



THE GOAN EVERYDAY

It is easier to prevent bad habits than to break them.
Benjamin Franklin

Probe into bribery charge must begin with Madkaikar

Former Power Minister threw a bombshell on Tuesday while coming out of a meeting with BJP's national general secretary BL Santosh on Tuesday by stating that ministers in the Pramod Sawant-led cabinet were "busy counting money" and added that he paid Rs 15-20 lakh to the PA of a minister to get his file cleared. Madkaikar said that there is "rampant loot," not just corruption, while also briefly making a mention of the jobs-for-cash scam.

The Cumburjua leader appeared miffed over being sidelined from the party "despite being given assurances" of a role. On the face of it, Madkaikar may appear disgruntled for being sidelined, but his charges of corruption in the government cannot be taken lightly. However, the reluctance to name the specific minister he allegedly bribed raises several important points in the political and ethical landscape of Goa.

By making a general accusation without identifying an individual, Madkaikar not only casts suspicion on unidentified members of the Sawant-led cabinet but puts those who may have a clean image at risk of public scrutiny. This ambiguity could unfairly tarnish reputations and create an environment of distrust within the political arena. Moreover, the lack of specificity in his claims serves little constructive purpose.

For allegations of such seriousness to hold weight, they must be accompanied by concrete evidence and identifiable parties. Without naming individuals, Madkaikar's statements can be perceived as

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an attempt to incite chaos, score political points, or blackmail rather than genuinely seeking accountability. This raises questions about whether his goal is to embarrass the government rather than promote transparency and reform.

Moreover, Madkaikar's admission of having paid a bribe is a serious offence in itself. His move to randomly speak out, without conviction or accountability towards the act, raises significant moral and legal questions. It suggests a tacit acceptance of corruption as a means to an end, which undermines efforts to eliminate such practices. By admitting to his involvement, he places himself in a compromised position, where he could be seen as equally culpable as the minister involved in the alleged bribery.

Given the context of the recent jobs-for-cash scam that has drawn public attention and shaken the State, Madkaikar's claims can further embarrass an already beleaguered government hit by charges of graft earlier from various quarters, including former governor Satya Pal Malik. The demand from both the ruling party members and Opposition for Madkaikar to provide more details is indicative of the serious nature of his allegations. A thorough investigation is needed to bring clarity, uphold the rule of law, and restore public trust in governance.

Transport Minister Mauvin Godinho slammed the allegations and dared the leader to register a police complaint. Others too have joined the bandwagon. While finger-pointing and speculations may continue, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant must prioritize an inquiry into these allegations, regardless of Madkaikar's motives. Merely asking him to come out with names will not serve any purpose. This cannot be brushed aside, he has to be called in for questioning. Eventually, the integrity of the administration and the broader political context requires transparency and accountability. It's not merely about the allegations themselves, but about demonstrating a commitment to uphold ethical governance in the face of corruption claims.

OPEN SPACE >>

Tourists must follow rules just like all other motorists

A roadside disagreement at Candolim on Monday night escalated into a brawl with one of the involved parties whipping out a gun and allegedly threatening people. Road rage is the prime reason for the confrontations. Drunken driving, not following traffic rules, and over-speeding are some of the reasons for accidents involving tourists. However the general feeling among tourists is that they can get away lightly. Many of the tourists could be belonging to families with a political clout in their home states hence they feel that they cannot be touched by law-enforcement agencies in Goa. Tourists have also indulged in disruptions in residential areas like Fontainhas which has led to confrontations in the past. A Parra road appears to have been "hijacked" by the tourists. Disruptive actions by the tourists seem to be let off by the police only after a warning. There is a limit up to which locals can tolerate such misbehaviour. It appears that the limit has been crossed and the patience of the people has been tested for far too long. If things are not normalised, it could lead to a serious incident.

ADELMO FERNANDES, Vasco

Battle against domestic violence, marital rape

It's truly disappointing to see that, even today, we find ourselves debating a woman's autonomy over her body after marriage



SAPNA SARFARE

The writer is senior features & content writer and editor with 13 years experience

Since independence, Indian laws for women have changed for the better. But some rulings have sparked debates. Recently, a High Court in India courted controversy when it stated that domestic rape and unnatural rape is not a legal crime. It raises inquiries about women's fight against domestic abuse and protection. On International Women's Day, we speak on this legal battle for women.

Adv Virat Vilas Pawar, a family lawyer practising in Mumbai High Court, calls rape as forced sex intrinsically wrong. "However, just as it is commonly believed that a woman cannot rape a man (as there are no provisions to protect men from rape), there is also a misconception that rape cannot occur between a husband and wife. This is incorrect because even a married woman has the right to say no to her husband. Unnatural sex, which refers to anal or oral sex, is a matter of personal preference between couples and is acceptable only when consensual."

Dr Malini Saba, a psychologist, human and social rights activist, global advocate for women and girls, and the founder of the Ananke Foundation, calls the verdict deeply disturbing. "Rape is rape, whether inside or outside of marriage. It's a forced act, and forcing someone into an intimate act without consent is, by definition, a violation of their body and dignity. Marriage does not erase a person's right to say no. It's truly disappointing to see that, even today, we find ourselves debating a woman's autonomy over her body after marriage."

According to Smita Bharti, Executive Director, Sakshi - a rights-based NGO, the verdict not only denies justice to the survivors but also "reinforces a system where women's bodily autonomy is disregarded". "If consent is fundamental to any sexual act, why should marriage erase it? Why is a husband's desire legally recognised but a wife's refusal dismissed? By refusing to acknowledge marital rape, the law sustains a culture that prioritises perpetrators' rights over survivors' justice."

Dr Saba thinks laws put facts over



emotions. But human sufferings get overlooked in the process. "As women, it's essential to ask who's writing the laws and whether they truly understand the experience of being a woman today."

There are times when women feel trapped since they are unaware of their rights or cannot speak out due to fear of consequences. Gagandeep Kaur, a communications and marketing strategist and advocate for women's rights, thinks so. "There's still so much to be done, and it's not just about creating stronger laws. It's about changing mindsets and shifting societal views on women. We need to cultivate a culture where women feel safe to speak up and where they know they are supported and empowered to live life on their own terms. Changing laws is one piece, but shifting the way we value women in society is the real work."

Rashida Khilawala, the founder of 30Sixty Tech, feels there is a revolution in waiting. "The problem is that laws are made for men to feel like they are "allowing" women to have rights. Society still sees our safety as a privilege instead of a basic necessity. Our education system has failed us. We teach our girls to be careful instead of teaching our boys to be respectful. Our leaders have failed us. They debate whether a woman's pain is "serious enough" to be criminal. Our legal system has failed us. A woman must fight harder to prove she was raped than a man ever has to fight to justify it. And most of all, our culture has failed us. Because women are still seen as sacrificial. We are told to endure. To forgive. But let me be clear - they can. And they will."

Adv Pawar does speak of strong laws protecting women like the Mahila Vibhag (Women's Department), where women can come forward to file complaints, which will, in turn, be taken up by the police for investigation. "Unfortunately, the judiciary is overbur-

dened with numerous cases, making timely justice a major challenge. The real solution lies in expediting court procedures (not just police action) so that judgments are delivered swiftly."

"It all comes down to consent, that's the key factor in any healthy relationship," suggests Dr Saba. "But beyond that, we need to recognise that there's a complex set of issues here, and a lot of it comes from cultural traditions, like arranged marriages. Too many couples enter marriages without truly knowing each other, and that lack of communication and understanding only contributes to a lack of respect when it comes to boundaries and consent."

Adv Pawar feels it is essential to recognise men are often at the centre of the crime. "Crimes like rape and sexual harassment are committed by men. It is crucial for them to understand consent and respect a woman's right to say no. Beyond just controlling their actions, men must also hold their peers accountable, educate them, and ensure that behaviours like rape, stalking, and catcalling are not treated as entertainment but as acts of shame."

As per Rashida, men cannot be bystanders in this battle, say 'not all me' and walk away. They need to prove it. "If you don't mistreat women, speak up when other men do. If your friend cracks a rape joke, shut it down. If a woman tells you she feels unsafe, believe her. A good man doesn't just avoid harming women. He actively protects them. If you are truly not one of them, then don't just say it - show it. Because silence is complicity. And complicity is violence."

This International Women's Day, there is a need to think of women's marital safety and rights amidst their battle against domestic violence and marital rape, despite a setback via a ruling.

