

# Goa tourism minister takes on casino operators

Offshore casinos in Goa are committing 'gross violations' of the law, the state's Tourism minister Francisco Pacheco has said.

The minister, better known as Mickky, warned that provisions of the Goa Tourism and Trade Act would be invoked if the casino operators did not clean up their act. 'First of all they have to be five nautical miles from the shore,' he told a local cable television channel Tuesday.

'All the casinos are dumping their sewage straight into the water. There has to be a rule of law. A line has to be drawn,' Mickky said.

There are presently six offshore casinos docked in the Mandovi river as it flows into the Arabian Sea next to state capital Panaji.

Lambasting the home minister for not 'putting in his shift' vis a vis regulation of casinos, Mickky said: 'They are committing gross violations as far as I know. Who knows what is happening out there? The home ministry has issued gambling licences, but have they gone on board and seen what is happening?'

Mickky's statements come on the heels of a campaign by main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, which has accused the chief minister's office, chief secretary and the home minister Ravi Naik of receiving bribes for issuing licences and giving clearances to the casino operators.

Mickky, a legislator from the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) joined the opposition criticism to say: 'Deep down, I am not happy with the government. There is no coordination, no unity

when it comes to taking decisions. I regret having been a part of this government.'

The NCP is a part of the coalition government in the state, led by the Congress.

Mickky has already filed a disqualification petition against his cabinet colleague and Public Works Department minister Churchill Alemao. Mickky has also been feuding with Home minister Ravi Naik, after he was booked under several charges, including bigamy and forgery. The complaints against the minister were filed by his wife Sara Pacheco.