

Furore over illegal operation of off-shore licenced Casinos

Panaji – Goa Chief Minister Digambar Kamat today told the assembly that the government shall review the entire policy related to functioning of casinos on and off-shores at the earliest following a spate of complaints.

Intervening on the issue during Question Hour, Mr Kamat said Home Minister and Sports Minister should sit together to review the policy so that the casinos organisers did not violate licensing rules henceforth.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Ravi Naik assured the House that he would consider initiating suitable action against the off-shore casinos operating illegally only after examining the issue. He said he would come out with the report by the next assembly session.

Earlier, the opposition BJP leader Manohar Parrikar raised a hue and cry against the off-shore casinos operating around the Captain of Ports area in Panjim and on Mandovi river against the licence rules that insisted on these vessels to operate off-shore.

He also pointed out that most of the vessels, except one, did not have proper sewerage facilities and had been polluting Mandovi river adding that this needs to be checked by the state pollution control authorities.

He also questioned how the authorities issued licence to a casino vessel owned by V M Salgaokar and Bros before receipt of licence from the Directorate General of Shipping and an NOC from the Captain of Ports here.

Mr Parrikar also pointed out that the foreign casino vessels were not expected to display their flags under the rules of

license as the DG Shipping allows display of the flags only to the cruises promoting tourism, not other vessels.

Mr Dayanand Narvekar (Cong) said one of the vessels was operating on Mandovi without an engine and this needs to be checked to ensure that off-shore vessels operated 12 km away from the shore.

The government collects Rs five crores revenue besides Rs 10 lakhs from each vessel as processing fee before issuing licence. Five vessels were given licence out of 21 applicants on first cum first served basis.