

O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Taxi thuggery must stop immediately

Ordeals 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 matter.

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 like.

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



PLASTINO D'COSTA

Goa's hostile takeovers

India 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 India framed was supposed to 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 troubled companies for next to nothing



The bankruptcy code India framed was supposed to 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 trou-

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.

Need to stand up against Pakistan

India on Wednesday has announced a series of strong diplomatic measures against Pakistan which include the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, closure of the Wagah-Attari border and cancellation of visas for Pakistani nationals in view of cross-border links to the Pahalgam terror attack that claimed 26 lives on Tuesday afternoon. I still do feel that the attack

M Pradyu, Kannur

letterstotheeditor

For letters to the editor contact us at editor@herald-go.com.

All letters must contain correct postal address and telephone number. Letters are liable to be edited for brevity.

Which took place on Tuesday in Kashmir was due to intelligence failure and the Indian government alone should be held accountable for the same.

When Israel can strike Hamas in a jiffy, what is stopping the Government of India from striking Pakistan in a similar manner to defend our sovereignty? It's time we stand up against Pakistan because if we don't react now then that we will definitely continue to bleed us forever.

Jerry Fernandes, Saligao

Massacre? But the 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, hey

!! the show must go on. Dream 11 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.

Rexha 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 Pulwama strike in 2019. There seems to be a deliberate attempt to target tourists, including foreign tour-

ists 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 JD 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

people'sedit

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 core.

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 Minister, 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.