

Margao family narrowly escapes terror attack in Pahalgam

Decision to visit the scenic Baisaran valley earlier in the day to avoid crowds ended up saving their lives; they descended 15 minutes before the shooting

Team Herald

MARGAO: A Margao-based family of three had a miraculous escape from the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir. Damodar Naik, his wife Shalini, and their son were part of a group of 12 tourists who left the area just 10 to 15 minutes before the shooting began.

The Naik family, who returned to their home in Margao on Thursday, recounted their harrowing experience to **O Herald**. According to Damodar, their early arrival at the popular tourist spot may have saved their lives.

"We reached Pahalgam in the morning along with our group. Since there weren't too many people around, we had a peaceful time



Damodar Naik and his son at their Margao home



The family during their visit to Pahalgam's Baisaran valley on the morning of the shooting

"We reached Pahalgam in the morning along with our group. Since there weren't too many people around, we had a peaceful time exploring the area, eating bhelpuri, and clicking photos in traditional Kashmiri attire. It truly felt like a dream location—Pahalgam is called 'mini Switzerland' for a reason. But we now realise how lucky we were — Damodar Naik, Margao resident

exploring the area, eating bhelpuris, and clicking photos in traditional Kashmiri attire," he said. "It truly felt

like a dream location—Pahalgam is called 'mini Switzerland' for a reason. But we now realise how

lucky we were."

Naik believes the attackers had targeted the larger crowds that began arriving later in the day. "While we were leaving, we noticed many more tourists, including families with children, heading up the same route. The terrorists, we were later told, spared women and children and deliberately targeted Hindu men," he added.

Their group had gone into a nearby hotel for lunch when they were informed about the attack. "The hotelier broke the news of the firing. We were stunned. One of our group members had a flight to catch, so we had already planned to return by 12:30 pm. That timing may have saved us," he said.

The family expressed deep gratitude for their narrow escape. "We truly believe it was divine intervention," Shalini said. "What was meant to be a peaceful holiday turned into something we will never forget."

The family has urged fellow tourists to stay vigilant and follow all safety advisories while travelling in sensitive regions.

Beef extortion: Konkani PI moves bail plea

Sources said ACB has an audio recording of constable haggling for a higher amount, where he claims to pay his higher-ups

Team Herald

MARGAO: Police Inspector Sunil Gudlar of the Konkani Railway Police Station, who was arrested by the Directorate of Vigilance's Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) for allegedly extorting and accepting a bribe of Rs 25,000 from a meat trader, has moved a bail application before the Sessions Court in Margao.

The bail application was heard on Wednesday before the Additional District and Sessions Judge. However, the ACB sought time to respond. The court has posted the matter for argument on Monday, April 28. Public Prosecutor V G Costa was present during the hearing.

Inspector Gudlar and constable Mohammad Hussien Haryar were arrested by the ACB on Tuesday following a complaint from a meat trader from Belagavi, Karnataka. The complainant alleged that the officers had demanded Rs 2 lakh to release seized meat and allow him to continue his trade, subject to a monthly payment of Rs 25,000 as 'protection money'

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According to the ACB, the complainant provided a voice recording in which constable Hussien is allegedly heard haggling for a higher monthly payout, since he has to pass it on to "the people on top".

Acting on the complaint filed on April 21, ACB officials laid a trap and conducted a raid at the Konkani Railway Police Station, where they recovered Rs 25,000 from the cabin of a senior officer.

Flood risk: Churchill calls for desilting of Saldem lake

Team Herald

MARGAO: Former Beaulim MLA Churchill Alemao has urged authorities to act swiftly to desilt River Sal and the Saipem lake, warning that neglect of these water bodies could spell trouble for nearby communities with the onset of the monsoon.

While speaking to the media, Alemao said both the river and the lake are ecologically and culturally significant, and have long served the needs of the people. However, years of neglect and silt accumulation have compromised their natural flow and utility, he said.

"We can't predict how heavy the rains might be. If the silt isn't cleared in time, water could overflow into agricultural fields and cause serious losses to farmers," Alemao cautioned. Turning attention to Saipem lake, Alemao lamented its current state, describing it as a vanishing part of local heritage. "This lake was once an integral part of life in Navelim and across Goa. People used to bathe in it, but now it's barely visible" he said.

He also expressed concern about pollution in River Sal, pointing out that sewage continues to contaminate the water.

Traders refuse to pay MMC's revised fees, call hike illegal

Team Herald

MARGAO: The protest against the recent hike in Margao Municipal Council (MMC) fees has intensified, with commercial establishment owners formally refusing to pay the revised rates, alleging that the increase exceeds what was approved by the Council on 27 February 2025.

A group of citizens and taxpayers has termed the hike illegal and demanded its immediate withdrawal.

