



Govt eyes birdie shot

Big B to promote golf in the state as government prompts golf clubs to join hands and attract businessmen

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Gujarat might not have the aura of the national capital region when it comes to golf. But there is no denying the fact that the state makes the most of its entrepreneurs skills and attract a sizeable amount of foreign investment. Now, the state government wants to use golf to attract business and the tourism department has mooted the idea of bringing all golf clubs in the state under an association with a view to promoting golf tourism in the state.

Sources told *Mirror* that Amitabh Bachchan, who is the brand ambassador of the state, has been roped in as the key person to showcase the state as a destination for golf tourism. "Talks are on with him (Bachchan) and we plan to have a short film where he will be promoting the state as a golf destination," the source said.

"In a week or so you might see the formation of Gujarat golf association where all golf club owners will join hands to promote the sport," Sameer

Sinha, Kensville Golf Living managing director, said. "The idea is to promote the sport as well as the state among the tourists," he added.

Pranav Shah, the promoter of Kalhaar Blues and Greens, said, "The idea is still in the initial stage. But, yes, there is a proposal in this regard and it will become a reality."

Pranav Shah, who also owns Louis Philippe Cup winning Team Navratna, added, "Our prime focus is to promote the game in the state. But as an off-shoot it will help tourism here."

ALL FOR PROMOTION OF GOLF

Alpesh Parikh, Gulmohar Greens Golf and Country Club managing director, confirmed the news. "Yes we are working towards forming an association and having a representation at the national body - Indian Golf Union. The basic idea is to promote the game across the state and bring everyone under one banner," he said.

Elaborating on the development, Santosh Bapat, Gulmohar club vice president, said, "Tourism Secretary Vipul Mittra mooted the idea about three months back at a meeting of the

golf course owners in Gandhinagar. The club owners liked the idea of the government taking initiative to promote the sport as well making it sustainable by mixing it with business," he said, adding "it will increase the state's appeal in the global market and might in turn benefit the state itself by attracting more business."

Confirming the news, Mittra said, "The state has one of the highest share of golf clubs in the country. But we found every club has its own marketing strategy. Our state gets a lot of business people who come in the morning for work and leave by the evening. We want to tap this segment. We want them to stay here for some time, enjoy our hospitality, play a round of golf, see the state before leaving. We want them to experience the state," he said.

Siddharth Naik, co-founder of The Elite Golfer Association, is elated by the news. "It is indeed a great news for the state. It is high time we came together and join hands. It will benefit the golfers too as we can expect more tournaments and big tournaments," he said.

PICTURE FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE

