

Talk or action?

In the wake of the Mumbai terror attacks, the central government has decided to set up a common coastal command in each of the nine coastal states of the country, in line with unified command structure — comprising Army, central paramilitary organisations, intelligence agencies and state police — currently operating in states affected by insurgency, like Jammu & Kashmir and Assam. This is in addition to the National Coastal Command, declared earlier by Union Home Minister P Chidambaram.

The Home Minister says the government is considering setting up of such a structure in each of the coastal states to avoid multiplicity among security forces, better coordination and speedy results. He has proposed that the coastal commands would comprise Navy, Coast Guard, marine wing of the state police and central security agencies, operating in close coordination with each other.

The coastal command in each of India's nine seaside states — Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal — will be headed by either the Chief Minister or Chief Secretary, while the local Navy or Coast Guard area chief will head the operational structure. The National Coastal Command will look after the security aspects of the seaside union territories, including Lakshadweep and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. However, since law and order is a state subject under the Constitution, the Centre will have to take consent from all the nine states, before taking a final decision.

Under the present situation, not a single state is likely to object. Like the new draconian terror laws, this proposal, too, will get clearance at rocket speed. However, we have seen earlier times when such initiatives have got clearance, but the implementation has sorely lagged behind the rhetoric.

The one most relevant to the topic at hand would be the Marine Police. Setting up of Marine Police units in each state was a central initiative. It was a grand plan, where the Marine Police would patrol inland waters and the sea near the coast, the Coast Guard would handle the marine expanse up to the 12-nautical-mile territorial waters limit, and the Navy would protect the exclusive economic zone of 200 nautical miles.

States were asked to go ahead and set up Marine Police Stations, and promised fast boats and suitable training. Many states, including Goa, went ahead and set up rudimentary Marine Police units, which were equipped by a few boats procured by the state government. However, years passed, but the promised help from the Centre never arrived.

If a Marine Police force has to operate with a few low-cost speedboats and rented trawlers, how can it be expected to effectively stop infiltration by terrorists, or even smugglers, for that matter? Hopefully, this time the central government will put its money where its mouth is.

Payback time

Now that the Indo-US nuclear deal is signed, sealed and delivered, and the world's only superpower has solidly stood behind India, putting Pakistan on the mat over the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, it's payback time. Yesterday, the central government was at pains in the Lok Sabha to explain that electricity generated by nuclear power stations will not be greatly more costly than other conventional sources of electricity, like hydro or coal power.

Nuclear power will be as competitive as coal power, Minister of State for Power Jairam Ramesh told the House. In fact, he said, coal power would be costlier than nuclear power if it was generated by a power station situated more than 800km away from a coal mine.

He was replying to a question by Mumbai Shiv Sena MP Mohan Rawale, who said the new nuclear power stations to be set up following the Indo-US nuclear deal would have a capital cost of Rs9 crore per kilowatt. Would this not lead to the consumers being made to pay much high prices for electricity, he asked.

The canny Mr Ramesh may have stonewalled the rather less sophisticated Mr Rawale, but in reply to another question, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Pithiraj Chavan admitted in reply to another question that preliminary discussions have already been held with two American firms, GE and Westinghouse, for supply of nuclear reactors. So, the Yankees are coming after all. It's payback time, they reckon.

A Christmas for the Secular Believers

The crowning glory of Christmas is the extent of Christ's solidarity with the downtrodden, TEOTONIO R DE SOUZA tells us

The BBC has an educational series entitled "Secular Believers" on youtube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsb5j2sYnXl wherein we are shown the Leicester Secular Society's monumental hall with a façade honouring Socrates, Thomas Paine, and several other free thinkers, including, disconcertingly, a bust of Jesus. Possibly, the Jesus of the Leicester Secular Society represents the European society, which since the Enlightenment got beyond medieval Christianity, though not sufficiently liberated from the grip of 19th century "enlightened" Eurocentrism and racial prejudices to add the busts of Buddha, Confucius and Muhammad to their secular pantheon. None of these historic figures could have achieved what they did had it not been for their mental capacity to overstep the mental-cultural world in which they were born. I believe that Jesus of the Leicester Secular Society too is not the original Asian Jesus, but one shaped by the western secularists according to their image and likeness.

