

## **Maestro Zubin Mehta & the Els**

**"Each orchestra has its own personality, its own flexibility": Zubin Mehta**

**(Text and Photos by Verus Ferreira)**

In the city to perform a series of concerts in August 2024, the very presence of Mehta arriving for the press conference in a wheelchair is heartbreaking, a far cry from his youthful, dashing days. Seated in his wheelchair, Mehta is flanked to his left by Mr. Khushroo N Suntook, Chairman of the NCPA and Mrs. Mehroo Jeejeebhoy, Founder Trustee of the Mehli Mehta Music Foundation.



Mehta conducted the SOI for the first time in August 2023 and is excited to play once again after sellout shows with the SOI in 2023. He says slowly but firmly, *"This year I am conducting the SOI orchestra for four concerts featuring the compositions of Johann Strauss II and Richard Strauss. I am playing two great composers who have very different styles. There is one composer from Vienna and the other from Germany. You will also see soprano soloist Chen Reiss, acclaimed to be "one of the most perfect Strauss voices". It (SOI) is a really very fine orchestra and I am so impressed with them that I am looking forward to my first rehearsal with them today"*.

Recalling his very first concert, the 88-year-old goes back in time with the help of his school mate Khushroo saying. *"I played my first concert in Mumbai in 1967 with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra at the Shanmukhananda auditorium. I had warned the musicians that during the concert they would hear crackers and so during the show they thought they were being bombarded (smiles) from outside. But believe me they loved it. I also remember that workers at the Taj Mahal were on strike and our musicians refused to enter the hotel, so we had to house them at private houses for*

## RULES

### **Bombay East Indian Association**

Established on 26th May 1887

The Association shall be designated  
**"The Bombay East Indian Association"**

#### **OBJECTS :**

The objects of which the Association is established are to watch, protect & promote the moral, physical, social, educational, economic and other interests Of the East Indian Community of Bombay, Salsette and Bassein by all legitimate and constitutional means, namely :

- a) By representations to the constituted authorities in India or elsewhere as exigencies may require.
- b) By encouraging the origination of lectures and discussions on social questions affecting the community.
- c) By holding meetings, whenever necessary or expedient, for enabling the Community to participate in public movements or demonstrations of loyalty to the constituted authorities and for the discussion of public affairs.
- d) By publications in the Press with a view influencing public opinion in favour of the Community.
- e) By contributing to the funds for the public welfare as a contribution from the Association, and
- f) By the adoption of such other means as may be considered conducive to the advancement of its welfare.

*those few days, but since then a lot has happened and I have come here with so many different orchestras, including the Vienna Philharmonica, with the exception of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra."*

Speaking on how the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra which he has played with for many years is different from other orchestras he has played with, he says, *"The Symphony Orchestra of India is just starting, it is in its birth, and hopefully there's this wonderful English conductor coming over next year and hopefully together they will help establish it (SOI) better. It will take time"*

Mehta has travelled the world and has played with almost every orchestra and with that come the challenges he faces. He states, *"Each orchestra has its own personality, its own flexibility, it's a process that builds up each time. So, I usually do 4 to 5 rehearsals before I really go on stage with them, and that really works out for me"*

While not directly answering a question put to him on how western classical music has evolved in Mumbai, Mehta instead gives words of wisdom to those at the helm of music education on how to bring in children into the world of classical music, when he stated, *"Today there are some audiences that one has to inspire with programming and with popular soloists or conductors and draw them to the public. In Central Europe there is no problem, in East and the West coast of America, except for a few cities, there is no problem. All orchestras have children's concerts where you*

*start educating the younger generation who would want to come to these concerts. During these children's concerts, if listening to classical music is made like a fun experience for them, they will want to come again and especially if every orchestra has these specialist conductors and they can think of different methods how to cajole and inspire children to come to their concerts. Of course, hopefully they will grow up to buy subscription tickets to the whole season".*

The legendary conductor's return to the NCPA, the home of the SOI, is a true testimony to the orchestra's prowess. The SOI is privileged to have a conductor as big as Zubin Mehta. Mehta needs no flamboyance. His mere presence is enough.

