u>Bardez</u>	5,503	6,448	945
<u>Bicholim</u>	1,361	2,291	930
<u>Pernem</u>	1,948	2,868	920
<u>Quepem</u>	1,685	2,435	750
<u>Salcete</u>	9,250	9,950	700
<u>Canacona</u>	1,075	1,760	685
<u>Ponda</u>	2,870	3,525	655
<u>Satari</u>	835	1,190	355
<u>Mormugao</u>	1,160	1,380	220
<u>Sanguem</u>	1,483	1,483	0
Total	30,303	37,558	7,255

*Calculated using Computer Aided Design (CAD)
Source: GBA team 2006.

Over 7 crore sq.m. of land was sought to be converted in RP-2011

final ODPs floated in the recent past that proposed development in eco-sensitive zones without any fact-base or study. Most of these have been challenged, and cases pending in the High Court. ODPs in Bardez and Mormugao were withdrawn by the TCP department after a government committee highlighted the high-handed and arbitrary rezonings in it. This report justified the negative sentiment towards these poorly planned areas. The ODPs contradict their professed purpose of detailing our critical areas within a broad-brush Regional Plan. In fact, other Indian states use detailed plans, such as ODPs and zoning plans, as subsets of the Regional Plan, detailing and changing densities and defining settlement zones within the fence into residential, commercial, and public uses. There is no provision for detailed plans to exceed settlement fences determined in the Regional Plan.

A similar analysis of the recent Pernem Zoning Plan

by activists and journalists indicates that 1.4 crore sq m. (i.e. 1,400 ha) has been carved out from green cover for construction purposes. In other words, 21% of the green cover that was protected by RP-2021 in Pernem has been conveyed. Further, the Village Panchayats in the taluka were neither consulted when formulating the zoning plan nor was the report accompanying the zoning plan made public. A scrutiny of a number of permissions issued through the IPB Act reveals the same trend that this policy has essentially armed the government with enormous discretionary power, which has been (mis) used to zone away agricultural and ecological areas for select parties.

PART - III TCP MINISTER'S MYSTERIOUS 6 CRORE SQ.M. AND THE INFAMOUS RP- 2011

THIS analysis has already demonstrated that the RP-2021 actually added areas under the settlement zone. Our analysis shows that the TCP's new land policies are

not used to correct or improve the RP-2021 but to unleash a rapid and wanton conversion of agricultural lands and natural cover. A perusal of Goa's controversial planning history reveals that the closest reference to the mysterious 6 crore sq. m (or 6,000 ha) is the extent of the land that was sought to be converted by the infamous RP-2011 that was scrapped following a public outcry by the people of Goa. Many would recall the gross differences in settlement areas when comparing draft and final versions of the RP-2011. These "back-door rezonings" raised initial suspicions about the plan. Since there was no accompanying table with the final RP-2011, which recalculated the different zones document, it was difficult to obtain the areas of the respective zones that had been diverted to settlement. Instead, activists across the state resorted to Computer Aided Design software (CAD) to compare the draft and final RP-2011 and calculated that 7,255 ha (or 7 crore sq.m.) of land across the state had been rezoned as settlement.

Land Zones	RP-2001		RP-2021	
Settlement	39,673	10.72%	48,479	13.10%
Institutional	N/A		2,164	0.58%
Sub-total	39,673	10.72%	50,643	13.68%
Industrial	2,596	0.70%	3,984	1.08%
MIZ	N/A		311	0.08%
Sub-total	2,596	0.70%	4,295	1.16%
Transport	N/A		7,281	1.97%
TOTAL	42,269	11.42%	62,219	16.81%

ZONE COMPARISONS BETWEEN RP-2001 AND RP-2021 (AREAS IN HA)

Sources: Respective Zoning Tables in RP-2001 (1986) and RP-2021 (2010 & 2011)

Note: Percentages calculated based on Goa's land surface taken as 3,70,200 ha



GOA SAFE FROM ANTI-MUSLIM RHETORIC FOR TIME BEING!



ABUSING MUSLIMS

THE firebrand TMC MP Mahua Moitra, who was the first legislator to share the video on X, asked BJP president JP Nadda whether the right-wing party was going to act against Bidhuri. "Abusing Muslims, OBCs, is an integral part of BJP's culture," she posted on X. OBCs refer to the constitutionally recognised "other backward castes" who have been historically marginalised by the privileged castes in India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi "has reduced Indian Muslims to living in such a state of fear in their own land that they grin and bear everything," she alleged. Even Omar Abdullah, a politician from Indian-administered Kashmir, said hate against Muslims in India "has been mainstreamed like never before."

"How easily expletives roll off the tongue of this hateful [honourable] MP!" he posted on X. "How do Muslims who identify the BJP as their party coexist alongside this level of abject hatred?"

GOA MORE CIVILIZED!

BUT what has all this got to do with Goa and Goans? Our MLAs are much more civilized than their counterparts in the northern states and in Parliament because we have never had any anti-Muslim incidents in our legislative assembly unlike Parliament. As the Christian population in this

By Dr Olav Albuquerque

THE 27-year-old man who was arrested in Goa for posting offensive remarks against Muslims is only the tip of the iceberg because this peaceful state has undergone a metamorphosis, so that those who were peaceful have turned clamorous against minorities. There was a time in the past when all communities lived peacefully side-by-side but that is a distant memory.

We need to do a flashback of the disgraceful episode in Parliament during a debate in September on the success of India's historic moon mission. BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri called Kunwar

Danish Ali of the opposition Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) a "terrorist" and a "pimp" among other offending remarks.

The point here is that Parliament is a microcosm of legal immunity within the country so that no action can be taken against any MP who speaks after taking the permission of the Speaker when the house is in session. The Speaker can suspend the MP and ask him to leave the house. But apart from that, the MP gets total immunity from the Indian Penal Code because he delivered his so called speech in the house.

FLYING KISS

BROUHAHA!

ANOTHER example is of the ruling party MP Smriti Irani making much of a brouhaha over a so called "flying kiss" blown by Congress MP Rahul Gandhi when it appears no such incident ever took place. So, our law-makers turn law-breakers when issues pertaining to the minority community are raised.

These remarks inside the newly inaugurated parliament building evoked angry reactions from the opposition parties and social media users who demanded strict action against Bidhuri. Kunwar Danish Ali told "Al Jazeera" he was horrified and hurt by the remarks, but "not shocked."

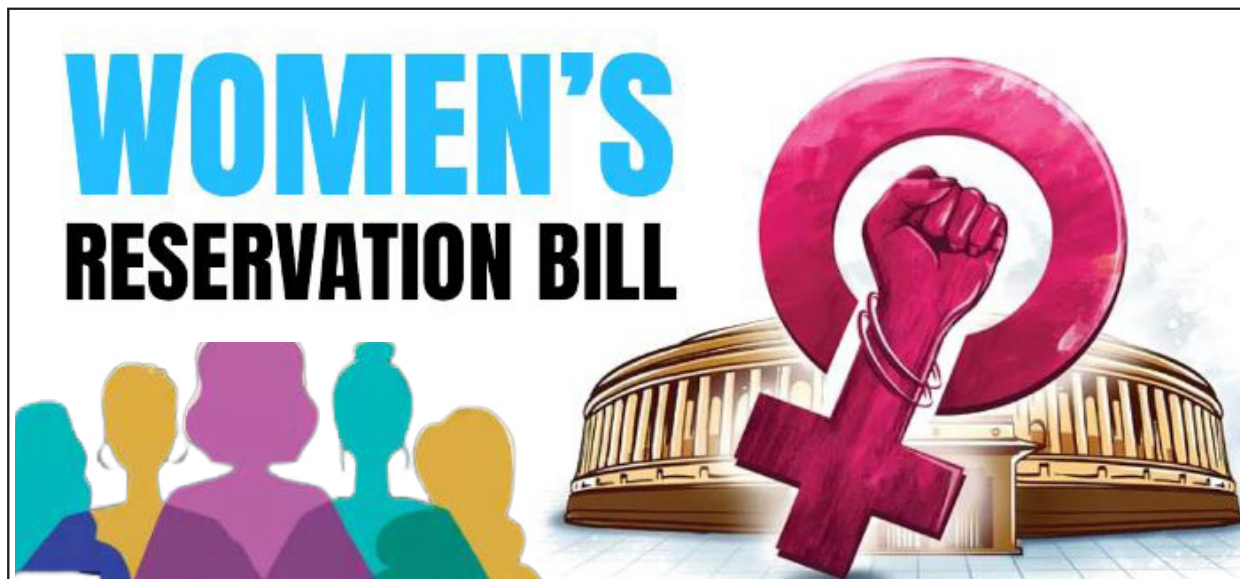
"I want to ask Mohan Bhagwat and Prime Minister

[Narendra] Modi: Is this what RSS teaches to its cadres in their schools?" he said. The RSS refers to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or the National Association of Volunteers, the ruling BJP's far-right ideological mentor that aims to create an ethnic Hindu state in the world's most populous country. Bhagwat heads the RSS, which boasts of millions of lifetime members in India and abroad.

