

GOA HOME TO 6K-PLUS SEX WORKERS; BARDEZ FLESH TRADE EPICENTRE: STUDY

Commercial Sex Activity (CSA) extends to non-touristic talukas, industrial zones; financial hardship drives many Goan women into sex work; HIV cases highest in Bardez

Team Herald

PANJIM: An alarmingly high number of women and girls involved in Commercial Sex Activity (CSA) are now residing in Goa. CSA has expanded into non-touristic areas, while Bardez remains the taluka with the highest concentration of sex workers. Ironically, the number of cases booked by Goa Police against sex trafficking, as well as the awareness initiatives to combat CSA, remains minuscule.

According to a report by the Goa State AIDS Control Society (GSACS), Goa is home to 6,425 female sex workers. The data from GSACS on persons engaged in CSA in 2024 indicates that such individuals are spread across Goa.

NGO Anyay Rahit Zindagi (ARZ) revealed that there were approximately 900 to 1,200 sex workers residing in Baina when the area was shut down. Today, a significant number of sex workers are living across the State. Arun Pandey of ARZ stated that the reported figure

NUMBER OF REGISTERED FEMALE SEX WORKERS

■ Number of registered female sex workers in Goa: **6,425** (GSACS data, 2024)

■ Commercial Sex Activity no longer limited to tourist hubs; has spread to non-tourist talukas including
Tiswadi: 801, Bicholim: 667, Mormugao: 865, Salcete: 761, Sattari: 811

PRIMARY REASONS THAT DRIVE WOMEN TO SEX WORK:

- Financial crisis: **32.69%**
- Supporting children after separation: **36.54%**
- Online solicitation contributing to CSA spread across Goa.
- Bardez now the epicentre of HIV cases, shifting from Mormugao



ACTIVISTS RECOMMEND:

- 1 Advertise Goa as not a CSA destination
- 2 Combine enforcement, awareness, and policy changes
- 3 Proactively target individuals profiting from CSA
- 4 Calls for stricter action against pimps and online facilitators
- 5 Emphasis on rescue operations that address root causes, not just symptoms
- 6 Coordinated efforts with other States

is substantial and could be much higher in reality. "The maximum number of HIV cases used to be in Mormugao, but now Bardez is the epicentre. The GSACS report vindicates this fact," he said. Pandey highlighted that the local population is increasingly vulnerable to infection due to the

high concentration of CSA, calling for greater concern for the well-being of Goa's residents.

"We need to address the demand. The client is the primary offender, and action must be taken against them. Unless we tackle the demand, we will not succeed in combating sex traf-

ficking," said Pandey.

He emphasised the need for stringent action against individuals profiting from CSA, such as pimps and those operating online portals facilitating this trade.

On the enforcement of anti-human trafficking laws, Pandey added: "The action shouldn't be

"We need to address the demand. Client is the first offender and action needs to be taken against them. The action shouldn't be directionless. If you rescue the girls without addressing the root causes, more will be brought in due to widespread poverty"
— **Arun Pandey, ARZ**

directionless. If you rescue the girls without addressing the root causes, more will be brought in due to widespread poverty." The report indicates that 32.69% of victims entered sex work due to financial crises, and 36.54% of women involved in CSA cited financial responsibility for children (education, healthcare, food, and shelter) following separation from a husband or partner as their reason.

Pandey stressed the importance of advertising Goa as not a destination to purchase sex. "We need proactive measures combining enforcement, aware-

ness, and policy changes," he said.

The report by ARZ also highlights a sizable number of girls and women from Goa involved in CSA in non-touristic talukas like Bicholim, Sattari, Ponda, and Mormugao. These areas, with higher concentrations of industries and mines, include victims both from outside Goa who have settled in the State and those originally from Goa. While a significant proportion of CSA originates in tourist-centric areas, online and offline solicitation has widened its reach beyond these zones.

The GSACS data shows Tiswadi with 801 sex workers, Bicholim with 667, Mormugao with 865, Salcete with 761, and Sattari with 811 registered under the society.

"Human trafficking is a more complex crime compared to others, as it spans multiple States," Pandey said. He also called for better coordination with other source states to control sex trafficking effectively.

Rally highlights collective fight against human trafficking



Street play by students on human trafficking

PANJIM: Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN-Goa), in collaboration with the Goa Police, Women Police Station, and the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) - Panaji, organised a rally on Saturday, to mark National Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

Themed "Connecting the Dots. Strengthening Communities. Preventing Trafficking," the event aimed to raise awareness about human trafficking, focusing on prevention, protection of vulnerable groups, and support for victims.

Around 200 participants, including students from Govind Ramnath Kare College of Law, Parvatibai Chowgule College of Arts and Science, and V.M. Salgaocar College of Law, along with police personnel and SCAN-Goa staff, joined the march. The rally commenced from Police Headquarters, Panjim, and passed through Urban Health Centre and Church Square before culminating at the Panjim Bus Stand.

Flagging off the rally, Tikam Singh, and Ezilda D'Souza, SP - AHTU, called for collective action to combat human trafficking. "Human trafficking is a serious violation of human rights and a global issue," said Singh. "All of us have a role to play in tackling it."



Baina, once an area notorious for commercial sex workers at Vasco was cleaned up by the government, due to the bad name it brought Goa. However, decades later, a study says that there are more commercial sex workers operating in Goa now.

ARE THERE MORE COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS OPERATING IN GOA NOW, THAN DURING THE BAINA RED-LIGHT AREA DAYS?

"There was a red-light area in Baina, Vasco, for many years. People used to be ashamed to live in that area. But now, you have seen Anjuna, Calangute, Baga, Panjim, Mapusa—this business is going on everywhere. Some sex workers are brought forcefully, while others come on their own. If they are caught, they say, 'My mother is sick,' 'My son died of cancer,' 'My husband has left me; how will I manage my expenses in my youth?' They tell lots of lies. That is how they escape from the police. The Supreme Court has passed a judgment which states that if the women engage willingly, no one can stop them. They can be fined Rs 500 and let go. No case can be filed against them, nor can they be sent to protective homes"

—Tara Kerkar, social activist

"I condemn and do not want the sex trade to continue in Goa. It has had a negative effect on our younger generation and adult men. I urge the Chairperson of the Goa State Commission for Women to implement strict laws to control this trade. Due to the rampant sex trade in Goa, other women are not safe on the beaches or even at bus stops. Men stop and ask for the price. The government should provide justice to women"

—Ana Gracias, social activist

"Today, we organised a programme on the occasion of National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. We want people to be aware of what is happening around them and report any incidents to the police when they see them. We are fighting against various types of trafficking cases, including child labour, sex trafficking, organ trafficking, and trafficking for adoption. We request the public to remain vigilant"

—Reema Naik, PI, Women's Police Station



Watch Street Voices on Herald Media on YouTube by scanning the QR code

THRILLING SKILLS



Fire personnel perform a drill at the Directorate of Fire and Emergency Services ground at St. Inez, Panjim, on Saturday

Property tax assessment survey in Cuncolim

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Goa State Urban Development Agency (GSUDA) has initiated a property tax assessment survey in the jurisdiction of the Cuncolim Municipal Council (CMC), engaging Nagpur-based firm M/s Kolbro Group Pvt Ltd. for the task. This initiative aims to assess and update property tax records comprehensively. Surveyors from Kolbro

have been authorised to visit properties within the municipality's jurisdiction, collect necessary details, take measurements, and capture photographs. Municipal authorities have urged residents to cooperate fully with the survey team by providing accurate information and relevant documents to ensure a smooth process. CMC Chief Officer John Fernandes emphasised that failure to provide the required information could

lead to assessments based on existing data, increasing the risk of inaccuracies. "Property owners and occupants must ensure all accurate details are shared during the survey to avoid discrepancies," he stated, calling for community support in this endeavour. CMC reiterated that the survey aims to streamline property tax assessments, ensuring transparency and efficiency in the taxation process.

Margao sopo contractor refutes graft charges, dares critics to take action

Team Herald

MARGAO: Milagres Fernandes, the sopo contractor for the Margao Municipal Council, on Saturday responded to allegations made by certain councillors and political figures, challenging them to take the matter to court and demanding an inquiry against the councillor who allegedly took documents from the Municipality illegally.

Speaking to reporters, Fernandes stated that he has been unfairly targeted by a councillor from the civic body and a political leader from Fatorda.

He emphasised that he obtained the sopo contract after completing all the required legal procedures and was surprised to see objections not coming from the competing bidder, but from individuals with no connection to the contract. "The other bidder had every right to raise objections or challenge the contract process if it were illegal. This contract was issued following the online procedure,"

Fernandes remarked.

