

O HERALDO EXCLUSIVE

'MY COMPANY WAS RUNNING GLOBAL ONLINE SCAMS'

Employees worked 14-hour shifts, pretended to be women and chatted with Americans – Goan youth's month-long ordeal in Myanmar scam Co

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PANJIM: He was lured with the offer of a call centre job in Thailand, but ended up in Myanmar, forced to work for an organisation that ran international scamming operations by luring unsuspecting clients with investment offers. After spending over a month as part of this illegal racket, the 28-year-old from Tiswadi was repatriated to India after he and other Indian nationals were rescued with the intervention of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). While he refused to be identified, he poured his heart out, speaking about his experience in Myanmar.

TODAY TOMMORROW
Big DISCOUNT
SHOPPING FESTIVAL
SGPDA GROUND MARGOA
14th To 23rd MAR
TIME : 10.30 am to 9.00 pm



Rescued Indians on their way back home from Myanmar on an IAF plane

"I was a trainee, but I saw a lot of other employees target mostly US nationals between the age of 45 and 80, and chat with them, pretending to be women. The goal was to get them to invest in our company. There were hundreds of such companies – all involved in online scams"

An O Herald exclusive. This January, I came across a recruitment ad on Instagram, which was for a call centre job in Thailand. It was a Bengaluru number and the person who spoke to me, interviewed me on Google Meet. He told me that six people had been short-listed, and that my friend from Mumbai and I

had been selected. He later sent me a flight ticket and on January 14, my friend and I flew to Bangkok, from where we were taken to Mae Sot (eastern Thai city close to the Myanmar border) and lodged in a resort. The next morning, another vehicle took us to Myanmar. The vehicle crossed the

border with ease, and I noticed the good ties between the border personnel on the two sides and this made me suspicious. But we had no courage to question them, and I don't speak Burmese.

A couple of kilometres into Myanmar, we were provided accommodation in an area called KK Park, which was about 200 metres away from the premises of the company – Juxiee Group in Myanmar – where we were supposed to work. Next day we went to work as trainees at the call centre.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

FALLING INTO FAKE JOB TRAP

- 549 Indians, lured into illegal jobs in Myanmar & Thailand, rescued
- 283 were repatriated by IAF aircraft on Monday
- 266 people repatriated on Tuesday
- Lured by promise of fake jobs in IT sector, victims were trafficked to cybercrime centres, run by Chinese criminal gangs in border regions not controlled by military junta
- Victims, forced into illegal activities, hailed from Andhra, Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab and UP
- Indian embassies in Myanmar & Thailand worked with local agencies to secure their release
- They were taken from Myanmar's Myawaddy to Mae Sot in Thailand and kept in detention centres before being flown back

Illegal quarrying very risky for dam: Goa WRD team in Tillari

Environmentalist warns any disruption to Tillari water supply would spell doom for Goa's tourism industry

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PANJIM: In a swift response to a report published by O Herald on the alarming situation at the Tillari dam site, officials from Goa's Water Resources Department (WRD) visited the area to evaluate the extent of quarrying activity, on Wednesday. The visit came after growing concerns about the safety of the dam, which supplies water to key regions in Goa.

During their visit, WRD officials expressed shock at the scale of illegal quarrying and described the situation as 'very risky' for the dam's stability. Environmentalist Ramesh Gawas, who also visited the site, emphasised the potential consequences of continued blasting in the flood plains of Tillari. He warned that any disruption to the dam's



Environmentalist Ramesh Gawas inspects damage at Tillari



water supply could severely impact Goa's tourism industry, which relies heavily on water from Tillari to support the talukas of Pernem, Bicholim and Bardez.

"Goa was promised 2.4 lakh cubic litres of water from Tillari, and without it, tourism in key regions could face a crisis," Gawas warned. He noted that Goa invested Rs 1,100 crore in the dam's construction, while Maharashtra contributed Rs 400 crore.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

"Goa was promised 2.4 lakh cubic litres of water from Tillari, and without it, tourism in key regions could face a crisis – Ramesh Gawas, Environmentalist"

"We won't end our strike without a clear commitment from the authorities to stop this hazardous activity – Nagraj Naik, protester"

"Years of unchecked quarrying have weakened the hill. If a landslide occurs, it will wipe out our homes, fields and families – Rajan Shetye, protester"

HC notice to Rane, developers over Karapur project

Team Herald

PANJIM: The High Court of Bombay at Goa on Wednesday issued notices to Health Minister Vishwajit Rane, the House of Abhinandan Lodha, and six others while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) writ petition challenging the permissions granted for a mega project at Karapur in Bicholim taluka.

