O HERALDO The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Taxi thuggery must stop immediately

rdeals that tourists living at starred resorts in the state face with local taxi operators is only another confirmation of the fact that Goa's cabbies are getting increasingly out of hand with each passing day.

It has become more the norm than the exception for local taxi drivers operating from stands in the vicinity of resorts to intercept guests travelling in cabs that are booked privately or online, threaten the drivers with dire consequences, and ensure that the staff of the resorts concerned refrain from intervening in the

Many tourists, particularly domestic holidayers or Goan-origin visitors from other nations, have often said that they have every reason to believe that the taxi operators in the state are part of some kind of cartel system. Several of them have even reiterated that people should be free to hail their own taxis—as is the practice the world over—while expressing shock that in Goa, guests at resorts are forced to use only the cabbies stationed outside the property who go on to charge whatever they

There have been enough and more instances to confirm that such brutish behaviour by taxi drivers makes them a law unto themselves and a blot on Goa's fabled hospitality. While action by the authorities is seen in some cases, it is almost always seen that these interventions do very little to deter their mafioso behavior.

Across the length and breadth of the state, particularly outside starred resorts, local taxi drivers begin their 'invasion' by first stationing their cars in the vicinity of the property concerned, forming an association and setting up a shed for shelter. Soon enough, they begin to flex their might and threaten even the resorts' operators into submission. Social media platforms are rife with videos of taxi operators stopping app-based taxi drivers, forcing tourists to cancel their trips, and even of passengers being forced to get out of taxis they had booked privately.

With tourism in Goa already on the wane this year, thuggery by taxi drivers might just be the final nail in the stuttering sector's coffin. The government has attempted to bring this faction in line on several occasions by mandating that speed governors and fare meters be installed in each tourist taxi, and that they join cab aggregators or create their own such system. Most, if not all these interventions have hardly ever taken off, which only goes to show that the taxi mafia has the blessing and the backing of a section of the government itself thereby empowering it to continue being high-handed with impunity.

The Travel and Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG) has repeatedly said that such incidents, if they recur, would certainly lead to a loss of business for multiple stakeholders and would taint Goa's reputation as a tourist and wedding destination.

Meanwhile, when they are taken to task, most unruly taxi operators rely on a tried and tested method to deflect the focus from them: Whataboutery. They often tell the media that only taxi operators are given the mafia label despite operating legitimately. Another instance of their whataboutery is when they point to the alleged "double standards" where tourism establishments freely adjust their rates seasonally without criticism, while taxi operators face constant scrutiny.

While their points of view are acknowledged, what the taxi drivers fail to understand is that tourists are free to choose among any other amenities in the state —apart from taxi services—without the proverbial gun being held to their heads. For instance, if a resort hikes its tariffs from Rs 5,000 to Rs 25,000, guests are free to move to any other cheaper accommodation of their preference without the fear of the resort threatening them to continue staying on its property only. Similarly, if airfares to Goa skyrocket, travellers are free to change their mode of travel to either rail or road without being forced by the airlines to choose only their services. The sooner the taxi operators realise this, the better.

So, what is the government waiting for? It is binding on the authorities concerned to act swiftly and strongly if it is to control this widespread thuggery, or risk losing even the tourism industry due to unruly local taxi operators. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant recently said that the state will bring in reforms and that everyone would have to come on board aggregator apps, particularly those taxi drivers who are vexed by the renewal of taxi meters.

Twitter World

Sumanth Raman @sumanthraman

India is now a country where no one in the Govt is accountable for anything. Terror attacks killing dozens of innocent civilians or military personnel, unending train derailments, disastrous economic decisions, botched infrastructure projects.... no one is answerable.