Secularism took the form of anti-clericalism under the radical Jacobins of the French revolution, and this trend also affected Portugal, which was quick to pass the law of the separation of the State and the Church following the proclamation of the Republic in 1910. The conservative ecclesiastic response took the form of the miracle of Fatima, appealing to the devotional resistance of the rural faithful to the urban liberals!

Curiously, the liberal politicians of the Republic were not coherent with their ideological proclamations, and decided to hold on to their Church *Padroado* rights in Asia. The Portuguese Minister of Colonies, Joaquim Basilio Cerveira de Albuquerque e Castro, after consulting the Governor of Portuguese India, Dr Francisco Maria Couceiro da Costa, had the following recommendation to the Parliamentary Assembly of 1912-13: "*Padroado* ought to be maintained, not as an instrument of international politics, but as a bond that meets the consensus of the Portuguese dispersed all over India, united to their fatherland by religious principles, rooted in tradition which politics cannot fail to take into account, because it can act as important force of social cohesion. I believe therefore that the Congress of the Republic should authorise negotiations with Vatican in order to work out a fresh concordat that may respect all the rights



of Portugal." The Portuguese Church and State authorities in Goa had planned to hold an exposition of the relics of St Francis Xavier to commemorate the fourth centenary of the conquest of Goa in 1910. The anti-clerical Republican regime that came to power in 1910 confirmed all the plans for the exposition and the budget that was already approved for it! This reveals the true nature of the secularism of the Republicans in Portugal. They were not averse to political marketing of the saint in Goa to counter the growing British shadow upon the Portuguese presence in India since mid-19th century. While any other forms of resistance could become suspect in the eyes of the hegemonic British rulers, the promotion of the cult of St Francis Xavier appeared to be a strategy that could best serve Portuguese political interests.

Since 1838 when the Papal Bull *Multa Præclara* reduced the Portuguese *Padroado* jurisdiction in British India, the Portuguese decided to play up the popular image of St Francis Xavier to draw pilgrims to Goa and to enhance their decadent political image. The Jesuits did not

commemorate the first centenary of the saint, and they did not exist to celebrate the second anniversary following the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1759 by Marquis of Pombal. In 1822 the restored Society of Jesus had hardly recovered in India to celebrate the third centenary. In 1922 took place the first major exposition of the relics of the saint. But even in 1922, we read in a commemorative brochure of the exposition by the canon Francisco Xavier Costa (Nova Goa, 1924) that the "devotion to the Saint had not reached great height of popularity". It is clear hence that what we see today as popular cult of St Francis Xavier is a relatively recent phenomenon caused by the Portuguese colonial political marketing. Whatever the original meaning of "*majior in occasu*" on a side panel of the tomb of the saint when Foggini inscribed it there [the emblematic legend was attributed to Maximilian Emanuel of Bavaria by Joseph Cajetan Khuen and the artist Franz Xaver Joseph] it had gained a new meaning during the "sunset of the empire" which the Portuguese expected the intervention of the saint to save! After all it was Francis Xavier who had helped in ex-

panding the *Padroado* presence from India till Japan.

It is fair to conclude from the above that neither the liberalism nor the secularism of the Portuguese had fulfilled its political proclamations. It is not very different with the present-day secular states. They were eager to substitute the role of the Church in education and social service in the early 19th century, but we see the modern State increasingly incapable of meeting its promises. The modern State in the West has not been able to deliver the promised goodies to the great majority of its populations that continues with mediocre levels of education, with many below the levels of poverty even as compared to the Third World standards. Out of 10 million Portuguese, 2 million, or nearly 20 per cent, of the Portuguese live today below the poverty line. The Western elites (and their counterparts elsewhere) continue to peddle discourses of secularism. They continue cherishing their so-called "democratic values" and holding the purses of the States, but are depending increasingly once again upon the Church-inspired and -backed initiatives to provide social assistance where the State social security systems are collapsing!

