

GOA GRADUALLY TURNS FROM A POPULAR TRAVEL DESTINATION TO A CRIME HUB



Goa, India's smallest but one of the richest states, has opened its borders not long ago in a move to try and revive the tourism industry inevitably struck by the COVID-19 pandemic. Usually, the state is visited by millions of tourists annually for its beaches, beautiful sights and nightlife, with visitors bringing income and prosperity to the prominent travel destination. However, this year is considerably different and there are many unprecedented problems connected with the pandemic and the renewed tourism flow.

The Coronavirus pandemic has decimated the tourism industry and left many people without a job. For this reason, a part of the unemployed may be enticed to turn to petty crime to provide for their families.

Illegal Tourism Businesses

As a result, the number of illegal tourism business is destined to grow and tourists will be more likely to become the victims of fraud or other, perhaps even violent, crimes. This would inevitably lead to the worsening of Goa's image as a travel destination.

"We informed Goa Tourism about the huge illegality, but they did not act. There is a huge problem with state revenue leakage because touts are making a lot of money. The money earned is sent out of the state without being taxed. The number of illegal guest houses and hotels in the state is huge," Serafino Cotta, a hotel owner in Calangute, told O Herald.

Tourists as Criminals?

However, crimes committed by the locals is only one perspective of the Goa issue. Since the opening of the borders, local authorities have observed the birth of a new phenomenon - crimes committed by tourists.

Rave parties, counterfeit money, gambling operations or drug dealings - a large variety of problems struck Goa over the last couple of weeks. All of the incidents included the participation of tourists in the coastal belt of Bardez, which is the most preferred destination in the state.

This represents a big problem for that state, as it attempts to get tourism in the region back on track after the pandemic. Moreover, these crimes are not petty crimes and they were all planned in advanced.

Thus, local authorities might need to investigate more whether these tourists-criminals visited the state of Goa with the sole aim to engage in illegal activities

If that is indeed the case, the question is, whether the state is welcoming the right kind of tourists to guarantee prosperity for the region and whether it should not shift its focus on a different target group. Either way, it is most definitely bad publicity which is not desired for the popular travel destination several weeks before the start of the peak season.

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