He said the Opposition members of Parliament present during the debate stood up for him. "The MPs from Congress and TMC [Trinamool Congress], particularly the women MPs, spoke out," he told "Al Jazeera."

A HISTORIC STEP TOWARDS EMPOWERING WOMEN!

The 33% Women Reservation Bill is finally passed but there're still some hitches of the suspicious kind...



By TAMANNA SHAIKH

IN a historic moment for India, Parliament recently passed the Women Reservation Bill securing a resounding majority in favour of the legislation. This landmark development has been welcomed by various segments of society, marking a significant step towards achieving gender equality in the realm of law and policy-making.

However, this success was not achieved without its fair share of challenges and opposition, and the road ahead is still dotted with uncertainties. The Women Reservation Bill, aimed at reserving 33% of seats in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies for women, has long been a subject of debate and contention. Previous attempts to pass this legislation had faltered, but this time, it sailed through with overwhelming support.

WOMEN HARDSHIPS

THE story of India's Women's Reservation Bills

goes back many years. In 1974, a group noticed that women were finding it hard to become leaders.

In 1992, they made rules to have more women in local governments, which inspired the idea of having more women leaders at higher levels. Groups of women kept pushing for a law that would give more women a chance to lead at the national level.

The WRB was first introduced in parliament in 1996 by the Deve Gowd-led government. Several ministers opposed the bill. Between 1998-2004 the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee made several attempts to pass the bill. In 2014 the bill was again expected to be tabled in Lok Sabha however lapsed.

Finally on September 2023 Lok Sabha passed the bill with 454 votes in favour and 2 against. The Rajya Sabha passed the bill unanimously with 214 votes in favour and none against.

UNDERSCORING URGENCY

THIS resounding victory in Parliament however underscores the urgency and

necessity of women's active participation in shaping the country's laws and policies. But at the same time need for such a reservation system raises questions about the prevailing gender disparities in Indian politics. In the 21st century, when the world has made significant strides towards gender equality, the fact that such a bill is necessary highlights the persistent inequalities that women face in India.

If political parties had provided women with equal opportunities and representation, the need for reservations may not have arisen in the first place. This is the reason only 78 women candidate were elected to the 17th Lok Sabha out of 542 MPs. This is highest ever number making the proportion of only 14%. The Rajya Sabha has total of 224 members out of which 24 are female members.

UNCERTAINTIES, CENSUS DATA, PLEASE!

THE passage of the Women Reservation Bill is undoubtedly a momentous achievement, but there

are still uncertainties surrounding its implementation. Despite securing a majority in Parliament, the bill will not be in effect for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The delay in implementation has raised questions about the government's commitment to this crucial legislation.

One of the key reasons behind the delay is the requirement for delimitation and census data. The bill is slated to be implemented only after these processes are completed. This timeline has left many sceptical about the bill's actual realization. Some women Members of Parliament (MPs) have voiced their doubts, and their concerns are valid, given the history of delays and inaction on similar matters.

CHALLENGE FOR WOMEN

THE Reservation Bill faces the challenge in the demand for separate quotas within the reserved seats. Some political parties have opposed the bill, advocating for separate quotas for

Other Backward Classes (OBC) and minority women. While this perspective may stem from the desire to address intersectional concerns, it adds another layer of complexity to the already contentious issue.

Despite these challenges and uncertainties, the WRB remains largely unopposed in principle. Its passage signifies a collective acknowledgment of the need to rectify gender imbalances in politics. However, it is crucial to address the concerns raised by different groups and ensure that the bill's implementation is fair and effective.

As we celebrate this significant step towards gender equality, it is essential to recognize that the fight for women's rights and representation is far from over. The bill is just one piece of the puzzle. To truly achieve gender equality, society must address deep-rooted patriarchal norms, promote women's education and economic empowerment, and create an environment that encourages women to enter politics voluntarily, rather than as a result of quotas.

TOP PRIORITY

MOREOVER, the government must ensure that the bill's implementation remains a top priority. Delimitation and census processes should be expedited, and mechanisms for addressing the concerns of OBC and minority women should be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders. It is essential to maintain transparency and accountability throughout the process to build trust in the legislation's effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

IN conclusion, the passage of the Women Reservation Bill is a historic moment for India, signalling a commitment to gender equality in the political sphere. However, the journey towards true representation and equality is ongoing, with challenges and uncertainties still ahead. It is imperative that all stakeholders work together to ensure the bill's successful implementation and address the concerns of various groups to create a fair and inclusive political landscape. Only then can India truly claim to be a nation that values and promotes the equal participation of women in law and policy-making! □

GOA SAFE FROM ANTI-MUSLIM...

Pg 6 ▶

tiny state hovers around 25 per cent, there have never been insults hurled at the Catholic population in this state.

The Constitution of India states that a State Legislative Assembly must not have less than 60 MLAs and not more than 500 MLAs but an exception may be granted via an Act of Parliament for the small states of Goa, Sikkim, Mizoram and the Union Territory of Puducherry which all have fewer than 60 MLAs.

And with fewer MLAs, chances of communal polarization is less because most MLAs in these states behave decorously despite controversies breaking out now-and-then in these tiny states. This was why the Goa Legislative

Assembly passed The Goa Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of the Legislative Assembly (Amendment) Bill 2023, while two MLAs walked out in protest.

As Minister for Law, Judiciary and Legislative Affairs Nilesh Cabral moved the bill, Congress MLA Altone D'Costa objected to it and demanded the funds should be used for public welfare. He pointed out that MLAs were not informed 36 hours prior to introduction of the bill which was against the rules.

"The State has a debt of Rs28,000 crore. There is no need for an increment. Perks of panchayat members and sarpanchas are not being enhanced but the government is increasing perks of MLAs. Why increase the

perks of MLAs? Give it to the cause of social welfare. Give it to the Laadli Laxmi scheme," he said.

PAMPERED MLAS
CHIEF MINISTER Pramod Sawant told the legislative assembly that the salary and allowances of MLAs were revised after 10 years. He said only petrol quota, medical bills, vehicle loan limit with rate of interest and housing loan with rate of interest have been increased. Also, two additional staff have been sanctioned, Sawant said. This on closer look pretty much amounts to everything.

What we have to understand is that our legislative assembly does not have a Muslim MLA unlike Parliament and the northern states where the Muslims get some representation even if this is inadequate.

We have to commend



(Dr Olav Albuquerque holds the MSc, LL.M and PhD degree in law from the University of Mumbai. He is a senior journalist-cum-advocate of the Bombay high court and an honorary member of the Goa Union of Journalists.)

Opposition leader Yuri Alemao and Congress MLA Altone D'Costa for opposing the bill to enhance the pension and other allowances of these MLAs. While the government keeps incurring debts, these MLAs gift themselves huge hikes in salaries and pensions while other equally deserving sectors like the police and teachers have been struggling for decades without much of a hike.