At a press conference, Shadow Council of Margao convener Savio Coutinho was joined by Adv. Snehal Onskar, architect Carlos Gracias, Lincoln Gomes, Aneil Alvares, Robert Vaz, Anwar Naro, Clifford Dias, and Camilo Camara. Coutinho presented copies of letters submitted by traders, stating their refusal to comply with the new fees, citing the February Council resolution that allowed only a 10-15% increase.

He accused MMC Chairperson Damodar Shirodkar of deploying market inspectors to threaten traders with sealing orders if they failed to pay under the new structure, calling it "an act of extortion". He also questioned why no action had been taken to recover Rs. 3 lakh in dues allegedly owed by a Margao BJP Mandal office bearer.

Protesters said they had compiled video evidence showing Chairperson Shirodkar and councillors—including BJP councillor Camilo Barretto—stating that only a modest hike was approved. These clips will be circulated to business owners to resist any pressure from municipal staff. Coutinho also revealed that Fatorda councillors had filed an objection with the Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA), challenging the unauthorised hike. He maintained that this objection gave legal ground to withhold payment at the inflated rates.

Lincoln Gomes said several complaints had been received from business owners, and urged them to submit written refusals and use the video evidence to counter intimidation. Adv. Snehal Onskar criticised both the MMC Chairperson and BJP MLA Digambar Kamat for the April 2023 hike in residential sanitation fees—from Rs 600 to Rs. 900—higher than Panjim's corresponding fee, which remains Rs 600. Protesters also condemned the Council's decision to apply the new rates to transfer fees, even for applications submitted before the start of the financial year.

Goa Muslim Forum condemns Pahalgam terror attack

Team Herald

MARGAO: Members of the All Goa Muslim Forum, joined by citizens of different faiths, staged a peaceful demonstration outside the South Goa Collectorate on Wednesday, condemning the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir.

The Forum submitted a memorandum to the South Goa Collector, denouncing the "inhuman and cowardly" attack and calling it an assault on peace, justice, and humanity. Signed by Forum president Shaikh Iftikar, the memorandum expressed solidarity with the victims' families and offered prayers for the injured.

Protesters highlighted how Kashmiri Muslims have come to the aid of stranded tourists amid the unrest, urging the public and media to acknowledge these acts of compassion. They voiced concern over the growing vilification of Muslims in Kashmir and attempts to equate an entire community with terrorism.

"Terrorism has no religion," the memorandum stressed. "The teachings of Islam strictly prohibit the killing of innocents and promote peace, compassion, and coexistence."

The Forum urged authorities to ensure civilian safety, bring the perpetrators to justice, and work toward lasting peace in the region.

IN SOLIDARITY



Members of the All Goa Muslim Forum stage a peaceful vigil outside the Matanhy Saldanha Administrative Complex in Margao. Appealing against terrorism and violence, they called for harmony and respect for human dignity across all communities.

Konkan Railway fines over 1 lakh ticketless travellers

Collects Rs. 23.10 cr in fines in 2024-25

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a continued effort to curb fare evasion and ensure disciplined travel, the Konkani Railway administration significantly intensified its ticket inspection campaigns during the financial year 2024-25, resulting in the collection of Rs. 23.10 crore in fines.

This marks an increase of Rs. 1.70 crore compared to the previous year (2023-24). As part of its ongoing initiative to improve passenger compliance and safeguard revenue, the railway conducted 9,731 ticket inspection campaigns across the year. These efforts led to the detection and penalisation of

1,11,500 passengers travelling without valid tickets. By comparison, the 2023-24 financial year saw 6,308 inspections and action taken against 78,115 ticketless passengers, with Rs. 21.40 crore collected in fines. The sharp rise in inspections and offenders reflects both the scale of fare evasion and the administration's strengthened enforcement measures.

Despite regular drives and stricter penalties, officials observed a concerning trend: an increase in passengers attempting to travel without tickets. They expressed worry that many continue to flout the rules despite increased surveillance. To tackle the issue, frequent

ticket-checking drives are being carried out across trains operating on the Konkani Railway network. These inspections aim not only to penalise violators but also to deter potential offenders and promote responsible travel.

Ticket inspecting officers were felicitated last year by the corporation's Chief Managing Director for their commendable contribution to revenue protection and discipline on trains.

The Konkani Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL) has reaffirmed its commitment to these efforts, stating that tackling ticketless travel will remain a priority and that enforcement will continue with the same rigour in the coming year.

Goa coastal authority backs Colva Residency reconstruction plan

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA) has given its approval to a revised proposal from the Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) for the redevelopment of aging Colva Residency and has recommended it to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) for Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearance.

The project, which GTDC intends to carry out through private investment, involves the complete demolition and reconstruction of the existing structure within the High Tide Line 200-500 metre zone. GCZMA's expert members who inspected the site reported that the current building has partially

collapsed. GTDC has proposed a new construction consisting of a stilt floor, ground floor, and first floor.

