

Goan communities organise events to celebrate Easter

The Goan diaspora across the UK and France organised various events to celebrate Easter. **Lui Godinho** provides a roundup of some of these events at Aberdeen, Southampton, South London and Swindon in the UK and Paris in France.

Golden Goa Association hosts Easter Dance in Southampton

Golden Goa Association, Southampton (GGAS), a leading community organisation of the Goan community in the south of England, organised the Easter Dance at St Boniface Church Hall, Shirley, Southampton on April 9 from 1 pm to 5:30 pm.

The unique community event was a totally free entry extravaganza where food, including an assortment of snacks and desserts along with drinks, was on the house. Goans and people from diverse communities came dressed in colourful national costumes.

DJ Zack (Z a k i S h e i k h), hailing from Bicholim was the main entertainer who rocked the event with his Konkani music.

GGAS President RJ Roque Vaz conceptualised and compered the entire event. Awaaz 99.8 FM, which airs the popular 'Konkani Ulloi London Fuloi' every week was the media partner.

The theme of the event was 'Community Cooking', wherein amateur and talented Goan chefs prepared popular main dishes like Sorpotel (Bihula Vaz), Goan Peas Pulao (Michelle Coutinho D'Souza), Chicken Curry (Alex D'Costa), Choneacho Ros (Rita Borges), Goan Stew (Bosco Wangstone Dias), Chilli Con Carne (Alcina Fernandes), Italian Pasta (Dina De Souza) and Carrot Halwa (Ramona D'Costa) and many other



er dishes from different countries.

Besides, people from various cultural backgrounds brought along delicious snacks and desserts. Drinks and Easter eggs were sponsored by Sheldon Braganza, while Anushka Ponniah sponsored the traditional Hot Cross Buns.

On the occasion, different spot prizes were awarded and the prize winners were Sydney Alvares and Felecidade Gomes (Best Dressed Couple) and Britney Dias (Best Dancing Child).

The Easter Egg Hunt was won by Serona D'Costa and the prize was sponsored by GGAS Vice President Assumpta D'Costa.

The highlight of the event was the vibrant Goa Easter Queen 2023 Contest. Contestants from different nationalities, including Goans, participated with great zeal and energy. Sheldon Braganza and Felecidade

Gomes were the judges.

Comper RJ Roque Vaz asked the contestants different questions to test their confidence, charm and communication.

Glanice Nazareth was crowned the Goa Easter Queen 2023 and bagged a special Easter hamper, sponsored by GGAS General Secretary Bihula Vaz and a kitchen blender sponsored by the association.

The ceremonial Easter cake, sponsored by Nivedita Roberts, was cut by the Parish Priest Fr Tom Kleinschmidt along with assistant parish priest Fr Godwin Kambal, who both prayed for everyone.

Later, a bingo and raffle were organised and a sum of £ 300 was raised, which was given as an Easter gift to all three parish priests of St Boniface Church, Southampton. Each priest received £100 each, namely Fr Tom, Fr Godwin and Fr Jufel Baldado. The GGAS maintained the tradition of gifting collection to the parish priests on Easter Sunday.

The event was a result of the combination of volunteers and large-hearted sponsors. Joe Valent Braganza was the main sponsor of the event.

Communities conduct first Konkani Easter Vigil Service in Aberdeen

Around 160 people from the Goan, Mangalorean and Konkani communities participated in the first Konkani Easter Vigil Service in Aberdeen at St Joseph's Church, Woodside.

The liturgy began in darkness with the blessing of the new fire and the preparation of the Paschal Candle. The Paschal candle was kindled by the main celebrant, Fr Anil Gonsalves, before the congregation, followed by a procession to the church.

Brunette Pereira, Coordinator of the Konkani Mass Group, welcomed the congregation and read the opening prayers followed by the Mass intentions.

The lectors were Cynthia Desa, Maria Viegas, Zenaida Rodrigues, Reagan Cardozo,



Daniella Fernandes and Brunette Pereira. The choir members were Maria Viegas, Chrisanne Mendes, Alex Mendes, Aloysius Rodrigues, Nash Fernandes, Nilesh Gomes, Francis Desa, Riana Fernandes and Brunette Pereira.

Goan photographer based in Aberdeen, Shane De Souza, captured the moments at the Konkani Easter Vigil Service.

In his special greetings to

the Konkani speakers from various parts of India, gathered at St Joseph's Church, Woodside, Archbishop of Goa and Daman Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrao said it gave him joy to know that they had gathered for the first ever Konkani language Easter Vigil service in Aberdeen.