Nilesh Cabral said

those who do not require increased allowances are free to refuse them. "MLAs pay rate of interest on car loans or housing loans. If any MLA does not avail the allowances, they are free to do so," he said.

Power Minister Sudin Dhavalikar claimed that he had not used medical bills in spite of undergoing a major surgery nor had he obtained a housing loan. "We need to understand that all MLAs are not landlords," he said.

□

AGING IS A TERRIBLE BUSINESS!

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LIFE

I STOPPED going out. When I get up in the morning terrible shoots of pain at shoulders and lower back drag me down in bed, as if my body is frozen with my right shoulder bone tilting down on right side, dragging my posture down ...so that I may topple down one wrong move. I can't get up from bed in the morning without some manipulation with hot and cold fomentation of my body and the medications.

Various doctors and my very good physiotherapist tells me I need multiple disciplinary approach and spine at neck region need urgent attention. Now there is also a creeping in prostate problem. All the pain at

the shoulder blade region makes it impossible for me to bend and do my long ablutions in the morning and through the day. I can no longer bend from the waist down.

I have few friends left in the GMC anymore. I am told I may be admitted at the geriatric ward if I have influence. I would prefer to go to the Healthway but Now I am being referred to a proctologist in Mumbai where the last time in Mumbai I had terrible nightmare experiences with one Dr Roy Patankar. It seems Mumbai has all the best proctologists though, they are experts who deal with the collapse of the alimentary or digestive system right up to the

prolapsed rectum stage. Maybe they can help me but I am too weak for another surgery and without surgery my insurance company won't pay. Perhaps everything is too late for me now.

If you ask ten different doctors their views on a particularly painful health condition you will get 15 opinions, like the story of the seven blind men and the elephant. Just 24 hours after I was admitted the Neurologist whom I trust implicitly insisted it was an ortho problem. The ortho people obsessed with broken bones want me to do more x-rays CT scans and a spinal MRI. Largest number of visits from neurosurgeon team did not include Head of the Department Ponraj Sundaram. They did not communicate any opinion. And finally, the HOD of Geriatrics whom my wife has been chasing turned up. He sneered at the other specialists. They are only

concerned with body parts. Only we Medical people take a holistic view. The geriatric head asked if I had problems with my throat. When I said yes, he implied I may have cancer of the throat. He referred to the fact I used to smoke forty-plus cigarettes a day. I am now expecting a visit from Oncology and ENT. The people I need desperately are the physiotherapists. Yesterday neither Ortho nor Geriatrics wanted to admit me. Now that I have been admitted under the Superintendent of GMC and Prof of Surgery Dr Rajesh Patil they cannot ignore the reference Viva Dr Rajesh Patil.

BOTTOMLINE

THE bottom-line is that getting old with health issues not of my own making but of the political kind, and also being bankrupt is a deadly combination. It is not easy to grow old,

it is very challenging. Why should I not stop eating and drinking like a monk bit by bit in the hope that I may one day soon close my eyes forever for a graceful exit from blows my life has dealt me? It's all the mind and it is also not all in the mind. Everyone at home and hospital is now researching me and psychoanalysing me and I no longer have the energy left to even get angry like once upon a time. The passion is spent.

I have learned patience with the injustices which may come in a media person's life. Who came all the way from Mumbai in 1983 to take up what he then thought would be the exciting challenge of converting a Portuguese society paper into a contemporary investigating paper. There were no rewards, or very little rewards which count for something. What a price I am paying for the decision of mine to come to Goa today. It is che sera sera.

□

Eating is Fun/ Eating is Yuck!

A variety health food column by Tara Narayan

HOW MANY FLOWERS GROW IN MY GARDEN OF PARADISE... EAT THEM!



THIS glorious cockscomb plant just fell in my way so that I rescued it! Also called amaranth, velvet flower, wool flower and in Kashmir it's the mawal flower, an exciting spice or "brain food" in *piece de resistance* Wazwan cuisine. The Kashmiri cockscomb flower is bright red in color and Kashmiris families use the dry powder of the flowers to enrich their culinary specials...the flower is said to be good for eyes, digestion, cures eczema, reduces risk of diabetes.

WHEN did you last think of a flower as food? Recently I did when I was visiting an old favourite place, the International Centre Goa

which was hosting a meet for cancer survivors. While walking up to the reception area past the garden grounds I suddenly found myself

crushing beneath my feet a thick reddish-stalked plant fallen down, the flower heads were these amazing velvety dark purplish red combs and it suddenly

clicked, where did I last see them? In Kashmir valley where these flowers are relished as "mawal" – the flower to flavour and bring alive with color some of the Kashmiri cooking of the festive Wazwan meal for special occasions like marriages – who doesn't recognise and love the dishes of "rogon ghosh" or "gushtaba"?

Anyway, I quickly uprighted the plant before it got crushed by a car's wheels and finding no gardener around to appeal to grow this plant somewhere to get a mini-garden of mawal phool – I just brought it home to plant in the pot near my rental home, must give it to someone who has a garden and will care for it for posterity! Mawal or mawal is such a pretty flower and likely takes its name from the majestic rooster's comb, it comes in several colors actually including *Celosia argentea* or silver cock's comb...

But the purple red mawal is a Kashmiri cook's exotic spice powder, the dried red cockscomb flower powder sells for something like Rs500 plus, plus for Rs400g or so. The flowers are of the Amaranthaceae family which grow from Nepal to Kashmir to India and they are perceived as a herbaceous plant – edible exotic flowers of the mawal! Exquisite beauty. I'm not surprised the Kashmiri people value this

plant's flowers and think of it as "brain food" because look like ...er...human brains in their tight velvet twists. The dry powder of cockscomb are used to enrich several dishes in Kashmir as afore mentioned, gives the dishes a rich red glow and that je nais sais quo flavour.

Of course just as in the case of many leaves there are many flowers we enjoy relishing in our salads and garnishing our meals. Begin with roses and rose petals, pink rose petals (organically cultivated, think rose petal jam, syrup, sherbet, gulkhand which in Ayurveda is a perfectly cooling jam to include in our eating habits); then there're the flowers of the drumstick tree (also called moringa tree) so loved in Konkan coast dishes; and tender tamarind flowers are delicately tart and delicious (as also the tender leaves)... pumpkin flowers also turn into stir fries and fritters, akin to squash flowers. Of course, if you pluck the flowers to eat you may oftentimes have to forego eating the wholesome fruit!

Hibiscus flowers, rosella sours give many a high (gongura in Karnataka, the greens go into much loved gongura pickle), banana flowers are prized in Goa for fritters or bhoje (in Kerala known as "vazhaipoo"); also flowers of the insulin plant are beautiful and have a tart crunch, real beauties.



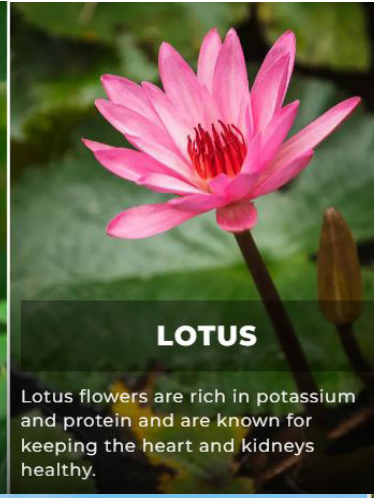
MAWAL

These flowers are rich in calcium, which helps prevent osteoporosis, and the rich fibre and mineral content aid digestion. They are also rich in vitamin K and potassium, which reduce blood pressure.



BOKFUL

As per Ayurveda, this flower balances the kapha and pitta doshas and is a powerful remedy for constipation, inflammation, and stomach infections.