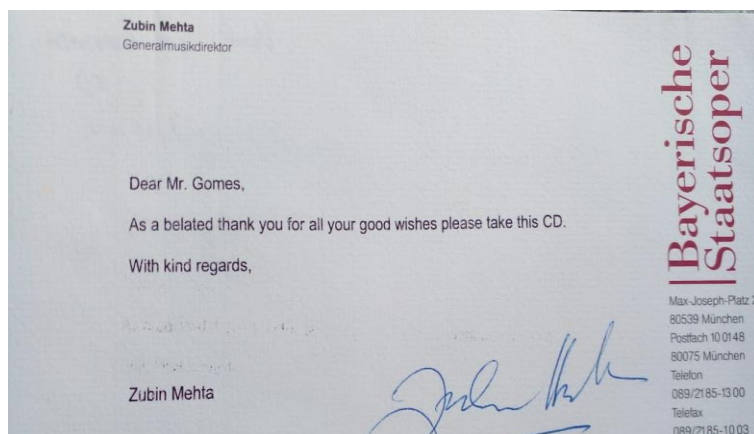
During this concert in August 2024, I was fortunate to have got special permission from the NCPA to shoot during his rehearsal when he conducted the SOI playing the works of Johann Strauss II and Richard Strauss. Meeting him post his concert then, was not possible as he was busy with his musicians.

On his third visit in three years, on the Republic Day weekend this year, Mehta floored classical music lovers with a knockout performance, where over a two-day period he conducted works by Bizet (Excerpts from 'Carmen') and Verdi (Excerpts from La Traviata) and an Opera Gala featuring some of the top talent from the international classical world.

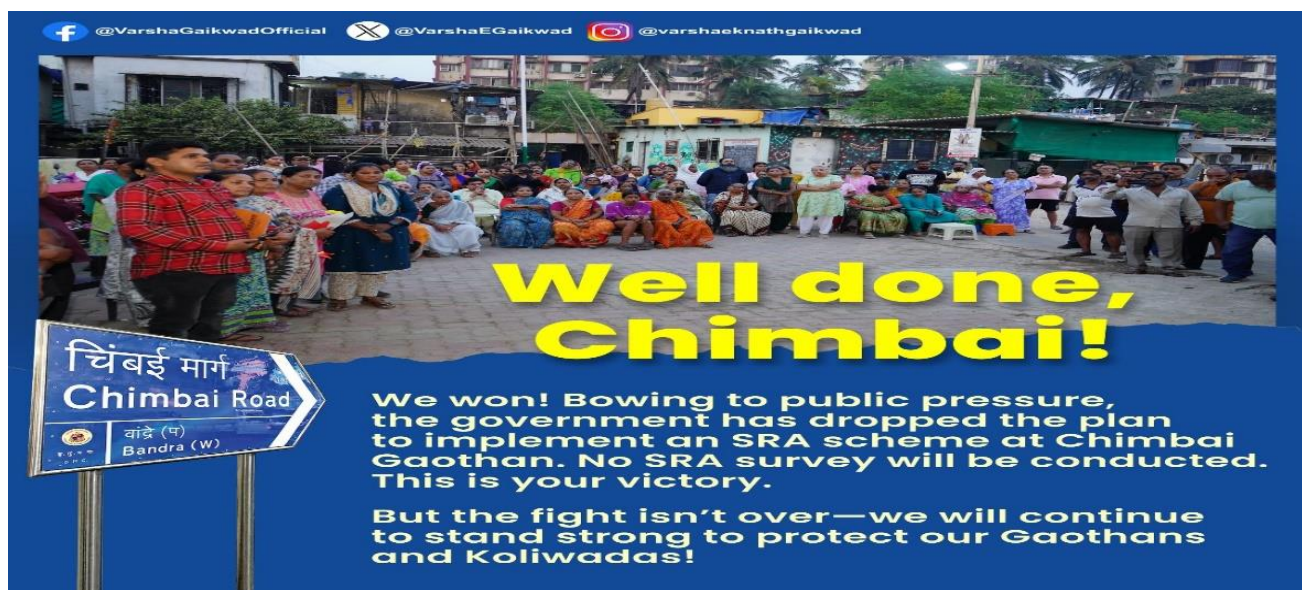
However, on his recent visit this year, I did manage to meet the maestro in his private room during the intermission of his recent performance. The reason - to present the legend with a photo I shot of the maestro during his performance in August 2024. This photo was part of the display at my Music Concert Photography Exhibition in November 2024.



