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Panjim | SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2025 | PRICE ₹10.00 | AIR SURCHARGE ₹10 | REG. NO. G2/RNP/GOA/101/2021-23 | PAGES 18 | GOA'S LARGEST CIRCULATED NEWSPAPER

TAXI TROUBLE: UK FAMILY HARASSED IN VARCA

Alleges local taxi operators blocked their vehicles, intimidated their drivers and let them leave only after making the drivers pay Rs 5,000

Team Herald

MARGAO: Goa's reputation as a tourist destination took another hit after members of a UK-based family, who were in the State for a wedding, had a 'horrible experience', as they complained of being harassed by the local taxi operators outside a resort in Varca.

They claimed that the incident occurred after they booked private taxis online to take them to the airport for their return journey on April 17, just before their connecting flight from Gujarat to the UK. The tourists alleged that their vehicles were blocked, their drivers were intimidated, while the resort staff chose not to intervene.

According to one of the male tourists, they had booked four to five taxis online, but local drivers stopped them as they tried to leave the resort.

"They blocked all of our cars. They started banging on the windows, arguing with the drivers, saying they would harm their families. This isn't how guests should be treated," he said.

"We should be able to get our own taxis like anywhere else in the world. But it seems there's some sort of cartel system here — you have to use only their taxis, and they can charge whatever they like," he said.

> They blocked all of our cars. They started banging on the windows, arguing with the drivers, saying they would harm their families. This isn't how guests should be treated
> – A male tourist

> These people gave us such a nightmare, a horrible experience. They would not let us travel in peace. And there is a high chance that we're going to miss our flight. This is bad. Not good for India. Not good for Goa. Not good for any guests who are planning to come here
> – Bride's mother

> We were only there to pick up the passengers who had booked with us. The fight started when we were stopped by them (the Varca taxi drivers who have a local taxi stand near the hotel). We were only defending ourselves and asking why we were being blocked
> – Private taxi operator hired by the family

He claimed that the drivers they had booked were ultimately allowed to leave only after paying Rs 5,000 to those drivers, allegedly from the taxi stand there, who were blocking the way.

The incident has since gained widespread attention after video recordings taken by family members inside the taxis were uploaded onto social media platforms. The viral videos have sparked outrage online, with many expressing concerns about the impact on Goa's tourism industry and calling for strict action from authorities against such harassment the tourists face at the hand of local taxi operators when they book their own private taxis.

The bride's mother, visibly distressed, is heard to say, "These people gave us such a nightmare, horrible experience. They would not let us travel properly. And there is a high chance that we're going to miss our flight. This is bad. Not good for India. Not good for Goa. Not good for any guests who are planning to come here."

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CABBIES BOOKED FOR UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY, ABUSE AND EXTORTION

MARGAO: Colva Police have registered an offence against a group of cabbies for forming an unlawful assembly, restraining tourist taxi drivers booked by the guests, abusing guests and extorting Rs 5,000 for releasing the vehicle outside a resort at Varca.

In his complaint on behalf of the State, Colva PSI Prashant S Bhagat stated that on April 17, Oliveiro Fernandes, Brito Fernandes, Remy Rodrigues, driver Sanjay (full name unknown), Seby, Vice President of Tourist Taxi Association Varca, full name unknown), and other local taxi drivers formed an unlawful assembly near the resort entrance at Pedda-Varca at around 3 pm.

The complaint further stated that the accused allegedly restrained tourist taxi drivers booked by the resort guests, who were there to pick them up for an airport drop-off. The accused also allegedly abused the taxi drivers and hotel guests and extorted Rs 5,000 for releasing the tourist vehicle, due to the guests choosing another tourist taxi for the airport drop.

Colva Police registered the offence under sections of BNS.

PSI Bhagat is investigating the case.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

VISHNU NARVEKAR

Fr Tony holds the Paschal candle during the Easter vigil outside Our Lady of Fatima Shrine, Panjim

CM says no houses will be touched, Bhomkars stick to bypass demand

Sawant says PWD team will present the expansion plan to the villagers at the Mantralaya tomorrow

Team Herald

PONDA: Despite Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's promise to Bhoma residents that no house or temple would be touched during the NH expansion, the locals remained steadfast on their demand for a bypass to preserve the village culture.

In a meeting with Bhoma residents, the Chief Minister announced that the PWD technical team will present the expansion plan to the villagers at the Mantralaya on Monday at 10.30 am, with revisions to be made to protect affected areas.