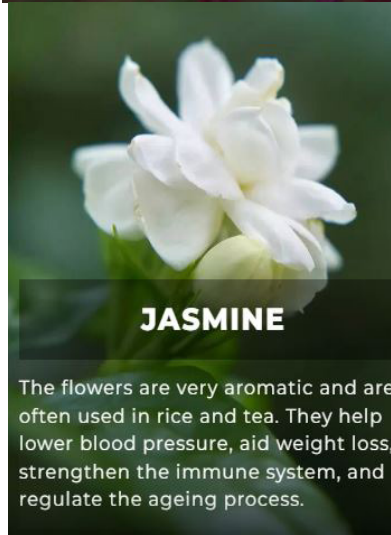
LOTUS

Lotus flowers are rich in potassium and protein and are known for keeping the heart and kidneys healthy.



HIBISCUS

These flowers are rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. They are low in calories, high in fibre, and aid in weight loss.



JASMINE

The flowers are very aromatic and are often used in rice and tea. They help lower blood pressure, aid weight loss, strengthen the immune system, and regulate the ageing process.



MORINGA

Rich in fibre, magnesium, potassium, and protein, moringa flowers are known for their medicinal properties and are helpful in combating malnourishment. They also help reduce muscle inflammation.



RHODODENDRON

These flowers are rich in calcium, iron, potassium, and vitamin C and are known for their anti-diabetic properties.



TAMARIND

The pale-yellow flowers add a tart sweetness to any dish and are considered to boost digestion, help control insulin, and are diabetic-friendly.



MAHUA

They are used in making honey, jam, juice, and more and are considered a natural cure for asthma and respiratory illnesses, improve eyesight, and strengthen the functioning of the heart.



BANANA

Banana flowers are a powerful source of protein and vitamin C. These flowers are rich in fibre, aid weight loss, and are considered natural mood boosters.

EAT THESE FLOWERS TOO! Yes, you can eat them and they pack quite a few nutritional magic! Lovely to look at, delicious to eat too...garnishing salads, confectionary, in jams and sherbats. Grow them in your kitchen garden: roses, hibiscus, drumstick, roselle (gongura), basil and many more!

kidneys. I hear of bokful in Ayurveda, powerfully anti-constipation, anti-inflammation, protect from stomach infections.

From gardens in the countries of the West, there are lavender, nasturtiums (peppery flavours), pansies, sweet pea blue flowers (water turns a soothing blue, sweet peas tea), some say marigold flowers too one may eat but lightly, ditto for violets, heirloom roses like Edward roses. Think of some more flowers you may eat, flowers can be terrific eye-catching...hey, cauliflower and broccoli of the cabbage family of plants are flowers eaten as veggies!

Think up some more and let me know. Eat more flowers. You must know

flowers are the reproductive part of a plant and have the ability to make their own food in the cells called chloroplasts by the process of photosynthesis. Flowers are nutritious. Eat more flowers, my friends! Pop that insulin flower in your mouth and shut your eyes...first check there are no creepy crawlies lying in their lovely bowers

Give me a garden of paradise alive with flowers and life would indeed be roses, roses all the way even if nobody promise you a rose garden. By the way the flowers of the harshingar (also parijata, tree of sorrow) goes into making a most memorable sherbat... these flowers are said to be a favourite of Lord Shiva, the Lord of Dance and much else desirable and undesirable! ▣

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The saffron crocus flowers although it's only the stigma which go into the most expensive spice which is a flower, kesar (Kashmiri kesar, goes into making of much loved qahwa. In Madhya Pradesh, mahua flowers fall so profusely, intoxicating the very air...people make jam, juice, honey and these mahua

flower enshrined goodie are said to cure asthma, respiratory illnesses, improve eyesight, strengthen the heart.

Heard of chamomile flowers? Chamomile tea is most sedative, soothing, have chamomile tea as a nightcap. Again, the lovely scented cloves are flowers and make up one of the fabled five spices of Chinese

cuisine fame. Up in the mountains of the Himalaya grow rhododendrons which diabetics seek out for they are known to be anti-diabetic flowers! Also think rhododendron jam and sherbat...aromatic jasmine stir up the senses as in jasmine tea, they are rejuvenating, anti-ageing. Lotus flowers are for protecting heart and

IRONMAN TRIATHLON ONCE AGAIN IN PANAJI!

Swim 1.9km, bicycle 90 km, run 21.1 km in eight hours or less and get your most desirable Ironman's medal for future similar fitness adventures around the world... the world's most famous endurance triathlon was in Goa for its third edition.



IRONMAN 70.3 GOA THIS YEAR...in its third edition in Goa. Miramar beach turned into a hub of excitement as the triathlon kicking off on October 8, 2023. Reportedly 1,200 participants swam, bicycled and ran the route designed for them to prove to themselves how much they could endure in the fitness regime!
GO, GO, GO...the aero bike cyclists push off for their 90km long ride from Miramar beach

By TARA NARAYAN

IT'S good to know that the world is driven by so many fitness seeking men and women today. Even if seeking fitness for self and family is a still a luxury one may or not be able to afford! This is to say Sunday, October 8, 2023 dawned into a dull, cloudy day at Miramar beach in so called capital city Panaji in Goa. Since I live so close by the thought of imbibing some of the spirit of fitness consciousness from the ironmen and iron-women in town was irresistible! They were here last year too and this year it was the

third edition of the Ironman 70.3 and something like 1,200 entries had registered. Reportedly, 15 % (about 50 women) were women and some of them veteran Iron-women too.

By 7am Chief Minister Pramod Sawant had already done the honours to kick off the first event of swimming in the Miramar beach sea waters and Miramar Circle was buzzing with locals, as also families and support teams of the participants who after the swim would race to their where their state-of-the-art bicycles were parked in a cordoned off lot for the second event of cycling something like 90 km and said veteran participant Adil Nargolwala

later in a brief interaction, "The cycling this year was tougher than last year but that's how it's supposed to be! This year we had to cycle up and down three times, first to Ribandar and on to the Bambolim hills and back to Miramar beach..."

FAMILY SUPPORT TEAM

IT'S sometimes also interesting to talk to family members of the participants who parked themselves at the Miramar Circle and a little way down the Campal promenade – and as their participants passed they would break into enthusiastic yells of "Keep going!" "Let's go!"

"Whoosh..." Very infectious! Swimming over with and the bicycling laps under way some looked around to catch up with some breakfast.

A most genial brother Ankush Sharma who was pushing his "aero bike" (these lightweight bicycles invite much interest) said his sister Tim Tim was participating in the race "and I am part of her support team, you can say I am her cycling coach!" This was his sister's second Ironman and "last time she was the first Indian finisher!"

To a query about the aero bicycle he offered "it can be lifted with two fingers, here you try lifting it." To my surprise I managed to lift the bicycle easily and he clicked a picture of me doing it,

explaining like the pro that he is that "these bicycles are more about balance, if you want to speed, there's no comfort; if you want comfort, there's no speed!" They cost a bomb of course, over a lakh and plus, plus, "there must easily be Rs50crore worth of aero bikes parked here in the lot at your Miramar beach!" The bicycles are locked and under guard.

The Ironman 70.3 may also be done in relay teams, that means in a team of three one will swim, another do the bicycle race and the third do the run of 21 km which is a half marathon, "I

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think this year there're 126 relay teams" and as usual there are many newbies to the events.

India is slowly an surely waking up to the joys of fitness consciousness and swimming, biking, running and maybe give or take a few more decades down the road of fitness joys – our hospitals packed with sick patients will ease up and there will be just a few of them! A good thought to look forward to if it materializes, thank-you. Thank-you, Ankush Sharma.

MEET the parents of Pranav Chhikara from Rohtak in Haryana, they were perched at a grassy pavement patch at the Miramar circle and were here to give moral support to their son, 28. Said his father Virendra and mother Rekha, "Pranav is passionate about this sports thing and wants to be a professional, he is doing swimming, bicycling, running ...all three by himself." Otherwise he is a "BCom, Masters in marketing, was in Singapore for a while, now he is back home but may go abroad if he gets the chance..." They took out a packet of biscuits and offered me some, asked if there was a nearby place

where they could find an idli breakfast; I directed them to the nearest Fortune Miramar Hotel (where a sumptuous breakfast buffet for Rs650 was being offered, some of the better off participants and their families were putting up here for the duration of the triathlon).