"We celebrate today the triumph of the Risen Lord over death and all forms of evil, making us sharers in his New

Paschal joy and share it, particularly with those who are most in need of it: the joyless, the dejected and the underprivileged. I wish you a grace-filled Easter, with abundant blessings of Jesus, the Risen Lord!" stated Cardinal Ferrao.

Later, a token of love in the form of an Easter card and Chocolate Bunny (Easter Eggs) was distributed to each family.

Goan Chaplaincy stages Easter Dance in Swindon

It was a packed gathering at the Sikh Community Hall in Swindon on April 9, as the Goan Chaplaincy, Swindon, hosted the 4th annual Goan Chaplaincy Easter Dance.

The event featured entertainment with Swindon's topmost band 'Rainbows End' providing dancing music and keeping the record crowd glued to the dancing floor for almost five hours.

Children were treated with Easter Eggs which put a big smile on their faces while everyone else was busy dancing the night away to the music from the band who played non-stop through the night.

The Sikh community hall was decorated by Jas Media Decorators under the leadership of Annabelle Soares, while the in-house catering was provided by Chef Anthony, Chef Jacob, and Chef Savio.

The comper Sheila D'Costa boosted the spirits of the revelers throughout the evening. On behalf of the Goan Community, she thanked and acknowledged



the hard work and dedication of Fr Lucas Rodrigues, Fr Francis Colaco and Fr Mark Furtado towards the huge Goan Community in Swindon.

In his address, the Goan Chaplain, Fr Lucas Rodrigues said the purpose of the event is to bring families together to share some moments of love, concern and solidarity.

He acknowledged the support of Goans who contribute in many ways to the Swindon Goan Chaplaincy and also thanked all the various chaplaincy teams for working with dedication and commitment.

Goans who attended the event appreciated and praised the

event and all those who were involved in the organisation.

"Thanks for such a wonderful evening, we all had fun. All the arrangements and everything were on point and the best we have ever seen," said Vance Dias, a youngster who was present at the event.

Vance Machado, the Children's Choir Master of Rhythmix Goa, said: "It was such an amazing sight to see a lot of people both young and old coming together as one family to show their love and solidarity in supporting the Goan Chaplaincy Swindon."

"We even had people of different faiths and walks of life coming to this dance which

shows the true meaning of being a Catholic, where we welcome everyone with open arms."

"Overall, it was a day to remember and people went home with a renewed hope and love in their hearts, knowing that the Chaplaincy is always there to put their arms over our shoulders when we need it the most."

"Also, people will now want to serve the Chaplaincy even more in any way they can. I for one will definitely strive to work as hard as I can, along with my army of nearly 100 children in my choir for our Chaplaincy. We hope for another fruitful year. I can't wait till our next Easter Dance 2024," Machado added.

South London Youth Goans hold second Easter Dance

South London Youth Goans hosted their 2nd Easter Dance at Sutton United FC, Sutton Surrey on April 10.

"After months of organising, fervently promoting on social media and collaborating with other event organisers, the Easter Dine and Dance was a success for South London Goans," said Lavinia Rodrigues, who organised the event along with the hosts Serena Rodrigues e Gracias and Melanie Rodrigues.

Music by the Popcorn Mix band and DJ Jonathan Baretto, as well as Emcee Bunty Vas all set the event's mood with good music and audience participation. Traditional Goan catering was provided by Bernie's kitchen.

"Although unintentional and looking back in hindsight, the intimate setting created an atmosphere that



was charged with happiness, positive energy, and overall merriment."

Lavinia Rodrigues said they received many positive compliments from guests for the choice of venue, the food and the entertainers, who came into their own to create an almost family atmosphere.

"There is great expectation for

our future events, and this has motivated the South London Youth Goans organisers to reach out to other Goan youth to collaborate for future events. We have learnt so much from hosting this event and we believe we have found our niche for hosting future events in South London," she said.

Goans celebrate Easter in Paris

The Goan Association in Paris organised an Easter celebration at Paroisse Saint Leon 1, Place du Cardinal Amette, Paris on April 9 at 12:30 am.

The Mass in Konkani was celebrated by Fr Anderson Fernandes, a Jesuit who came specially from Rome.

The Mass was followed by a party in the Church hall. People danced to the tunes of Goan music by DJ Remedios Fernandes, while Viona Cardozo

compèred the event.

A banquet was served and the Easter cake was cut by Fr Anderson and the children. There was a distribution of Easter eggs to the children.

The housie was won by Joe Cardozo and the tombola was won by Joaquim Cabral. The Baccalauréat distinction award was presented to Cheryl Cardozo.

