



National/Commonwealth Games 2010

India is equipped to tackle any emergencies: Tourism Minister

Chandigarh, May 17 (IANS) India's Tourism Minister Kumari Selja Monday said security threats are unlikely to deter foreign or domestic tourists from visiting New Delhi during the Commonwealth Games in October.

Claiming that not just India but many other countries face terror threat, she said: "We are expecting both foreign and domestic tourists to come to New Delhi during the Games. We do not think any terror threat can deter them from arriving."

"India is equipped to tackle any emergency situation. We will make world-class security arrangements during the Games and there is no need to worry," she said.

"Preparations for the Games are in full swing. We are expecting to offer world-class facilities to players, officials and spectators coming here," said Selja said.

The minister said the government is also providing formal training to service providers like taxi drivers and restaurant workers in New Delhi who are expected to come in direct contact with thousands of tourists.

"We are training our manpower to deal with the tourists efficiently. Taxi drivers, autorickshaw drivers, other service providers and workers of some restaurants and hotels are being given training in soft skills.

"We are teaching them some frequently used English words and how to express everything with courtesy, before others," said Selja.



National/Environment/Commonwealth Games 2010

Ahead of Games, look up and know the air Delhi breathes

By Richa Sharma

New Delhi, May 16 (IANS) Delhiites can now literally know the air they breathe. Come July and LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) boards across the capital will flash hourly data about air quality. These will also give a forecast 24 hours in advance.

Scientists from the Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) have prepared an emissions inventory for the Commonwealth Games. It will prove crucial in managing air quality during the Oct 3-14 event.

The inventory has been prepared using data - number of vehicles, industries, shanties, hotels and restaurants and other sources - collected from near Games venues and the Games Village after a two-month long exercise.

About 250 students from various colleges in Delhi participated in the exercise between February and March. Students, equipped with Click Counters, were positioned at 106 traffic junctions around the venues during the period.

"For air quality management, we need to know the number of vehicles that use the roads around the Games venues on an average basis daily. We found that at each junction 10,506 vehicles crossed per hour during peak hour while 3,037 vehicles crossed during non-peak hours," Gufran Beig, a scientist with IITM's System of Air Pollution Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), told IANS.

Scientists have also collected emissions data from 70 slum clusters, 881 hotels and restaurants, 5,000 industries and other sources around the Games venue.

The data will act as a baseline emissions inventory for air quality management model SMOKE (Sparse Matrix Operator Kernel Emission).

It is a computer model where data like vehicle numbers, wind speed and humidity will be keyed in and the information will forecast the pollution level 24 hours in advance. The real-time data will help predict air quality 95 percent accurately.

Explaining how the generated data will come handy for air quality forecasting, Beig said: "If on a particular day it is found that pollution level is high, we will recommend to the Delhi government to shut some industries or divert traffic near the venues."

The IITM will put up 16 outdoor LCD boards and six indoor display boards across the capital. There will be different colour codes for the level of pollutants - oxides of nitrogen, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, black carbon and benzene - in the air.

"At a specific time if the the level of particulate matter or black carbon in the air is high, the display board will show red and if it's normal it will show green. By seeing the colour codes people will easily come to know about the air quality," Beig said.

SAFAR will provide information on air quality within a four-kilometre radius at 11 places around Games venues on an hourly basis.

Some athletes have hinted at skipping the Games as they fear that Delhi's air is unsafe to breathe. But the Games organising committee says it is committed to ensuring clean air as the event has been dubbed the first-ever Green Games.

The organisers are confident that the existing traffic density can be reduced drastically by providing quality public transport by way of more Metro lines and green buses.

The Indian capital is among the most polluted cities in the world and the ever-growing number of cars, and three- and two-wheelers occupy a staggering 75 percent of road space, although only 20 percent of the commuting public use them.

Delhi has over five million vehicles and another four million come to the metropolis from towns in adjoining states in the National Capital Region (NCR).

The Games organisers are keeping their fingers crossed hoping the scientific methods to improve the quality of air in the capital will succeed.



National/Environment/Commonwealth Games 2010

Delhi to intensify pollution check for CWG

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) With the Commonwealth Games in mind, the Delhi government Saturday said it will intensify pollution checks in the capital.

Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit convened a meeting with officials and discussed about the possible increase in pollution level during the Oct 3-14 Games.

"There will be an unprecedented increase in quantum of traffic during the Games. It will be in the fitness of things if number of vehicles coming from other states may be minimized at least during those days," Dikshit said.

As of now, around one million vehicles daily enter the capital.

It was also decided to intensify pollution check drives in Delhi and exhort people to go for regular pollution under control (PUC) checks.

Dikshit also suggested that all coal-based power stations be shut down during the

duration of the Games.

It was also decided that timings would be strictly enforced for trucks plying in the city.

During the meeting it was also suggested that in case of parking at unauthorized places the amount of fine may be increased along with the hike in parking charges to discourage use of private vehicles.

Since schools and colleges will remain closed during the Games so 1,200 school buses and 2,500 maxi cabs will remain off the roads.

Dikshit also stressed upon the need of a short-time and long-time strategy to de-congest roads.



National/Health/Commonwealth Games 2010

For Games, MCD to take bite out of mosquitoes

By Rajeev Ranjan Dwivedi

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) October will see hordes of foreign visitors for the Commonwealth Games, it will also be peak dengue season. The capital's civic authorities are now gearing up big time to check the mosquito menace.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is well aware that the chances of mosquito breeding have increased due to large-scale construction activities all across the capital.

"There are maximum chances of mosquito breeding in view of large-scale constructions in the city, but we are aware of it. We have a surveillance team at every construction site for checking," municipal health officer N.K. Yadav told IANS.

He said the civic body began a public awareness campaign against mosquito breeding in February and deployed 3,500 domestic breeding checkers in April, well ahead of schedule.

He said keeping in mind that the Games Village site is near the Akshardham Temple in East Delhi on the banks of the river Yamuna, an area which is prone to mosquito breeding, the MCD has begun spraying and fumigating the area.

Also, MCD officials feel that congested areas besides unauthorised colonies might

pose "difficulty" for the civic body in its bid to put the situation under control in October.

"Several departments like sanitation and also Delhi Jal Board have been shot off letters to take measures while collecting water and cleaning drainage," Yadav said.

At a recent meeting on how to check the spread of diseases during the Games scheduled for Oct 3-14, Municipal Commissioner K.S. Mehra said attention should be paid to unauthorised colonies where the maximum number of cases are reported.

He also asked the irrigation and flood control department and the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation to ensure the free flow of water in these colonies.

Prem Lata Kataria, the MCD's director of primary education, said: "Over 1,000 nodal teachers have been designated in the civic body's schools to coordinate efforts for prevention and control of vector and water-borne diseases."

In the post-monsoon phase, dengue and malaria claim nearly 30 lives in the city and around 1,000 people are infected every year on an average.

Officials said to tackle malaria and dengue during the Games, the MCD is also contemplating circulating advisories among visitors to encourage the use of mosquito repellants.

However, the Residents Welfare Associations (RWAs) are not happy with what the civic body is currently doing to make sure that nobody is inflicted with dengue or malaria during the Games.

"They are organising some camps in the locality for public awareness but the whole process seems to be inadequate, considering the fact that the whole city has been dug up for the Games. Even domestic breeding checkers have not visited the area," said Atul Goyal, general secretary of the Karol Bagh RWA.

Goyal said keeping in mind the prestige of the country, the civic body should remain alert, start a door-to-door campaign to check mosquito breeding and clean up the choked drains.

In infrastructure-related works, the MCD is engaged in flyover construction, pavement beautification and in improving basic civic amenities during the mega-sporting event.



National/Commonwealth Games 2010

Games effect: Metro officials to pick up Brit accent

By Prathiba Raju

New Delhi, May 14 (IANS) If you come across a Delhi Metro official greeting you in English with a clipped British accent, don't be surprised! It's probably a newly acquired skill ahead of the Commonwealth Games.

The Metro staff is being trained in the English language for the Oct 3-14 mega event that will bring in hordes of foreign visitors. And it will involve getting the pronunciation and accent right too.