During the inspection, it was observed that the structure in question does not appear on the survey plan prepared by the Directorate of Settlement and Land Records.

The GCZMA expert panel advised GTDC to produce documentation proving the structure existed prior to 1991. Following this, GTDC submitted a revised proposal accompanied by relevant documents, including the land survey records.

The proposal also includes the reconstruction of existing elements such as the compound wall and temporary structures located within the No Development Zone (NDZ).

Migrant influx linked to rise in crime, while South Goa police solve all murder cases so far this year

Team Herald

MARGAO: The influx of migrant workers into South Goa's villages—mainly for construction work—has steadily risen over the last decade. This growth, however, has been accompanied by a marginal rise in crime, including several murders. The South Goa police have successfully solved all murder cases reported so far this year.

Between January and April 16, five individuals have been arrested in connection with five separate murder cases. Three of these occurred in March, and one in April. In a notable breakthrough in February, a murder accused on

Police records show that South Goa witnessed 13 murders in 2024, compared to 9 in 2023. Despite the increase, police solved all cases reported in both years. Attempted murder cases remained steady at 10 in both 2023 and 2024—all detected. Between January and April 16 this year, South Goa police arrested 5 individuals in 5 separate murder cases

the run for 35 years was arrested in Raia. Basappa, from Yadgir, Karnataka, was wanted in a 1990 case registered under IPC Section 302. In March, Verna Police arrested two men—Santosh Indar Mallick (22) and Pradhan Nalika Mandal (35), both from Odisha—for allegedly stabbing Anil Muthamajhi (20) to death over a dispute about free chicken at a Cortalim poultry farm. Another person, Jihusaya Mandal (39), was

injured in the attack.

That same month, Mormugao police arrested a man for fatally stabbing his elder brother. In another shocking incident, a couple in Usgao was arrested for allegedly killing a five-year-old girl from their neighbourhood and burying her body in their backyard.

In April, Maina-Curtorim Police arrested two more Odisha natives, Sashibant Majhi (43) and Rabi Majhi (28), in connection with

the murder of 38-year-old Khageswar Sabar, who was found dead in a rented room in Raia. A drunken brawl reportedly led to the fatal attack. Most of the accused in these cases were migrant labourers.

Some residents link the rise in crime to the rapid development of villages in Salcete taluka—including Margao, Curtorim, Colva, Fatorda, and Cunclim—calling for heightened police vigilance.

Margao advocate Vinay Patkar said the surge in economically vulnerable migrants from States such as Karnataka, Odisha, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and West Bengal—working in construction, restaura-

nts, workshops, and petrol pumps—has coincided with an uptick in crimes like murder and attempted murder. "Most are single, young males and often take up jobs without proper background checks," he claimed. A senior police officer assured that every effort is being made to curb crime, and police stations are conducting tenant and servant verification, processing 670 forms until March 12, with details sent to headquarters for validation. When contacted, Colva PI Ritesh Tari said they have intensified tenant verification, regularly conducting checks in the coastal villages to ensure full compliance.

Over 2,000 garbage offences booked in South Goa so far in 2025

Team Herald

MARGAO: South Goa police stations have registered 2,111 cases under the Goa Non-Biodegradable Garbage (Control) Act, 1996, up to April 1 this year. Despite this enforcement, open dumping of garbage continues to be a major civic concern, particularly in Margao.

According to police data, Canacona police booked the highest number of cases—479—followed by Cunclim with 248, Fatorda with 185, and Ponda with 173. Other police stations reported the following: Quepem (191), Maina-Curtorim (152), Sanguem (102), Colva (62), Curcholem (286), Vasco (80), Mardol (76), Collem (42), and Verna (23). Notably, Mormugao police booked only two cases, while Dabolim police booked none.

While cases are being registered, the issue of illegal waste disposal continues, especially in urban areas like Margao, a commercial hub that generates a large volume of waste.



Open dumping of garbage remains widespread, with stray animals often seen scavenging in uncovered waste heaps, raising serious public health and sanitation concerns.

As of December 18, 2024, a total of 7,342 cases had been booked across South Goa under the Act. This marks an increase from 2023, when 6,746 cases were registered. In 2023, Curcholem police led the crackdown with 1,870 cases. In contrast, Dabolim Airport and Vasco Railway Station police stations reported no cases, raising questions about either cleanliness levels or enforcement practices in those areas.

Despite Margao's reputation as a major urban centre, only 572 garbage-related cases were booked there in 2024.

The Goa Non-Biodegradable Garbage (Control) Act prohibits the disposal of plastic and other non-biodegradable waste in public spaces, drains, and water bodies. Violators are subject to penalties for endangering public health and causing environmental damage.

A local advocate highlighted the harmful consequences of illegal dumping, noting that such practices lead to blocked drains, unhygienic conditions, and the proliferation of stray animals, which can cause accidents and health risks.