He pointed out that there were no records of an RTI application seeking documents or information about the sopo contract at the Municipality. However, he claimed that one of the councillors had taken documents from the municipal office without authorisation and shared them publicly, which he called a criminal act.

"We demand that the Chief Officer file a complaint against the concerned councillor," Fernandes said.

Reflecting on past difficulties in securing a sopo contractor, Fernandes explained that no contractor was willing to take on the contract due to potential losses. He, however, took the initiative to bid in order to help the civic body generate revenue.

Fernandes also accused a political leader from Fatorda of inciting certain councillors to make allegations against him, describing these actions as completely unfair.

Cavellossim VP demands removal of submerged trawler from River Sal



Fishing trawler that submerged in the middle of River Sal

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Cavellossim Village Panchayat has called upon the Captain of Ports (CoP), Goa, to take immediate steps for removal of a nearly submerged fishing trawler from the middle of River Sal.

In a letter to the CoP headquarters, the panchayat highlighted that the sunken vessel is causing inconvenience to fishermen and posing risks to boats operating in the area.

According to the panchayat, the trawler, which was anchored near Mobor after the government cleared the Cut-bona jetty a few months ago, now poses a hazard to locals, especially cruise boats. Emphasising the need for urgent intervention, the panchayat said that the presence of the vessel in the river has raised concerns about

"I personally spoke to CoP Octavio Rodrigues, requesting swift action to prevent any untoward incidents. Our locals depend on the river for boat cruises. We must act promptly to avoid any disasters"

— **Dixon Vaz, Cavellossim Sarpanch**

potential accidents.

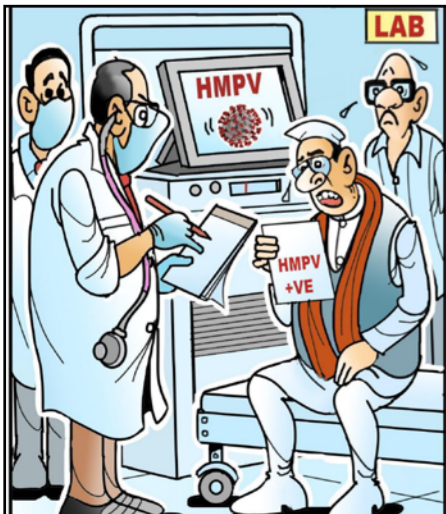
Sarpanch Dixon Vaz said that he had also personally spoken to CoP Octavio Rodrigues, requesting swift action to prevent any untoward incidents.

"Our locals depend on the river for boat cruises. We must act promptly to avoid any disasters," Vaz said.

The panchayat has called for the authorities to prioritise the safety of river users and resolve the issue without delay.

MAX. TEMP 33.0 °C
MIN. TEMP 22.0 °C

idharudhar



No way! We've imposed a blanket ban on Chinese items!

Govt launches Rs 18 cr project to tackle sewage overflow in Fatorda

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a bid to address the issue of overflowing sewage chambers and the associated health hazards, the Government of Goa has launched an ambitious Rs 18 crore project in the Fatorda constituency, utilising the HDPE (High-Density Polyethylene) pipe bursting technology.

The project, aimed at tackling sewage problems, will cover areas such as Amritnagar, Vidyannagar, Monte Hill, St Joaquim Chapel Road, Madel, and the vicinity near the KTC bus stand. The work is expected to be completed within a year-and-a-half,



with contractors tasked with completing 50 metres of piping work per day to meet the project's target.

Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai, who launched the project in Borda on Friday, urged the public to cooperate with the Sewerage Infrastructure Development Corporation of Goa Ltd and the contractors to ensure timely com-

pletion. He also announced that the Public Works Department (PWD) has appointed a local contractor to restore the roads to their original condition after the excavation work.

Sardesai explained that the project aims to rehabilitate the existing sewage systems using trenchless technology, specifically through

the inline replacement of old sewers with the HDPE pipe bursting method. "The project will cost the government Rs 18 crore. I have not taken a single rupee from the contractors. My only insistence has been that the contractors execute quality work and ensure proper restoration of the roads once the work is completed," he stated.

Emphasising the importance of the initiative, Sardesai added, "Cleanliness is now a fundamental right for every citizen. Hundreds of crores spent on sewerage infrastructure would be wasted if the chambers overflow, posing a health risk to the population."