

## TAXI TROUBLE IN VARCA

# Goa's reputation as wedding destination under threat: TTAG

### Says Varca-like incidents will lead to a loss of business; urges govt to permit app-based taxis to operate in the State

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Travel and Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG) acknowledged on Sunday that the recent incident involving tourists, who recounted their "horrible experience" with local taxi operators outside a Varca hotel, as captured in a viral video, could damage Goa's reputation as a wed-

**It's time for local operators to develop their own app, or for the government to guarantee them a minimum rate while allowing apps like Uber and Ola. A draft app policy has been created with these considerations in mind and should be implemented as soon as possible**

— Jack Sukhija, TTAG president

ding destination. TTAG emphasised that customers' freedom of choice must be respected at all times.

Commenting on the potential impact of this

incident on Goa's tourism, particularly the wedding industry, TTAG president Jack Sukhija said, "Yes, it is a self goal, and recurring incidents will definitely lead to a loss of business."

Sukhija urged the State government to permit app-based taxis to operate in Goa, whether through an app developed by local taxi operators or by larger aggregators such as Ola and Uber.

Sukhija said, "The government needs to address the taxi issue urgently. Customers must have the freedom to choose their mode of transport. In today's world, technology and app-based transport solutions are essential and should be available throughout the State. It's time for local operators to develop their own app, or for the government to guarantee them a minimum rate while allowing apps like Uber and Ola. A draft app policy has been created with these considerations in mind and should be implemented as soon as possible."

## Varca cabbies deny allegations of ₹5k demand from pvt taxis

### Allege private operators demanded Rs 20,000 to delete the video; deny any wrong doing

Team Herald

MARGAO: Refuting allegations concerning the recent viral video incident outside a Varca hotel, taxi operators from Varca, along with representatives from North and South Goa taxi associations on Sunday firmly denied demanding Rs 5,000 from private taxis or receiving any payment during the controversial encounter.

During a media briefing, the taxi owners stated that they never asked for money and that there is no video either of them trying to extort money from the private taxi operators. The Varca cabbies alleged that these private operators demanded Rs 20,000 to delete the video, threatening to circulate it, which they ultimately uploaded.

**I challenge those making accusations to show proof that taxi operators asked for Rs 5,000. No one asked for any money, not even Rs 500. If they can prove this, I will resign from the Varca taxi stand immediately and stay at home**

— Jose Afonso, former Varca Sarpanch & veteran taxi operator

**The government is out against us, having asked us to put speed governors, meters, and GPS tracking, all of which we agreed to, yet we're still being defamed with terms like 'taxi mafia'**

— Savio Goes, senior leader of All Goa Taxi Association

Jose Afonso, former Varca Sarpanch and a veteran taxi operator, asserted that vested interests are trying to remove their taxi stand, despite their local roots. Afonso, who has been in the taxi business for over 40 years, challenged his accusers, stating, "I challenge

those making accusations to show proof that taxi operators asked for Rs 5,000. No one asked for any money, not even Rs 500. If they can prove this, I will resign from the Varca taxi stand immediately and stay at home."

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## Now, AC 'glitch' disrupts drama at Kala Academy

Team Herald

PANJIM: Just a week after a Marathi drama by Sharad Ponshe was disrupted due to lighting issues, another play, 'Shrimant Damodar-pan', featuring Bharat

Jadhav, faced interruption at Kala Academy on Sunday. This time, the air conditioning stopped functioning for some time.

Speaking to mediapersons, an audience member who attended the play

said, "The air conditioning wasn't turned on when the drama began. Since we were paying to watch the play, there should be proper facilities."

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## THREE YEARS WITH THE LORD

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## Dad Devidas, worker hatched plot to kill son Shravan: Cops

### Say Shravan was earlier arrested following five non-cognisable complaints by his father, accusing him of assault

Team Herald,

PANJIM: A shocking revelation in the Shravan Barve murder case by the Valpoi Police has revealed that the victim's strained relationship with his family for the past five years prompted his father Devidas Barve to approach his casual worker Vassudev Ozekar to hatch a conspiracy to eliminate him.

According to North Goa Superintendent of Police (SP) Akshat Kaushal, who addressed a press conference at Police Headquarters in Panjim, Vassudev stated that Devidas approached him on April 13 to plan the conspiracy.

**Ozekar, who previously worked as a daily wage labourer at the victim's farm, played an important role in the criminal act. Crime records at the Valpoi Police Station revealed multiple prior complaints filed by Devidas Barve against his son, accusing him of assault. To date, five non-cognisable complaints against the deceased have been found, leading to Shravan's previous arrests**

— Akshat Kaushal, North Goa Superintendent of Police

SP Kaushal said, "Vassudev was recently elected as president of a temple where a birthday party was organised on the fateful day. Ozekar had previously worked as a daily wage labourer at the victim's farm. He played an important role in the criminal act."

SP Kaushal said, "Crime records at the Valpoi Police

Station revealed multiple prior complaints filed by Devidas Barve against his son, accusing him of assault. To date, five non-cognisable complaints against the deceased have been found, leading to Shravan's previous arrests."

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## Rainfall, flash floods wreak havoc in Ramban, 3 dead

PTI, RAMBAN/JAMMU: Heavy rainfall due to cloudbursts triggered flash floods and landslides in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district early Sunday, leaving three people dead and damaging scores of houses, shops and roads, while more than 100 people were rescued.

Hundreds of vehicles were left stranded after traffic on the strategic 250-kilometre Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, was suspended due to debris from mountains blocking the route at nearly a dozen places between Nashri and Banihal, officials said.

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## Pope emerges from convalescence on Easter, blesses crowd

### Delights thousands with surprise popemobile tour

AP, VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis emerged from his convalescence on Easter Sunday to bless the thousands of people in St Peter's Square and treat them to a surprise popemobile romp through the piazza, drawing wild cheers and applause as he continues his recovery from a near-fatal bout of double pneumonia. "Viva il Papa!" (Long live the pope), "Bravo!" the crowd shouted as Francis looped through the square in his open-topped popemobile and then up and down the main avenue leading to it.

He stopped occasionally to bless babies brought up to him, a scene that was common in the past but un-



Pope Francis receives US Vice President JD Vance, (left) before bestowing the Urbi et Orbi (Latin for 'to the city and to the world') blessing at the end of the Easter mass presided over by Cardinal Angelo Comastri in St Peter's Square at the Vatican

thinkable just a few weeks ago as the 88-year-old Francis fought for his life. "Brothers and sisters, Happy Easter!" Francis

said, his voice sounding stronger than it has since his hospitalisation.

Francis didn't celebrate the Easter Mass in the pi-

azza, delegating it to Cardinal Angelo Comastri, the retired archbishop of St. Peter's Basilica. But after the Mass ended, Francis appeared on the loggia balcony over the basilica entrance for more than 20 minutes and imparted the apostolic blessing in Latin. The thousands of people below erupted in cheers as a military band kicked off rounds of the Holy See and Italian anthems.

Francis waved from the balcony as a Vatican archbishop read aloud his speech, a global appeal for peace in the world's hotspots that is the hallmark of the Vatican's Easter celebrations.

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