- FPJ



A culture needs to be cultivated where women feel safe to speak up and where they know they are supported and empowered to live life on their own terms

THE INBOX >>

US leaders must remember nation's founding values

It was very disturbing to see the top US political leadership practically humiliate and "bully" Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on his visit to the White House. I have never seen such disrespect to a visiting president at any point in my life. Whatever differences the new American leadership had with him, this was no way to treat a visitor, guest to the USA and to see all including some sections of the media gang up on him. Surely there were better ways to communicate in a civilised manner. In my study of US history and also visits to the country I was inspired by many of the founding fathers and other leaders notably former president Abraham Lincoln, former president George Washington, late civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr and quite a few others. I believe it was these values which set the USA on course to become the most powerful country in the free world and an inspiration to many others. In my view the USA can't move on to be "great again" with this arrogance and extreme pride, and I hope that the new US leadership remembers this great nation's true founding values to have the nation truly be great.

ARWIN MESQUITA, Cole

'Rampant loot', not mere corruption?

Former transport minister Pandurang Madkaikar on Tuesday has reportedly accused the State government of widespread corruption, alleging that ministers are focused on "counting money" rather than addressing the issues facing the state. He has made these remarks after a meeting with BJP national general secretary B L Santosh, who is currently visiting Goa. He has described the situation as "rampant loot," rather than mere corruption and has said that the government jobs for cash scam is just another example of this loot. Well, what Madkaikar has said is absolutely true.

Brody, Brutalist and prevailing brutalism

Adrien Brody just won the best actor Oscar for 'The Brutalist', a historical drama about an architect who survives the Holocaust, only to face anti-Semitism, drug addiction and violence in the US. The world is also awash with a wave of brutalism; look around and see how the world is slowly being usurped by rabid right wing forces. India, US, Hungary, Turkey are only some of the examples. In his acceptance speech Brody mentioned that his character in the film represents the lingering traumas of conflict, repercussions of war, systemic oppression, racism and othering of those whose thoughts and actions are at variance with the prevailing neo-fascist ideology. For a healthier, happier and more inclusive world we should learn from the past. More than moral lessons, it is a reminder to not let hate and bigotry go unchecked. Hope Modi, Trump and others of their ilk are listening.

VINAY DWIVEDI, Benaulim

Yes, this government has truly become a "lootmaar-serkaar" as most of its ministers are indeed seen today behaving more like those roadside extortionists and collecting only money from helpless poor Goans for the completion of any routine work in Goa. I think that with the demolition of a centuries-old banyan tree and the adjacent Khatreshwar temple (which unfortunately was humbly demolished without even any High Court order) in Porvorim, the downfall of the government has slowly begun in Goa.

JERRY FERNANDES, Salgao

Goa could have rivalled best scenic spot in Asia

Like the "Rome of the Orient" of yesteryears, Goa should have remained a tropical paradise. With its palm-fringed coast, the idyllic beaches and traversed by crystal clear rivers and bestowed with a wide variety of flora and fauna, as also with hundreds of fresh water springs providing medicinal water, if the environment of Goa had been tended to with care, Goa could have rivalled the best scenic spot in Asia. To add to its



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scenic beauty and allure, Goan cuisine which has distinct Portuguese gourmet's delights, not to forget the Mancurado mangoes and the authentic cashew nuts which are a prized delicacy as also cashew feni and coconut feni that serve as an appetizer that has the distinct Goan flavour to add to our music, dance and culture, it would have taken a dedicated and devoted leader to maintain Goa as a foremost tourist destination of choice to the world replete with the vibrancy of the new and the old world vintage charm of yore. If a naturalist, environmentalist, conservationist and a heritage lover were to take over the reins of power, redemption of this paradise is still within the realms of possibility.

STEPHEN DIAS, Dona Paula

Trump a biased arbitrator in Russia-Ukraine dispute

Defending Russia's aggression and allowing it to retain conquered territory under the pretext of Ukraine's Nato aspirations is indefensible. Russia had guaranteed Ukraine's security in exchange for nuclear disarmament, which Ukraine honoured in good faith. Trump's apparent support for Russia, possibly motivated by business interests or ambitions in Greenland, is concerning. His demand for Zelenskyy to leave the White House is diplomatically inappropriate, and calling Zelenskyy a dictator while suggesting his resignation to end the war is extreme. Trump's push for peace talks without Ukraine or the EU defies international norms. Zelenskyy has resisted Russia's brutal, unprovoked war for three years, thanks to US and EU support. Russia's initial goal of a swift victory was thwarted due to this aid, ensuring Ukraine's survival. Despite tensions, EU-US cooperation remains strong. Trump's past threats to withdraw from WHO and NATO signal a dangerous shift, undermining global stability. Demanding an apology from Zelenskyy merely to restore Russian pride is an unacceptable humiliation.

NELSON LOPES, Chinchinim