Against this background, Christmas has a valid message today, not just for the traditional faithful, but also to secular believers. It reminds all and sundry of the values incarnated by Jesus, the Christ. The secular believers may tend to identify them with human values (and correctly so), delimiting them from the historical institutions (many of them official representatives of the Christian church) that often tarnished them. It is important also that they delink them from the human values of the privileged classes, including most secular believers. They are "heroic" human values that tend to safeguard and legitimise the human needs of the underprivileged and oppressed sections of humanity. Christmas points to Crucifixion, not to "crucifixion" as a learned botanist wrote very recently on Goanet. Another Goanetter sought to translate *Salve Regina* from Portuguese to English and produced a "*bandito fruto do vosso entre*" (sic) [blessed fruit of thy womb!]. Unintentionally, the translator almost made Jesus a bandit. We know that he was crucified as one, and that symbolised the extent of his "solidarity" with the downtrodden. That is the crowning glory of Christmas we are about to commemorate.

Tongue in Cheek

Terror Of Another Kind

By Adelmo Fernandes

These days we are being bombarded with news about terrorism. The terror attack in Mumbai has united the country the way only the game of cricket can. Those at the receiving end of public anger and outcry are of course the politicians. After all these politicians are expected to protect us from such attacks. We as citizens of the country pay taxes to the government. Those in power are expected to use the money from the taxes collected to work for the betterment of the people. That they work for their own betterment is another story.

When we talk about terrorism, the one country that comes to mind is Pakistan which many consider as the epicentre of world terrorism. We see a terrorist as a man (probably a chap in his teens) moving about with a AK-47 in his hands and a haversack slung on his shoulder, full of explosives. Their motive is to create terror. But then you do not have to be a terrorist to create terror. We come across terror of various kinds almost everyday.

As we drive our vehicle on the roads at below 50 kph speed, there are those who create terror on the roads as they drive at breakneck speed. The cops, more specifically the traffic cops, are many a time found wanting as far as tackling this type of terror is concerned. Such terror on our roads

has caused numerous deaths, while many are injured and maimed for life. Those who carry out such terror do not wield an assault rifle but are behind the steering wheel of a bus, a truck or even a small car. They leave behind a trail of death and destruction on the roads.

There are also the housebreakers, racoits, kidnappers, rapists and high-way robbers who create terror in the hearts of the common man. This type of terror is quite common in our State where murder and rape has almost become an everyday occurrence. This type of terror is unleashed probably because of the backing of the people in power. The police seem incapable of fighting this form of terror because of the political clout of the perpetrators of the crime.

On a milder note we come across various individuals who can create terror in our everyday life. Some consider their boss a terror. They are terrified to work under such a boss. Such bosses literally breathe down the neck of the employees. They (the bosses) see to it that those who work under them are punctual at work and that they do the maximum amount of work during the time they are in the office. Some male bosses may also indulge in sexual harassment of the female employees.

Many parents consider their little brats a 'terror' in the house. Little kids can give a hard time to the mother, as they go on a rampage breaking everything breakable in the house while playing indoors. Little boys very often do not listen to what their parents tell them to do. They are also probably a terror to the teachers in the schools. But then this is one kind of terror we love to have around.

Our neighbours could in a way be terrors in our lives as they do not believe in keeping up a friendly relationship with the other neighbours and could be making life difficult for them.

When in a marriage all does not go well, each partner may consider the other as a terror in the house. In several homes the husband comes home dead drunk and causes untold misery to his wife. He may abuse and even beat up the poor woman. The lady could be terrified at all times within the four walls of her house. A nagging wife could also turn out to be a terror to the poor husband.

