

PUBLICATION	TIMEOUT MUMBAI
EDITION	NATIONAL
DATE	22nd FEB – 06th MAR, 2008
PAGE NO	15



Water baby *The Azimut 50 is for those who don't want to miss the boat*

proposed restaurant on a vessel docked off the Gateway of India. Vice president Asad Zaidi said that the vessel will also be rented out to individual clients once operations are launched. Hindjal Pravasi Vahtuk will also offer pleasure cruises, said director Sandeep Ganesh Naik. In addition, they're planning a daily ferry service from Belapur and Elephanta Island to the Gateway by the end of February.

But these firms have been beaten in the pleasure cruise race by Samudra Link Ferry Shipping & Cruise Services, which in December launched a voyage that leaves Mumbai harbour at 8pm and returns at 8am. The vessel, which operates only on weekends, has passenger cabins and a "full bar, two restaurants, singers, Bollywood dancers, Russian dancers and a casino which opens once the boat reaches international waters", said Nadeem Kothari, assistant general manager with the company.

As is often the case in the city, these grand plans have preceded the appropriate infrastructure. If boating is to become more popular in Mumbai, the city needs a marina, where boats can be moored. But this won't be easy. Because of Mumbai's peculiar tide patterns, the harbour will require heavy dredging, which is environmentally hazardous. Besides, Mumbai's heavily polluted waters take the fun out of activities that complement leisure boating, such as swimming, fishing and water-skiing.

Furthermore, projects along the coast require a raft of permissions. The waters around Mumbai's eastern coast and southern tip up to Marine Drive

fall under the Mumbai Port Trust, as does the land between Colaba and Sewri. The Maharashtra Maritime Board regulates the western side. The Indian Navy, Coast Guard and environmental agencies must also approve all projects that come up along Mumbai's coast. Finally, No Objection Certificates need to be obtained from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation.

"Mumbai now has the money and the awareness for luxury boating but lacks the infrastructure," said Shakeel Kudrolli, founder of Indian Marine Federation and director of Aquasail, a boating products and services company. He believes "people in Mumbai will take to boating, but it will be based out of other ports, such as Goa."

Ashim Mongia, MD of West Coast Marine, a company that deals in luxury yachts and provides support services to boat owners, voiced similar concerns. "There will be a glut of [boat] dealerships, but unless it is supported by infrastructure, the industry may go kaput," said Mongia.

That's a situation that Koltharkar and his fellow tandels are refusing to contemplate. Their loyalty to their jobs is steadfast. "We tell our employers that boat is not yours or the company's," said Koltharkar. "It is ours and our destiny is tied to it. We'd rather have a slightly lower steady income in this job than worry if the day's catch will cover our diesel costs in the fishing business."

See *Check out in Consume* for details of the boat show. Also see www.sam-link.com for information about the weekend cruise.