Mehta was relaxing on a sofa, probably making mental notes of some of his classical music scores, when I entered the well-lit room. My host introduced me to him and told Mehta the purpose of my visit. He saw my photo frame that had him conducting the SOI and instructing soprano Chen Reiss. He liked the photo, but humbly said he couldn't accept it as he was travelling to Europe and then to China for tours. *"I cannot accept it as I am on tour. How do you me to take such a big frame to all these places"* he quipped with a smile, while adding, *"If I was going directly to the US, I would've taken it with me as a memory of a photo journalist who presented it to me"*. That sealed my fate of presenting the maestro with the photo frame of him performing. After exchanging pleasantries for a few moments, taking his autograph and clicking pictures with him, I left with a heavy heart and an equally heavier photo frame.



The Maestro's  
communique to your  
editor when he  
presented his  
autographed CD to JHG





## **It's March**

By Prof. Marcellus D'Souza

It's March and the first pearly drops of sweat roll down. After a pleasant winter, the heat is getting at us with a vengeance. "Don't forget to carry your pee cap or a parasol, carry tissues or a hanky and don't forget a bottle of water and remember not to get dehydrated" are some of the often-repeated instructions each time we leave home.

Remember the time when every home had a hat stand that was made of Burma teak and had a mirror embedded into it with an assortment of bowler sun hats strung from the kegs.

March is when the fruit trees like mango, cashew is filled with flowers that will eventually bear fruit. Recall that famous Marathi song: "Aambyache Danglivar Baslai Mor Navricha Bapus Kavti Chor..... Aambyache Danglivar Halvili Navryane Navrila Palvili" that is sung on the day at every Umbracha Pani that translates to "water from the fig tree". And the 'umburs' made from the ripe targola.



The mango trees (we used to have them in our gardens) is in full bloom and one hopes we have a plentiful crop/harvest. This is until a strong wind knocks down the flowers or the baby mango fruit. The tender fruit is collected or plucked to make a really good cucumber with white onions brought from Saturday bazaar or Alibaug.

March is when the few fields left along the Gorai-Manori belt get busy. Red radish and pumpkin is grown in plenty. While radish is pungent, grown in the black soil of earth and is mostly used as a decorative agent in lavish buffets to make various vegetable decorations. Pumpkin or bottle gourd is grown on the kashi's built

for this runner. As we all know the pumpkin goes well with our lonvas or rice curry. Other favorite veggies are okra or lady fingers and tender spinach shoots.

How can one forget the green tamarind? Tangy and bitten into without hesitation. Oh, what with rock salt from the baniya shop's sack that lay outside unattended. Jams or love apples and Karvanda and jambul are fruit of this time of year. Pickles are salted, dried and submerged in a brine to give it its characteristic taste. Preparation for making EI masala has begun.

This year Lent begins on March 5. The mortification, abstinence, arms giving, Stations of the Cross, missions, reciting the rosary and fasting to the best of our ability are part of the 40-days Lenten observance. Lent is when dry fish is unpacked from the burni or jar to supplement our intake of meats and chicken that has been stopped. Yes, I'm aware that dry fish taste best during the monsoons but



what does one do when we are called upon to abstain. Dry bombil the sav with Vindaloo masala is on the 'To Do' lists.

The stuffed Promfret or the green steaming white rice is heavenly. How about the gutli or hard bread from the bread shop? Not to forget the drum stick trees which once used to grow in our gardens but today we settle to buying them on weight. Oh! These go well as a vegetable with coconut or dropped in a finger licking curry.