"Around 2,000 Delhi Metro staff members are being trained in the English language. The focus is particularly on pronunciation skills as they have to deal with international visitors," Mohinder Yadav, public relations officer of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), told IANS.

The Metro will play a vital role during the Games as it provides connectivity to 10 out of 11 venues for the event. The Games Village, where most of the athletes will reside, is adjacent to the Akshardham Metro station.

"The staff is being asked to converse in English in the British accent. They should also put on their best behaviour during the Games, courteously and politely dealing with the international visitors," Yadav said.

Special training is being given to customer relations assistants, station controllers and train operators in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation skills as they would directly deal with foreign visitors.

"The Delhi Metro is bearing the cost of training. The staff is being trained at a training school of Delhi Metro in Shastri Park in east Delhi," Yadav added.

Alka Gupta, the training team's head from The British Academy For English Language (BAFEL), said: "BAFEL trains the Metro staff in pronunciation skills, grammar and vocabulary. The six-month training in connection with the Games has improved their skills tremendously."

"The mother tongue influence which is true of most employees, particularly from Bihar, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, needs to be removed," she stressed.

"After training them in audio-visual activities, voice and accent training, and grammar classes, their English skills, particularly pronunciation, has improved immensely. Most of the employees can now speak English with a British accent. The training will end by

September," Gupta added.

The Metro Citizens' Forum - a group of volunteers - will play a major role during the Games as they will help the DMRC instil good behaviour and discipline among commuters.

"There are 400 volunteers as of now and we want to increase the number to 1,000 by September. From school students to retired senior citizens - anyone who has the urge to showcase himself as a responsible citizen - can enrol in this volunteer programme," Yadav said.

The Metro will provide a cap or badge to the volunteers. The duty of a volunteer will extend to not more than three hours a day.

"To make Delhi Metro accessible, the Metro feeder bus service will be improved. As of now 400 buses are plying. We will add 100 more buses so that visitors for the Games can easily reach the Metro stations," the spokesman said.

The Delhi Metro is also planning to have new signboards that will indicate the nearest tourist spots and hotels at exit and entry points of major Metro stations.

"The signboards will be placed in some of the prominent stations like Central Secretariat, Patel Chowk, Tughlaqabad and Jahangirpuri by September. Pamphlets carrying detailed information about each location and tourist spot will be made available in every Metro station," Yadav said.

About one million commuters use the Metro on weekdays. During the Games, about two million commuters are expected to use the Metro on weekdays.



National/Politics/Commonwealth Games 2010

CWG projects will be completed on time: Delhi Chief Minister

New Delhi, May 12 (IANS) Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit Wednesday said that all Commonwealth Games related projects will be completed well before the event starts here Oct 3.

"All the projects will be completed well before ...(time)," she said at a function here.

Diskhit appealed to the people of Delhi to contribute to the event's success. Her

remarks followed concerns that several Games projects are running behind schedule.



Business/Business/Economy/Commonwealth Games 2010

Hong Kong firm landscaping, beautifying Delhi's newest airport terminal

By Rohit Vaid

New Delhi, May 10 (IANS) If you drive to or from the soon-to-be-opened Terminal-3 (T-3) of the international airport here, you are bound to notice the sidewalks and causeways fast sprouting with exotic flowers, palms, manicured shrubs and lush lawns.

A Hong Kong landscaping architecture firm is beautifying the surroundings around Delhi's newest terminal at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, billed as one of the largest in the world, ahead of the October Commonwealth Games in October.

Exotic varieties of orchids from Thailand and Dioon Spinosa palms imported from Mexico will be among the key highlights of the landscaping initiative, according to officials at Delhi International Airport Ltd, which is carrying out the new development.

EDAW, the Hong Kong-based firm, is working with Beyond Built of Bangalore for delivering the project from concept to commissioning in the landscaping project, which is spread over 70 acres outside the terminal and 10,000 sq mt inside the building.

As many as 39 varieties of trees, 26 kinds of plants, 39 types of ground covers and six types of cacti and succulents will blend with 30,000 sq mt of lush green lawns along the terminal and its causeways.

"The idea is to create an environment that makes passengers feel good before or after a travel," a senior official of DIAL told IANS, speaking on the condition of anonymity as per his company rules.