K J Singh @kjsingh2

It defies common sense that in the most militarised territory in the entire world 4 men armed with sophisticated weapons emerge out of nowhere and for 20+ minutes leisurely select and shoot 40/50 males. How come they were confident there will be no intervention? This is surreal.

comment

The bankruptcy

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Goa's hostile takeovers ndia has never been

big on corporate hostile takeovers. One can't say it is not technically possible, but usually there was a gentlemen understanding among corporate players, that you don't acquire a company without the consent of the target company's board of directors, which is usually how it's done in hostile takeovers. The regulators also made sure these takeovers are subject to scrutiny and current shareholders are given an opportunity to participate in an open offer, just in case they do not like the new owners, this becomes mandatory once the acquirer crosses 25% of shareholding. Protecting

companies from hostile takeovers had some wisdom inbuilt in it when they were conceived. The thought process was simple, a company is formed with founders taking the initial risk, pour their sweat and tears into an idea they believe and build a company, so after it gains success it cannot be given on a platter to a corporate raider with deep pockets, all set to reap the benefits of the initial risk and hard work put in by the founders.

It's another matter, when the owner is willingly ready to sell his or her company, but hostile takeovers is usually about taking a business forcibly, unfortunately sometimes situations are created to put the founders on the defense and the only way out of the quagmire for the founder is to reluctantly sell the company. Let's not go into names, but in recent years, hostile takeovers of a different kind have emerged in India, with company founders helpless and unable to save their company.



The bankruptcy code Into give a chance for bankrupt companies to reset their finances and at times sell these companies to financially stronger players. The start was fabulous in the first two cases, but it eventually got gamed by corporate raiders to purchase these target trouto nothing. In the process. hostile takeovers took a different meaning and shape, where corporate raiders previously had to pay more than the actual price, the bankruptcy code gave them an opportunity to buy set companies with probably temporary financial mismatch at bargain prices, you just had to have the

right connections.

All above, technical jar-

gon is mostly applicable to listed companies, but what about the hostile or friendly takeovers of privately held businesses. The method could differ but the intention remains the same, buy the company by hook or by crook. In USA, it is common practice, companies are sold for various reasons. When Colonel Sanders sold KFC for 2 Million Dollars, one of the factor could have been his advancing age, but more so because he found the explosive growth too overwhelming to handle at his age.

investors who bought KFC lacked the passion and sincerity of Sanders, they were in for a quick buck and they manage to sell it off in just a few years at 285 Million Dollars. Sanders was frustrated with the cost cutting measures the new owners had undertaken thereby effecting quality of his product and this is what he said to a journalist about the baby he created, but unfortunately lost control over it 'My God, that gravy is horrible. They buy tap water for 15 to 20 cents a thousand gallons and then they mix it with flour and starch and end up with pure wallpaper paste. There's no nutrition in it and they ought not to be allowed to sell it. ... [The] crispy [fried chicken] recipe is nothing in the world but a damn fried dough ball

stuck on some chicken. Goa has a lot of family businesses that might be on the verge of changing hands or passing on to the Generation Next, but sometimes due to complicated family dynamics, things can get into a limbo and when ego comes into play, it is usually the outsider who takes advantage of the situation. Goans are advised, please resolve your difference at the earliest, because once sold to new owners, there will be no control on the operations and with changing approach to business, your brand can go downhill in no time and your legacy out of the window. Please prepare your succession plan well in advance, be-

bled companies for next cause people are on the prowl and will use horrible tactics to get control over Goan businesses. Remember everything Goan is trending in India.

The reason Goan businesses need protection from raiders is that Goa will not remain the same if business owners are going to be non-Goans whose culture is diametrically opposite to ours. They will mess the business model on day one and instead of adding value to your creation they will dismantle your hard work and your legacy, similar to the deterioration of the helpless Sander's KFC.

Also once they get control over Goan businesses, they will yield so much power that Goans will be treated as second class citizens in their own place. In a recent video that went viral, a Gujarati is seen calling a Marathi Manus in their own place Bombay 'dirty people' just because they consumed non-vegetarian food in a vegetarian housing society and the local politicians did not even create a ruckus which was the general expectation of the Marathi Manus.

If the situation remains the same, then Goans better be prepared to be called worse names then 'dirty people' because of our food choices and there will be no politician that will come to rescue you. For example, there are already two Udupi restaurants in Margao city center compared to one Goan restaurant in a 100 meter surrounding area, one opened recently which carries a huge in your face Udupi sign board. Shame on the people of Margao for electing the same fellow for donkey's years, who has now converted Margao into Udupi.