Hence there are various types of terror we live with in our everyday life. They may not be fatal like the terrorists attacks from across the border, but in their own way make our lives miserable.

Letters to the Editor

Cries of Goan youth

Mark Menezes, by email

It is shocking to read in the press how the high and the mighty get away with breaking of the law and destroy the very fabric of law and order. As we read in the press, it is only money that will buy silence and to hell with rest. What chance is there for those who do not have money? The courts are the only recourse left for the *aam aadmi* and to save Goa from all evils.

As a concerned youth I call upon the judicial system to act on the wrongdoings of the police and the politicians who cause law and order to deteriorate further. Bribes to obtain jobs must be stopped immediately to avoid corruption in the system, as such acts force the people who obtain such jobs to recover what they give in the form of corruption. Any politician who is found guilty of such acts should be severely punished.

As a youth of Goa seeking a future, I call upon

the courts to intervene and save the fall of Goa. In conclusion I wish to seek a job in my homeland which I treasure so much. Politicians should not drive away the brains from Goa who are full of talent and wish to stay in their own country. What future is left for the youth of Goa who are highly educated, as the uneducated brutes get away with whatever they need for themselves, their children and grandchildren?

Tourist blues in Goa

Alf Tupper, UK/Goa

I read with interest how Goa never accepts blame for anything negative that goes on here, the latest being the security measures being undertaken which are apparently affecting tourism.

I have been visiting and renting a property here in Goa for some years so really do understand Goa and its complexity. This year we finally coaxed a couple of our friends to come and stay with us for 2 weeks. After agreeing to finally come and visit Goa, the first obstacle they had to overcome was the visa problem (the less said about it the better). On arrival they were then greeted by a 4-day taxi strike and shops forced to close (I don't know why). We took them to all the usual tourist places and they were shocked by the amount of garbage everywhere.

On our last day together we went to the beach only to be told of the 10-bed restriction, and hence couldn't say goodbye to our friends at our usual shack. We sat and had some lunch and watched in amazement as a red life guard jeep came speeding down the beach taking photographs of the shacks, and then the occupants sat and had their fill of food and drink at the shack and, even more amazingly the shack owner proceeded to pay the jeep drivers for the pleasure of visiting his shack!

Needless to say our friends will not be coming back to Goa.

Divisive Politics

S N D Poojary, Miramar

After the 26/11 terrorist attack on Mumbai, most of our politicians went into hibernation because of the huge popular backlash against the politicians for their utter insensitivity, collective incompetence and pervasive indecisiveness. We

Letter of the Day

Improving our police force

Vivek Shirali, Panjim

It is indeed shocking to read that a noted police official who was caught red-handed at the Patradevi check post by his boss, and was under suspension, has been called back and restored in services once again! Such incidents are nothing but instant proof that such systematic operations have higher connections — maybe till the House Of Commons at the bank of the river Mandovi?

We are currently under the threat from the terrorists. This action appears as a false display of the government's concern about the safety of the *aam aadmi* when our border checkpoints are allowing in anybody, in any vehicle. Safe passage/entry can be assured by paying a few notes. Terrorists would have a cakewalk in the State of Goa.

Setting an example of strict discipline for the police force should have been the need of the hour, but our administrators seem to have some strange ideas. Is it to save the skin of few higher-ups?

- We expect the following with immediate effect:
1. Total upgradation the police force, personnel, equipment, arms, etc.
  2. Identify young and energetic personnel possessing quick reflexes and train them to form an anti-terrorist squad.
  3. Upgrade Home Guards for effective police responsibilities.
  4. Reallocate entire force for different responsibilities.
  5. Define duty timings for the policemen so that they can eat and rest adequately and act swiftly, when most expected.
  6. Regular fitness test, medical aid and treatment.
  7. Welfare measures, career guidance, scholarships/financial assistance for education, housing for the families of the policemen in service and retired.
- Most important of all, the honest officers should be publicly felicitated and given increments. Provide better salaries and allowances to the police.

