

# KSTDC plans to charter Golden Chariot

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**G**olden Chariot, the luxurious heritage train from Karnataka Government which has completed one year of its commercial run, is likely to be extended to other states from its second year of operations starting August 2009.

The Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC), which runs the train, is gearing up to launch a new marketing strategy to woo various cross sections of travellers from both India and abroad. In order to expand its scope and attract larger international travellers, the corporation is entering into a tie up with a private airline company having significant presence both in India and abroad.

"We are in advanced talks with a couple of airline companies for a tie up to promote our luxury train among their foreign travellers. We will be finalising a deal with one of them by end of this month," Vinay Luthra, managing director, KSTDC said.

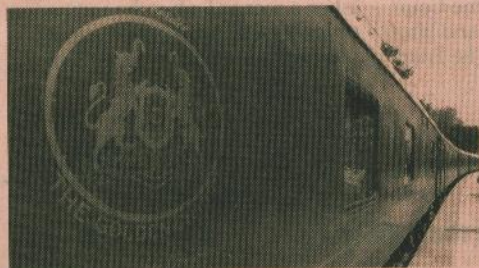
He said the corporation is also in talks with Kingfisher Airlines for a similar tie up. "We hope that our tie up with air-

line companies will bring us more customers as we offer higher commissions to travel agents compared to that of airline companies. We are sure the general sales agents of these airline companies will get us extra travellers through their network," he told *Business Standard*.

iot, to take the train out of Karnataka, he said. The Swiss travel house has given a plan to take the train to a few selected places of tourism in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, while Exotic Journeys wants to take it to places in Karnataka and Kerala. As of now, the Railways have approved places like

countries like Sweden, Norway and Finland this year. These countries have not been affected much by the global economic slowdown," Luthra said.

KSTDC has tied up with HDFC Bank as a payment gateway. The bank will also offer interest free EMI options to its



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He said the corporation has made a proposal to take the Golden Chariot outside Karnataka from next tourism season. It has received proposals from two international travel agents like Luxury Trains of Switzerland and Exotic Journeys of UK to run the luxury train on charter basis for their selected customers coming from Europe and Japan to a few places in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. KSTDC has got an approval from the Indian Railways, a partner in Golden Char-

Coimbatore, Kochi, Kanyakumari, Madurai and Tiruvananthapuram. The exact tariff plan is currently being worked out, he said adding that it is offering 20 per cent discount for the summer months.

The corporation has also planned to hold roadshows abroad this year. It plans to participate in major international travel exhibitions in London, Berlin, Las Vegas, France among others during this year. "We are going to conduct a roadshow in Scandinavian

customers who want to travel on Golden Chariot. During the first year of its operations, Golden Chariot has achieved 35 per cent occupancy and 825 passengers have travelled in 27 trips so far. Of this 90 per cent were foreign travellers from the US, UK, Spain, France, Germany, Japan and Argentina. In the domestic tourism expos, KSTDC will hold roadshows in Ahmedabad, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chandigarh and Kolkata, he added.