

# Buddh, speeding 'on the right track'

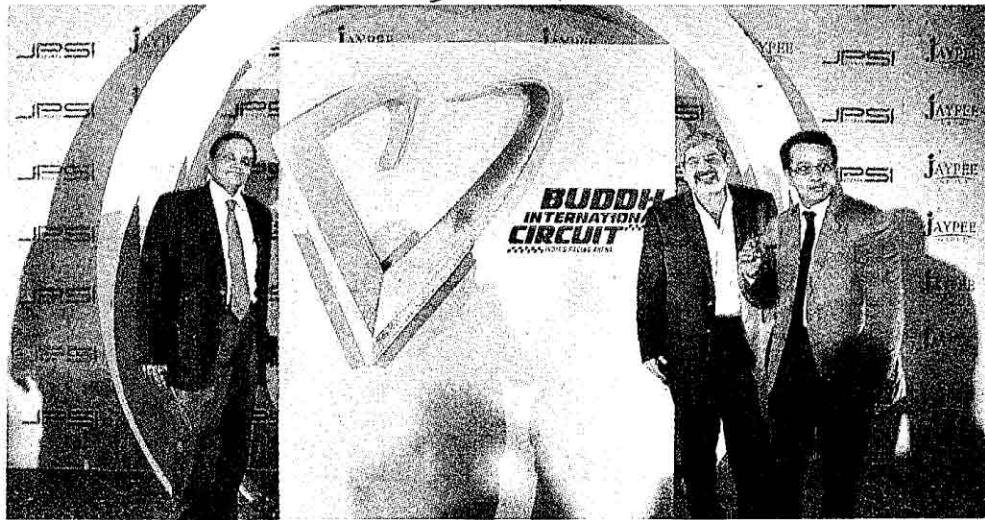
## Our Bureau

New Delhi, April 25

India's first successful nuclear test explosion was codenamed "The Buddha is Smiling". Now the country's first Formula One race track is also being named after the spiritual leader. Here too, at the 5.14-km long Buddh International Circuit (BIC) in Greater Noida, the action should be explosive - with no hint of Buddha-like peacefulness.

For, when the 12 big F1 teams rev off the start line on October 28 in the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) approved event, they can aim to achieve top speeds of 320 km/h. Unveiling the logo and name of the circuit at a press meet today, promoters Jaypee Sports International Ltd claim BIC will be among the top three fastest racetracks in the world.

Built at a cost of Rs 1,700 crore, four of the 16 turns on this track will be wide enough (18-20 metres) for five cars to be abreast, promising some edge-of-the-seat overtaking excitement for the crowds. There will also be an elevated stretch where the track will be



Manoj Gaur (left), Jaypee Sports International Ltd (JPSI) Chairman, with Vicky Chandok, President of Federation of Motorsports Clubs of India, and Sameer Gaur, Managing Director & CEO of JPSI, at the unveiling of the logo of Buddh International Circuit, India's first F1 race track, in Noida on Monday. — PTI

14 metres high. "It promises to be a spectator friendly event as no F1 track has such exciting undulations and fast stretches," said Vicky Chandok, President, The Federation of Motor Sports Club of India.

The Gaurs who run the show at Jaypee group - Executive Chairman Manoj and MD & CEO Sameer - plan to

bring the action live to at least 1.2 lakh enthusiasts.

"There will be temporary stands, permanent grandstands, corporate boxes and natural seating," says Sameer Gaur. Although tickets and pricing strategies are yet to be finalised, he says sales will begin a month from now. Indications are starting price will be in the range of Rs 2,500 and

the boxes could go for as much as Rs 40,000.

Jaypee has got the license to host the premier F1 event for five years which could be extended for another five years. Although unwilling to divulge how much they shelled out to bring the event to India, unofficial estimates suggest that the fee is \$40 million.

Given the huge investments

they have put in, and that F1 is a one weekend event, how and when do they expect to break even? "We expect to raise Rs 150 crore through ticket sales, some amount will come through on-ground advertising," says Manoj Gaur.

The title sponsorship fee as well as proceeds from sale of media rights would go to the FIA, the apex organisation behind the Formula One events. But the Gaurs say they are not banking on just this event to break even. "The track will be with FIA for just seven days a year, the rest of the 350 days it is our ingenuity to market it and we have multiple revenue streams planned," said Gaur. According to him queries have come in from Moto GP, the world's premier motorcycling event and others.

Addressing media concerns about the readiness of the organisers - it's already April and as yet the press corps has not got a glimpse of the circuit - the Gaurs insisted that things are on track.

"Ninety per cent of the track and the race control room are ready. All electronics are in place. Only the grandstand and facilities like

400 toilets - the nitty gritty that make up a good venue - are left," said Manoj Gaur. Plans are being finalised to provide seamless transportation to the crowds. According to Manoj Gaur, 6,000 construction workers have worked on the project, overseen by 300 engineers in a race to finish the venue by July.

There are 20 agencies involved - Voltas, Shapoorji Pallonji, Hitachi, Misubhisi, Siemens among others. Four million cubic metre of earth has been dug up for the project and 1 lakh cu metre of concrete used, 3.5 lakh square metre of greening is happening with nearly 10,000 trees planted.

For the 12 F1 teams, which will on average have 90 members each, besides the estimated 400 odd FIA officials coming for the event, 4,000 hotel rooms are going to be booked.

And to address safety concerns, three helicopters will be hovering around the race track.

So, get set for the adrenaline rush when the F1 teams make their pit stop in Greater Noida. (chitra.n@thehindu.co.in)