EQUATIONS

DOCUMNETATION SERVICE

VOLUME XIII
PREFACE

One year has gone by since we began our newscutting documentation service, and the response so far encourages us to continue it.

As usual, we report on the latest trends and developments in Indian tourism, focusing on the many innovative measures to make it a key sector of the liberalised economic policies of the new government. With the push towards a free-market economy, we also cite the examples of Yugoslavia and S E Asia, where similar policies have not achieved well-being and prosperity for all. There is, quite clearly, a need to re-think the validity of a one-dimensional socio-economic and political model, of which mass tourism is just facet.

We also bring you items featuring hiccups and controversies, alternative viewpoints and the use (or misuse) of the mass media. These include a counterpoint to the increasingly virulent attack on tourism-activism in Goa by Hugh and Colleen Gantzer.

Your responses and suggestions for further improvement, as always, are welcome.

EQUATIONS Team.
Market forces not the only remedy

In the present circumstances, Yugoslavia’s financial system may not be the most obvious source of the country’s concern.

But however the conflict between Serbia and Croatia is finally resolved, the longer-run economic question is whether Yugoslavia’s unhappy experience with financial deregulation is a warning to the rest of the developing world.

Yugoslavia’s civil war has now pushed a system already weakened by deregulation to the very brink of credibility, as savers rush to withdraw their cash from the banks. Although the situation has intensified in the past few days, the situation is the result of forces that have been building up for a number of years.

According to a recent United Nations report, some of the problem can be attributed to the liberalization of the financial system in the second half of the 1980s. The recent history of savings in Yugoslavia shows how rising real interest rates failed to deliver increased savings.

The monetary authorities started to pursue a policy of positive real interest rates in 1986, and by 1990 rates were completely liberalized. However, savings growth did not respond. Although savings were rising in the first part of the Eighties, when moves were made towards liberalisation, savings promptly fell — and then stayed on a downward path.

Total Yugoslav financial savings did grow substantially throughout the 1980s, but despite the rise in interest rates, the money went abroad. By 1989, foreign savings were three times greater than deposits in Yugoslavia, partly because people exchanged the Yugoslav dinar for other currencies.

More recently, deposits have been converted into cash as savers’ confidence fell — and then stayed on a downward path.

The experience of total financial deregulation in Yugoslavia shows that it is not all that effective a development strategy, according to a UNCTAD report. This could hold some lessons for India too.

In the banking system has deteriorated and devaluation of the currency has become imminent. The response of the Yugoslav government has been to restore controls over the beleaguered financial system.

Yugoslavia is not an exception. Many developing countries have recently liberalised their financial systems, but by and large, the UNCTAD report says, these policies do not appear to have succeeded in raising the level of savings and investment.

There has been much talk of a "global savings shortage" in recent years and some economists have claimed that unless savings increase — and to many this means rising interest rates — the prospects for sustained growth in the developing countries will be limited. The catch is that the higher real interest rates needed to encourage savings add to the problems of highly indebted countries, as they struggle to find the cash for increased debt repayments.

The UN not only challenges the received orthodoxy that interest rates need to rise to increase savings, but dismisses any idea of a global savings shortage likely to cause a problem for development finance.

The reasoning is simple. At a time of recession, there are unutilised resources that can be employed to increase investment without the need for either the government or the individual to cut consumption. This is because additional investment will generate its own income — which in turn creates the extra savings required.

"Doing away with financial repression" it says, "typically leads to a sharp increase in interest rates. In practice, this does little, if anything, to boost savings."

The risk of high interest rates is accentuated in developing countries. Financial openness typically pushes domestic rates above international rates, owing to the greater uncertainty attached to holding domestic assets.

Besides, the UN says, it exposes the economy to international financial flows that are inherently volatile — the consequent loss of policy autonomy can be very costly for growth and stability.

Liberalisation in other areas can, however, bring benefits to developing countries, the study says, and a successful and balanced outcome to the Uruguay Round of world trade talks is vital to their increased prosperity.

According to the UN, the key to development lies in raising export earnings, which are needed to cope with persistent and large balance of payments deficits with industrialised countries because of heavy debt-service obligations and payments for essential capital goods imports.

The lesson for developing countries, then, is that reform should emphasise freer trade, but experience suggests activist government policies as well as market forces are needed if the financial system is to promote growth and development.

— Ruth Kelly
The Guardian
ECOTOURISM has become the travel industry buzzword of the nineties offering an idealistic avenue to many struggling Third World nations, including Pacific Islands, to generate revenue while at the same time protecting vulnerable natural resources.

Focusing on the promotion of nature and often dubbed nature travel, ecotourism aims to attract a limited number of paying customers to remote areas with minimal damage to the natural, social and cultural environments.

It is based on an unusual alliance between conservationists and tourist developers and Sierra Club’s founder John Muir’s idea that people who experience a plate first-hand are more likely to be concerned with preserving it.

The Ecotourism Society says that nature travellers must not only go and see but must also do — that they must contribute to a sustainable future for the destinations they visit. Some tour operators make donations to local conservation projects. Others organise trips on which participants contribute time to reforestation, construction or conservation projects.

It is still a small part of the $2 trillion international tourism industry but its potential has caught the eye of entrepreneurs from as far afield as Kenya, Nepal and Papua New Guinea. While general tourism has increased at a rate of about four per cent a year, according to a report for the World Resources Institute, nature travel is growing by up to 30 per cent. More than 300 United States companies sell wildlife and nature tours to five million Americans last year.

In developing nations, which are prime destinations for ecotourists, nature travel accounts for more than 20 per cent of total tourism receipts. It is little wonder then that Pacific Island leaders will meet this month to discuss this rapidly growing industry and its impact on small business development.

The conference will be in Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia and is jointly sponsored by the United States Department of Commerce, the Pohnpei State Government and the Pacific Business Centre at the University of Hawaii.

Pohnpei is a particularly appropriate venue for the meeting, which recently won an inaugural PEC award for ecotourism in its Village Hotel which offers a series of bungalow lodgings for a limited number of visitors. Another venture on the island of Yap has been singled out by the Ecotourism Society as a model for future development.

Yap’s Pathways Hotel has scattering of thatch-roofed cottages set on a steep hillside. The units are built of locally available materials and were constructed by local labour. This is another key aim of ecotourism-to ensure that profits flow back into the local community. Far too often they do not.

The World Bank estimates that even in the best of circumstances 55 cents of every tourist dollar spent in developing countries leaks back to developed countries. In less developed areas where large percentages of food, supplies and transportation must be brought from other areas, the locals receive as little as 10 per cent of tourist revenues generated.

Many Pacific development experts believe that for the small islands of the Pacific, ecotourism, which they prefer to call friendly tourism, offers a way to avoid the devastation wreaked by mass tourism.

“If tourism in fragile environments isn’t conducted with conscientious attention to conservation principles and managed properly, it can destroy the very qualities and resources that originally attracted visitors to them,” says the newsletter of the Pacific Business Centre at the University of Hawaii.

It is also a way of stimulating local business which has a better chance of providing small-scale tours requiring less financial outlay such as bush hikes or bicycle and camping trips or reef dives.

Recently the Marshall Islands announced that it is preparing to promote ecotourism. Gordon Benjamin, the country’s chief of trade, industry and tourism, says his nation would rather have visitors who are “ecologically minded, the more educated and married types and those who are more adventurous” rather than the mass tourism packages offered by many other communities.

US Greenpeace activist, David Rapaport, has just completed a study tour of three northern Pacific islands assessing the potential for alternative tourist developments. He says the adverse affects of traditional mass tourism are evident on Guam where scientists have measured alarming results indicating that coral reef reproduction is being undermined by the run-off of tourist facilities such as hotels and roads.

The tourism threat to such small Pacific islands is “very real. They can’t afford to make many mistakes,” he says Greenpeace wants developers to study the use of alternative technology to reduce the amount of pollutants and run-off.

It believes Pacific islanders offer an excellent opportunity for solar power, for innovative sewage disposal and with a little bit of pre-planning, the avoidance of plastic and toxic chemical products.

Ecotourism is still largely in the hands of small independent operators who first fed small groups into the outback while the industry’s mainstream concentrated on marketing large records. But mainstream companies and other operators are getting into the act. Last year the Thomas Cook Group, one of the largest international tourism outfits which in many ways epitomises the practice of mass tourism, said it was “joining the gentle tourism revolution.”

The prospect of mass tourism invading realms of ecotourism has alarmed many conservationists. They point to evidence of destruction caused by poorly planned nature trips such as in Nepal where the demand for food by people on eco-treks caused deforestation.

“I’m concerned that all sorts of dubious characters are leaping onto the ecotourism bandwagon — suddenly everyone is an ecotour operator,” said Vivian Newman, from the Sierra Club.

The National Audubon Society has warned that the frenzy of activity means that even nature-loving ecotourists could end up “loving nature to death.”

