

The 6th National Conference 2016, Goa – A Report

The most awaited TISA event- The National Conference was finally happening... This year it was on the shores of Varca beach, amidst the choirs of waves and winds in the land of sea and sand – Goa.

Day 1

The lobby and reception area of Varca Le Palms beach resort, the venue of the conference was soon witnessing the hustle of PWS arriving from across the country. Greetings, exchange of hugs and smiles of old friends and some others making new friends. The banners with TISA logo and captions saying “Haklao magar pyaar se...” hung at the entrance. The atmosphere was festive sending out a clear message- a BIG celebration of our diversity is round the corner.

Registrations began, with TISA volunteers manning the registration desk. After a quick cup of coffee and biscuits, we all gathered in the conference hall. Harish welcomed all participants and announced that the conference is going to kick off with four informal parallel group sessions:

1. Techniques Group: Targeted towards the new-comers, this session was about learning different techniques – bouncing, prolongation, cancellation and practice in group. Vikas Ranga and Dhruv Gupta facilitated these sessions, and with their great facilitation skills they made it interactive and participative. The sessions gave opportunity for the new comers to experiment with their speech, practice and have fun at the same time.



Pic: Learning and Practicing techniques on the shore.

2. WWS (Women who stutter) group: Led by Mansi, Soumya and Anita, this group was dedicated to the women who stutter, and a space to discuss their issues. The girls discussed several issues and time was just not enough to complete the agenda for this group.

3. Parents and Family members: Dr. Sachin led this group of parents / family members who had come along with the participants. We had Dr. Akash Acharya's mother, Lalit Puri's Father and Mr. Pramod Kathuria's wife among others.

4. Personal Sharings: The fourth group was about personal sharing. This was led by Ravi Kant Sharma, Amitsingh Kushwaha and Harish. Here, participants just came forward and shared their

stories of courage, journey of acceptance, coordinating SHGs and just anything that they wanted to share.

After the sumptuous lunch, we had a formal welcome address by Harish. This was followed by open mic sessions for the new-comers and first timers. Most of the members had the stories to tell about their schools, colleges, roll calls, buying things at a shop... all those stammering issues that makes us think – “yes, I have been through this as well”.

During the group sharing activity, the four groups that were formed in morning sessions came forward and shared what was done during their sessions. Techniques, WWS issues and the encouraging feedback from the families completed the day of what was promising to be a great event to be in.

Finally, post dinner, a talent show was organized anchored by Vikas Ranga and Vishal Gupta from Delhi. This gave an opportunity to the PWS to come forward and display their talent. While some displayed their acting skills, some read out their poetry, dance performances, storytelling and various other hidden talents were exhibited during this fun session that happened on the shore of the Varca beach.

Day 2

Day 2 was jam-packed with a lot of items in agenda. We kicked off with an insightful session by Dr. Farida D'Silva Dias, a Goa-based psycho-therapist and counsellor. Dr. Farida spoke about “Cognitive Distortions”: how our mind programs itself to start thinking negative with self-blame, guilt and self-victimization. She explained various ‘categories’ of Cognitive Distortions and gave tips on how to get over this. The session was interactive with members sharing their experiences on cognitive behaviours and Q&A to end with.

Then it was the turn of the girls to steal the show. The WWS team performed an amazing skit highlighting the issues faced by a girl who stammers at various stages of her life- school, college, job-seeker and a professional. The skit revolved around a fictional character named “Bhavna”, and her story from denial to acceptance of stammering.



Pic: WWS Performing a Skit.

After the skit, Soma from Bangalore gave a presentation on her journey of acceptance. It was a story of her ups and downs, how her father helped in pumping confidence, how acceptance and spiritual practice helped her deal with all the not-so-easy moments of her life.

Post tea, we had two parallel sessions. Tarunidhar from Bangalore conducted a Yoga session, which covered some asanas that would help not just speech, but overall wellbeing. The session was refreshing and covered some important breathing and relaxation exercises. Tarunidhar says, the session focussed on achieving compassion in heart – most essential for one’s acceptance of himself.

On the other end, a role-play activity called “Hakla planet” was going on. The theme of this activity was interestingly reverse of real life – “What if 99% of the people on the planet stammered, and 1% had ‘fluency disorder’?” Five groups had to prepare and act out a role play on this theme. Different teams performed on different situations- Some of the role plays were: “People forming an association called ‘The Indian Fluency Association’, and revolting that ‘fluency’ is not a crime”, “Parents demanding additional dowry because the potential bride is ‘fluent’ speaker”, and “A fake self-proclaimed godman who claims to cure fluency”. The interesting theme and participants enthusiastic performances made this one of the most amusing session of the day.



