

An offshore casino to open in Goa next month

An offshore casino with 'no-limits' tables, touted as the biggest in South Asia, will open in Goa next month. Aboard a specially commissioned 70-metre long Panamenian vessel, costing USD 25 million, it will be operated by Creative Gaming Solution, a subsidiary of Mumbai-based Pan India Network Infravest Pvt Ltd (Pinipl), the promoter of the Playwin lottery.

„It will be the biggest offshore casino and will be an added appeal for tourists to visit Goa,” Pinipl managing director Amar Sinha told IANS. The ship, appropriately named „Maharajah Casino“, will offer a regal ambience to professional and amateur gamblers out to try their luck at the jackpot.

It will initially conduct operations from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. and within a month offer round-the-clock services. It will be anchored around 20 metres off the Mandvi river in Goa's capital Panaji. Two boats will ferry the patrons to the offshore casino.

„It will house 35 tables in an area of 2043.8 sqm spread over four decks. All the internationally popular casino games like American Roulette, Black Jack, and variants of Poker will be available for the patrons,” Sinha said. Each table will have a 'no-limits' betting system and at any given time the ship will have a cash chest of USD 1 million on board.

The luxury ship, built with imported fire-retardant interiors, will also house a lavish restaurant offering international multi-cultural cuisine, a bar, a live barbecue area on the topmost deck, a sundeck and a variety of entertainment programmes to cater to its clientele.

Pinipl has already completed the relevant formalities for

launching the offshore gambling den. It includes paying a one-time deposit of USD 24,667 for five years for the "Maharajah Casino."

The entrance charges for the patrons shall be decided keeping in view the seasonal tourism fluctuations in Goa and other factors, according to Sinha.

He added that the offshore casino would help attract a different element of people who never come down to Goa, which in turn will boost the tourism industry in the state and fill up the state's coffers. Besides attracting foreigners, Sinha is hoping that some of the domestic crowds from the India-Kathmandu sector shall be diverted to Goa.

"Many Indians who regularly frequented Kathmandu casinos have been hunting for alternatives in and around India owing to the recent bouts of unrest in the Himalayan kingdom," he explained. Sinha claims that as per initial projections, the company would earn a revenue of around Rs.1 billion in the very first year of its operation. Thereafter, the sky is the limit," he smiled.

Maharajah Casino is undergoing finishing touches to its refurbishment at the Victoria Docks in Mumbai. After it secures the necessary approvals from the director-general of shipping, it will sail to its permanent home by March-end.

Goa already boasts of India's first offshore, moving casino, the 215-foot-long 'The Caravela' which can accommodate 300 patrons at a time. In addition, several land-based deluxe hotels offer varying degrees of casino facilities all around the state, proving a major revenue earner for the state south of Maharashtra.