“Tour boats dump garbage in the waters of Antarctica, shutterbugs harass wildlife in national parks, hordes of us trample fragile areas ... ecotourism threatens to destroy the resources on which it depends.”
Largest convention centre coming up near Kovalam

**United News of India**

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 21 AUG 91**

SOUTH India's largest convention centre is fast coming up beside the Kovalam beach near here.

Being built by the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), the 500-seater centre will have the most updated equipment and facilities for simultaneous translation in six languages at international conventions.

Convention tourism, which draws high-spending visitors from different parts of the world, is a new thrust area for promotion by the department of tourism. As of now, for want of facilities, India gets fewer international conventions than many other countries.

A major convention centre in Delhi—the Vijyan Bhavan, was lost because of a fire two years ago.

While the Kerala project is being pushed through as part of the policy to promote alternative destinations in the south, recent trends in the generating markets in Europe suggest greater preference for holiday tourism, particularly beach tourism.

A German delegation of travel agents which recently visited India spoke of the very high potential provided by the long coastline with excellent beaches.

In his discussions with Kerala chief minister K Karunakaran, Mr. Scindia broached the proposal for a German-sponsored resort to be built in the state.

According to Mr. P O Thomas, general manager of Ashok Resorts, plans have been finalised to introduce water skiing and surfing for the monsoon season. The ITDC has also introduced low-priced packages.

Mr. Javakumar, Kerala's director of tourism, cited figures to show that the state has been able to sustain a growth of 10 per cent even in the face of the decline in tourism traffic in other parts of the country.

The state's efforts for promoting tourism were commended by civil aviation and tourism minister Madhav Rao Scindia who, during his visit last week, offered to assist a Rs. 50-lakh project comprising anium-museum-pavilion with a viewing gallery at the site of the traditional boat race, near Alappuzha.

Incidentally, a star attraction at the race was a particular snake boat which the late prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru boarded while watching the event in the early 50's. A very happy Pandit Nehru, on return to Delhi, sent a rolling trophy which is the most coveted prize in the event marked by a display of speed, stamina and strength.

Mr. Scindia was the chief guest at the event, which is watched by tens of thousands of people from the lake. He also got into one of the winning boats to the acclaim of the spectators.

In his discussions with Kerala chief minister K Karunakaran, Mr. Scindia broached the proposal for a German-sponsored resort to be built in the state.

The minister also suggested to the organisers of the race to hold pageantry shows on the river at night, with several floodlights, to make the event more colourful.

He promised help by the department of tourism in promoting the event in the international market. Even this year, about 250 foreign tourists watched the boat race, buying tickets at Rs. 10 each.

In Mr. Scindia's view, the annual boat race could be used for promoting national integration. He also suggested participation of cultural troupes from different states as part of the river festival.

**Rs 40 crs earmarked for tourism promotion**

**INDORE, Aug 6 (UNI)**

Union Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Madhav Rao Scindia has said tourism authorities have been asked to select more than a dozen lesser known tourist centres in the country, including a few in Madhya Pradesh, which would be taken up for intensive development in the near future.

A function held at the Devi Ahilya Vidymarked the formal inauguration of post-graduate course on tourism management, he said Madhya Pradesh would also have a significant share in the Rs. 40 crore budget for publicity campaign for promotion of tourism.

He said by encouraging tourism, foreign exchange income could be increased from the present Rs. 2,500 crores to Rs. 10,000 crores.

Mr. Scindia said Rs. 65 lakh would be spent at Indore as per the proposal sent by the State government. The local Lalbagh premises required proper development, he said, adding his ministry could arrange to send expert foreign tourists and hence could be constructed there for tourism.

Meanwhile, international tourist traffic to India declined only by 0.5 per cent last year despite several adverse developments both within the country and abroad.

According to Tourism Department's annual report for 1990-91, as many as 13.30 lakh foreign tourists had arrived in India in 1990 as against 13.34 lakh during the previous year. This did not include the nationals of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

According to the report, tourism had become an important segment of Indian economy contributing substantially to foreign exchange earnings. The foreign exchange earnings from tourism during 1989-90 was provisionally estimated at Rs. 22,450 crore against Rs. 21,260 crores in 1988-89. The target of foreign exchange earnings for 1990-91 was Rs. 2,200 crore.

During the year, 25 extension circuits had been identified for strengthening infrastructure facilities in order to promote tourism. As many as 46 fairs and festivals had been drawn up to be promoted in collaboration with the state governments.

The report further said that in order to further accelerate the development of tourism in the country, the eighth five-year plan had laid stress on various activities, including development of selected tourist places, diversification from culture-oriented tourism to holiday and leisure tourism, development of trekking, water sports, wildlife and beach resorts, tourism and exploring new source markets in regions and countries having cultural affinities, and restoration of national heritage projects.
Tourism zones planned in NE

Our Special Correspondent

KOHIMA 6 OCTOBER

THE UNION ministry of tourism is taking up a strategy of developing tourism complexes, borrowing the concept from the operations of free trade zones. Such tourism zones could substantially increase the net earnings from high spending international tourists.

A high-level team is shortly due to visit Nagaland and elsewhere in the north-eastern region to identify locations for development of such tourism complexes. The complexes are also to have a host of activities which should appeal to the top echelons of the international tourism market to augment high-value earnings from international tourism.

While there is ample natural settings for attracting high-spending tourists to the country, the ministry of tourism surveys indicate that there is need for developing infrastructure facilities for holding the attention of such groups of tourists.

For developing water sports, for example, it is needed to have water scooters or diving equipment, which attracted very high rates of duty.

However, without such facilities it will not be possible to attract the high-value tourist trade. It is believed such tourism could substantially increase the foreign exchange earnings of the country, since this segment of the international market is booming at present. There complexes will have facilities for adventure sports, fishing, hand gliding, river rafting, as well as outlets for sale of handicrafts.

The equipment for such activities are, unfortunately, not available within the country and therefore would have to be imported. It was for example noticed that notwithstanding excellent beach resorts, the foreign tourist inflow could not pick since no equipment like water scooters or diving apparatus were available.

The ministry had initiated dialogues with the Union finance ministry for permission for imports of gadgets for such complexes at low rates of duties. Already, finance ministry had conceded tourism ministry's demand for lower tariffs for certain items needed to be imported for beach tourism. The ministry, however, is emphatic that these would be open to domestic tourists as well.

Initial talks have been started by the Union minister for tourism and civil aviation, Mr Madhuravao Scindia, with the Nagaland government for identifying such areas in the state. Mr Scindia was here in connection with the inauguration of the Naga autumn festival at the picturesque capital of the state.

He had granted Rs 90 lakhs for initial work on two complexes at Motukchung and near Kohima. Under the schemes formulated by the tourism ministry, the Tourism Finance Corporation would provide three-fifths of the project cost and the rest would have to be provided by the state government. The Union ministry has further committed to provide part of the state government's share.

Mr Scindia had also cleared a feasibility study for construction of a ropeway for linking Kohima town with Pulu Bladze peak at an altitude of more than 9,000 feet which is visible from the town. The minister has commissioned the Rail India Technical and Economic Services Ltd (RITES) for conducting the feasibility study and the entire costs will be borne by the Union tourism ministry.

Centre to help Nagaland develop tourism

PTI

KOHIMA, 4 OCTOBER

THE MINISTER for civil aviation and tourism, Mr Madhuravao Scindia, on Wednesday said that Nagaland would be given all necessary co-operation to develop and tap tourism as a source of resources for the state's development.

Inaugurating the Nagaland autumn festival here, the minister said all efforts would be made to ensure that Nagaland, through tourism, was drawn into the mainstream of the nation's economic life.

Referring specifically to the state government's request for assistance in developing infrastructure for tourism, Mr Scindia said that priority would be granted to establish tourist complexes in Mokokchung and Dimapur districts, including setting up of restaurants, creating hang gliding and trekking facilities.

Mr Scindia also assured the state government that his ministry would bear the entire cost for conducting the feasibility studies about establishing a ropeway in Kohima.

Later, addressing a press conference, Mr Scindia noted that in the seventh five-year plan, the Centre had given Nagaland Rs 134 lakhs to promote tourism while this year alone, the state had been given Rs 90 lakhs.

"The state government should take the initiative. They should send us projects and we will cooperate," he said at the press conference also attended by Nagaland chief minister Mr Vamuzo.

The minister said that he did not view development of tourism in Nagaland in isolation but as part of overall efforts to develop tourism in the country.

"We are setting up a tourism action plan for the country," he said and added that a conference of state tourism ministers would be held soon to finalise the plan.

Mr Scindia said that 15 tourism circuits had been identified in the country and these would be vigorously developed and promoted.

Mr Scindia added that he felt that the government should only lay down and initiate a tourism policy to encourage the private sector to take part in it. He also said that his ministry was looking at the idea of creating special tourism zones where entrepreneurs could be given incentives in terms of taxation, excise and loans. He emphasised that this was only an idea.