Let us not pay bribes, and, last but not the least, let us be alert and vigilant at every step and report every illegal anti-national incident to the concerned authorities.

thought that our political class has learnt a lesson or two. But we are sadly mistaken; our politicians have surfaced and they are at it again: indulging in divisive politics, dividing people on the basis of religion, caste, region and language for electoral gains.

Sometimes we think naively that they must be defeated in the next election. Unfortunately the ground reality is that they cannot be electorally defeated because they are still circulating in the mainstream politics by practising this brand of politics. Divisive politics is their survival kit. Either we have to endure what cannot be cured or suggest some drastic measures.

The divisive politics survives on the existence of multiplicity of political parties. To cleanse our

natural beauty is being destroyed, Goans are fast becoming a minority, and scarce land is gobbled up by rich outsiders (mostly with illegitimate wealth).

It is high time Goans wake up, come out and demand safeguards to protect our land, demographics and identity. Goans were never consulted on the current Constitution, as India annexed Goa much later, so it is only fair to give us the necessary constitutional amendments to truly celebrate Goa's Liberation Day.

Double standards

Savio Falleiro, Margao

The manner in which the police went about picking up 88 girls and 6 teachers from a Vasco madrasa was nothing short of a criminal violation of the human rights of individuals in general and of minors in particular. It brazenly smacked of gross double standards, authoritarian misuse of power and flagrant bias against only a particular section of the community. Was the action of the cops solely their own idea, or did they do it at the behest of higher powers?

Coincidentally, the disgraceful incident came close to our Liberation day. Are we truly liberated today in most senses — including from state-sponsored intimidation and violation of individual/community rights to just co-existence and double standards?

The non-filling of stranger verification forms along with photographs as a cause for the picking up of young girls was even 'stranger' since no such step has been seen followed against other similar students of other communities or against adult visitors (national as well as international) including businessmen, gamblers and tourists who regularly keep visiting Goa.

It would be apt to ask the cops that when they or their kin including minors go outside Goa (but within the geographical boundaries of our very own India), do they always fill up such forms with photographs? Likewise, when they have visitors coming to be with them in Goa, do they always fill up the 'stranger verification' forms along with photographs?

Or is it that the 'stranger verification' forms are for those in particular educational institutions only, and that all others, in educational institutions or otherwise, are 'harmless' in the eyes of the law-keepers?

Words of Wisdom

The Prophet

*The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran is a book of prose poetry that made its Lebanese-American author famous. Commonly found in gift shops and frequently quoted at weddings or any occasion where uplifting 'spiritual' thoughts are required, the work has never been a favorite of intellectuals — to some readers it may seem a bit trite or pompous — yet its author was a genuine artist and scholar whose wisdom was hard-earned.

*The Prophet* begins with a man named Almustafa living on an island called Orphalese. Locals consider him something of a sage, but he is from elsewhere, and has waited twelve years for the right ship to take him home. From a hill above the town, he sees his ship coming into the harbor, and realizes his sadness at leaving the people he has come to know. The elders of the city ask him not to leave. He is asked to tell of his philosophy of life before he goes, to speak his truth to the crowds gathered. What he has to say forms the basis of the book.

*The Prophet* provides timeless spiritual wisdom on a range of subjects, including giving, eating and drinking, clothes, buying and selling, crime and punishment, laws, teaching, time, pleasure, religion, death, beauty and friendship. Corresponding to each chapter are evocative drawings by Gibran himself.

Taken as a whole, Gibran's book is a metaphor for the mystery of life: we come into the world and go back to where we came from. As the prophet reads himself to board his ship, it is clear that his words refer not to his journey across the seas but to the world he came from before he was born. His life now seems to him like a short dream.

The book suggests that we should be glad of the experience of coming into the world, even if it seems full of pain, because after death we will see that life had a pattern and a purpose, and that what seems to us now as 'good' and 'bad' will be appreciated without judgment as good for our souls.