Pic: One of the team performing it’s role play.

Post lunch, there were again groups split. The WWS (women who stutter) group spent time with Dr. Sachin to discuss their issues. On the other side, a session was taken on communication skills by a Toastmaster from Goa, and also a PWS.

The Bangalore SHG then had a skit cum learning session on ‘How to coordinate an effective SHG meeting’. In a unique way of delivering the message by recreating the SHG meeting scene, the Bangalore group gave some very good tips on how to conduct a SHG, some dos and don’ts and even took questions from other coordinators. The professionalism showed in the performance as the group also distributed pamphlets which covered all the tips to the audience for reference.



Pic: Bangalore SHG performing the skit on ‘How to coordinate effective SHG meeting’.

It was finally the time for the most awaited performance of this year's National Conference. The team behind successful and unique experiment conducted by Mumbai and Pune SHGs, sphere headed by Dhruv Gupta, of a Theatre Workshop for people who stammer was here. The team consisted of the PWS who participated in the workshop, professional actors and a director of the play. The play was titled "People who Buffer", and every participant was eagerly waiting to witness the performance of this play live! The people who buffer team put out a splendid performance and enthralled the audience with the play which revolved around the life of a PWS, and challenges faced in daily life.



Pic: People Who Buffer play performance

It was evening as the play ended, but the agenda was not done yet. We had a special celebrity guest – Mr. Varun Carvalho from Goa. Varun Carvalho is a Goan music composer, singer and lyricist and also a PWS. He also came out open in public about his stammering, and after learning about the TISA National Conference in Goa, promptly agreed to visit for a special musical session. Varun spoke about his stammering journey, and said that it was because of his stammering that he chose to become a singer. He owes all his success to his stammering. After a few musical performances, the PWS also joined Varun and sang on the stage. The song and dance with Varun brought about a lot of energy and it turned out to be a festive atmosphere – indeed a celebration of our diversity. Varun also distributed copies of his music album CDs to all participants.



Pic: Varun Carvalho performing one of his super hit track

Post dinner, the celebrations continued with DJ party on the dance floor. The PWS across the nation danced to their heart's content and showed how crazy the PWS can sometimes get.

Day 3

It was finally the closing day of the National conference. The day began with prize and certificate distribution to appreciate and recognize some of the wonderful voluntary contributions done by SHG coordinators, PWS and even parents. Awards were given in categories like 'Best Innovation in SHGs', 'Prolific Blog writer', 'Most energetic volunteer', 'Women of Courage', 'Teenager with Courage' and so on.



Pic: Vishal Gupta receiving the award at the hands of Dr. Sachin for most consistent participation and volunteering in TISA events

Then it was time for some formal presentations by senior TISA members on some serious topics. Dr. Akash Acharya, from Surat, one of the founding members of TISA, spoke about his own perspectives of Speech Therapy and his learnings of the same. Virendra Sirse from Pune spoke about how his acceptance helped his career and how his company encouraged his new attitude towards stammering. Anupam Saxena from Bangalore gave a presentation on 'Benefits of Stammering' and Vishal Gupta from Delhi gave a presentation on "Iceberg analogy of stammering".

After the formal presentations, there was open-mic session for all those who had not got a chance to speak. Participants came forward and talked just about anything. Finally, the NC final session was concluded by the "Ha-Ha-Ha-Hakla..." song from the People who buffer play.

