

Goa govt hikes entertainment tax to 10% on casinos

Panaji: Giving in to political opposition to offshore casinos in Goa, the state government has doubled the entertainment tax levied from the gambling dens to ten per cent.

Finance minister Dayanand Narvekar hiked the entertainment tax on casinos including off shore casinos, in the state budget presented on the floor of the House yesterday.

The move will double the revenue from entertainment tax levied from casinos. Goa annually collects Rs five crores as licencing fee from the offshore casinos.

However, the opposition parties have always been against promoting casino tourism in the state.

„We don't want to turn Goa into a gambler's paradise. We strongly oppose off shore casinos here, Leader of Opposition and former Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar told PTI.

„By promoting casino tourism, we will be losing on quality tourists,“ the former Chief Minister said.

Parrikar's objection on these gambling dens stems from the fear that they lead to all vices including prostitution, drug mafia and black money.

According to the Chief Secretary, Goa has only two off shore gambling casinos – Caravella owned by Advani group and another on owned by the Leela hotel group.

„We have not given any third licence although we have twenty two applications pending with us for four licences,“ Singh said rubbishing the internet reports that a Casino giant, which is having their operations in Kathmandu (Nepal), is given licence to operate in Goan waters.

The BJP has opposed these ship based casinos, right from the time they were allowed in the state in 1999, claiming them as dangerous for the social fabric of the state.