March is when we prepare for our examinations but a game of marbles or koiba used to fill in the free time. Games like Vitti Dandu or Gilli Danda and Langdi or hopscotch used to be played in the

open space between buildings. However, these days, traditional games have been junked and discarded. Mobile games rule. Gone are the days when the golawalla was frequented now various brands of ice-cream are ordered for on-line.

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Dear Heavenly Father,

We lift up India, our beloved nation, to You. We pray for peace, harmony, and unity to prevail in our land. Amidst the diverse perspectives and opinions, may Your divine wisdom guide our leaders and citizens alike.

May our politicians and policymakers prioritize the well-being and dignity of all citizens, regardless of their background, caste, creed, or faith. May they work tirelessly to address the pressing issues of poverty, inequality, and social injustice.

Protect our nation from the forces of hatred, intolerance, and violence. May Your love and compassion inspire us to embrace our differences and celebrate our diversity.

We pray for the safety and security of all citizens, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized. May our law enforcement agencies and judicial system uphold justice, fairness, and equality for all.

May India become a beacon of hope, peace, and harmony, where people from all walks of life can live together in mutual respect and understanding.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

--Rev. Fr. K T Emmanuel

## **THE 5TH ANNUAL MELBOURNE EAST INDIAN ASSOCIATION (MEIA) FIESTA**

The Melbourne East Indian Association hosted its vibrant 5th Annual East Indian Fiesta Dinner Dance on Saturday, 22nd February 2025, drawing a lively crowd of 330 attendees for an evening bursting with culture, joy, and community spirit.



The festivities kicked off with the East Indian Entrance Parade, as guests dressed in dazzling traditional attire danced into the hall to rhythmic ghumat beats and a spirited East Indian soundtrack. The energy soared as EI Dancers—a dynamic ensemble of young and old—took the stage, captivating the audience with a vibrant performance blending classic and contemporary East Indian melodies.

Guests indulged in a sumptuous buffet by Silver Platter Caterers, while the band Legacy kept the dance floor alive with an electrifying mix of hits spanning generations. Anita D'Mello delivered a soulful rendition of "Kuwaitwala" by acclaimed East Indian singer Hazel, energizing the crowd. Attendees also snapped keepsake photos at a lively photo booth, complete with East Indian props and festive accessories.

MC Sean Fernandes charmed the crowd with his energy and wit, expertly guiding the night's festivities. The evening's excitement included lucky door prizes, kids' activity packs, and a grand raffle featuring top-tier giveaways.

Brimming with laughter, reunions, and nonstop dancing, the event embodied the community's vibrant spirit. MEIA President Sally D'souza thanked attendees for their enthusiasm and support, calling the fiesta "a testament to our shared heritage and unity."

Relive the magic! For photos and videos, visit the Melbourne East Indian Association (MEIA) Facebook and Instagram pages.

**SUKHALA!!!**



## **CELEBRATIONS @ the BIDM**

Last month, the BOMBAY INSTITUTION FOR DEAF & MUTES, @ Mazgaon, celebrated its Annual Day, and Donor's Meet. It was a day for the Management to meet and greet our



financial supporters, who, extend from the local Rotary and Lions Clubs who are ever enthusiastic to extend support and presence, even others that include Tech-Mahindra, Alkem Laboratories, and several others.

An annual day celebration at a school is a special event that marks the end of the academic year. It's a time to recognize students' achievements, showcase their talents, and celebrate the school's progress. An annual school function is a much-anticipated event by students and staff alike. Usually held at the conclusion of the academic year, it provides an opportunity for students to showcase their talents through performances like singing, dancing, sports, science project exhibitions, and drama.

The school's annual day is the culmination of its academic year. It is that time of the year where we celebrate and recognize the school's as well as the students' achievements. It gives the students an opportunity to showcase their unique talents and achievements. The school's annual report is also read.

It is an opportunity for experiencing teamwork amongst our peers and being proud of what the school's ideology is and what it stands for. All the program events are selected very carefully on the basis of their importance and value to the audiences.