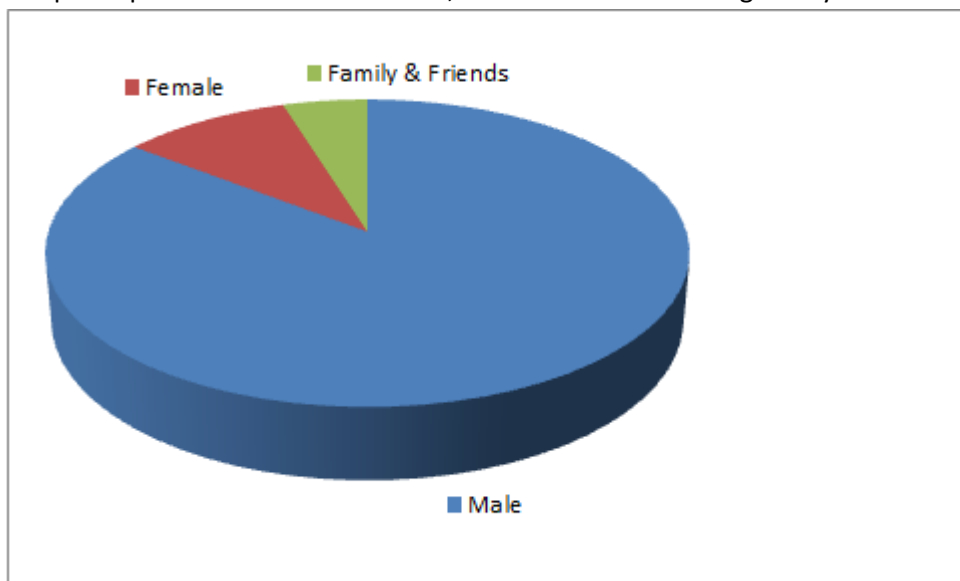
During the lunch time, people exchanged numbers, contacts and finally the big ritual of the group picture of all NC participants was completed.



Pic: Group Picture of the Participants of National Conference 2016

The 6th National Conference was thus concluded with success and celebrations. Some of the highlights of the conference were-

- This was the first time when a TISA National Conference was streaming live on Facebook.
- This was the first time when a TISA National Conference had a media partner. A local newspaper, **Gomantak Times** came forward to be the media partner of the 6th National Conference of TISA, and covered the entire event as part of this partnership.
- A local celebrity who stammered participated and acknowledged about his stammering.
- The participants consisted of 88 male, 10 females and 5 among family and friends.



Media Coverage



Coming together to change the world: Attendees having a fun moment at the TISA conference 2015

The sixth national conference of The Indian Stammering Association will be held in Goa this year. Café talks to the co-coordinator and some of the speakers at this event

A SELF HELP APPROACH TO LIFE

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Many journeys are that of fortitude and these journeys begin because of people who are willing to take the necessary first step. Until 2006, there was no effective central place in India for people with a stammer to get together to talk about everyday issues relating to stammering, and ask for help. Many Indians emailed the International Stuttering Association and other national associations, seeking guidance, and in 2006, the vision of The Indian Stammering Association (TISA) was formed. In five and a half short years they moved from being an online group to having their own website to holding a national Indian conference. The first conference was held in 2011 in Orissa. This year, the sixth edition of the conference will be held in Goa.

The theme of the conference this year revolves around building attitudes through knowledge because for people who stammer, the stages of growth start with knowing that they have poor communication skills, followed

by a want to improve by seeking knowledge to help themselves and then using it to improve their communication day by day, having fun in this process. A person who stammers generally suffers from low self esteem and low confidence. The objective of such a conference is to get them out of this suffering mindset. So rather than focusing on how to speak fluently, this conference will focus on how a person who stammers should have a better attitude and mindset," says Harish Usgaonkar, coordinator for the event in Goa and also the founder of his own self-help group in the state. He also states that the conference is being held with the support of volunteers not only from Goa but also from across the country.

As part of the conference, talks and discussions will be conducted by TISA facilitators. Dr Satyendra Shrivastav will be one of the speakers at the event. He is a qualified doctor who moved out of the medical practice in 1995 and joined a social

work organisation in Uttarakhand. As a social worker, he started working for social causes related to medical causes. "Stammering is an example of a medical problem with a social component; my talk is about how a person that stammers should understand that he or she is okay," he says. Another speaker at the conference is a dentist and singer/songwriter Varun Carvalho. He himself understands what it is like to have stammered as a child and thus his session will be about building confidence in children that stammer. "Music is a tool that can overcome stammering and boost a child's confidence," says Varun. Besides these two speakers, Dr Farida D'Silva Dias, a psychotherapist and behavioural consultant and trainer, will be talking about cognitive distortions.

