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## News

### SEX TOURISM EXPOSED

## Sin in Paradise



*A five-month undercover investigation conducted by Tehelka has revealed that hundreds of Europeans — British, Germans, Dutch, French, Swiss and Swedish — visit Goa to seek children for sexual gratification. They come to Goa because it is easy, and cheap, to sexually abuse a child here. On the run after crackdowns on cheap child-sex tourism in Thailand and Sri Lanka, the paedophile bus has rolled into Goa. And turned the picture-postcard tourism destination into an arena of perversity and of horrors. Goa has made an alarming transition from being a laid-back resort to a paedophile's paradise. And the government, despite knowledge of this debased crime, despite alerts from international agencies, chooses to look the other way. A report by **VK Shashikumar***

paedophile bus has rolled into Goa. And turned the picture-postcard tourism destination into an arena of perversity and of horrors. Goa has made an alarming transition from being a laid-back resort to a paedophile's paradise. And the government, despite knowledge of this debased crime, despite alerts from international agencies, chooses to look the other way. A report by **VK Shashikumar**

European paedophiles have virtually kick started a cottage industry of child sex abuse in Goa wherein poor parents, an uncaring society, a callous bureaucracy, a corrupt police and an insensitive government look the other way to facilitate the sexual exploitation of children. Goa beckons preferential child sex abusers, otherwise known as paedophiles, who travel in order to sexually abuse children because such crimes are tolerated in India and hardly ever lead to conviction.



One estimate by Child Relief and You (cry) indicates that over 10,000 paedophiles visit Goa every year. Another assessment by Children's Rights in Goa (crg) says that at any given point there are at least 100 paedophiles on the prowl in Goa. According to field data collected by national and international child rights organisations, a paedophile in Goa sexually exploits at least 20 children during his or her visit.

This exposé is a startling revelation of Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar's passive connivance in turning Goa into a sex tourism destination. As paedophiles roam the streets of Goa, the state government has looked the other way in its quest for more tourism revenues.

And Parrikar has been sitting tight on an explosive report on child-related sex crimes perpetrated by foreigners since 2001. He has buried the report because he does not want the report to affect the state's tourism revenues. The latest government statistics show that 3,21,399 foreign tourists visited Goa between April 2003 to March 2004 and the state earned Rs 3,000 crore in foreign exchange.

Goa is a popular destination among Europeans. Of the 1,20,653 foreign tourists that visited Goa by chartered flights last year, the British comprised 78,000, which is almost 65 percent of the total. The Russians were second highest with 18,987, Swedes 7,732, Germans 5,439 and Finns 4,032. According to Goa's Tourism Minister, Mathany Saldanha, "The government is

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trying its best to attract high-spending tourists by participating in different marts, organising road shows, etc. abroad”.

In 2001, the uk government commissioned a top-notch former police investigator, Ric Wood, to map the extent of tourism-related paedophilia in Goa. Wood, an expert on obtaining information from witnesses to serious crimes, has worked closely with police in Italy, Ireland, Turkey and India to develop their witness interviewing skills.

August 14, 2004

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Wood regularly visits India to train police officers. He is the international training and development manager of Individual and Organisation Development Assessment (ioda), London. Jeff Wilson, First Secretary, Press and Public Affairs, uk High Commission in New Delhi confirmed that the Wood report has been lying with the Goa government. "We commissioned a report for the office of the Chief Minister of Goa when they requested our assistance to look into the problem of paedophilia. As this issue is of real concern to the British government we were of course pleased to do so. The report helped to identify the nature of the threat to the children of the area, and looked at ways of tackling these issues. The report is now with the chief minister's office, and is not in the public domain. For details of it, you would have to speak to them. We remain prepared to engage in future cooperation on action against paedophilia with the Indian authorities as appropriate," Wilson said.



**HIDING SOMETHING: Manohar Parrikar**

The uk government has been working on countering sexual abuse of children by British nationals in other countries. "The government is committed to tackling the problem of paedophilia. In India, we arranged the report for the government of Goa. Ultimately, it is for the authorities in India to tackle criminal problems in India," Wilson told Tehelka.

Over a two-week period in October 2001, Wood compiled 37 case histories showing the extent of paedophilia. Nearly half of these cases related to British men. The Wood report categorically states that "it must also be noted the comparative ease with which the information was gained. It is implied that had this information been actively pursued, by a team of trained investigators, considerably more cases would have been established."

**This exposé reveals Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar's connivance in turning Goa into a sex tourism destination. He has been sitting tight on an explosive international report on child related sex crimes in the state**

The report suggests that it is virtually impossible to quantify how many paedophiles visit Goa every year. Also, the sheer number of cases that were unearthed in just a two-week probe reveals that Goa attracts high preferential paedophilia traffic. That means that pederasts travel to Goa for the specific purpose of exploiting children sexually. According to Wood, the paedophiles, specially British paedophiles, target boys "between the ages of 8 and 13."

