

Goa's 2025: A Year of Tragedy

A State Caught Between Grief and Denial

By Suraj Nandrekar

If there was one emotion that defined Goa in 2025, it was grief. Not the sudden kind that fades with time, but a steady accumulation of sorrow, anger and disbelief. Month after month, tragedy followed tragedy, exposing cracks in governance, safety systems and public accountability. Goa, long marketed as a haven of peace and pleasure, found itself confronting an uncomfortable truth: the state was failing its people when they needed protection the most.

From religious gatherings turning deadly to fires claiming dozens of lives, from violent crime to relentless road fatalities, 2025 was less about isolated incidents and more

about a pattern of neglect. Even as festivals were hosted and elections won, a sense of insecurity seeped into everyday life.

Lairai Zatra: Faith Turns Fatal

The year's first major shock came at the Lairai Zatra in Shirgao. A centuries-old religious tradition, deeply rooted in faith and community, ended in tragedy when six devotees lost their lives amid a chaotic rush. Survivors described panic, lack of crowd control and confusion during rescue efforts.

The incident raised uncomfortable questions. How did authorities allow such a massive gathering without adequate safety planning? Where were emergency exits, medical teams and crowd marshals?



For many families, official condolences and compensation could never replace what was lost. The tragedy also reignited debate over whether faith-based events are exempt

from basic safety norms, and at what cost.

Birch Fire Tragedy: 25 Lives Lost to Negligence

If Lairai exposed gaps in planning, the Birch fire laid bare the consequences

of sustained regulatory failure. The blaze claimed 25 lives, many of them trapped with no escape as flames spread rapidly. Survivors spoke of locked exits, overcrowding and the absence of fire safety equipment.

The tragedy was not just about fire. It was about illegal structures, ignored warnings and a system that reacts only after disaster strikes. Once again, committees were formed and investigations promised. But among the public, there was a growing sense that accountability in Goa ends with announcements, not action.

Armed Dacoities: Fear Enters Goan Homes

2025 also marked a disturbing shift in Goa's crime landscape. Armed dacoities, once rare, became alarmingly frequent. Reports of masked men wielding weapons, breaking into homes and terrorizing families shattered the state's long-held image of safety. These crimes were not confined to isolated

areas. Villages and urban neighbourhoods alike felt vulnerable. Many residents admitted they no longer felt safe at night. The rise of such violent crimes pointed to deeper problems in policing, intelligence gathering and deterrence.

Rape and Murder: A Crisis of Safety

Cases of rape and murder continued to haunt Goa throughout the year. Each incident sparked outrage, protests and demands for justice. Yet, convictions remained slow, and investigations often dragged on.

For women, 2025 intensified fears about safety in both public and private spaces. Activists argued that beyond policing, there was a failure to address social attitudes, victim support and fast-track justice. The recurring nature of these crimes made it difficult to dismiss them as aberrations.

Law and Order: A System Under Strain

By mid-year, the phrase "collapse of law and

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Mahadayi Talks Move in Circles as PRAWAH Meet Ends Without Site Inspection

Fifth meeting in Delhi focuses on procedures and paperwork while Goa's key concerns remain unaddressed

By Satyavatinandan Satrekar

The fifth meeting of the Mahadayi – Progressive River Authority for Welfare and Harmony (PRAWAH), held in New Delhi, once again highlighted the gap between administrative deliberations and action on the ground, particularly for Goa, which continues to press for inspection of the contentious Kalasa diversion site.

The meeting was held at the conference hall of the Central Water Commission, with officials from Mahadayi basin states participating. Goa's presence was limited to online participation,

with senior Water Resources Department officials including Secretary Sarpreet Singh Gill, Chief Engineer Dnyaneshwar Salelkar and Mhadei Cell official Deelip Naik joining the discussions virtually, as they could not attend in person.

Despite Goa's repeated requests, the Authority has so far not initiated any inspection of the Kalasa project site at Kankumbi, where Mahadayi waters are being diverted into the Malaprabha river basin. The absence of any assurance or timeline on this issue emerged as the most significant takeaway from the meeting for Goa.

The Authority confirmed the

minutes of its fourth meeting held on April 22, 2025, in Bengaluru, and took up detailed discussions on the procedure for granting final clearance to new minor irrigation and drinking water projects proposed by the basin states. The issue is seen as critical, as future projects could have long-term implications for water availability in the Mahadayi basin.

Officials from Goa requested a one-month period to submit their comments and suggestions on the proposed clearance procedure. While Karnataka has already submitted its inputs, Goa and Maharashtra are yet to do so. PRAWAH decided

that the final procedure would be adopted only after receiving suggestions from all party states, underscoring the need for unanimity on sensitive water-sharing matters.

The meeting also called upon all states to furnish updated details on the salient features and status of completed and ongoing major, medium and minor irrigation schemes, including water supply projects within the Mahadayi basin. Additionally, the Authority directed states to share hydrometeorological and other water resource data for all schemes and sites in the basin, a move aimed at

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MAIN POINTS

- Fifth PRAWAH meeting held at Central Water Commission in New Delhi
- Goa officials participated online; none attended physically
- No inspection conducted or assured at Kalasa diversion site in Kankumbi
- Minutes of April 22, 2025 Bengaluru meeting confirmed
- Detailed discussion on final clearance procedure for new irrigation and drinking water projects
- Goa sought one month to submit comments; Karnataka has already submitted inputs
- Final procedure to be adopted only after inputs from Goa and Maharashtra
- States asked to submit details of all irrigation and water supply schemes in Mahadayi basin
- PRAWAH seeks sharing of hydrometeorological and water resource data
- Authority functioning with additional-charge officers despite approved 45-post structure
- Goa has provided space for Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal in Porvorim
- PRAWAH asks Goa to allot land for independent Authority office