If you have Goan friends in Panaji you're lucky! They are happy to take care of friends down for the Ironman 70.3 event and join in the excitement. I found my friend Elizabeth Rodrigues and her brother Adelmo at the Café Bhonsale savouring puri-bhaji and mirsang bhoji with Dr Rajesh Parekh, wife Asha, young friends Priya Kini and Shyam Saravana down from Bengaluru, for their son Neil participating in Ironman and while he was doing his cycling...they were here at the café, enjoying their Goan breakfast! Sharing details of the endurance event, Dr Parekh (he's an ophthalmologist) said, "We just wanted to come to Goa and this was a good excuse, Neil's participation in the Ironman 70.3...he is doing all the events himself."

FITNESS CONSCIOUS

FAMILY

THE Parekhs are a fitness-consciousness family in toto and Priya, on her smart phone constantly, said they keep in touch with Neil and events on the Ironman.3 App, so it is easy to keep track of what's happening... they may also do some sightseeing! Neil's mother Asha quipped, "By the evening I know my son will be so fagged out and will say he wants to sleep, he won't leave the hotel room!" Maybe not even attend the evening function to felicitate all the Ironman finishers (as they are called, also triathletes) at the Taleigao Community Hall, they'll have to just play it by ear.

Interestingly, rules are very strict for the triathlon endurance test and participants who do not finish the swim, cycle race and run within the maximum stipulated eight hours, they lose out on even getting their precious Ironman's medal! So if anyone newbies want to participate in the event next year, they better take it seriously and start training right away. Most seasoned participants who follow the famous event from country to country have their support team and coach to make them work hard at staying fit around the year. Ironman 70.3 is no joking time pass achievement which anyone can do just like that!

Fitness, one realizes, is something which has to be honed with discipline over time. Taking a final look at the Miramar beach circle one couldn't help noticing how fighting fit most of the participants of Ironman 70.3 were; yes, even in comparison to Goa police on duty! Ironman 70.3 anyone? They do believe in catching them young for now there is also IronmanKids India and this year it was in its



Meet parents Virender and Rekha Chhikara of Rohtak...here to cheer on their son Pranav participating in Ironman 70.3 triathlon.

second edition in Goa for children in the age group of six years to 16 years, it flagged off on Saturday, October 7 at 7am at Miramar beach.

Needless to say Ironman 70.3 India (hosted by Deepak Raj, franchisee owner and race director of Ironman in India and CEO of Yoska, Jeff Edwards, CEO and MD Ironman Asia and VS Ganeshan, director-marketing of Herbalife) is now getting some kind of competition with companies and corporate hospitals waking up to the idea of promoting fitness and health for the future! Witness on the same day as when Goa CM Dr CM Pramod Sawant flagged off Ironman 70.3 triathlon he also flagged off the National Red Run; recently the RG Hospital too organized a marathon with a special section for the handicapped. It's nothing on par with the Ironman 70.3 meticulous standard of course! Goa is a sports friendly state and now fever is building up with the 37th National Games coming up.

IS it true that one may take this whole craze for sports and fitness a little too far? Ardent participants unable to stretch their stamina or push too hard do end up in tragic incidents – yes, they do drop dead!

Mercifully, such incidents are few and far between and do not put off the legion of young and not so young aspiring to fitter, healthier, happier lifestyles or so to speak.

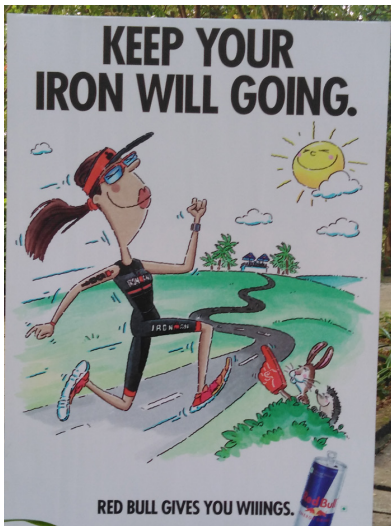
Most sporting events do have hospital ambulance services on stand-by at the venue just in case... some participant gets into trouble. It cannot be easy to organize Ironman 70.3 and when asked, the "Ultraman Ironman 6 Star world majors and continents marathoner motorsport enthusiast" Adil Nargolwala, who's very into sports, fitness and recreation, was all praise for this year's Ironman 70.3 in Goa, "Previous occasions there were some glitches but this year it was a smooth experience. I'm all praise for Deepak of Yoska and his team who did a good job!"

Why does he do it? "Why does anyone climb mountains or sail the seas? For the same reasons I do it!" The Ironman triathlon runs in many countries, demands a lot from the triathletes participating and only after experience and several wins they will get to the main championship Ironman coming up in New Zealand next year.

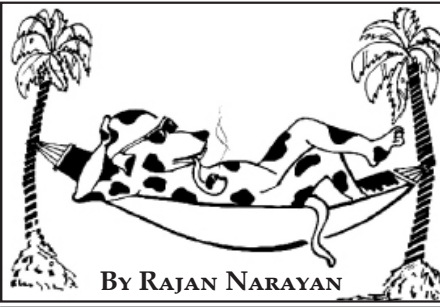


FITNESS CONSCIOUS FAMILY....Participant Neil Parekh's family from Bengaluru, Dad Dr Rajesh, mum Asha, Shyam Saravana, friend Priya Kini, happy to do Goan breakfast while in Goa!

GLIMPSES OF IRONMAN 2023 TRIATHLON...All the way down Miramar beach road, some interesting highlights and sidelights



(l to r) Say hello to veteran Ironman 70.3 Adil Nargolwala from Delhi... "I enjoy endurance tests... this time the cycling route was much tougher." Corinna Van Dam of Netherlands, living in Mumbai for seven years now working for NGO Maitrayana... "I am participating for the third time in Ironman... what's age got to do with it as long as I can do it!" Finally this year's Ironman winner Nihal Baig from Andhra Pradesh "I have been enjoying this sports over 12 years." (l) Fireman at your service!



STRAY

AMIT SHAH TARGETS PFI!



Home Minister Amit Shah attacking Popular Front of India

AND a few stray thoughts for yet another Saturday. For a Saturday following the week when in a major setback to Vishwajit Rane the centre shot down his plans to convert Pernem into a concrete jungle. For a Saturday following the week when we advise you do not go to Casualty in GMC if you have not broken your head or limbs. For a Saturday following the week when the long-delayed

National Games are about to start (scheduled Oct25 to Nov9, 2023) but out of the 72 venues only half are ready.

AND a few stray thoughts on a major setback to Vishwajit Rane when the centre shot down his plans to convert Pernem into a concrete jungle. It was an action replay for Rane to way back to 2009. Then Rane grabbed large parts of land at Canacona cheating tribal and using benami names. This was exposed by Goa Bachao Abhiyan;

Rane has been more rapacious than Babush Atanasio Monseratte in facilitating the conversion of agricultural fields, he got Article 172 of the Town & Country Plan act amended He added new clause D under which the government could convert any land, farming, orchard or even forest land anywhere in Goa. It is under this clause that 25 per cent of Mopa land was sought to be converted.

Rane has also moved an amendment to permit the

conversion of farmland into farmhouses. Excepting limit brought down to 1000 mts. So every posh villa with a swimming pool becomes a farmhouse. All the regional plans put the Planning & Development authorities into a state of limbo.

There is a provision that once in ten years government can make any changes it wants in land use plans. But this cannot bypass CRZ rules and farming laws. Public hearings must be

held before any large scale conversion. It would appear senior BJP leader Sadanand M Shet Tanawade has managed to stall mass conversions in Pernem. Local MLA Jit Arolkar has strongly opposed the plan. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant is also against it. It would appear that they have succeeded as Rane has deferred conversions.