Earlier, at the inaugural function, Mr Scindia evoked a lot of laughter and cheers when he concluded his speech. The minister was also cheered when he joined the dancers.
Specific tourist spots likely to be promoted

A shift in strategy to market specific destinations instead of the country as a whole is envisaged as part of the new thrust in overseas promotion of tourism. A consensus in favour of this shift is understood to have been reached by the think tank constituted by the minister for civil aviation and tourism, Madhav Rao Scindia. The minister indicated so at the just concluded India Travel Congress in Goa and at other functions held in the beach resort there.

The rationale for the shift, apparently stems in great part from the sad experience of Visit India Year, which saw a very decline in arrivals of foreign tourists. In fact, February the decline in foreign tourists was as much as 26 percent as compared to the corresponding month last year.

In several tourism generating markets, the country is viewed as a whole destination, and reports of trouble in widely-scattered parts of the country still alarm, also advisories by foreign governments to their citizens not to visit India. While efforts have been made to convince the markets that the major part of India is still safe and secure, they have had little effect. That is why Scindia now deems it necessary to promote specific destinations.

Scindia is trying to develop tourism zones patterned on export processing zones, where incentives will get substantial benefits. According to the minister, it will be essentially a programme of tourism-related comprehensive area development covering selected tourist destinations.

Scindia has also conceded to seriously look into most of the demands of the travel trade. Apart from the modifications in Section 90 (B) of the Income Tax Act announced by the finance minister, the minister for tourism assured the travel trade that its representatives would be involved in the finalisation of the action plan and the details of the national tourism policy are to be announced in November. Since tourism is a state subject, he has called all the state ministers to formalise the document.

Though some in the trade want tourism to be made a concurrent or a central subject, the minister says he prefers to steer clear of such controversies and opt for a consensus approach by enlisting support of the trade and the states to a national policy.

The theme of the Indian Travel Congress, the annual convention of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) in Goa, was tourism's role in the balance of payments problem. Scindia stressed the proposed action plan by what he described as three supportive structures: the centre, the state administrations and the trade. He was very hopeful that the trend so far would be reversed with the onset of the next tourism season.

The minister pointed out that an upswing was already evident in the tourist figures for August, and bookings for the subsequent months of the year confirmed his optimism. He was certain that the new strategy—shift in marketing to specific destinations—would pay off well and the country would regain its place on the international tourism scene.

He appealed to the convention that the commerce ministry was prepared to extend to the trade the benefits of EXIM scrips in some form.

Destination Kerala

Ashley D'Mello on the tourism industry’s upcoming focal point.

Come 1993 and tourists from Europe and the USA will fly straight to the palm-fringed shores of Kerala which is being developed as a 'direct destination'.

Kerala will thus be the second Indian destination to receive direct charter flights from the West after Goa.

According to the managing director of the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation, Mr T. Balakrishnan, the state is undertaking major plans to develop its tourism facilities as well as infrastructure to meet the expected demand.

Mr Balakrishnan said a chain of hotels is being built with the assistance of the Taj group at various important locations in Kerala. Work on five sites has already commenced. A total of 13 sites for hotels in the four- and five-star categories is planned.

The main thrust for development, according to Mr Balakrishnan, will come from the private sector. The room capacity will be expanded to 60,000 rooms from the current 30,000 rooms. Among the other facilities being developed are a beach resort is planned at Bekal in north Kerala. He hastens to add that beach tourism is only one aspect of what Kerala was offering. In addition to this there would be hill stations, forest lodges, water sports facilities and local festivals.

The great elephant march at Kollam, Thrissur and Thiruvananthapuram in January was gradually being made a tourist attraction. Currently Kerala has only two five-star hotels, the Taj Malabar and the Ashok at Cochin. It has 12 hotels, five yar...
India's first 5-star fort?

MTDC has plans to convert the ancient Vasai fort into a five-star hotel, writes MC Vaijayanthi

THE historic Vasai fort all set to gain five-star status? Yes, if the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation has its way. The MTDC has offered prime land at the fort to hotel chains and according to reports, the Taj group is very interested. The Vasai fort or Bassin Fort, as it is better known, is one of the oldest existing forts in India, which first acquired importance as the port most suited for the then available new navigational technology, during the days of Portuguese invasion. The fort is situated 77 km away from Bombay and is on the northern side of the Bassin Creek. Most of the walls are still intact and there are several old homes and churches in the area.

The Vasai fort is an officially protected monument by the archeological survey of India under section 15 of Ancient Monuments Preservation Act 1862. The earliest available history of the fort dates back to the year 1534 when Bassein was ceded to the Portuguese by Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat. The fort was raised thereafter by Navnath Chopda, the Portuguese governor on the site of the old Mohammedan fort which he had destroyed. And then it was a place of power struggle for a long time and in the ensuing encounters the fort was damaged. It came under the British rule later and ultimately in 1904 the area within the walls was declared protected as an ancient monument.

After many years of neglect and vandalism, the Archeological Survey of India announced that the preservation measures would be planned. But nothing substantial has been done so far. MTDC feels that the fort a good place to build a hotel-it is all part of the state government's policy of inviting the private sector to participate in tourism related activities. The Taj group of hotels is responding to the invitation.

Several hotel chains have shown interest in the project. The project will be completed within five years. The new hotel will have all the modern amenities and will be completed within five years. It will be the first five-star hotel in Maharashtra.

Darjeeling tourism

The Darjeeling tourism potential is immense. The Darjeeling Tourism Association (DTA) has come together to organise an international conference on tourism in Darjeeling. The conference will be held from October 24-26, 1991. The conference will be attended by tourism professionals from all over the world.

There are several factors that make Darjeeling a popular tourist destination. The town is surrounded by tea plantations and mountains. The climate is pleasant and the town is known for its rich cultural heritage.

The DTA has invited several experts to speak at the conference. The keynote speaker will be Mr. K. N. Das, the President of the West Bengal Tourism Association. Other speakers will include experts from the fields of marketing, hospitality, and tourism management.

The conference programme includes a cultural programme, a session on marketing strategies for Darjeeling, and a session on the future of tourism in the region.

Darjeeling has also received government support to promote tourism in the region. The government has allocated funds for the development of tourism infrastructure in Darjeeling. The government has also provided incentives for hoteliers and tour operators to invest in the region.

The DTA has also been working on developing new tourist attractions in Darjeeling. The town has several tea plantations that attract tourists. The DTA has been working with the tea plantations to develop new attractions and activities for tourists.

The DTA is hopeful that the conference will help promote tourism in Darjeeling. The conference will bring together tourism professionals from different countries and will help promote Darjeeling as a tourist destination.

Industry status for tourism in Gujarat

Ahmedabad, Sept 18 - The Gujarat government has decided to accord industry status to tourism. Several incentives are being offered to private companies for developing about 50 well-known tourist spots in the state, which attract only 20,000 foreign tourists every year.

Among the entrepreneurs who have evinced keen interest in the tourism projects in the pipeline are Sabya Amusement and the Ajmer group, which have tied up with GTDC to set up a Rs 11 crore amusement park near Gandhinagar, the state capital. Spread over 20 acres, the project will be ready by March next year, with the two private firms providing 74 per cent of the project cost and GTDC the remaining 26 per cent.

Avani Motel and Restaurant has also agreed to construct a motel on a highway near Limbdi town in the Surat district region.

Other projects coming up in the joint sector include a water sports complex at Ahmedpur-Mandoli, a beach resort in the historic Dandi, cottages at Sapatwa, and a club at the seaside town of Talca and an amusement park at Ubtarbra. The government has assured help in acquisition of land for these schemes, which will be run by the entrepreneurs under a 15-year contract under the supervision of GTDC, on payment of a yearly rent.

The new tourism policy offers a six-year sales tax exemption on cooked food to motels or hotels within five km of the 50 selected tourist centres, besides 40 per cent relief on electricity duty and luxury tax.

A 25 per cent sales tax exemption and 23 per cent tax concession will also be given to motels coming up on state or national highways. Moreover, amusement parks, water sports, ropeway and the like will not have to pay any entertainment tax for the first six years.

During the past three years, GTDC has incurred losses totalling a whopping Rs 2.52 crore, mainly owing to the mismanagement of funds. The corporation runs at least 40 units in and outside Gujarat, but only 10 of them, including its offices at Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta, have recorded profits in the past.

The government has also decided to provide financial assistance to tourism projects. The financial assistance will be provided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature and scale of the project.
Creating of tourism board ‘not feasible’

From Our Special Correspondent


The tourism think tank constituted by the Minister for Tourism, Mr. Madhav Rao Scindia, is believed to have ruled out setting up of the National Tourism Board, as suggested by the National Committee on Tourism some four years ago.

The think tank feels that it is not feasible to implement the recommendation to set up the National Tourism Board on the pattern of the Railway Board for want of financial resources and legal provisions. It is argued that as most of the delivery systems, including land, water, building, electricity and hotels are in the State sector, the Board set up at the Centre would not be able to function effectively.