The 6th National Conference of The Indian Stammering Association will be held from September 16 to 18, 2016 at Varca Le Palmes Beach Resort. [TWEETS @CHERALDOGOA](https://twitter.com/CHERALDOGOA)

STUTTERING TOWARDS A BETTER TOMORROW, TOGETHER

TISA TO HOLD TWO-DAY NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR PEOPLE WHO STAMMER AT VARCA FROM SEPT 16 TO 18

BY A STAFF REPORTER

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Panaji: The world can turn into a cold and lonely place if you have a stutter, however there is a need to tell such people that they are not alone. Hence, the Indian Stammering Association (TISA) is holding its sixth national conference at Varca from September 16 to 18.



Harish Usgaonkar

"The idea of a national conference is to bring Indian people who stammer, from all corners of the country under one roof, and let them share their stories, meet more people who are just like them, understand them, offer them a podium to be themselves," said TISA's Harish Usgaonkar, while speaking to Gomantak Times.

"The feeling of meeting other people

STUTTER STATS

- 8.5 million people stutter across India.
- 51 million stammer globally.
- 6 million pre-school children stutter in India.
- 1.2% of all school-age children stammer.

who stammer can lead to life-changing revelations. The national conference reflects on the most important aspect of self-help in dealing with stammering, which is - socializing," said Harish. Stammering or stuttering occurs when the flow of speech is broken by repetitions (li-li-like this), prolongations (lllllike this), or abnormal stoppages (no sound) of sounds and syllables. Fear of public speaking has

consistently been ranked the biggest fear among people and for those who stammer, this vulnerability is greater than normal.

Stating that stuttering has been turned into a joke by media, Harish said, "Stammering is a painful aspect of our lives, which has a neuro-biological basis, often mediated by stammering genes. It is not a habit that has been picked up."

"People who stutter can be crippled by severe psychological fears and anxiety. Society's outlook is ambivalent. There is discrimination and difficulties in education, careers and also in relationships. People Who Stammer (PWS) are often mistaken for being aloof, while the fact is, they may be painfully shy," lamented Harish. However, for PWS, life need not go

downhill. There are numerous examples of PWS who have scaled great heights, from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, to Coldplay's Chris Martin. There are sports stars in golfer Tiger Woods and footballer James Rodriguez along with actress Julia Roberts and Indian superstar Hrithik Roshan. Rowan Atkinson famous for his role as Mr Bean, incorporates his stuttering into his work by using over-articulation to overcome problematic consonants. Reiterating that stammering is not an obstacle, Harish said "We need to accept our stammering as a diver, not a lack of confidence."

"At this conference, TISA provides a friendly environment where stammers can take the first step of acceptance

without hiding their stammering. Communication games, energizers and open-microphone sessions provide the best opportunities to break the shackles of fear," said Harish.

"The best way to overcome personal fears is to become social, because stammering is a social issue and the answer can be found in social settings, rather than in clinics," concluded Harish.

TIPS IF YOU STAMMER

- Accept that you stammer.
- Talk and write about it.
- Maintain eye contact even when you stammer.
- If you stammer, repeat the word, so that you are clearly understood.
- Focus on communication more than fluency.
- Never give up hope.

GT POSITIVE

Rise above your stammering, showcase other talents: Dr Satyendra Srivastava

BY VENITA GOMES
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Margao: "I hail from a family of stammerers. In every generation of my family, there was one member, who was a stutterer, and during my generation it was me," said Dr Satyendra K Srivastava, Founder of The Indian Stammering Association (TISA).

Dr Srivastava, a stammerer himself, founded the Indian Stammering Association, a self-help group that helps people overcome their fears and guilt associated with stammering and also enables them to live their lives confidently.

Dr Srivastava who was a part of the two-day Sixth National conference in Goa at Varca Le Palm beach resort, spoke to GT and explained how stammering controlled much of his life.

He said "I discovered that I was a stammerer, when I was a kid. I always lived in fear of what other people would think of me, and was afraid that they would laugh at me."



Our basic aim was only to make people realise, that it is okay to be a stammerer.

— Dr Satyendra K Srivastava
Founder, TISA

"I started going away from my friends, family and neighbours. I would not speak much to anyone; just hide in one corner," said Srivastava, adding that the world turned into a cold and a lonely place, as everyone he came across, made fun of him and showed no interest in his talks.

Srivastava also mentioned that before he could complete a statement, some other person would interrupt him, and he was unable to say what he wanted to; due to which he developed a fear of speaking and

that is what restricted him from being around people.

"It was nothing to do with lack of confidence. I was very much confident to speak but was unable to deliver at that very moment," explains Dr Srivastava.