> I don't want to demolish a single house or temple. If any house is being affected, show me. I'm ready to change the plan
> – Pramod Sawant, *Chief Minister*

> We have been advocating for a bypass for the past two-and-a-half years, but the alignment plan has never been presented to Bhoma residents. While the Chief Minister discusses widening the existing NH road, Bhoma residents are agitating for a bypass to protect the entire village from a flyover structure that would hinder their cultural preservation efforts.
> – Sanjay Naik, *a Bhoma resident*

During a meeting with a delegation of Bhoma villagers on Friday, Sawant addressed concerns about the proposed road project that could potentially impact homes and a temple and affirmed his commitment to ensuring that no houses would be affected.

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Greens hail HC order directing mining cos to pay Rs 2 cr to DMF

Call for utilising District Mineral Fund for welfare of locals affected by mining ops; accuse govt of diverting the fund for other purposes

Team Herald

PANJIM: The villagers of Sirigao and environmentalists have welcomed the decision of the High Court of Bombay at Goa that the mining companies must pay Rs 2 crore to the District Mineral Fund (DMF) for the damage caused to agricultural lands in the village.

Environmentalist Ramesh Gauns said, "The High Court upheld its decision but it is ironic that the State government does not know why the District Mineral Fund has been established. The DMF should be solely utilised for the welfare of the villagers affected by mining operations in their respective areas. But the government is diverting this fund for other purposes."

> Mining affects low-lying fields and water bodies and during monsoon silt flows down and gets deposited in these low-lying fields and water bodies. Mining companies should take responsibility and rejuvenate them
> – Swapnesh Sherlekar, *activist*

Sirigao Nagarik Sanghatana and Tenant Association of Kharat Savat Khajan, president Dinanath Gaonkar said, "After High Court directives in 2019, the WRD prepared estimates and desilted the creek, constructed a sluice gate and carried out restoration of fields damaged by mining activity. The three mining companies deposited a total of Rs 2 crore but had contested the decision to pay the money. The Advocate General told the Court about the Polluter Pays Principle and the Court upheld it and forfeited their deposited money."

Gaonkar said, "Though we are able to cultivate 35 hectares of paddy fields, we still face problems as we are unable to cultivate five hectares of fields due to water logging."

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Guv, CM, Archbishop extend Easter greetings

Team Herald

PANJIM: Governor P S Sreedharan Pillai, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Archbishop Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrao have extended their heartiest greetings and warm wishes to the people of Goa on the occasion of Easter.

In his message, the Governor said "Easter commemorates the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, the resurrection of Christ is the eternal hope and foundation of Christian life and faith. Easter is the symbol of victory over all the evil forces."

The Governor went on to add, "Jesus Christ taught us to love God and love our fellow human beings. Let us practice the ideals of Lord Jesus Christ so as to make the world a better place to live in'.

Chief Minister, Dr Pramod Sawant in his message to the people said, "Easter commemorates the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, three days after his death. Jesus Christ rose on the third day after his crucifixion. Easter is the crucial sign and divine symbol of victory over forces of death, darkness and evil. Easter is a time to share happiness."

"May the Easter celebration inspire everyone to win over sin. Let us celebrate it in such a way that it will bring greater peace, prosperity, happiness and unity among all. May the celebration of Easter brighten our mind with hope and empathy and motivate us to seek happiness in every step of life," he added.

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At last, Churchill Bros crowned I-League champions

Earn ISL promotion; after dismissal of their appeal, Inter Kashi to approach Court of Arbitration for Sport

PTI, NEW DELHI: Churchill Brothers were belatedly crowned I-League champions and handed promotion to the Indian Super League after the All India Football Federation's Appeals Committee ruled against second-placed Inter Kashi on Saturday.

Reacting to the verdict, Inter Kashi released a statement calling the process "protracted" and signalling their intent to escalate the matter to Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

Churchill Brothers had finished provisionally on top of the I-League table (with 40 points), after the final round of matches on April 6 but their wait for the title and a historic promotion to the ISL depended on the verdict of the AIFF's Appeal Committee which was to decide a case involving second-placed Inter Kashi (39 points).

The controversy was related to Inter Kashi's match against Namdhari SC on January 13, when the latter won 2-0. But the AIFF Disciplinary Committee later ruled that Namdhari fielded an ineligible player. The committee awarded a 3-0 forfeit win to Inter Kashi along with three points.

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> Today, we are officially crowned champions of the I-League 2024–25. This isn't just a trophy—it's a resurrection of belief, of dignity, of everything we stood for
> – Churchill Bros FC

> ... Churchill Brothers FC, Inter Kashi, and Namdhari FC ha obtained 40 points, 39 points, and 32 points respectively. Accordingly, Churchill Brothers FC Goa, Inter Kashi, and Namdhari FC stands at No. 1, No. 2, and No.6 respectively at the Points table: I-League 24-25. As the I-League has concluded on April 6, 2025, the AIFF is directed to act forthwith by conducting a medal distribution ceremony in accordance with points obtained respectively
> – AIFF Appeals Committee ruling