While overlooking the creation of a special cadre of professionals belonging to the Department of Tourism, it said the existing cadre must be made more functional by providing adequate training and improving the cadre prospects. It has, however, suggested that working of the tourism boards and authorities in the neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka, Singapore and Thailand should be studied in detail and the positive aspects of those boards and authorities incorporated in the functioning of the existing set up. It seems to have agreed to consider the question of constituting a standing committee on tourism at the forthcoming conference of the State Tourism Ministers to be convened some time next month.

The suggestions made by the think tank appear to have ended the euphoria the tourism cadre officers had been entertaining about tourism becoming highly professional trade under the stewardship of the dynamic and understanding Union Tourism Minister, Mr. Scindia. They have been trying hard, though without much success so far, to seek an audience with Mr. Scindia, for the past two months to explain their view point on the tourism promotion and invite his attention to the "neglect" with which the professionals are being treated.

"Anguish": In a memorandum submitted to Mr. Scindia in the second week of August the cadre officers are reported to have expressed "anguish" at the way they are being exploited by the deputationistIAS officers whose influx into the department has assumed alarming proportion in the recent years. According to them, between 1967 and 1992 all senior positions, excluding that of the Director General of Tourism, were held by the departmental officers. It was during this time that the foundation for the growth of tourism in the country was laid.

After that the ranks of deputationists in the department started swelling and many of the Central Directorate of Tourism has over a dozen deputationists, majority of them belonging to the IAS. While the new cadre of Tourism IS officers are considered important "vanguard" in the organisation, the IAS cadre officers are accused of having exploited the position of the cadres with the help of which they have found an expanding market for themselves in the tourism industry.

The recent graduation of Mr. Scindia from the IAS, with an impressive record of service in the International Civil Service, is said to have fuelled the pent-up feeling of the IS officers and they are waiting for him to take the "right kind of initiatives" into the affairs of the tourism industry.

Mr. Scindia is expected to take over the charge at the earliest. He is said to have already taken up the issue of the new cadre officers' demands for having proper administrative structure within the department as a first step towards institutionalising the tourism industry.

India elected chairman of WTO Commission

NEW DELHI, Oct. 4.

India has been elected Chairman of the South Asia Commission of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) at the ninth session of the WTO general assembly currently on in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The other members of the Commission are Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Maldives.

An official release issued here today said that addressing the assembly, the Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of India, Mr. M. S. Shrihari Bahl, who is heading the Indian delegation, called upon the WTO to play a purposeful role by initiating tourism projects in the developing countries and financing such projects.

Asserting the importance of the foreign investments in the development of India's tourism sector he called upon the foreign investors to collaborate in the tourism ventures in India.

— Our Special Correspondent
Travel industry: All take no give

RAMADA RESORT (Goa), SEPT 16 — When the 700-odd delegates at 40th Indian Travel Congress start departing tomorrow, Goa should be heaving a sigh of relief. In fact, for most of the past four days that they were here, the Goaites chose to ignore them.

And why not? The very contradictions of the congress, confined to the isolation of opulent beach resorts, were enough to provoke disdain from the locals. Luckily for the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) such disdain, if any, was not made public.

When the congress began on Friday the 13th, TAAI president Gautam Khanna promised Goa the moon. He said the convention itself would lead to an upsurge of tourist inflow and development of this popular destination.

And yet, for the last four days when the deliberations took place, not one voice was heard on making Goa a paradise on earth. Instead, what one heard from speaker after speaker from the travel trade was just the overwhelming faults of the government. When, cornered on an issue sensitive to every Goan’s heart by the local media — the over-construction of hotels and beach resorts — Khanna chose to be ignorant and retorted, “This is just the beginning.”

“Truly, for the whole of the convention here, the only sympathetic voice one heard in this confused milieu was from none other than the government — be it the minister for civil aviation and tourism Vishwanath Mahadik, the Indian Airlines CMD S.S. Ramdas, the Goa Chief Minister Ravi Naik, the RBI controller of foreign exchange P.P. Soodhiani, or the IAAI chairman V.K. Mathur. They all promised to make tourism what it deserves to be.”

Come November, and the Catholic Church will be holding its own convention at Goa — to discuss the impact of tourism on Goa life and culture. Well-known travel columnist couple, Hugh and Colleen Ganzer, themselves Catholics, have refused to participate. Participating at the TAAI convention here for the last few days, they chose perhaps to display their secular credentials instead.

But the travel trade itself is not secular, it is as orthodox as a rabid communist, seeking to uphold its own privileges without so much as thinking about the fate of others.

So when Hugh Ganzer, a managing committee member of TAAI, preached his sermons at the convention last Saturday, he drew the loudest applause from all. And yet, no one responded to his brief suggestion that the tourism industry come forward to meet its social obligations. No one seemed to care.

Given the outcome of the four-day jamboree, the development of Goa, and all other destinations, appeared as though yet another government responsibility. And the government itself appeared ever ready to oblige. Scindia, on his day-long visit, laid the foundation stone of the addition to Panaji’s Aminabad and inaugurated a yacht club at Panjim as well. He assured the travel industry of an increase in air capacity to Goa by 65 per cent this winter.

Naik promised an 18-hole golf course (which he mispronounced as “gold course”), perhaps on account of the Goa gold or the “Alemma arrest scare” on his government’s behalf. Scindia further announced his proposed concessions to travel industry.

The RBI controller today listed several steps initiated over the past year to facilitate foreign exchange transactions by tourism industry.

The bank’s foreign investment cell, the foreign investment and technology transfer section (Fits), he said, has started functioning in Bombay from today. The cell will clear all foreign investment proposals, including those in tourism-related area, having 51 per cent overseas equity within 15 days at the most.

But TAAI failed to come forth on its assurance on the development of Goa. It chose to remain silent; the delegates wanted more for themselves.

And more was granted. The IAAI chairman disclosed his plans before the government to allow greater acceptance of plastic money even at bank and customs counters at international airports. Soodhiani also assured that the RBI would consider the possibility of allowing international credit cards for travel agents.

Yet, towards the close of the TAAI programme, the travel agents gave away their rank division... And difference. A long list of resolutions were moved without so much as a discussion amongst the members present. Travel industry

heavyweight Jai Sharma stood up in protest. “Such a thing has never happened before. I feel ashamed,” he thundered. And some from the floor applauded. The matter was postponed to the latter half of the day, by when, several delegates had wandered out for sightseeing trips.

As rightly pointed out by Scindia yesterday, the convention this year was the largest not in order to hear a young and handsome minister speak (or to deliberate on such serious issues as the balance of payments crisis, which was the theme this time). It actually grew to be the largest because of what Goa happened to be.

So when Scindia sits down once again to ponder over further concessions to travel trade be it through cash scrip-like instruments, or any other, he would perhaps do well to slap few obligations on the trade as well. For instance, he could just ask them to renovate the churches of Goa which are in abject disrepair, or clean up the streets of Panjim at least. For the beauty of Goa does not lie in convolutions and bickering. Its spirit continues to pervade its churches, its beaches, and its lush green countryside forever.
India is going to promote "adventure tourism" in a big way to attract foreign tourists with a view to earning foreign exchange. Union Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Madhav Rao Scindia said here:

"This country has the potential and infrastructure to cater for the needs of tourists from any part of the world", he said.

Mr. Scindia was inaugurating a two-day International Himalayan Mountaineering and Tourism Meet, organised by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF). More than 200 delegates from different parts of the world are attending the meet.

Mr. Scindia said India would soon launch an "information revolution" to make the people across the world aware of its rich cultural heritage and its "immense" tourism potential.

"There is not sufficient information available about India in other countries. Foreign tourists do not know where to go in India and at times they avoid coming here due to this very specific reason", he observed.

Tourism could provide "much needed" foreign exchange and could also help the country substantially in overcoming the problem of unemployment. "Above all, it can create an awareness among the people to preserve environment and our ancient heritage."

About adventure tourism, he said the country had recently organised an international hang gliding meet. "We will be organising a boat rally in November near Gwalior to be followed by two more such international rallies from Allahabad to Buxar and from Morshidabad to Diamond Harbour", he said.

In his address, Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man to climb Mount Everest along with Mr. Tenzing Norgay, said mountains were of "paramount importance" to humankind. "We must protect the delicate ecological balance."

One of the objectives of the meet is to bring together decision makers and key operational agencies concerned with adventure tourism with a view to further developing adventure tourism in India.

Haryana govt to launch adventure tourism

Chandigarh 18 October

HARYANA IS entering the field of adventure tourism by launching various schemes at its tourist complexes with a view to promoting adventure among the people. The state government has approved the scheme of tourism cooperation for introducing water sports in Dandama Lake (Gurgaon) water sports facilities are being added at Hathnikund (Yamanaganj) and Surya Kund (Faridabad).

