

GOA SCPCR ADVOCATES FOR ADDITIONAL POCSO FAST TRACK COURT IN SOUTH GOA

December 21, 2023

Agrahayana 30, 1945

In a proactive move to expedite the resolution of cases under the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012, the Goa State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (Goa SCPCR) has recommended the creation of an exclusive Fast Track Court (FTC) tailored for South Goa District. The Chairperson of the Goa SCPCR Peter F. Borges, met with Shri Aleixo Sequiera, Minister for Law and Judiciary, to discuss this crucial initiative.

Mandated by Section 44 of the POCSO Act, 2012, and Rule 12 of the POCSO Rules, 2020, the Goa SCPCR, assumes a critical responsibility for vigilantly monitoring the implementation status of the POCSO Act.

The Goa SCPCR is actively engaged in a comprehensive assessment of the implementation status of the POCSO Act. This involves meticulous scrutiny of its provisions, investigative processes, trial proceedings, and the accessibility of support services for victims.

Going beyond monitoring, the Goa SCPCR plays a pivotal advisory role by providing recommendations to the government. This includes proposing legislative amendments, advocating policy changes, and suggesting enhancements to the support infrastructure for the effective implementation of the POCSO Act.

It was informed that, the recent extension of the Fast Track Special Court (FTSCs) by the Union Cabinet, from **April 1, 2023**, to **March 31, 2026**, aligns seamlessly with the "Scheme on Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) for Expeditious Disposal of Cases of Rape and Protection of Children against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act," which initially sanctioned two FTSC courts for the state of Goa.

On compelling grounds, the Goa SCPCR strongly recommends the establishment of an additional POCSO Fast Track Court in South Goa District.

Goa SCPCR further stated that the existing FTC in North Goa District, managing over 100 POCSO cases, strains its capacity for prompt and efficient trials. Establishing a court in South Goa, would alleviate this burden, ensuring timely justice. Additionally, the High Court of Bombay at Goa has recently issued an order mandating the transfer of all rape cases and cases involving sexual offences against children to the POCSO Court.

South Goa's diverse topographical landscape, including remote and inaccessible areas, poses considerable impediments for victims accessing the current FTC in North Goa. Establishing a court in South Goa would enhance geographical accessibility, safeguarding victims' right to expeditious justice.

The scheme mandates exclusive POCSO Courts in districts with over 100 cases. South Goa District meets this criterion, necessitating the establishment of an additional court to address the risk of secondary victimization.

With only one established POCSO court against the sanctioned two, an additional court in South Goa is critical to addressing the backlog and ensuring timely justice. Establishing an additional FTC in South Goa District, is pivotal in providing prompt access to justice, minimizing the trauma associated with prolonged trials, Goa SCPCR added.

DI/NB/PN/SF/UH/2023/2152

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Issued by the Department of Information & Publicity

Department of Information & Publicity,

Government of Goa,

Udyog Bhavan, Third Floor,
Near Azad Maidan,

Panaji – Goa.