Pravinsingh Shedgaonkar, Prithesh Salgaonkar, Ashish Porob, Jose Carlos da Viegas Gracias and Rupesh Shinkre filed the PIL writ petition seeking to quash and set aside the permission granted for the mega project and revoke the development approval given to the real estate developer.

In addition to Rane and the House of Abhinandan Lodha, notices were also issued to the State government, Karapur Estates Pvt Ltd, Errichter Infra Pvt Ltd, Shamba Dhavaskar, the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) and the Bicholim deputy town planner.

According to the petitioners, permissions were granted under Section 17(2) of the TCP Act, and there were concerns regarding conflict of interest and quid pro quo.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

REVIVING THE RIVER



Farmers remove stone and silt during a drive to desilt the Indravati river, at Jora Nala in Bastar district, on Wednesday

Heat wave across Goa causes a surge in hospital visits

India Meteorological Department has been extending heat alert for 11 consecutive days till March 13

Team Herald

MARGAO/PANJIM: As Goa continues to endure sweltering conditions, hospitals across the state are witnessing a notable increase in patients—many suffering from ailments indirectly triggered by the persistent heat wave that is sweeping across the state. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has extended the yellow alert for heat over Goa till March 13, 2025, marking the 11th consecutive day of the warning.

Healthcare facilities are feeling the impact as doctor's report treating various conditions that, while not always directly caused by heat exposure, are frequently exacerbated by it. Herald spoke to several doctors who shared their observations and concerns.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

WATER LEVELS AT KEY DAMS IN GOA

- **Amthane Reservoir (North Goa):** Dangerously low at 36% capacity, affecting Bardez, Pernem, and Bicholim
- **Tillari Reservoir (North Goa):** Down to 52% capacity, a key source for Bardez, Bicholim, and Pernem
- **Anjunem Dam (North Goa):** At 57% capacity, supplying Sattari and Bicholim
- **Panchawadi Reservoir (Shiroda):** Holding 54% capacity, under pressure due to demand
- **Chapoli Reservoir (Canacona):** At 69% capacity, relatively stable but monitored
- **Selautim Dam (South Goa):** Steady at 70% capacity, supplying most of South Goa
- **Gaunem Reservoir:** Highest at 71% capacity*, offering some relief

KEY CONCERNS

- Water Resource Department (WRD) officials warn of shortage if dry conditions persist
- Contingency plans are in place; residents urged to conserve water
- Over two months to go until the monsoon
- Rising temperatures and no rain forecast worsen the situation, especially in North Goa.

HC halts tree-felling near court premises

PIL claims deforestation on Law and Judiciary Department land is a ploy to rezone the area from its current No Development Zone status

Team Herald

PANJIM: Petitions come up regularly in court to save the green cover of Goa, but Wednesday's PIL was slightly different. Hearing the petition, the High Court of Bombay at Goa issued an interim order on Wednesday halting the felling of trees along the southern and eastern cliffs surrounding the court premises building. And here's the catch – the trees were be-

ing cut and deforestation was taking place on land reportedly owned by the Law and Judiciary Department. The PIL filed by Ganpat Sadhaye and Dinesh Dias, residents of Porvorim, claimed that the land in question, located in Survey numbers 76/1-C and 76/1-E in Penha-de-Franca village, was reportedly being cleared without the necessary permissions.

The petitioners argued that the deforestation

was part of an effort to rezone the land, which is currently classified as Natural Cover with No Development Zone (NDZ). Advocates for the petitioners, including Adv Rohit Bras de Sa, emphasised that tree cutting is occurring right next to the High Court building, which they argued poses a significant risk to public safety, infrastructure, and the environment.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

Lilavati trustees suspected of practising black magic

AGENCIES, MUMBAI: In a bizarre twist to the Lilavati Hospital fund embezzlement case, some former trust employees have indicated that black magic rituals had been performed in the office where Prashant Mehta, the permanent trustee, and his mother, Charu Mehta, used to sit.

Earlier, allegations had surfaced that the funds to the tune of Rs 1,200 crore were misappropriated by its former trustees and certain other individuals.

The authorities have allegedly found evidence of black magic on the hospital premises.

"Eight pots/urns (kalash) filled with human remains, rice, human hair, and other black magic material were found buried when the office floor was dug up," Former Mumbai Police Commissioner Parambir Singh said.

MAX. TEMP 36.8 °C
MIN. TEMP 23.5 °C

idharudhar



Do I pack the school bag or the vacation bag?