It took him nearly 40 years to understand what stammering was all about. He said "In the beginning, I blamed my disciplinarian father for this. Later when I entered medical college and examined the problem objectively, I realised it was not so."

"I started writing about stammering and my experience on my online blog. And in no time, I got huge responses from other stammerers from different parts of India, who were also facing the same problem," added Srivastava.

He also mentioned that many other stammerers wanted to contribute to the blog and they all started writing for it. After which nine stammerers came together to start a small community where stammerers could freely share their or-

deals.

"Our basic aim was only to make people realise, that it is okay to be a stammerer. Accept it and once you accept it, all things will fall in place," said Srivastava, adding that with this aim they started forming various self-help groups in various parts of the country like Delhi, Pune, Goa, Chandigarh, etc.

Today, TISA has its presence in more than five states and cities of India and there are around 500 active members associated with TISA. He also emphasized upon the need to understand what exactly stammering is. Srivastava said "Do not deal with it as a problem. Rise above it, Find ways through which you can show your hidden talents and do not bother about what people say. People will always say; it's their duty to say."

Srivastava said that we all need to understand and be sensitive towards other people and not judge them without understanding them.

SUPPORT STAMMERERS WITH PATIENCE: DR DIAS

Goa-based Clinical Psychologist and Behavioural Consultant, Dr Farida D'Silva Dias, explains to **Gomantak Times** reporter **Venita Gomes**, how stammering needs to be handled positively and with patience.

Gomantak Times: How do you perceive a person who stammers?



Dr Farida D'Silva Dias

Dr Farida D'Silva Dias: I believe that stammerers are unique and different not because they stammer but because their thinking capacity is so fast that

they are unable to chase it. People who stammer are unlike non-stammerers who in order to speak fluently, switch words.

GT: What is one common aspect found in people who stammer?

FDD: Most people who stammer have a complaint of discrimination. It is true that at every stage of life, people face discrimination and insults but for a person who stammers, it is more

than non-stammerers. People are not just ready to accept and understand them and end up picking on them and mocking them. Stammerers repeat a word or a letter for a prolonged time but it is not something they can control, yet they are unjustly neglected and not given a chance to speak what they have to.

GT: What attitude should parents adopt towards children who stutter?

FDD: It is completely okay to have kids who stammer. Don't blame and shout at your child. Instead show them the way to overcome it. Many times parents think if they hide their stuttering children from society, they will be fine and people won't make fun of them, but that is wrong. It adversely affects the child's growth. Whenever the child ends up dealing with the out-

side world, as part of his or her career or social life, the child will find it very hard to adjust. Parents should teach their children to be independent and confident.

GT: What is the behavioural pattern of society towards stammerers in Goa?

FDD: Not only in Goa, but across the country and world, society is stigmatic towards stammerers and are neither welcoming, nor open towards stammerers. Society has failed to have patience until a stammerer completes his or her statement and instead marginalise and neglect people who

stammer.

People should not be shy or shamed that their children stammer, instead, there needs to be a better support system to help them overcome their difficulties.

GT POSITIVE

Shattering the shackles of stammering

BY VENITA GOMES

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Margao: In order to provide an interactive platform for people who stammer and to share their experiences, The Indian Stammering Association (TISA) held its Sixth National Conference at Varca le Palm beach resort on September 16.

The two-day conference comprised of various activities, sessions for people who stammer, their parents and members of the self-help group. Besides that, the event also aims to hold various interactive sessions for parents, spouses and friends of people who stammer.

"The idea of a national conference is to bring Indian people who stammer, from all corners of the country under one roof, and let them share their stories, meet more people who are just like them, understand them, offer a podium to be our own selves," said Harish Usgaonkar, Member of TISA.

He also said that the feeling of meeting other people who stammer can lead to life-changing revelations.

Speaking to GT, Founder of an online blog TISA, Dr Satyendra K

Srivastava said "This conference is a medium and a platform for stutterers to express themselves. We are trying to extend our reach to various other parts of the country, so that we can reach more and more people."

"There are around 500 active members associated with TISA, we want to go to the others who do not know about it and help them," added Dr Srivasatva.

Sharing his experience with TISA, Delhi Chapter Head of Self-help group, Vishal Gupta said "After being part of TISA, things have changed for me and this has made me more independent in life. Today I can speak confidently without any fear."