Goans are also advised to please stop your one-upmanship over each other because while we fight over Konkani and Marathi, the Gjarati language is all set to take over the numero uno position. Goa is already witnessing the takeover of Goan business, call it friendly or hostile, at the moment they are now confined to the hospitality sector and the mom and pop stores which have already gone out of Goan hands. Meantime politicians have absolute no pressure to do anything about the changing dynamics because Goans have never put any pressure on politician's to preserve the Goan way of life.

(The author is a business consultant)

people's*edit*

A NATION BLEEDS IN THE VALLEY

CS KRISHNAMURTHY

The brutal terror attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir where 26 innocent tourists, including honeymooning couples, jubilant families, and foreign nationals, were massacred—has ripped through the heart of India's collective consciousness. What should have been a peaceful retreat to one of the most serene landscapes in the world turned into a horrifying bloodbath, shaking the nation to its crux.

This was not just another tragedy -but a targeted assault on humanity, harmony, and hope. These were not just statistics but living, breathing people with dreams, milestones, and stories. A newlywed naval officer and his bride, a proud father from Karnataka, a bank retiree, a local Kashmiri Muslim who shielded guests from gunfire -all fell to bullets born of hatred. These victims remind us that terror knows no religion, no reason—only ruin.

Kashmir, often poetically hailed as "Paradise on Earth," now stands scorched with grief, its snow blood-stained. The psychological wounds inflicted on the survivors will outlast any headline -children who watched parents die, mothers who lost their sons, friends who couldn't save friends. The emotional, human toll defies articulation.

While the human cost of the Pahalgam attack is overwhelming, its broader implications are equally chilling. This was a direct strike on Kashmir's socio-economic soul. The Valley, slowly emerging from the shadows of militancy, had been basking in a tourism boom -with over 2 crore visitors last year alone. Local businesses, hotels, houseboats, and artisan markets had come alive, offering hope and employment to thousands.

That is exactly what the terrorists wanted to destroy. They didn't just aim to kill people. They intended to murder Kashmir's comeback story, scare away its visitors, and strangle its economy. This wasn't random violence -it was economic sabotage wrapped in ideological extremism.

Will tourists feel safe again? Can we truly protect those who come to celebrate Kashmir's beauty?

These are not just rhetorical questions. They demand real answers and swift action.

A crisis of security, the cost of complacency

For all the government's reassurances about a "terror-free Kashmir," the reality has proven painfully different. Pahalgam, with its proximity to the Amarnath Yatra route, should have been under high surveillance. Yet, heavily armed terrorists, dressed in military fatigues, crept in with chilling precision.

What went wrong? Was there a lapse in intelligence? Why was real-time surveillance not active in such a critical location?

These are not questions of blame, but accountability. Despite their claims, terror outfits like The Resistance Front (TRF)—a known proxy of Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Taiba - continue to operate with impunity. The timing of the attack, coinciding with the visit of US Vice President JD Vance and a critical diplomatic trip by India's Prime Min-

ister, indicates this was a calculated move. Pakistan's hand in this is not just suspected -it's glaring. The toxic rhetoric from their Army chief just days before the attack underscores their continued support for cross-border terrorism. It's time, the world recognises Pakistan not merely as a "troubled neighbour" but as a habitual offender.

What must be done?

India must now act -not react -with strategic clarity and moral courage. Here are some urgent steps:

1. Tourist hubs must be secured with AI-driven surveillance, drone patrolling, and better on-ground visibility. 2. Strengthen local informant networks by restoring trust and empowering community policing.

3. Victims' families need both compensation and trauma care. Business recovery packages for local stakeholders are essential.

4. Global platforms like the UN must be used to expose Pakistan's terror nexus, demanding sanctions where necessary.

Mere condemnation is not enough. Lastly

Kashmir is not just a piece of land. It is a pulse, a people, a promise of unity in diversity. Let Pahalgam not just be remembered for the blood spilled—but for the united resolve it awakens. Let us not be divided by religion, but united by justice. Let this not remain just another news cycle, but a national awakening.

Wipe out terrorism

Immediately after the heinous and blood curdling terror attack on innocent tourists, Kashmir valley observed a shutdown against the same for the first time in 35 years. Political parties and organisations from all walks of life and the people supported the bandh call to protest the killings in Pahalgam.

