How is it that there is never a dearth of destructive ideas with this government? It's sometimes like they live on another planet—and, in fact, this is what they seem to be aiming at. A complete separation of the lives of themselves and their big-ticket friends, from that of ordinary Goans. Not just metaphorically—not just that their avaricious dreams, vested interests, lavish life-style, and destructive aspirations are all light-years away from ordinary Goans, many of whom just want the security of their homes and jobs, and a decent future for their kids—no, not just metaphorically, but even physically. From the way they are 'developing' Goa, there will soon be two separate Goas.

In fact, you can already glimpse the two. One Goa for the patrons of five-star resorts, or owners of villas-with-swimming-pool or of sprawling old 'Indo-Portuguese' homes with new swimming pool, or residents of the gentrified Goan village with international cuisine and edgy art spaces, all connected via superfast elevated highways and helicopter commutes to airports or directly to the Indian metropoli, over the heads of everyone else.

And the other Goa: all about dust, disappeared trees, highways cutting through homes and shrines, empty apartment towers on rice fields, carparks on turtle nests, monkeys on roofs, big and bigger statues, water shortage, garbage, and more dust.

And now also chain-link fences. The government is considering, so it is announced, the installation of chain-link fencing along the sides of highways and other important roads to prevent 'cattle from encroaching and causing accidents.' The only reason why they are still 'considering' this—though the important road stretches have apparently already been chosen—is because of the potentially ugly look. Not the ugliness of the action, but the look. All the bougainvillea in the world may not be enough to hide some ugliness.

The real question is: are cattle really causing road accidents? How about teaching drivers how to drive instead? How to respect speed limits, and how to overtake and how not to overtake? But no, that's impossible, right, not when you are encouraging colossal numbers of tourists from Indian cities, where knowing how to drive usually means having the money to bribe the license officials. Yes, you sell Goa as a place where anything goes—alcohol, gambling, trafficking, you name it—and plus you hand the drunks a car the minute they land in Goa, whether they have a license or not, and then you blame cattle for the 'accidents'?

But it's not just the tourists creating havoc on Goan roads. We have our own champions like the Savordekar-Kamat couple who killed three people and injured many more while apparently driving drunk in a very powerful SUV that literally flung scooters into the air. Where were the cattle in that so-called 'accident'?

Accidents on Goan roads are largely being caused by bad driving, drunk driving, and insane

speeding. But behind this is bad road design, bad car design, and bad—to put it mildly—governance. The planners employed in the government's Town and Planning Department surely know straight roads cause more accidents than those with curves and turns? Because straightness and clear visibility encourages not just speeding by drivers, but also distraction. Bad car design is also responsible with cars being designed for greater speed, greater size, greater luxury, and greater power—for the driver. There are unlimited studies that show that cars that can go very fast generally do, encouraging dangerous speeding, while cars that are large and powerful kill many more people on the roads—other people, not their own driver/passengers—than small cars and two-wheelers.

And bad governance because… where does one start? Poor public transport. No protection for pedestrians or cyclists. No restrictions on four-wheeler or six-wheeler usage, even if there is only one person in a vehicle meant for four or six or eight. Monster vehicles are being allowed to monopolise road space, while hand-carts were banned in Panjim ages ago by Manohar Parrikar, because the latter were supposedly causing traffic jams. It didn't matter that hand-carts are non-polluting vehicles used by poor people for their jobs and basic sustenance, while big cars are the opposite. It still doesn't matter, even though the monster cars are even bigger now, so much bigger that pedestrians, even those carrying loads on their heads (instead of on a handcart), can hardly be seen by the driver (who's naturally also on his/her phone).

And have cattle appeared for the first time on Goan roads? When we were kids, we used to see herds of buffalo and other cattle on a daily basis on Panjim's roads. The open field in front of my building was a favourite grazing and wallowing spot, half of it being a natural lake for much of the year, for the benefit of buffaloes, lotuses, fish, and a host of local and migrant birds.

Now, however, land is only for profit-making, so where are cattle supposed to graze? All across Goa, the plateaux were the traditional grazing grounds, now they are covered in towering buildings, surrounded by car parks and other gated amenities. Even the old field in front of my house has become, not towers—thanks to a court case won by locals—but a public garden, where cattle are banned.

So where are they to go, but the edges of roads? Even this was not a problem earlier. Earlier one saw not just cattle on the roads, but children playing, people drying paddy and other produce, and a host of other activities. Those roads were not ideal, by any means, but they were used by many.

Now, though, they have become exclusive. Thus, the government is also planning a 'cattle underpass' at Agassaim. Just another construction project, in other words, which is what our

ministers love; who cares whether or not the cattle actually use it.

Chain-link fencing between the two Goas

And the chain-link fencing would naturally be considered a great idea too by them, another expensive solution which will surely work to keep not just cattle out, but also anybody who isn't important enough for those important roads. Sorry pedestrians, you don't belong to this Goa.

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