The school ensures that there is a hundred percent participation from the students as each child is special and important for us and we believe that every child must be given an opportunity to develop talents, showcase their talents, and harness their skills and attributes through such public performances.

All in all, the entire objective of having an annual day in the school is to create a harmonious connection of parents with the school and their children and letting them appreciate and enjoy their child's talent.

To this end, as ever, the BIDM didn't disappoint its Guests.

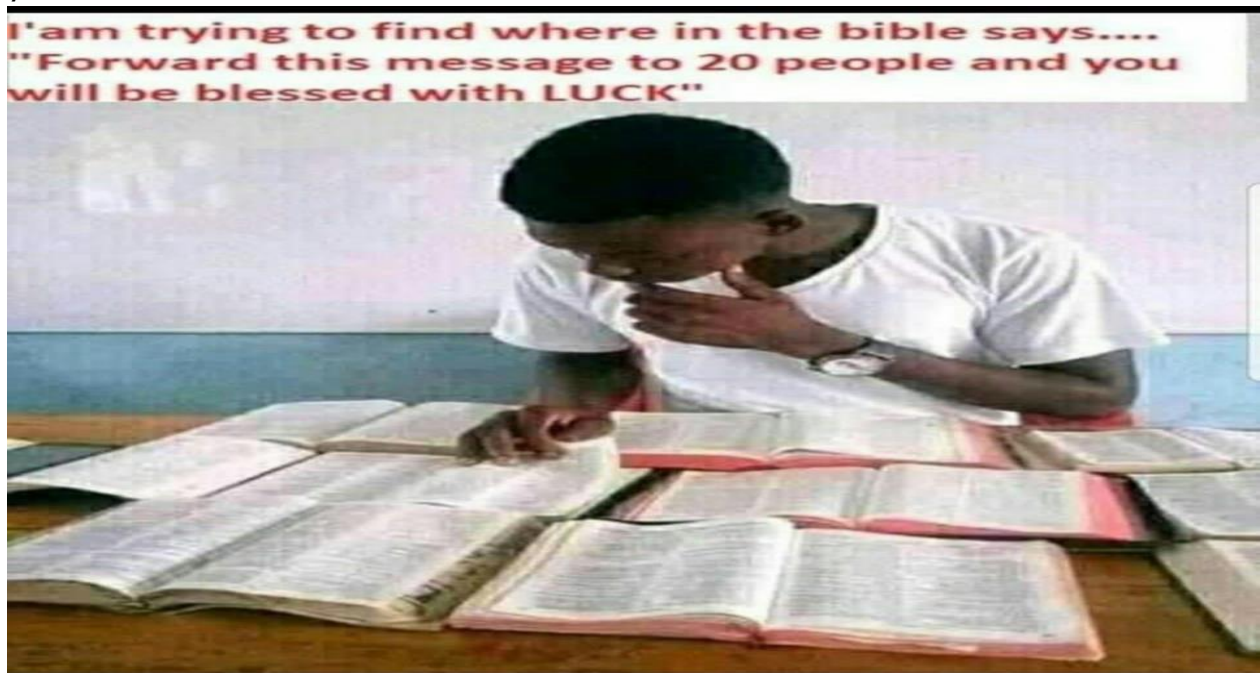
*The President Neil Creado, Principal Gunwant, Board Members of the Lions & Rotary Clubs, Donors, Benefactors & Guests at the celebrations*

**Jude H Gomes**  
**Hon. Secretary, Board of Management**

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### **FEEDBACK:**

On Chain-Letters in last month's issue, one reader sent this to share with you readers!



The most beautiful picture of all, to see them  
in one frame with their smile....

Pope St John XXIII (1958 - 1963)

Pope St Paul VI (1963 - 1978)

Pope John Paul I (1978 for 33days)

Pope St John Paul II (1978 - 2005)

Pope Benedict XVI (2005 - 2013)

Pope Francis (2013 - till date)





## How Ferrero Rocher chocolates were inspired by the Virgin Mary

Did You Know? Last month we celebrated the Feast of OUR LADY OF LOURDES, and who hasn't eaten a **Ferrero Rocher**?