GMC CASUALTY

AND a few stray thoughts on when you are advised not to go to Casualty at the Goa Medical College & Hospital. Don't rush there in an emergency if you have not broken your head or limbs. It seems the GMC's Casualty only entertains emergencies. If you have had a fall in the washroom and injured your head, go immediately to Casualty in GMC. If you go two days or two months later even in great pain they won't admit you, unless you are at immediate risk of dying in an obvious emergency.

Instead you have to go the OPD of relevant section and stand in a long queue for the right doctor to attend to you. It is completely at the discretion of the medical head of department whether to admit you or not as a patient in need of medical attention. Only if you have a powerful Godfather can stupid petty rules be overcome.

THOUGHTS

On Monday, Oct 10 I spent six hours in Casualty being tossed between Geriatrics and Neurology doctors. In frustration, I made an appeal to superintendant Dr Rajesh Patil. He moved me to the ward he was personally responsible for, that is the Trauma Ward adjoining Casualty. This ward has a new look as it is to be used as a chief medical facility for the National Games coming up in Goa later this month from October 25.

With Ortho insisting I was not an emergency, Dr Rajesh Patil admitted me to his own ward. GMC does have private rooms but they cost only Rs1,200 per night. However you have to pay an advance of Rs10,000 and you also have to pay for every doctor's visit and also for all tests and procedures done at nominal rates. They don't accept debit cards or Google Pay or any other payment gateways. Don't call for

doctors all the time as you pay even if an intern comes to visit you. Every time you ask for a doctor he has to be summoned from the hostel.

The head honcho doctor will visit you with his entourage only once a day. At other times you are at the mercy of residents who are PHD students or interns like the half-baked MBBS Munnabai in the film who if you remember did a much better job than consultant super doctors.

MIGRANT SERVICES BETTER!

AND a few stray thoughts on migrants in Goa for whom the most profitable business is attending to patients in hospital wards. All hospitals including the GMC insist on a patient having an attendant 24 hours a day. So unless you have a large extended family with enough spare manpower

or womanpower it is very difficult to find an attendant. You have to hire an attendant trained or untrained to be as good as ward attendant in helping patients handle their broken bodies.

The remuneration for hospital attendants is good although not for the poorer patients. The hired attendant or his company charges as much as Rs1,200 per working shift of eight or 12 hours. It can add up to Rs2,000 a day or a whopping Rs60,000 per month if the payments are by the hour and there are extra hours added on.

Goan attendant may not like helping a patient to change diapers in the toilet even if they are their own parents, let alone strangers. There are two agencies supplying professionally trained attendants. The attendants are mostly candidates from out of India in need of a job and they are given rudimentary training by their Goan boss and then assigned

to patients in need of an hospital stay attendant.

We know Renuka Rao who has a large data bank of attendants for several services. She even supplies attendants who will cook and do total housekeeping for patients at home. The other agency is run by a Goan who gets boys and girls from Jharkhand, untrained help. We know some Goan hospital and home trained helps like Nutan who helps me; Nutan is a housewife compassionate and brings a motherly touch for patients. Of course there are no substitutes for your own children. I know a friend who used to read to her mother in a coma for two years and had the satisfaction of seeing her mother pass n peacefully.

NATIONAL GAMES COMING UP

AND a few stray thoughts on the long awaited and long delayed National Games which are about to start at 72 venues although we are told only half are ready venues. The heavy rains have exposed the shoddy work on tracks where athletic events like hundred-metre runs take place. Football and cricket have mass support in Goa but there has not been much encouragement for athletic events.

Goa with its vast coast and multiple pools has great scope for winning medals in swimming, yachting, road skating, etc. But the lesser but equally fascinating sporting activities receive little or no encouragement or support from the Goa government or business houses. It is only the House of Dempos under Shrinivas Dempo which sponsored

badminton players, swimming and chess grandmasters. Neither the MPT nor Goa Shipyard have supported sports. Ironically, one of the stars of the Indian cricket team is Shikha Pande of the women's team. Her father teaches in the Kendriya Vidyalaya.

At the college level, several students show interest. The daughter of a former PSO of mine was very interested in shotput but gave it up due to the pressure of studies. It would appear that only the very poor are interested in sports for half the medal winners in Asia are from very poor background families. Like landless labour and rickshaw drivers, sports must not be the last choice of hope. This will happen only with government encouragement. Goa must look beyond football. Let us inspire ourselves by legends like Nikhil Chopra, the Olympic World and Asian champ.

STALIN'S RAJ

AND a few stray thoughts about the spate of arrests of senior political leaders and media personnel which reminds me of the Stalin Raj when the first step was to shoot the messenger. If you got rid of the media there would be no one to report your butchery of rival politicians.

So first you raid NewsClick. Then you arrest Sanjay Singh, senior AAP leader. Then our most terrifying home minister, Amit Shah, asked police to destroy the infrastructure of terrorism. Which means everyone who opposes the Modi government. This only enables us to fight with double vigour.

VISHWAJIT HALTED IN PERNEM!

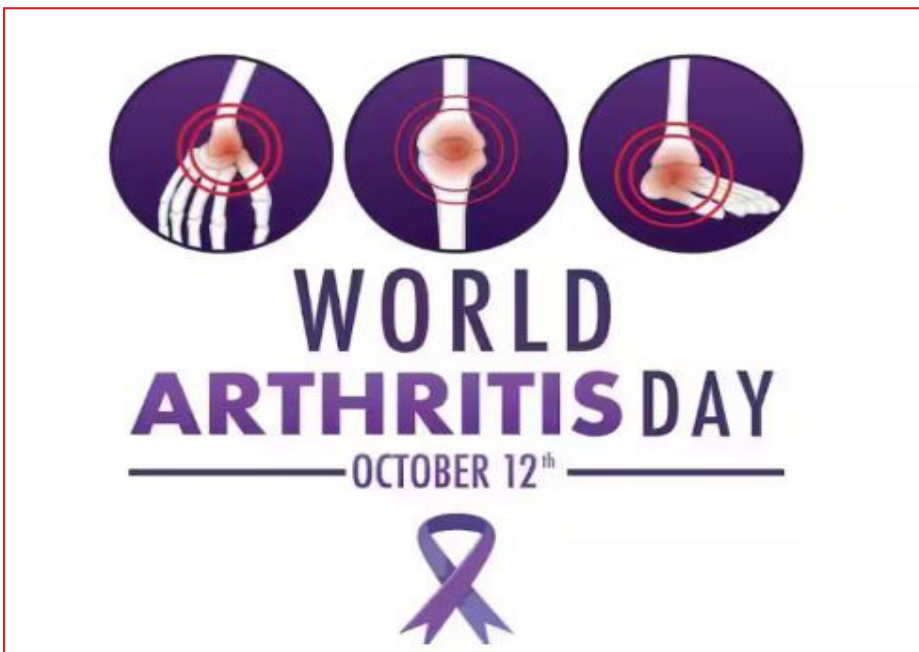
Vishwajit Rane amended Section 72 of the TCP Act. He added a new clause 72 (2) which empowered the state government to permit conversions of any agricultural land or orchard or private forest. It is under this clause that the Pernem Zonal Plan was drawn up permitting conversion of 25% of land area. Already another 25% has been taken by MOPA. Deltin is putting up an entertainment park a la Essel World. Over 50,000 sqm of agricultural land was converted.

Former Maharashtra minister, Narayan Rane of neighbouring Sindhudurg taluka is reported to have bought over 100 hectares in Pernem. Pernem is not included in the Tenancy & Mundkar Act which extends all over the rest of Goa, excepting for Sattari and Pernem which are exempted. Pratapsingh Raoji Rane deliberately kept Pernem and Sattari out of the Tenancy Act when he was Revenue Minister in the Shashikala government. So their tenants in Sattari and Pernem cannot buy the land they are cultivating.

A World Arthrities Day Special!

LIVING WITH ARTHRITIS

OCTOBER 12 is World Arthritis Day. The theme this year is living with arthritis at all stages in life. More than 100 types of arthritis exist, but the most common are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Due to the lack of awareness and support, arthritis and its related condition has crippled much life around the world.