It also plans to start invigorating rock climbing at Aravali rock race at Dandama and at Shivalk hills in Moran.

India 'Beckons'

Sir. — The same given to the new scheme to attract foreign tourists to India, "Adventure Tourism," is very appropriate, because the experience of most foreign tourists who travelled in India that it is itself is a great adventure.

There are many "adventurous" places in India for the foreign tourists to visit. If they want to see the tigers they can go to Punjab to see the Bhednanwale Tigras or to Tamil Nadu to encounter LTTE Tigers. If they go to Assa there are thousands of operation Rhinos near the ULFA hideouts. If they want to experience the thrill of being kidnapped, Srinagar is the best place to visit. West Bengal and Kerala were the two world famous sanctuaries where the Indian variety of ostriches locally known as "Indian Communists" live.

Dr B. Sathish Rai

Mysore
Foreign tourist arrivals picking up

by Arnd R. Jerath
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi, Oct. 13

The travel trade is keeping its fingers crossed. After almost a year of virtual stagnation, foreign tourist arrivals are picking up and if all goes well, by the end of winter, the traditional peak tourist season, things should be back to normal again.

In fact, according to projections made from bookings for the months of November to January, the much publicised India Tourism Year 1991 may not turn out to be a disaster after all. As against original estimates of 1.7 million tourists, 1.5 million will have visited India by the end of the year, current estimates project.

In a year that started off with a minus rate of tourist arrivals (minus 26 per cent in February this year), the Tourism Department, maintains that this is a credible performance.

Curiously, tourism figures this year saw an unusual pattern which is responsible for the unexpected break the industry has received. January and March, which is when tourist traffic usually peaks, were minus months. Virtually no tourists came to India. Then, suddenly, there was a turnaround in May and the summer months, when tourist arrivals normally slump, saw a positive growth rate with August registering a 5.6 per cent growth as compared to last year. Thus, the summer months combined with the coming winter season have more or less made up for the losses earlier in the year.

Tourism officials attribute this to the spur that tourist traffic tends to take after a slump. "People were taking the holidays they cancelled earlier in the year because of the Gulf War," explained a tourism expert.

The most surprising aspect of this unexpected spurt was that the bulk of tourists came in from Spain. In fact, the traffic was so heavy from Spain that the Department of Tourism had to request the Ministry of External Affairs to sanction extra staff for the Indian Embassy in Madrid to cope with the demand for visas.

The only explanation that the travel trade has to offer for this phenomenon is that with the crisis in Yugoslavia and the continuing tension in the Middle East, the tourist traffic that normally goes to the Adriatic region, Cairo, etc. came to India instead.

But even as the industry is breathing a sigh of relief, it is keeping its fingers crossed. For, the past one year has proved how vulnerable it is. Internal strife, political instability, a war in the Gulf, trouble in East Europe and the Soviet Union have all contributed to the ups and downs over the past many months.

"Tourism is the most sensitive of all industries," declared an official.

"When people plan holidays, the first thing they think about is their security. And it seems remotely unsafe is out." The knock for India began in June 1990 at tensions in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam rose. For the first time in many years, tourist arrivals to India fell. Anti-Mandir riots, Ayodhya tension and the subsequent collapse of the V P Singh Government made things worse and the figures nosedived through the winter months to reach an all time low in February this year thanks to the Gulf War.

Fortunately, things have been quiet in India for the past few months. And the travel trade is hoping that incidents like the recent abduction of the Russian diplomat do not have repercussions.

The Government itself has big plans to promote tourism to India. The first thing on the agenda is a tourism action plan which is expected to be finalised by the end of the year. Judging from the statements the Tourism Minister, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, has been making recently, the plan should cut a lot of the red tape that has prevented the tourism industry from gaining momentum.

More immediately, the Tourism Department has identified 15 major "tourist circuits" all over the country for concentrated development in terms of infrastructure like hotels, wayside facilities, information centres, adventure sports, recreational activities and so on. The idea is to remove as many obstacles as possible and pump in funds in a planned manner for proper growth rather than the diffuse development India has seen so far.

Planners are toying with several ideas including one to set up casinos in five star hotels.

3 UK visitors boycott lunch on Tourism Day

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
Mumbai, Sept. 23

When foreigners were given a warm traditional welcome in India on World Tourism Day, three British journalists touring South India at the invitation of the Union Tourism Ministry, boycotted lunch in a private hotel at Mahabalipuram.

As a gesture of sympathy, they refused to pass through a group of hotel employees picnicking at the hotel gate with placards in their hands demanding higher wages. They not only skipped their lunch, but also discussed the dispute with the strikers and made donations to them.

Mr. Peter Lazenby of the Evening Post said: "The hotel staff appear to be on very low wages. As trade union members (all the three journalists are members of the National Union of Journalists) it would have been wrong of us to visit this hotel while they are on strike." Mr. Michael de Larrebetu of Sunday Times said: "We wanted to wish the workers every success in their struggle for a fair wage, and we urge the hotel owners to settle this dispute.

Earlier in the day, they told this reporter that they were very disappointed with their visit to Nashik. "The attraction of the 10 day visit projected by Indian Tourism Department was "Kumbh Mela" at Nashik."
Foreign media being lured to cover fair

By PRANAYA K. CHAUDHARY
The Times of India News Service
PATNA, Sept 29:
The department of tourism, government of India has decided to sponsor media persons from France and Holland in the world famous Sonapur fair which is scheduled to begin in November in order to attract world tourists in the country.

This year the government is planning to sponsor a renowned French photographer Mr Xavier Zimbardo who has earlier done a photographic tour of Rajasthan. His photographs are most sought after by French magazines.

Mr Zimbardo is likely to spend about 15 days in Sonapur cattle fair and not in Panna. The director, department of tourism located in Paris, Mr G Kanjilal in a letter to the government of India clearly said, "since he is going with expensive camera equipment, he is hesitant to stay in tent, which is normally put by the department of tourism government of India." Patna office in the fair. But he will stay at Sonapur during the fair. According to sources here. It may be mentioned here that the French magazine gave wide coverage to Sonapur fair and also French television channel-3 showed a 10 minute film on it last year.

Mr Zimbardo is also likely to cover famous Chhath festival in Patna besides Nalanda, Rajgir and Vaishali in order to perform a special supplement on India with special reference to Bihar which has also been sponsored by the government of India, tourist office located at Tokyo.

Last year a 12-member French TV team visited the fair and showed it on French TV channel-3. The government of India sponsored their visit on an estimated cost of Rs 40,000.

A freelance writer of the USA who also writes for Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal, Ms Kathleen M Cox is also planning to visit India during September- November. The purpose of her visit is mainly to study the tribal society in the eastern India. She will also visit parts of Hazaribagh and Ranchi to study the conditions of Birhore tribes. Author of the renowned tourist guide book Fodor's, Himalayan countries and also the chief writer and area editor of the current Fodor's guide on India, Fodor's tour guides are published in US and have a very wide circulation all over the world. It has over 200 titles in print and used by many travel agents also.

Last year four journalists from Australia, Mr PC Jensen, Mr MM Heine, and Mrs and Mrs RC Beddison and one each from Korea, Mr John Louis Mow, Mr Hidaka Toshi (Japan) and Mr Jack Brunel (Paris) paid visit to the state and have also written articles on Bodhgaya, Rajgir, Pawaquiri and Nalanda.

The tourist officer, department of tourism, government of India, Mr Sudhir Kumar said that there was a sharp decline in the foreign travellers in the state in recent times due to the lack of infrastructural facilities here. Mr Kumar who is officiating as a director for the last two years said that the department has also decided to promote famous Chhath festival in Patna through inviting tourists and media.

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International cultural festival

NEW DELHI, Oct 9 (PTI):
Over 200 foreign diplomats and cultural envoys would participate in a 5-day long international cultural festival from November 20.

The festival, being organised during the cultural decade (1992-96), is central to the national Tourism Year, Mr M. Narendran, Union minister and chairman of the festival organising committee, said. The period also coincides with the beginning of Mahashivratri celebrations.

Besides the Asian Art Society, the ministry of Tourism and the cultural committee of the state government, also participate in the organisation of the festival.

The festive will provide cultural programmes from various countries, particularly from the north-eastern region, said Mr Narendran.

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TIME OF INDIA
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BACKGROUND ORIENTAL OPTICAL INDUSTRIES LTD (OOIL) NURSERY ROAD, PATNA 800 001
Master plan for better tourist facilities

From Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, Aug 30.

Every effort would be made to exploit the vast tourist potential of the State and a master plan was being prepared to improve the unknown tourist spots and to provide good facilities to the tourist, said Mr. K. Shivarathri, Minister for Information and Tourism, here, today. He also assured that a Committee would be formed to evolve strategies for the planned development of tourism.