The report goes on to reveal that "it is apparent that there are large numbers of children entering Goa from other states. The nomadic Lamani tribe from Karnataka has a large floating population which enters Goa during the tourist season. Numbers vary but the tourist industry generally agrees that there are between 15,000 and 20,000 in the season. A large proportion of this group consists of children under the age of 14. They are easy targets for paedophiles since they are, emotionally needy and materially deprived." Goa's Tourism Director N. Suryanarayana, in the course of Tehelka's undercover operation, affirmed Wood's

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assessment. He told a Tehelka reporter, who posed as a social science researcher from an American university, that the government estimates that 40,000 migrant children are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Superintendent of Police Inder Dev Shukla also revealed that the police knows that migrant children are exploited by pederasts.

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Wood's investigation reveals an interesting trafficking dimension to Goa's sex tourism. "Disturbingly, there is a huge increase in the amount of young girls travelling into Goa from Andhra Pradesh (ap). There are two trains per week arriving in Vasco (Goa's main railhead) from ap. At the beginning of the tourist season, there are approximately 50 girls (aged between 13 and 17), arriving on these trains each week," Wood states.

**Goa is no longer a place where the world comes to relax. It has become a destination for pederasts. Ronald Martins, who runs a documentation centre in Goa, says that "unlike Sri Lanka and Thailand, in Goa, the abuse is dangerous because it is covert"**

It is apparent that there is a large trade in trafficking children to Goa. Wood's prescription to the government is that "the only way of truly establishing this is to acknowledge the problem and to investigate."

Goa is no longer a place where the world comes to relax. It's become a destination for pederasts. Ronald Martins, who runs a documentation centre in Goa, says that "unlike Sri Lanka and Thailand, in Goa, the abuse (sexual exploitation of children) is more dangerous because it is covert".



**TOP COP: Ric Wood (second from left, sitting) with Indian police officers**

However, the chief minister's obsession with promoting tourism at any cost has backfired. Tourism-related paedophilia is disturbing because information is "readily available to anyone who takes the time to look," says Wood whose report comes down heavily on the government: "A paedophile looking for a place to commit his or her crime will be steered towards Goa."

Of course, a diplomatic tone is maintained. Instead of directly attributing the reason for Goa's transition to a sex tourism destination the report actually alludes to a number of articles that refer to the degeneration of tourism in the state: "These articles are inter-dispersed with headlines indicating Goa is

overtaking Bangkok as a paedophile paradise. This will cause two things to occur. More paedophiles will be destined for Goa with less Western tourists prepared to make the journey."

Among the recommendations made by Wood is the formation of a Strategic Policy Group, a Police Co-ordination Team, and a Child Protection Unit. He suggests that once these structures are in place "the other policy, procedural and training needs can be implemented... The response must be measured to maintain the integrity of Goa as a popular tourist destination. It must be achieved in such a way that paedophiles are deterred from arriving in Goa, but the genuine tourist seeking a family holiday continues to be encouraged."

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### SEX TOURISM EXPOSED

Throughout the 1990s there were enough warning signs, but successive governments ignored them. It's been almost a decade since Interpol declared Goa as the upcoming paedophile destination. In fact, six years ago the then British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook had warned at the second Asia-Europe (aesem ii) meeting in London that Goa is one of three areas in the world "worst hit by the evils of child sex tourism."

Yet, the government of India slipped into deep slumber as Goa turned into one of the hot spots for paedophiles. The latest End Child Prostitution Child Pornography And Trafficking Of Children For Sexual Purposes (ecpat) report, 2003, sponsored by the European Union, admits Goa's transition to a haven for child sex tourists. "A growing number of paedophiles have discovered Goa to be a safe haven. They form a part of a wider syndicate operating globally within a well defined network operating with the use of modern communication systems like the internet," the report says.

Tehelka's investigation also exposes the deep linkages between institutionalised forms of paedophilia and trafficking of children. (See 'The Beach Walkers'). The convergence of child sex tourism and trafficking of children is a national security threat not only to India but to other European countries as well. Unregulated and illegal trafficking of India children to European countries is a matter of mutual concern.

This year's annual 'Trafficking in Persons Report' of the us State Department categorically asserts that India is a source and destination for children trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation. The report also says "India is a growing destination for sex tourists from Europe, the us and other Western countries."

Many pederasts hunt for their victims in Goa during the tourist season. Besides, there are many who reside for longer durations and some who have stayed on for years. Child sex abuse by tourists is not restricted to Goa but has spread along the tourist circuits and is rampant in Kerala and Rajasthan. Many paedophiles have captive children or take kids along with them when they travel.

Tehelka's investigation reveals the brazen manner in which paedophiles subvert the legal system. (See 'Six Most Wanted') If Goa is becoming Thailand then the government of India is faced with a massive problem that threatens to tear the social fabric across India's high-profile tourist destinations.

This exposé is finally about failures of governance. According to the Goa Children's Act, 2003, "The state shall ensure that the children and the young are protected against exploitation and that they are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. Childhood and youth shall be protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment."


But the Goan government has failed to protect the children. It is also a failure of governance and administration at the federal level. It's a national issue and must be dealt with seriously. All it takes for a foreigner to declare himself an 'Indian inhabitant' is a sworn affidavit on a Rs 20 stamp paper.

This exposé is about the nexus of silence — of the fleet footed machinations that bind the

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police, the judicial officers and the immigration officials in one encompassing web of corruption. The government has only to launch a full-scale investigation and protect children from being exploited.

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