By DR. ANEESA KAPADIA
(RHEUMATOLOGIST)

increasing friction and making movements painful.

above the age of 65 years.

purine-containing foods to prevent the progression of the condition.

On the other hand, including specific food items in your diet will help in relieving the symptoms of arthritis by strengthening your bones, muscles, and joints. This includes oily fish, dairy and green leafy vegetables.

Q: WILL MY HANDS AND FEET GET DEFORMED DUE TO ARTHRITIS?

A: Untreated arthritis can lead to deformities of your hands, feet, wrists, and ankles. However, with early diagnosis and treatment, this can be prevented. With timely treatment, most patients with arthritis lead functional and productive lives.

Q: ARE ARTHRITIS MEDICINES HARMFUL?

A: The common medications used for treating arthritis include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), steroids, and disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs).

When used correctly under expert supervision, most patients do very well with these medications and side effects are rare. Adverse events, when noted, are with a long term use of analgesics and steroids, which can be avoided if the correct medications are instituted at the right time.

Q: CAN ARTHRITIS BE CURED?

A: Arthritis, just like any other chronic illness such as diabetes, hypertension, or thyroid disorders cannot be completely cured.

You may have noticed the elders at home constantly complaining of joint pain. It could be due to the inflammation of joints making it difficult for them to move and stay active. Joint pain can occur as the result of a chronic condition called arthritis, which commonly affects older adults.

Arthritis is an inflammatory condition that affects one or more joints in your body. It causes stiffness and pain in the joints that worsens with age. It is of different types, the two main types being osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. In both conditions, the protective cushioning of the joints deteriorates, increasing friction and making movements painful.

Arthritis is more common in women than in men. Less common types of arthritis include psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, gout, and systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) amongst many others.

TO PREVENT ARTHRITIS, YOU MUST:

- Follow healthy lifestyle measures such as doing regular exercise, having a balanced diet, and maintaining healthy body weight.
- Use protective gear while taking part in sports activities, as injuries increase the risk of arthritis.
- Quit smoking as smoking puts stress on the tissues that protect your joints.

(Disclaimer: This article is written by the practitioner for informational and educational purposes only. The content presented on this page should not be considered as a substitute for medical expertise. Please "DO NOT SELF-MEDICATE" and seek professional help regarding any health conditions or concerns. Practo will not be responsible for any act or omission arising from the interpretation of the content present on this page.)

Courtesy: Practo.com

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MORE COMMON IN WOMEN

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Here are answers to frequently asked questions.

FAQs About Arthritis

Q: WHAT IS THE AGE GROUP USUALLY AFFECTED BY ARTHRITIS?

A: Arthritis can affect patients in any age group. Young children, adults in their prime, as well as the elderly can be affected by arthritis. It is more common in individuals who are

Q: IF SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY HAS ARTHRITIS, ARE YOU ALSO AT RISK OF HAVING IT?

A: Certain types of arthritis tend to run in families. This includes conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and lupus. Having family members suffering from these conditions increases your risk of developing the disease.

Q: CAN DIET OR CERTAIN FOODS WORSEN ARTHRITIS?

A: Patients who are suffering from gout (a type of arthritis that occurs due to uric acid deposits in the joints) should reduce the intake of red meat, shellfish, alcoholic beverages and other

SIKKIM IGNORED FLOOD WARNINGS!



By C.P. RAJENDRAN

THE disaster that struck Sikkim in the early hours of Wednesday, October 4, ended up killing at least 40 people and many more are reported to be missing, according to currently available reports. The surge of floodwaters flowing into the Teesta River in Lachen Valley was so intense that it washed away several bridges and roads and it rammed the biggest hydroelectric project, the Teesta-III Dam in Chungthang in Sikkim, causing part of it to give away. According to a statement issued by the National Disaster Management Authority, the flash flood was the result of a cloudburst causing the Lhonak glacial lake, located at 5,200 metres above sea level, to overflow the impounding moraine, eventually eroding it to form an outlet.

A glacial lake outburst flood, or as it is known in scientific literature by the acronym GLOF, usually results in more damage and destruction than a flood caused by excess rainfall

alone. It is worth remembering that on February 7, 2021, a similar catastrophic mass flow descended the Rishiganga and Dhauliganga Valleys in Chamoli, Uttarakhand, killing more than 200 people and damaging two hydropower projects. The 2013 Kedarnath disaster was another devastating example of GLOF caused by the overflowing glacial lake up in the mountain, resulting in 6,000 fatalities.

The Sikkim disaster appears to be a repeat of events like the one that happened at Kedarnath in 2013 and Chamoli in 2021 – a sequence of events that marks the increasing risk caused by the upward trend in global warming and sustained melting of mountain glaciers. Combined with unregulated constructions, hydroelectric projects and anthropogenic activities, these events evolve into massive disasters.

The Geological Survey of India reports about 9,575 glaciers in the Indian part of the Himalayas. The annual rate of retreat of glaciers in this part ranges between 5 and 20 m per year. Based on satellite-based observations, it is estimated that the Himalayas lost 13% of the glacier area between 1960 and 2000; that is about 0.3% per year. Himalayan glaciers are losing mass at the rate of 6.6 ± 1 Gt per annum, which is

nearly 0.2% per year.

I met a Buddhist monk in the far-eastern part of Bhutan – a country landlocked in the Eastern Himalayas. Trekking alongside him in the mountains there in 2014, he showed a group of us the glaciated mountains in the distance and told us that the glaciers were indeed retreating. He has been closely watching these changes since his childhood, and this, I consider a credible personal report from the field.

In a study published in the journal *Science Advances* in June 2019, around 650 glaciers across India, China, Nepal and Bhutan show confirmed signs of retreat. The study identifies global warming as the cause of the melting and loss of glacial ice over a large area confirming the role of global warming. The studies also indicate that the average temperature in the Himalayas has risen by 0.66° C since 1991 – an increase much higher than the global average. The higher Himalayas became even warmer on average in the same period. The winters in the Himalayas have been getting warmer and wetter over the last 25 years. The unprecedented extreme rainfall events as

seen in Himachal Pradesh during this year's monsoon season are attributable to climate shifts.

The studies published in 2019 in PNAS show that the sustained glacier melt has produced more than 5,000 glacier lakes in the Himalayas, dammed by potentially unstable moraines – the loose debris transported by glaciers. These lakes are prone to outbursts triggered by ice or debris falls, earthquake shaking or overtopping waves generated by intense rainfall. The erosion of impounding barriers takes place within minutes or hours, releasing sediment-laden water rushing downstream, and destroying everything in its wake. The studies also indicate that glacier lakes are much larger in number and have occurred in clusters in the Central and Eastern Himalayas since 1990, compared to the other parts of the mountain range.

The analyses of satellite-borne remote sensing data carried out in 2013 by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing in Pune jointly with the Sikkim State Council of Science and Technology had shown that many glacial lakes in Sikkim Himalaya have expanded their spatial extent, accompanied by the retreat of glaciers from 1965 to 2010. The expansion of Lhonak and South Lhonak glacial lakes in an interval of 45 years was also found to be significant and both have been flagged as potential GLOF sources.

The Sikkim event was forecast by later studies too, led by the researchers in the Divecha Centre for Climate Change, Indian Institute of Science. The paper of December 2021 in the journal *Geomorphology* discusses the outburst potential of South Lhonak glacial lake in detail. The studies highlight that the length of the glacier that is feeding the lake over the last 29 years has been reduced from 6.4 km to 5.1 km, while the overall glacier shrank by 0.96 sq km. In line with the glacier retreat, the lake has

been exhibiting significant growth over the years as it grew from 0.42 sq km in 1990 to 1.35 sq km in 2019. This is a substantial growth in its area, registered by the lake.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The Sikkim disaster shows that repeated warnings from the individual research groups that have been communicated through scientific reports and papers in the past were ignored and the contingency plans were put on the back burner. The written replies from the national agencies on potentially dangerous glacial lakes that were published in the 23rd report of March 2023, submitted by the Parliamentary Committee, do not mention the potentially hazardous ones located in the Sikkim Himalaya.