Mr. T.N. Narasimha Murthy, Minister for Food and Civil Supplies, who participated in the discussion said that Karnataka is the only State where tourism could be publicized throughout the year. He suggested that a Legislative Consultative Committee be formed to evolve strategies for the planned development of tourism.

Mr. A.K. Anantha Krishna, MLA, said that to improve tourism as an industry, long-term planning was necessary. He suggested that a City Corridor reflecting the culture and development of the State should be planned at Bangalore on the lines of a Dutch venture.

Dr. Jeeravani Alva MLA, a delegate of the Tourism portfolio, pleaded for a pragmatic approach for the development of tourism and said that passage of a law and an amendment should be made to the total neglect of tourism in the State.

"Vibrant Karnataka": He felt that "Vibrant Karnataka" should be sold by organizing more and more Karnataka festivals' jointly by the Tourism, Karnataka and Culture and Information Departments outside the State.

Mr. K. Chandrashekhara, MLA, said that sufficient funds had been allocated for the development of tourism in the Hyderabadi-Karnataka area.

Need for more amenities: Mr. D.B. Chowdhary, Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, said that more amenities should be created to develop domestic tourism and coordination of different departments was necessary for its integrated development.

Mr. V. Nagaraj and Mr. B. Ramalingappa, MLA, stressed the need to preserve the vanishing flora and fauna of the State as also the evoking coastline of Karnataka.

Mr. M. H. Ramalingappa, Secretary, Information, Tourism and Youths' Service Department, said that Rs. 50 crores were available for tourism development during 1991-92 and emphasis would be given to popularize new tourism spots and to provide essential tourism facilities.

It was felt that at the planning stage, that the State had the essential Tourism Map and only promotional activities were lacking. It was also decided to lay more stress on adventure tours like rock climbing, water sports, horse riding and other activities so that people were looking for thrill and adventure.

It was felt that basic facilities should be provided and the amenities at KSTDC hotels be improved.

 Pollution notice to hotels

The Karnataka State Pollution Control Board has issued show case notices to four out of the five 5-star hotels in the city for violating the Environment Act, according to B. Basavarajappa, Minister for Science, Technology and Environment.

He told newsmen here on Tuesday that notices were issued for not erecting chimneys of prescribed height for letting off smoke from diesel generating sets.

He said the board was verifying whether 5-star hotels were sending solid "wet waste" like cooked rice to piggeries or whether these were being dumped en route.

He said an inspection of 5-star hotels by the board had revealed that the amount of wet waste in each of these hotels was about 200-300 kg. a day besides about 100 kg. of dry waste like paper and food waste materials. Dry waste was disposed of through private contractors or the Bangalore City Corporation for recycling purposes.

Mr. Basavarajappa said similar checks would be conducted on 3-star hotels.

Looking Corporation

The 'Looking Corporation' Ltd., the "Vidhan Sabha" Government's chosen agency for the development of the State, has held a meeting with the officials of the "Looking Corporation" Ltd., to discuss the implementation of the project.

The meeting was held at the "Looking Corporation" Ltd. office and was attended by representatives of the "Looking Corporation" Ltd., Karnataka State Electricity Board, Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation, Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation, and the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation.

The meeting was convened to finalize the details of the project and to make arrangements for its implementation.

The "Looking Corporation" Ltd. has been chosen by the Government of Karnataka to develop the State by providing various facilities to tourists.

The Government of Karnataka has allocated Rs. 50 crores for the development of tourism in the State and has approved the project of the "Looking Corporation" Ltd. for the development of the State as a tourist destination.

The project is aimed at developing the infrastructure and facilities for tourists in the State and includes the construction of roads, hotels, restaurants, and other facilities.

The "Looking Corporation" Ltd. has already started the construction of roads and hotels and is expected to complete the project within the next few months.

The project is expected to generate employment opportunities for the local people and will boost the economy of the State.

COUNCIL QUESTIONS

The leader of the opposition, Mr. C.K. Narasimha, asked, "Why has the Government not acted on the matter of the funds that had been misused?"

Mr. C.K. Narasimha, who had informed the House about the matter, said that the misused funds were allocated by the Government for the development of the State for the benefit of the people.

The Leader of the Opposition also asked, "Why has the Government not acted on the matter of the funds that had been misused?"

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The Leader of the Opposition also asked, "Why has the Government not acted on the matter of the funds that had been misused?"
Scheme to attract tourists on anvil

NEW DELHI, Oct. 6 (PTI). - The minister for civil aviation and tourism, Mr Madhav Rao Scindia, on Saturday said that the government would soon be launching a massive campaign to attract foreign tourists as part of the visit India year which is on currently.

He said that there was buoyancy in the tourism sector and the bookings for India by foreign tourists was looking up. Asked whether there was any proposal to have an Air India flight to South Africa, he said that it was too early to comment.

He hoped that the campaign by Air India would go a long way in enhancing the image of the airline as well as the country.

Eight passengers whose names were picked in the draw by Mr Scindia would be given free club class return tickets to various destinations covered by Air India.

Picking the draw of the Mahaluck Rajah scheme launched by Air India here at function at Indira Gandhi international airport, Mr Scindia said that ten advertising agencies have made presentation and the government would be selecting one of them for undertaking this campaign.

MRTPC asks AI to stop sales promotion contest.

Our Corporate Bureau

NEW DELHI 10 OCTOBER
THE MONOPOLIES and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) on Wednesday exercised its power to discipline government undertakings indulging in unfair trade practices and ordered Air India to immediately stop its sales-promotion contest started last month.

This is the first order against a government undertaking issued by MRTPC in 21 years of its existence.

Public sector undertakings and government companies were outside MRTPC’s jurisdiction till September 27 this year, when the government issued a notification to bring them under the commission’s ambit.

A two-member bench of the commission comprising its chairman, Justice R.A. Jhatghar, and Mr H.C. Gupta, has issued an interim injunction restraining Air India from continuing with its sales promotion contest.

The commission has asked Air India to show cause by October 28, why the injunction should not be made permanent. Simultaneously, it has issued a notice of enquiry about the alleged unfair trade practice.

Air India has launched a scheme on September 20 offering ‘Mahaluck Rajah coupons’, along with any tickets purchased in India for international travel. The passenger had to fill up the coupon and submit it to the airline. A lucky draw was to be organised every fortnight at the Delhi, Bombay, Trivandrum and Madras international airports.

The Mahaluck Rajah (the winner) was offered a club class return ticket to any destination in Europe except London if he was flying to New York, Toronto, London, Frankfurt, Rome, Geneva, Paris, Moscow, Tokyo or Osaka and any destination in south-east Asia if the person’s ticket was for Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Nairobi or Hong Kong and for those heading for the Gulf were offered tickets to any city in that region as a prize.

The commission has ordered the airline to stop issuing fresh coupons or advertisements. This means those who have already filled up the coupons, will be eligible for the lucky draw.

The director general (DG) of investigation and registration at the commission filed an application before the commission alleging that this scheme amounted to an unfair trade practice under section 36A (3) (B) of the MRTP Act (as amended by the ordinance issued last month).

The DG’s representative in the court room, Mr Subhash Chandra, said irreparable loss would be caused to the consumer if Air India is not restrained from indulging in the unfair trade practice of carrying on a scheme of lottery.

Mr Chandra said the scheme distorted the competition among various international airlines operating in India and abroad. He said it allured the passengers to purchase Air India tickets on the basis of considerations other than the merit of the service.

AI suspends ‘Mahaluck Rajah’ scheme

Our Bombay Bureau

BOMBAY 10 OCTOBER
AIR INDIA today decided to suspend its “Mahaluck Rajah” scheme and has ordered its officers not to issue any more of the coupons which went along with the scheme, till further notice. The airlines has also decided to discontinue its ad campaign for the scheme till the matter was sorted out.

Aviation sources here, however, feel that the MRTP Commission has acted in haste by passing an adinterim injunction restraining the airlines from advertising and issuing coupons under the scheme, without giving AI a hearing. Many feel that the MRTPC action has come a day too late, because the “Mahaluck Rajah” scheme opened on September 13, 1991, and had an unrestricted run till yesterday. In fact, the names of some of the winners of the scheme were also announced.

The MRTPC’s answer to this could be that it was only on September 27, 1991, that public sector organisations have been brought under its purview. Also, it was only after the implementation of the MRTP (Amendment) Ordinance that the Commission has been raised to act against public sector organisations like Air India.

Though the ad-interim injunction on Air India could act as a test-case for future restrictions on public sector organisations, a similar lucky draw scheme case introduced by a foreign airline; British Airways—got away scot free. Industry sources were of the opinion that the British Airways scheme was a clean lottery and it was not even against sale of any air tickets. Air India, when contacted today, maintained that though it is yet to receive the MRTPC order, acting on newspaper reports it has decided to suspend the “Mahaluck Rajah” scheme for the time being. Meanwhile all lines are seeking legal opinion about its further course of action.
You've spotted it, haven't you? Our doormen aren't really men at all, they're women.