"We have planned nearly one million trees for the project, both inside and outside the terminal building. We are using nearly 300 varieties of plants that grow fast and are easy to maintain," the official said but declined to share the financial details.

The T-3 landscaping initiative also includes new systems for irrigation, water-feature

works, energy-saving lighting, planters and works for vertical green walls. The total area involved is 5.2 million sq ft.

Soft landscaping inside the terminal will feature 1,000 granite clad planters, 800 self-watering planters from Germany and 850 low-height modular fiberglass reinforced planters that will act like "green lungs" and give a tropical look and feel inside the terminal.

The terminal will cater to both domestic and international flights while providing the travellers and visitors the comforts that come with state-of-the-art technology, a wide spectrum of infrastructure for transforming the airport experience in India.

T-3, the first phase of which is slated for July, will have 90 automated walkways, 63 elevators, 31 escalators and 78 aerobridges. It will also feature multi-level car park for 4,300 vehicles and a high-speed dedicated Metro link to the city centre.

According to DIAL, a plant nursery spread over 6.75 acres has also been developed to maintain more than 10,000 plants. The nursery will have the facility of a cold house, a green shade house and an open ventilated shade house.



National/Environment/Commonwealth Games 2010

UN praise for India's pollution monitoring system for Commonwealth Games

By Richa Sharma

New Delhi, May 9 (IANS) A pollution monitoring system developed by Indian scientists has come in for praise from the United Nations as an important step to ensure clean air during the Commonwealth Games.

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), a specialised agency of the UN, said the System of Air Pollution Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) will serve as an example within India, South Asia and globally.

Aimed at managing air quality, it has been developed by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune.

"The WMO recognises SAFAR as a very important activity in the region and will make all efforts to get international visibility for the project," L. Jalkanen, head of the WMO's

Atmospheric Environment Research Division, wrote in a letter to SAFAR project director Gurfan Beig in March.

The UN recognition holds significance as some athletes have hinted at skipping the Games, as they fear that Delhi's air is unsafe to breathe.

Scientists at IITM are elated and confident that the system will help in ensuring clean air during the Games, dubbed as the first ever Green Games.

"SAFAR will make India one of the few countries to take a big leap in environmental research," Beig told IANS.

"The system will tell us the quality of air at a given moment and also what it will be 24 hours later, thus alerting people and helping them avoid immediate exposure to unhealthy air."

SAFAR will provide information on air quality on an hourly basis and forecast pollution levels 24 hours in advance through wireless colour digital display panels located at 11 key points in the city during the Games.

"On any day, if the pollution level is high, the Delhi government might order closing of shops or reducing traffic flow," Indian Meteorological Department director Ajit Tyagi told IANS.

Only a few developed countries have the technical knowhow to use such a system. It was used during the Olympic Games in Beijing and also at the last Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

The Indian capital is among the most polluted cities in the world. Its major problem is an ever-growing number of cars, three- and two- wheelers, which occupy a staggering 75 percent of the road space, although only 20 percent of the commuting public use them.

Delhi has over five million vehicles and another one million come to the metropolis from towns in the national capital region in adjoining states.

China had a tough time battling air pollution during the Olympic Games last year and there are doubts whether Delhi can be as effective as Beijing in enforcing traffic curbs, raising emission standards and stopping Games' construction work well in time to improve air quality.

SAFAR will provide air quality levels in a four-kilometre stretch around the Games village and other major venues. Instruments like ozone and carbon monoxide analysers and real time analysers for various other pollutants would be used for collecting the data.

The system will provide details about oxides of nitrogen, carbon monoxide, particulate

matter, black carbon and benzene present in Delhi air.

"Exposure to the pollutants will affect human health, increased respiratory symptoms, heart and lung diseases, allergies being some of them," said Beig.

SAFAR's inputs will greatly help in identifying the major sources of air pollutants and recommending measures to help improve the air quality.



National/Security/Commonwealth Games 2010

Delhi Police to get mini robot to tackle terror threat

New Delhi, May 6 (IANS) Ahead of the Commonwealth Games, the Delhi Police is set to buy a mini remote-operating vehicle (MROV) that can detect and defuse bombs and explosives, an official said Thursday.