The TISA's Sixth National conference will also have a talent show that will showcase various talents of stutterers. Besides that, it will also help members to learn various skills and techniques to cope with stammering.

"I have seen a lot of improvement in my son after attending various sessions of TISA. Not only in terms of his speech but also in terms of his behavior and attitude towards life," said a parent who was part of the conference.

THESE YOUNGSTERS LEAD THE WAY IN OVERCOMING HURDLE OF STAMMERING

The stigma attached with stammering poses a major impediment in an individual's personal and professional growth. However, **GT** scribe **Venita Gomes** profiles two personalities who have overcome their weakness through acceptance and perseverance.

A stutter or a stammer, is a speech impediment that affects close to one per cent of the world's population. Of the many, Jonali Das and Akash Acharya, faced several hindrances in life due to their stammering but refused to give up.

After discovering that she stammers when she was in the first standard, Jonali Das went on to become a technical lead at Calso Lab Limited - an IT firm in Bangalore.

While speaking about her journey, Jonali stated that her stammering occurred occasionally and not frequent-

GT POSITIVE

ly. "When I was with my friends and family, I would speak fluently, but if I had to speak to my teacher or principal, I would stammer."

"My stammering was due to an unexplainable fear. As years passed it reduced, as I was making an effort to fight it," said Jonali.

“ TISA taught me that stammering had no cure or medicine apart from accepting myself as being different.”



- AKASH ACHARYA,
Associate professor, Centre
for Social Studies, Gujarat.

However, after being reminded of an embarrassing stammering incident that resulted in her entire class laughing at her, Jonali was gripped by fear again and the stammering erupted.

"I became very conscious and anxious due to that incident and the flood of memories that accompanied it and

“ At TISA, I learnt to accept and respect myself and that stammering is okay.”



- JONALI DAS,

Technical lead, Calso Lab, Bangalore

from that day onwards, my stammering started all over again," recalled Jonali.

Unable to cope with her second bout of stammering, Jonali began lagging behind in her professional life.

"Whenever there was a presentation in the office, my colleagues would win, as they spoke fluently, while I stuttered," said Jonali, adding that people would not give her a chance to complete her sentences. ■ **Contd on pg 4**

These youngsters lead the way in overcoming hurdle of stammering

■ Contd from pg 1

Disappointed with her inabilities, Jonali tried medical treatment, therapy and other remedies but was unable to overcome it.

After learning of The Indian Stammering Association (TISA), Jonali joined it in hope of finding a remedy.

To her surprise, she realised that instead of fighting it she would have to accept it.

"At TISA the first thing I learnt was to accept myself, to respect myself and that stammering is okay.

Rather than crying over not having something, I learned to bring out the best in myself," said Jonali.

While Jonali's stammering was caused by fear, continuous fights and quarrels at home turned Akash Acharya into a lonely stammerer.

"Due to the hostility in my house, I was disturbed, became a recluse and began alienating myself from people. Those who met me, would mock my stutter or ignore me," recalled Akash.

"I neither had any friends nor close associates to share my problems with. My loneliness and isolation dragged me to a point of suicide. I had so much to say, but due to my stammer, no one wanted to look at me or talk to me," lamented Akash.

Therapy and medication only gave Akash temporary relief but his stammer kept coming back. However, after another failed attempt, Akash came across TISA online which effectively changed his way of thinking.

"Stammering was a problem for me at first, as I wanted an instant cure, but TISA taught me that stammering had no cure or medicine apart from accepting myself as being different," said Akash, who is now an associate professor at Centre for Social Studies, Gujarat.



Participants at the sixth national conference of the Indian Stammering Association held at Varca Palm beach resort. Pic: Venita Gomes

Peace and Hi peace and ha

BY A STAFF REPORTER
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Panaji: In the wake of the growing social unrest across the country, Peace and Humanity Forum will celebrate a fortnight campaign with the central theme of 'Peace and Humanity' from September 21 till October 5.

Addressing media persons in Panaji on Monday, Peace and Humanity Forum convenor Asif Hussain condemned the attempts of the extremists and fundamentalists and said, "The silence of the majority of the people who see the fast growing walls of division based on caste, religion, region and language needs to be broken."

Hussain added, "The threat of institutionalised communalism is the greatest threat India is facing today. So, to build and strength-

HC adjourns beach cleaning contractor's challenge to Lokavakta's order to Sept 21

Ground Zero at
Fr Agnel College
on September 21