No fooling you, is there?
The reason for this is very simple. We're not your average kind of hotel, so why should our reception committee be any different?

Besides, there's no denying that our doormen are much prettier than their male counterparts elsewhere.

At any rate, they certainly seem to be a hit with the guests.

For one thing, they always seem to guarantee a ready supply of taxis waiting outside the hotel at all hours of the day and night.

Welcome to The Pan Pacific, "never a dull moment," as they say.

THE PAN PACIFIC HOTEL
Singapore

MARINA SQUARE, 7 KALLANG BOULEVARD, SINGAPORE 0811. TEL: (65) 316 6111, FAX: (65) 339 1661. FOR RESERVATIONS IN ASIA, USE ACCESS CODE "PF" OR CALL (65) 339-5333 (SINGAPORE) OR (852) 277-3316 (HONG KONG).
Construction cos find room for more hotels

These, however, are the obvious reasons. Scratch the surface, and an equally pressing reason for the new push emerges: tax planning. Mr Ansal reveals that while there is no depreciation in real estate, for hotels depreciation as high as 25 per cent is permitted even on the cost of building.

Points out Mr Abbi, "In construction, there isn't too much equipment. However, to retain surplus and claim depreciation, assets are required. Therefore, the search for new areas to invest." Swearingen the pitch further are the generous incentives being offered by the government. The debt-equity ratio is very high, says Mr Ansal, noting that the rate of interest in hotel financing was cheaper and far more easily available than in any other industry.

With this in mind, Pushpa Builders is setting up a hotel in Kanpur. In Lucknow, Pushpa Builders is setting up a Travelodge. Down south, Madras Coromandel Engineering is diversifying into hotels, while in Bangalore, Skyline Builders is testing the waters. And these are just for starters.

Behind the various activity are coolheaded calculations; construction companies start off with the in-built advantage of expertise in building, plus access to plum prime location properties. Says the chairman of Jai Prakash's hotels division, Ram Gupta, "It is a logical step for the builders to diversify into the hotel industry."

Agrees the chairman of the Ansal's group, Mr Sushil Ansal, "It is the safest diversification for the real estate developer." Ansal's itself is the management consultant for Pushpa Hotels in Leningrad and Bangkok.

Besides, there's the additional advantage of infrastructural support. Pushpa Builders and Ansal's, for instance, chose to set up their first domestic hotel ventures in Lucknow, where they already have existing offices.

For builders, hotels are also the ideal place to reinvest capital. The chief of Om Prakash Buldev Kishen Engineering and Rajiv Contractor, Mr Dinamish Abbi, whose father was the first to diversify into hotels when he built Hotel Vikram in the capital, says there is no scope for plothing profits into the construction business where the market is tight and the returns are not satisfying.

Inevitably, the flurry of new hotels has triggered off a mini-stampede for tie-ups with the big ones abroad and to carve out new niches in the market. Mr Sohn has tied up with South Pacific Hotel Corporation for the first 'Travelodge' in India. The Abbi's are planning a project in Jaipur which will be an old world hotel, with candles for lighting. The Delhi-based Som Datta's are coming up with a Rs 12-crore 'Landmark' hotel in Kanpur.

Surprisingly, few builders are going in for the big buck five-star range. Most groups are targeting business travellers. Says Mr Ansal, "I am looking for permanent clientele, which the foreign tourist inflow does not ensure." Therefore, he plans to put up three-star hotels in the smaller towns of Gaya, Kanpur and Lucknow.

Lucknow, incidentally, has emerged as the most sought after location primarily because it is considered the most important place next only to Delhi, and has a permanent flow of both business travellers and Basht pilgrims on their way to Gaya round the year.

All those, however, are mere peripherals. As the original hotel man Conrad Hilton put it, in the business of hotels there were three things that matter: First, site, second, site, and third, site. Sitting pretty on plush sites, Indian building barons surely are on a firm foundation.
NEW DELHI, Sept 28:
A duty free shop in each city and town of India? Gold banks in the country to prevent the smuggling in of nearly 160 tonnes of the yellow metal each year? Measures to end the hawala racket?

All this sounds fantastic. Even more enchanting is the proposal that if NRIs are asked to deposit $ 100,000 for every one of the 5,000 retail outlets and $ 10,00,000 for every one of the 100 wholesale companies authorised to import foreign goods for which there is a craze in India, the government would stand to pay by $ 600 million in one month itself through these deposits.

In the context of the on going foreign exchange crisis, this seems an easy and quick way for government to shore up dollar earnings. The proposal has been made to the government by Mr Ramesh Minda, an NRI from Dubai, and is said to be under consideration.

While the political leaders are not apparently averse to the idea, bureaucracy feels that it is one of those many unresearched ideas which abound in India. The first question is: Who has the dollars to buy the items from the proposed network of duty free shops? Then there is the problem of logistics, of locating these shops. Will they be at the airports or in town? What will be their turnover? What if expensive foreign goods are stolen? Will not the exercise be counterproductive for the NRIs who have invested their dollars in this project?

Yes, there is a plethora of questions that arise from any such proposal. The intention is good, perhaps business like. The question is: Is it workable?

The proposal envisages that the NRI investor should be allowed to import all kinds of consumer goods, durable and non-durable: liquor, cigarettes, chocolates, electronic items not manufactured in India, junk food, cosmetics, perfumes and the like.

It says that these goods are presently available in India, thanks to what is called the tripart system. In this system, needy persons like students visit Dubai and carry some unofficial cash or

leitits and leather goods or even arrange to receive money in Dubai by hawala. After selling their goods in Dubai, they buy consumer goods there and resell them in India for a consideration. The note says that there are thousands of trips in this business on which depends partially Dubai's business.

It emphasises that like in smuggling operations, the government does not benefit by a single dollar through this. It suggests that the entire operation be regulated so as to enable the government to earn valuable foreign exchange. It is also suggested that the NRI investor could pay 60 per cent of the import value of goods they hire in as franchise fee. It is so termed because the entire operation implies that the company will be exempted from paying tax or customs duty.

As for eligibility to buy goods from duty free shops, the proposal states that visiting foreign nationals including NRIs and Indians authorised to spend officially in foreign exchange could be the customers. There would be no limit on buying and payment would be in foreign exchange. In addition, the buyer would be required to gift/despose of the goods to any Indian citizen who will pay him in rupees, an aspect that would need correct handling.

The note points out that in Dubai and Singapore, banks keep gold bars in vaults on a consignment basis on behalf of the Swiss banks. Whenever any gold dealer approached the bank for gold, the bank released the gold against payment at the international market price. Banks in India could be given similar permission to keep their vaults on consignment basis.

The proposal also suggests that Indian goods like scooters, mixers and TV sets could be sold through the duty free shops and treated as deemed exports. The payment against it would be only in convertible foreign exchange by NRIs. This would obviate the system in which foreign distributors and shipping companies made handsome profits on Indian goods exported to free ports like Dubai only to be carried back home by NRIs when they return to India either on transfer or on a visit.

THE TIMES OF INDIA
20/9/91
GNLF airport plan threatens hill reserve

By USHARAI
The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI, Oct. 14:
One of the oldest high hill sanctuaries of the country and the only one of its kind in West Bengal, Senchal in Darjeeling, is threatened.

The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) is determined to construct an airport at Tiger Hill, within the 3,864-hectare sanctuary, right in the heart of the reserved forests. A pucca motorable road through the wildlife sanctuary and the catchment area is also proposed.

Conservationists are alarmed because the construction of the airport and its 70-acre administrative area at Tiger Hill would spell disaster for wildlife and water sources. Over 440 hectares of the sanctuary constitute the catchment area on which Darjeeling depends for its water supply. But the GNLF feels it is hard to construct if the airport was promised in its manifesto of 1989.

Mr. Subhash Ghising has been pressing for the reservation of the forest land (core area and catchment in the wildlife sanctuary) so that it can be handed over to the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) for construction of the airport. He also wants the old military road passing through the Senchal sanctuary and catchment to be deerscribed and handed over so that an alternative road can be made upto Kurseong.

The Federation of Societies for the Conservation of Forests and Wildlife, Darjeeling, is trying to build up public opinion against the proposed airport and road, but is finding it difficult to counter the political pressures which the DGHC is bringing on the central and state governments. Deerscription of forest areas for such projects falls under the purview of the central government.

In June this year, the Himachal Pradesh government denotified the Darlaghat sanctuary in the state so that Gujrat Ambujas could set up a cement plant in the sanctuary. After a hush and cry in the media, the project has been under discussion between the environment and forest minister, Mr. Kamal Nath, and the Himachal Pradesh chief minister.

A similar situation has been created in West Bengal. Only now it is political pressure to destroy the forest areas. In Himachal Pradesh, the argument for denotifying the area was that it was devoid of trees and there was very little wildlife. However, Senchal is an ecologically fragile area and part of a water catchment.