The popular chocolate and hazelnut treats were named after the Rocher de Massabielle, the site of the Marian apparition in Lourdes.

Within the gold foil wrapping of a Ferrero Rocher candy there is a multi-layered confection that seems like some kind of magic straight out of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory: a single roasted hazelnut, encased in a wafer shell filled with hazelnut chocolate, which is itself topped with chocolate studded with chopped hazelnuts. These magical chocolates, however, were inspired, not by Roald Dahl's children's book, but by the Virgin Mary.

When the Italian chocolatier Michele Ferrero introduced the treats in 1982, it is believed that he named them "Rocher" after the craggy rock grotto, called the Rocher de Massabielle, that marks the place where the Blessed Mother appeared to St. Bernadette in Lourdes, France.





The chocolates' hazelnut-pocked surface bears more than a passing resemblance to the rock formation at Lourdes, a place that had a special meaning for Ferrero, who died on Valentine's Day in 2015 at the age of 89.



A dedicated Catholic, Ferrero was known for his strong devotion to Our Lady. At the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of his company, he said: "The success of Ferrero we owe to Our Lady of Lourdes; without her we can do little."



As the third largest chocolate producer in the world, Ferrero had a lot to be thankful for. The Ferrero Rocher candies, along with Nutella, Kinder treats, and Tic Tacs, brought in over \$20 billion Euros in 2023 alone.

Ferrero was said to have made an annual pilgrimage to Lourdes, taking his top manager. He also organized a visit to the shrine for his employees, and had a statue of the Virgin Mary placed in each of his company's 14 production facilities around the world.

**The B.E.I.A. announces their AGM and elections on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2025 (Saturday).**

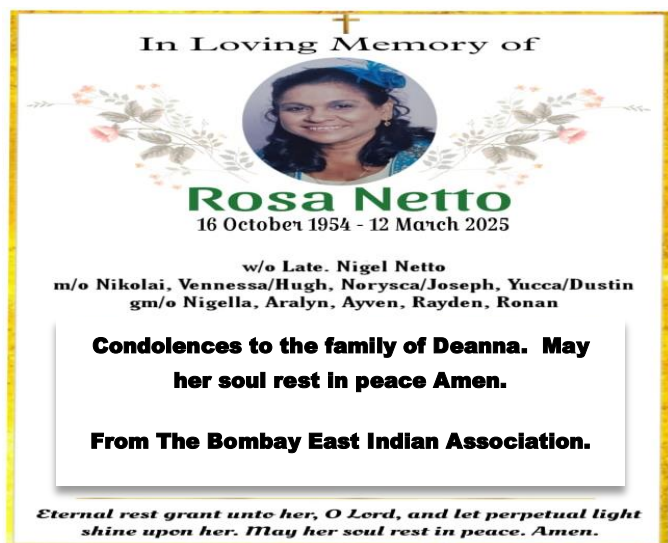
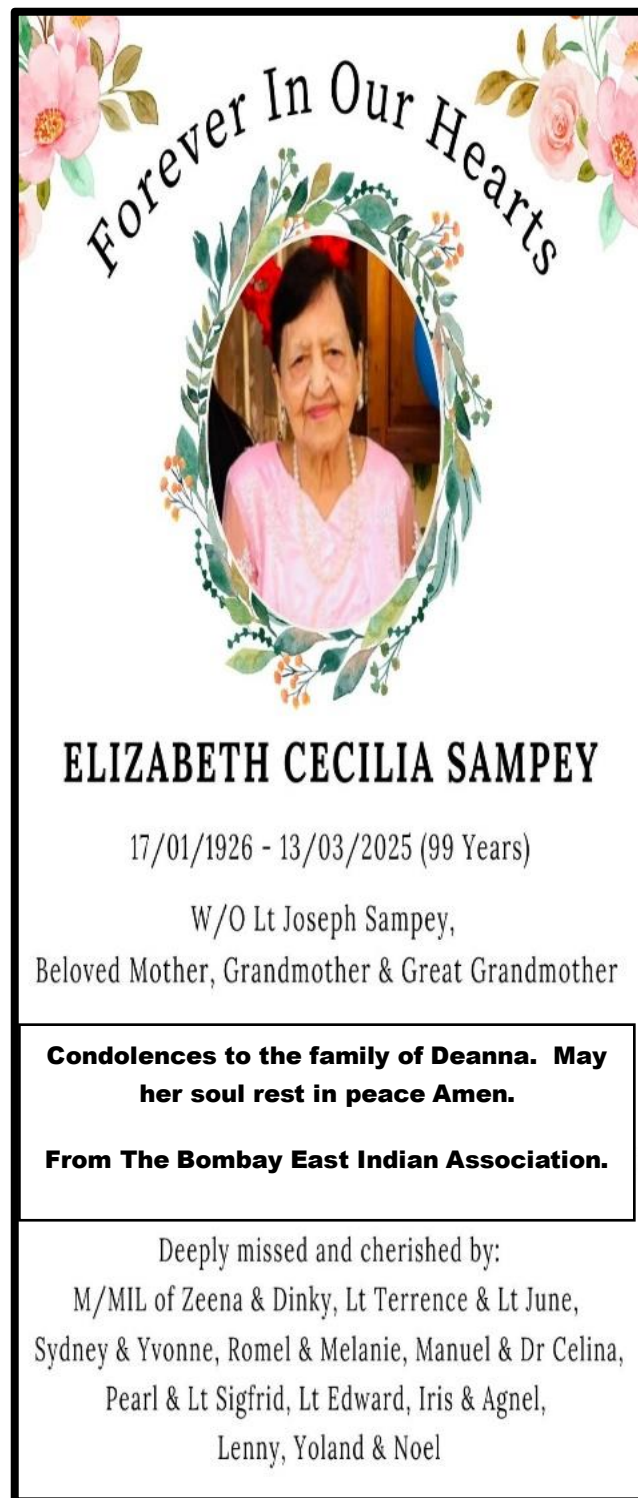
**Place and time will be announced later.**