Why was a highly expensive hydroelectric project costing about Rs 14,000 crore, commissioned only in 2017, which was breached and severely damaged in the flood, not taking the flood projections into account? Who is accountable for the under-engineered structure? The Union and state governments are hand in glove in building up dams in the Himalayan states to tap the hydroelectric power. The Teesta dam mishap is yet another warning to reconsider the efficacy and sustainability of such projects constructed within the dynamic environmental settings of the Himalayas.

The Parliamentary Committee had raised the issue of the "severe shortage of meteorological and monitoring stations in Himalayan regions", in its report presented to the Lok Sabha on March 29, 2023.

C.P. Rajendran is an adjunct professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru and a director of the Consortium for Sustainable Development, Connecticut, the US.

Courtesy: The Science Wire

4TH JANATA DARBAR AT SATTARI!



THE Office of the Collector, North Goa organized the 4th Janata Darbar for Sattari taluka, a pioneering outreach program, at Municipality Hall, Valpoi, on October 9, 2023 bringing governance to the doorstep of the people. Minister for Social Welfare Subhash Phaldesai along with Poriem Constituency MLA Dr Deviya Rane graced the occasion, offering a responsive ear to the grievances of local people and finding solutions to issues bothering them.

Subhash Phaldesai announced the formation of a separate department for Divyangs and revealed plans to include mini national games in the upcoming Purple Festival, an international-level event. He also assured an officer would be appointed within a month he will submit a report on both pending and resolved grievances of the people. Phaldesai said the government is committed to ensuring that all social welfare schemes reach the beneficiaries promptly. Additionally, he shared plans for the development and beautification of Rock Art Mauxi, Nanus Fort, and Dipaji Rane House under the Department of Archeology. Cost estimates will be determined soon. He also spoke of digitization of archives, a task comprising over 3 crore pages, to

be completed within 1-2 years.

Poriem MLA Dr Deviya Rane underscored the government's dedication to improving the people's quality of life. She commended Goa's social welfare minister for proactively delivering social welfare schemes and said the Janata Darbar is an invaluable platform for addressing the grievances of the people.

Present at the darbar were dignitaries Rohit Kadam (director, Department of Archives), Nilesh Phaldesai (director, Department of Archeology), Ajit Panchwadkar (director, Department of Social Welfare); Pravin Parab (deputy collector, Sattari); Dashrath Gawas (mamlatdar, Sattari); Pundalik Khorjuvkar (additional collector-III); Devyani Gawas (ZP member); Sagun Wadkar (ZP member); Rajashri Kale (ZP member); Shehzin Shaikh (chairperson, Valpoi Municipal Council); Dr Rajesh Patil (Medical Superintendent of Goa Medical College); Vinod Shinde; Sarpanch's; Panch members; government officials, and others. The program was compered by Uday Sawant with Pravin Parab (deputy collector) proposing vote of thanks.

MUSLIMS BEING TARGETED AGAIN

THE NIA has raided offices of the Personal Front of India, a major Muslim organisation. The main objective is to intimidate Muslims in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh going to polls soon. The PFI has been accused of aiding terrorists.



TREAT GIRL CHILD WITH EQUALITY!



PARENTS have to support girls with regards to their all-round development without any discrimination. Society must aspire to the girl child with equality. This was reiterated by District Magistrate and Collector--North Goa Dr Sneha Gitte (IAS) while speaking as chief guest at a function organized to celebrate International Girl Child Day on Oct 11, 2023. The theme of the celebration was "Invest in Girls Rights: Our Leadership, Our Well Being."

The function was organized by the State Family Welfare Bureau, Directorate of Health Services in the city October 11 2023. Dr Gitte highlighting the importance of celebration which aims address the challenges girls face and to promote girls' empowerment and fulfilment of universal human rights. This is an important celebration because there was time not too long ago when a girl child was discriminated in early society. But now with a change in thinking and enforcement of the law of equality, much has changed for the better. However, girls are discriminated against in different forms and this has to be rectified. Parents and society must create an environment of equality and respect for the girl child on every

family.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Uttam Desai clued up participants about various activities conducted under PC-PNDT and Beti Bachao Beti Padhav, sensitization programs were conducted for the staff of sub-registrar and appeal letters with Save Girl Child message are to be given to couples at the time of marriage registration. Other areas where sensitization programmes were conducted are Vidhya Prabodhini College of Commerce, Education, Computer and Management Porvorim, Kare College of Law & Salgaonkar College of Law, Skit competition for Higher Secondary students, ITI students and for government employees. There were dance competition, cloth bag designing, greeting card on BBBP on Women's Day for government employees and akash kandil contest. Staff blessed with a baby girl were felicitated. Also, there was a poetry competition, virtual cyclothon and other activities to sensitize masses about "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" campaign.

Psychologist and professional trainer Ketaki Parab delivered the keynote address, stressing how young girls must be empowered educationally, physically and emotionally. She advised women to do away with discrimination and say, "Wow! A girl child is born!" Deputy Director Dr Rupa Naik welcomed the guests and presented a memento to the chief guest Dr Sneha Gitte, Medical Officer Dr Pritam Naik, students of Nursing Institute, staff of DHS, State Family Welfare Bureau and others who attended the function.

Shraddha Naik compered and there was a cultural program in which Manjushree Mate and her team members performed Bharat Natyam dancing.

GARBA BEAT IS HERE!



DUSHEERA is here. The festival of lights For Goa Gurus is a festival of nine nights Bare backed designer garba choli dancing called garba and dandiya ras will take place at various venues for ten days to the beat of the dhol. Now there is even disco dandiya dancing. Garba Navarati has four days Laxmi puja to invoke wealth, Saraswati puja for wisdom, Dhanteras for buying jewellery and Bhai Beej, the male equivalent of rakhi bandhaan, for Mamata-didi in West Bengal it is Durga Puja. No other country celebrates like we do in India or Bharat around the year! Maybe we celebrate more than we actually work.

JUSTICE GURUDAS G D KAMAT MEMORIAL LECTURE



THE Justice G D Kamat Charitable Trust was established in 2015 to perpetuate the memory of the late Justice Gurudas D Kamat who expired on January 27, 2015. Justice G D Kamat was earlier judge of the Bombay High Court and retired as Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court. Prior to his elevation as judge Justice Kamat was an advocate in Goa, associated with educational

and social organizations.

To celebrate the memory of the late Justice G D Kamat a memorial lecture was organized on Friday, October 13, 2023, at 5.30 pm at Sanskruti Bhavan Hall, Patto, Panaji. The topic was "Legal Pendency & Moral Tendency" and it was delivered by Justice (Retd) Mridula Bhatkar, former Judge of the Bombay High Court. Justice Mridula Bhatkar has authored books in English and Marathi. Justice Mahesh S Sonak (Hon'ble Judge of Bombay High Court) presided over the occasion where two eminent personalities, Adv Fernando Jorge Colaco in the field of law and Suhas Sardessai in the field of education were felicitated.

SATTARI TIGER IS CORNERED



THERE is no sanctuary for Vishwajit Rane. Goa Bachao Abhiyan has started roaring again and Dean D'Cruz who exposed Babush Monserrate during RP 11 has called Pernem the "mother of all scams." Even the BJP top leaders are not supporting Rane junior. Chief Minister Pramod is avoiding direct confrontations with him.

NO TAKERS FOR BANASTARI?



THE biggest wholesale market in Banastari now has a mall. No traditional vendor wants to go there. Some of the fish markets in the Margao government don't understand that vendors don't like closed spaces. They want direct contact with customers. Even in England they left the Convent Gardens and moved out to open spaces. Vendors are more comfortable on the streets. They cannot afford costly rental space units.

Goa's only multi brand Piano Saloon

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