The event was organised by Goan Association in Paris President Camilo Cardozo and his committee members.



QGA 45TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

Honouring founding members as we look to the future

BY MELISSA FERNANDES
AND PRISCILLA FERNANDES

As Montreal slowly enters the warmer and sunnier days of spring, we reflect on the past few months marking the 45th Anniversary year of the Quebec Goan Association (QGA).

It has been a momentous year celebrating our Goan traditions, music, food and dance with the community at every one of our events. We have stood on the shoulders of giants to foster the growth of our organization. The brave, innovative and dedicated founding members of the QGA have given so much of their time and skills over the years to keep our Goan roots strong and thriving in Canada.

Thus, as the 2022-2023 QGA Committee concluded another successful year of activities with our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on March 25, we hosted a thank you luncheon as a token of our appreciation to our founding members. With a modest selection of mouth-watering snacks and dishes provided by Mama's Goan Food, the best caterer in town, we celebrated those who brought the QGA into existence.



The Quebec Goan Association (QGA) during a luncheon to culminate its 45th anniversary

Our founding members shared anecdotes of the early years of the organization, and as a team, cut a congratulatory cake subsequently distributed among the attendees. With smiles, countless photos, and heartfelt toasts in honour of the great progress that the QGA has managed over the last 45 years, our founding members

gave their thanks for a job well done.

As the community gathered in the hall to discuss the future direction of the QGA, there was an overwhelming consensus for the 2022-2023 Committee to return for another term. Blanche Da Costa was unanimously re-elected as President of the organisation. Without hesitation, she invited her previous team to join her in rising to the new challenges facing the community.

Never forgetting the importance of all those who have walked the path before us, the QGA completed the evening off with a commemorative Mass for the living and deceased members of the community.

These festivities ushered the end of the memorable 2022-2023 QGA term with all the hope and anticipation of the wonderful things to come from the 2023-2024 team that will take the reins.

[The writers are directors of the Quebec Goan Association]

Goan company wins LUXLife award

A&G Event Experts encourage, promote Goan cuisine with Portuguese influence

LUI GODINHO
THE GOAN NETWORK | LONDON

A&G Event Experts, a premier events management company, has won the prestigious 'Lux Best Fairytale Wedding Planner 2023 - West London'.

The company founded by Antonio Fernandes (FIH a Global Hospitality Specialist) and Gabriel Fernandes (Chartered Accountant), won the award in the category of the 'Global Wedding Awards 2023' hosted by LUXLife.

On its website, LUXLife said it is honoured to host an awards programme which supports those dedicated individuals and businesses who bring dreams to life, and ultimately influence the happiness of many.

"Spanning the entirety of the sector – from wedding venues to cake designers, to planners and digital planning software – the Global Wedding Awards 2023 aim to provide each valued vendor with the opportunity to showcase their excellence."



"LUXLife is proud to state that each of our awards programmes is innovative in its research methodology, completely merit-led and free to nominate and receive. Accepting nominations through an open voting system as well as through our dedicated in-house research team ensures a uniquely fair approach, creating a level playing field for all those involved in the industry regardless of the size of your organisation."

When contacted, Antonio and Gabriel said they were delighted on receiving the LUXLife award, which is a recognition of their business across the UK.

"Getting the LUXLife award was a bit of a surprise to us but we are glad to get this recognition for our hard work that goes into all our events. At the same time, it gives us that push to do better in our future events," said Gabriel.

"We are already targeting customers

for more wedding functions and have a few of our own events coming up like the Christmas Ball and New Year's Eve Ball, in the pipeline. We look forward to the day when people would begin to look to us as their first-choice event planners."

Gabriel said A&G Event Experts have access to some of the most sought out venues in West London which include Hilton Ealing, Radisson Edwardian, Sheraton Skyline, Marriott Heathrow, Ham Polo Club, Ascot, De Vere Hotels, Chelsea FC, Tottenham FC and Hilton Watford, among others.

Antonio said he and Gabriel are also key members of prestigious membership clubs and associations in the hospitality industry. "One of our key elements is that we have access to global cuisines, both traditional and fine dining. But although this is our core business, they always encourage and promote Goan cuisine with Portuguese influence to the highest level. Hence, we initiated 'Snack Hack', a Goan Kitchen which has a 5-star rating by the local councils," said Antonio Fernandes.

"Also, as Goans showcasing to the world, we can be as good as anyone as we have an IATA TIDS (International Air Transport Association Travel Industry Designator Service) number and are corporate members of both TAP Air Portugal and Eurostar, two international key areas of our business Portugal and France."