The shutdown observed is a symbolic display of collective grief and protest against the deadly terrorist attack and truly shows the unity and solidarity of the people. It also goes to show that the people want peace and it is only through peace that progress and prosperity can come. It's truly a powerful message of unity and resilience in the face of violence, as Kashmiri's mourn the loss of innocent lives and reaffirm their collective stand against terrorism.

The state no doubt has seen a lot of progress in the past few years and with normalcy returning there was an enhancement of tourism infrastructure, job creation and along with this a lot of development taking place in the transportation and other sectors resulting in an economic boost like never before.

Progress puts an end to poverty, unemployment and evils like radicalism and extremism.

which took place on Tuesday in . !! the show must go on. Dream 11 This what would have made anti national agencies and foreign Kashmir was due to intelligence failure and the Indian government alone should be held accountable for the same.

letterstotheeditor

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powered terror working cells to attack civilians and create panic and fear. These agents of chaos, blood shed and death - both alien When Israel can strike Hamas in a jiffy, what is stopping the and domestic need to be tracked and completely wiped out for Government of India from striking Pakistan in a similar manner only in their elimination can this beautiful paradise on earth reasto defend our sovereignty? sure the people of the state and It's time we stand up against it's guests that it is indeed a par-Pakistan because if we don't react adise. At this time of grief, it's the now then that we will definitely duty of all Indians - irrespective continue to bleed us forever.

of religion, region and any polit-

ical affiliation to stay United and

India on Wednesday has an-

nounced a series of strong diplo-

matic measures against Pakistan

which include the suspension

of the Indus Waters Treaty, clo-

sure of the Wagah-Attari bor-

der and cancellation of visas for

Pakistani nationals in view of

cross-border links to the Pahal-

gan terror attack that claimed 26

I still do feel that the attack

lives on Tuesday afternoon.

Need to stand up

against Pakistan

Jerry Fernandes, Saligao

swear to wipe out terrorism. Massacre? But the M Pradyu, Kannur show must go on

It has been less than 48 hours since terrorists killed 28 Indians in Kashmir; there is hurt, pain and anger in every countryman's heart. Those murdered include a newlywed Naval Officer, a businessman from Kanpur, a resident of Bengaluru on vacation with his wife and their son, an intelligence bureau officer serving the nation, an NCO of the Indian Air Force hailing from Arunachal

Pradesh, and many others. But it is business as usual for BCCI, the IPL circus continues, hev

is back to nudge you place bets. We can still understand poor people trying to eke out a living, but BCCI which earned \$2.2 billion last year represents India. Couldn't it have shown solidarity and compassion for the deceased by putting on hold cricket matches for a single day?

This is beyond nauseating, our deshbhakti stops where business starts, our sympathy ends when Mammon talks. From clubbing to filling cricket stadiums, we are back to who we really are - insensitive, pitiless money worshippers. A mass murder doesn't matter, it's just a speck of dust to be casually flicked away from our carefully creased jacket sleeves.

Rekha Sarin Trehan, Benaulim

Need to be proactive in combating terror

Terrorists opened fire at Pahalgam in Kashmir killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in what is considered as the deadliest attack in the valley since the Pulwana strike in 2019. There seems to be a deliberate attempt to target tourists, including foreign tourists in order to gain international attention. The timing, choice of target, and the manner in which the attack was carried out suggest strategic objectives that its planners had in mind. The attack also comes at a

time when the US Vice President ID Vance and his family are vacationing in India. It is learnt that following the Pahalgam terror attack, security has been tightened in Goa. Since terrorists have been targeting tourist destinations in the country, the threat to Goa which is a tourist destination cannot be taken lightly. It may be recalled that in 2000, a series of bombings were carried out inside churches in Goa, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh by the Islamist extremist group Deendar Anjuman.

On June 9 in the same year, a bomb exploded at St Andrew's church in Vasco. Tourism and tourists are under the permanent threat of terrorism which also has an impact on the economy of the region. After a terrorist attack, it is observed the security is heightened across the country. This happened after the 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai in 2008. The security was then gradually downsized. We need to be proactive and not reactive in preventing terror attacks.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

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