Delhi Police spokesperson Rajan Bhagat said: "We had a technical evaluation of the MROV (Wednesday). This is the first step in the procurement process.

"Bidding for the price is yet to be done. We are hoping to get it before the Commonwealth Games," he added.

Manufactured in Canada, the primary function of the MROV is to detect and disarm hidden bombs and explosives. The robot, which weighs 65 kg, can be controlled by a remote within a radius of 500 metres. It can drag weights of up to 113 kg.

The MROV has arms and shoulders and also four night-vision cameras. It is weather-proof but not fire resistant.

It can operate underwater and over rough terrain, moving at a maximum speed of 8 kmph and a minimum of speed of 3 kmph.

Joint Commissioner (north) Karnal Singh said: "Although the device is designed in Canada, it is suitable in the Indian scenario, particularly in the national capital where it will be able to help in bomb scare situations."



National/Economy/Commonwealth Games 2010

Nearly 4,000 tourist guides to be employed for CWG

New Delhi, May 4 (IANS) Nearly 4,000 regional tourist guides would be employed keeping in mind the expected rise in demand during the Commonwealth Games in October, a tourism ministry official said Tuesday.

The guides will be distributed in five regions across the country - northern, southern, eastern, western and northeastern - and will be given licences under the tourism ministry's scheme of Regional Level Guides.

"The number of Regional Level Guides until 2007 was 1,930 of which 1,154 were in the northern region alone. Thereafter, 602 such guides have been trained during 2009-10 by the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM), Gwalior," the official said.

"In addition to this, there will be 1,400 foreign language guides. Thus the total number of guides available before the Games will be 3,932," he added.



National/Technology/Commonwealth Games 2010

Secure radio network planned for CWG

New Delhi, May 4 (IANS) A secure radio network is being planned for the upcoming Commonwealth Games to facilitate easy communication between various government agencies, the Lok Sabha was told Tuesday.

"Delhi government is planning to create a secure radio network using the Terrestrial

Trunked Radio (TETRA) facility for the Commonwealth Games. The system will provide integrated, secured, encrypted, state of art communication network for use during Commonwealth Games," Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Pratik Prakashbapu Patil said in the house.

The network will be used by 18 government agencies, including the Commonwealth Organising Committee, Delhi Police and health and family welfare ministry.



National/Sports/Commonwealth Games 2010

Commonwealth Queen's baton to reach India June 25

New Delhi, May 4 (IANS) After travelling through 71 countries, the Queen's baton will reach India June 25 ahead of the Oct 3-14 Commonwealth Games. The relay will be the longest ever in the history of the games.

The Queen's baton is currently in the world's smallest island nation of Nauru in the South Pacific Ocean on day 188 Tuesday of the relay, which was flagged off by Queen Elizabeth II from Buckingham Palace Oct 29, 2009.

>From the Pacific islands, the baton will travel to Australia and New Zealand, before making landfall on the Asian continent at Singapore.

The specially-designed baton, made of light-weight aluminium and plated with gold, will wind its way through Asia, before reaching India from Pakistan June 25.

When it finally touches Indian soil, the baton would have travelled through 71 nations and territories for a total of 340 days covering 190,000 kilometres.

Within the country, the baton will travel another 20,000 kilometres, which will be a serpentine journey through 28 states and seven union territories before ending at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium Oct 3.



National/Environment/Commonwealth Games 2010

Ornamental plants to beautify Delhi for Games

New Delhi, May 3 (IANS) Delhi will be beautified with at least six million ornamental potted plants for the upcoming Commonwealth Games this year, Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh said Monday.

"Six million ornamental potted plants are being arranged for beautification of Delhi and various sporting venues for the Commonwealth Games 2010," Ramesh informed the Rajya Sabha.

"The Delhi Forests and Wildlife Department, the Delhi Parks and Garden Society, the Public Works Department (PWD) and other civic agencies are arranging the plants," he added.

The Commonwealth Games are slated to be held Oct 3-14 this year.

Besides these, there will also be plantations on roadsides, roundabouts and other vacant areas for the mega sports event, the minister added.