**Nomination forms to be available at the help desk at St. Andrew's School on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from 10am to 12 noon. From 18<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025.**

**Last day for filing of the forms is on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025.**

**Watch this space for further details.**

## FOR WHOM THE BELLS TOLL:



## Ashley, A Puzzle

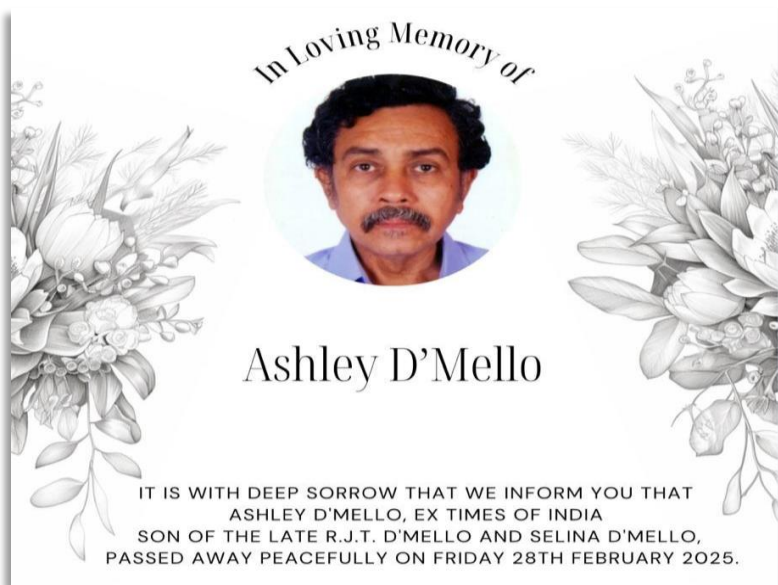
By Prof. Marcellus D'Souza

Ashley and I met for the first time in the 'Press Room' of the Adil Shah Palace in Panjim overlooking the Mandovi River. The Palace was built in the year 1500 and is Panjim's oldest surviving building. The 'Press Room' was small and situated at the extreme right of the imposing building that was being utilised as the Secretariat of the Goa government.