Mr. D.S. Rasaily, secretary of the Federation, had even sought the intervention of Mrs. Maneka Gandhi to stop the disastrous project. Quoting from the Bengal District Gazetteer on the Darjeeling of 1907, he has pointed out that Senchal is a Lepcha word which means hill of damp and mist. The area, for the major part of the year, remains wet and enveloped in mist. Rainfall is maximum as it catches the full force of the monsoon driving up from the Bay of Bengal.

It was pointed out that the proposed site at Tiger Hill was the major catchment in the reserved forests. In the last couple of years, the entire Senchal catchment has suffered from excessive illicit deforestation and developmental activities, and scores of the natural springs, streams and rivulets have dried up causing a serious water crisis in Darjeeling. On March 1 this year, 15 natural springs of the 30 which used to feed the three artificial lakes, the only source of water supply to Darjeeling, were found defunct.

The Federation has pointed out that at present water is brought in trucks from distances and distributed in the town by the local authorities. Some people are even selling water at Rs. 10-12 per tin. The water crisis would be further aggravated by the construction of an airport in the catchment area.

An airport in the region would increase human habitation which will further accelerate the process of deforestation. The noise and smoke would drive away and destroy the resident wildlife of the area. The sanctuary has been home to rare and endangered species like serow (that), gorali, palm civet, Himalayan bear, Chinese pangolin, flying squirrel, green pigeons, black-backed kalij pheasants and hill partridges. Some 26 species of wildlife inhabit the Senchal sanctuary.

Prof. Hiroshi Hara of Japan has also discovered at Senchal several new species of plants establishing that this stretch of forests constitutes a valuable gene pool that needs protection and not destruction. One major attraction of Tiger Hill is the golf course which brings tourists from all over the world.

Mrs. Maneka Gandhi had promised to take up the issue with the chief minister of West Bengal this February. But the hope kindled by her letter was squashed when in April this year a team of surveys from the airport authority visited Darjeeling and began mapping the area. By April-end another contingent this time from the environment and forest ministries at the Centre and state came to inspect the site proposed for the airport.

Three political parties including the CPI(M) and six local organisations are believed to have submitted to the experts written objections to the proposed site.

Times of India
15/10/91
Indo-Japanese venture grounded

The Times of India News Service
VAISHALI, Oct 25:

An Indo-Japanese venture to preserve Buddhist structures and megalithic finds in Bihar and parts of Uttar Pradesh has not made much headway due to the apathetic attitude of the state government.

The Japanese government has chalked out a comprehensive plan of more than Rs 60 crore for the repairing and upkeep of roads, both national and state highways, wayside amenities, landscaping, proper and regular water and electric supply in eight Buddhist circuits including Rajgir, Vaishali, Nalanda, Pawa, Patna, Bodhgaya and Bodh-gaya but till now, apart from some road repairing of Vaishali, Bodhgaya and Rajgir nothing has happened.

In this connection, the Japanese government had sanctioned a sum of Rs 4.20 crore both for national and state highways, Rs 4.50 crore for electric supply, Rs 1.20 crore for water supply, Rs 40 lakh for wayside amenities and Rs 12 lakh for landscaping during the period of 1988-93. The entire project was scheduled to be completed by 1993 in which except for road repairing no concrete work has been done in this regard.

According to sources close to the tourism department, the state government has also so far not prepared a comprehensive plan in order to develop Buddhist circuits in the state. According to the contract, the state government had to include in the annual budget but it has not done so far.

The Japanese government has also sanctioned a sum of Rs 28 lakh for the construction of electronic telephone exchange at Vaishali but it has run into rough weather.

Meanwhile, the US department of interiors, US-based national park service and the school of planning and architecture, New Delhi has also been assigned the job of conducting a survey of the tourist centres and submit a report, keeping in mind the project objectives.

The main objectives of the Indo-US venture were to ensure preservation of significant sites of Nalanda, Rajgir and Bodhgaya, suggest a comprehensive educational programme at the sites, provide access, circulation, development and landscape plans for various user groups at the three towns and suggested an economic base for enhanced site maintenance.

The then development commissioner, Mr Atun Pathak had presided over the meeting last year comprising of civil aviation, tourism and archaeology departments of the state government and representatives of the US department of interiors, national park service and school of planning and architecture, Delhi. The eight member MPRS team, led by Mr Ronald Cooksey, also conducted extensive tours of Buddhist centres last year and submitted its report to the government.

Lack of proper accommodation, safe drinking water and food and regular power supply, apart from the attacks on tourists by anti-social elements, were some of the inadequacies pointed out by the team.

According to tentative proposal, the project envisaged construction of amusement parks, hotels, tanks with boating facilities and an aerial ropeway at Rajgir, construction of an airport at Rajgir was also on the cards.

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Row over construction of tourist cottages

BHOPAL, June 14 (UNI): The construction of tourist cottages near the ancient century Shiva temple at Bhujpur near here has sparked a controversy with the archaeologists saying that it would endanger the antiquarian remains scattered around the monument and the government maintaining that it was outside the protected area.

The construction around the historic temple, built by famous Parmara ruler Maharaaj Bhoj, archaeologists say would endanger the evidence of all engineering techniques adopted during the medieval period.

While the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) officials have repeatedly asked the Madhya Pradesh Government not to take up construction work at the site, the government went ahead on the plea that the new construction was being done on government land outside the protected area.

The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mr. Sunder Lal Patel had, in January laid the foundation stone of the tourist cottages and a canteen on the bank of Betwa River near the Bhujpur archaeological site, which falls in the Bhopal Assembly segment represented by him.
Tourism facts or ‘activist’ bluff?

By Hugh & Colleen Gantzzer

INCREASINGLY, Goa will attract the attention of the world. With growing leisure funds, soaring tourism income, and an upward in disposable incomes thanks to the tourism family and the pressure being put on human labour, more and more people will have the leisure and leisure to spend. This pressure is increasing. Thanks to tourism, Goa has become a very affordable destination for the middle and upper-middle. And some middle-class Karmaveer has been successfully removed from the reality and international tourism map, unsought by the Offshore.

Some now expect a tourism boom in the immediate future in the Goa-arrayable future.

This, all likely, is what Tourism Minister Madhavajh Sci dina has heard when he addressed the 12th Travel Congress in the Goa, Bhopal Resort last month. In response the Goa, Sci dina asked: "Is the Goa Tourism’s worst scenario, if we are not careful, we will lose our tourist advantage. Is there a place for the Goa Tourism to have a say in this?"

In fact, the Goa Tourism has been heavily praised, even in the Defence Ministry. As Goa grows, so does the value of its environmental impact.

Unfortunately, in a country such as ours, the sheer presence of a tourism is not enough to guarantee a more sustainable future. In the Himalayas, a nation in which we live there is no place for people to see snow, or to experience the feeling of cold with snow. Inside two months outside the door of a mountain hut. There is little else in the ratings, even more in our wilderness. The tourist would now and then experience where their children are dying of malnutrition. You cannot convince a tourist to stay in the countryside to see the last. And the countryside is all there is. They can’t match their lifestyles with tourism.

Every person, every tourist life, and as long as the image of a tourist life is pegged to the countryside or the countryside, we will have to achieve it. Not long ago the Chief Minister of UP, brooz the former CM, declared his intention to remove tourists from the State. In a sea wall, we are not that good to a tourist who lives in a small village. We told us he was interested in his son to the island. We removed him of the CM’s words. He was cynically said: "Why should the local people in the countryside and lose jobs opportunities when the CM’s son studies English? Is there one law for the tourists and another for the locals?"

That’s the era, inexpressible, in the world tourism, there is a law for the local people and another for the tourists. Can politicians, servants, leaders of agriculture and tourism, in fact, instead of over-stating the under-privileged give up their dreams of achieving a more sustainable lifestyle?

A farming, hotel-napper or farmer may not want his children to be farmers. The tourist industry may be a way to turn around beautiful scenery and farmland. They may want them to work in the comfort of five-star hotels, become high-salaries experts, and gain international experience. The tourist industry has dreams by presumption: he’ll see through your bluff the way out of the mess through the Chief Minister’s bluff.

With T.V. reaching into every home, and hosts, magazines, and films touching the lives of every man, woman, and child, can the distortions of an internationally accepted lifestyle be denied? Should they be denied?

After the so-called, activist, tourism has become a cloud over Europe and virtually made happiness a sin, the Commonwealth Bigot; the last man, in Austin, we saw magnanimous Roman Catholic churches filled with good and decentness, and riddles for the great peace. Punjab, long suppressed by the Reformations, suddenly wanted to live like kings and princes. They should not all work in palaces, so they build magnificent visions which we set them lives in north gowns and ceilings, even for a little while.

You can’t destroy a person’s dreams with the law and society. We removed him of the CM’s words. He was cynically said: "Why should the local people in the countryside and lose jobs opportunities when the CM’s son studies English? Is there one law for the tourists and another for the locals?"

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