It was the pit stop for all journalists waiting for the next BIG story to break. The room was noisy with journalists exchanging information/notes. Most of the chatter was in Konkani or in Marathi. Portuguese was spoken by a couple of journalists. English was spoken mainly by Ashley, Cyril D'Cunha and myself.

I was introduced to Ashley as a fellow 'Bombaywalla' by Mario Cabral e Sa, a Portuguese speaking senior journalist from Divar Island who worked for the Bombay-based 'Blitz'. All Ashley said was 'Hi' and shook my hand still reclining in the deck chair. Ashley was a man of few words. Goan journalists who had made their acquaintance with him, long before I could arrive on the scene, found him to be an 'introvert'. As far as I can recall, he had his favourite chair in a corner of the 'Press Room' where he tried to comprehend all that was happening around him.

I met Ashley occasionally at Press Conferences and junkets. I was not needed to attend them but as part of the 'English speaking brigade' was invited to many an occasion. How can one forget being part of the Press corps, invited by the Governor of Goa to the Cabo Raj Bhavan for a 'at home' where the crème de la crème of Goan society attended. Ashley did not join in but was in a haste to file his story keeping the strict Bombay deadline of The Times of India (ToI). More so, Ashley was a teetotaler.



As time flew, I made numerous contacts. One was DySP Joe D'Souza. He was fun. He narrated many incidents that took place at the Police HQ and the corridors of power. With

time, Joe invited us to his home at Patto. I tagged along Ashley but he was not interested in rubbing shoulders with a cop.

My parents (Alfred & Yvonne) visited me a couple of times. On one such visit, I took my parents to Palolem. I was able to convince Ashley to accompany us. He did so hesitantly. At Palolem I had sourced some homemade urrak. Ashley made a fuss to have some, but finally yielded. He enjoyed the fried King fish or Surmai and clams that were ordered as starters. He spoke little throughout the journey and my mom kept making general conversation with him but was unable to break the ice.

Once I got a tip off about a crime case in Margao. The commercial capital of Goa is 40 kms from Panjim. All Ashley had to do was to ride along on my scooter, but he refused. Another time, I was going to Don Bosco Church for Christmas midnight mass. This is where one could meet VIPs like Dr. Wilfred (Willy) D'Souza, the Dy. CM and a renowned surgeon but Ashley refused to come along. Our other common friends were George and Yvonne Rebello. George was a consumer activist, who used to pen a column in the newspaper I worked for and Yvonne worked for Fundação Oriente – Goa. They were a Bombay couple who moved to Goa and were very sociable. But Ashley kept his distance. Though, Ashley visited Fundação Oriente for reference books et al.

Ashley was friends with Claude and Norma Alvares, the environmentalist – environmental lawyer couple who through their 'Goa Foundation', have filed successful public interest litigation cases and were a great source of information to journalists in general.

We were on opposite sides during the Justice G.J. Oza Commission which went into the merits of the Konkan Railway (KR) in the 1990's. While I supported the project, many journalists, including Ashley opposed the KR on environmental grounds. He became close to Frederick Noronha a.k.a 'Rico' during the KR agitation.

Although he was known to be serious, Ashley was an intellectual. He believed going into the depths of a story by thorough research, but his efforts were not appreciated. He was supported to the hilt by Darryl D'Monte, a fellow East Indian and Resident Editor (RE) of Tol.

Ashley contributed to a book titled "....And Read All Over: More Insider Stories about the Press in Goa and Beyond" that was released on February 28, 2025 at the 'Goa Book Fair', Margao where it was announced that Ashley had passed away at 5:15 pm.

Ashley was a puzzle, throughout his life, that will never be solved. Rest in Peace my friend.



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Numerous EIJ readers, subscribers, members and readers have been inquiring about the date of the hard-copy release. As soon as our Help-Desk starts functioning, we shall resume normalcy. We shall continue to assign printers who use paper for the EIJ from renewable resources from responsibly managed forests.

## The East Indian Journal

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