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Games rush claim exaggerated, says NGO report

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NEW DELHI: A report prepared by a voluntary organization has revealed that the officials may have made a gross miscalculation in estimating the number of tourists for the Games.

The report released under the title, "Humanity-Equality-Destiny? Implicating Tourism in the Commonwealth Games 2010 - prepared by a voluntary organization, Equations (Equitable Tourism Options) - investigates the link between mega sport events, tourism and notions of development and democracy.

Rosemary Viswanath from Equations said the need for 40,000 rooms stressed upon by the tourism ministry was baseless. She says the "exaggerated" figure that was arrived at after inadequate and selective research has triggered hysterical activity for carving out hotel room space in the city. Viswanath points that it would have been better to focus on budget accommodations, which received little attention and that, too, at the last minute.

"Mega events have little to do with bolstering tourism, as during such periods negative factors such as Olympics blight - a phenomena when a large number of people avoid coming to the city hosting the Games - play a key role in keeping away regular tourists," she asserts.

Of the 39 sites auctioned by Delhi Development Authority to construct hotels to cater to Games tourists, work was complete on only four sites by April, 2010 and 13 sites showed no progress at all. In response to a Parliament question on April 28, the ministry of urban development had stated that there was substantial progress at 12 sites while at 10 sites there was some progress.

"According to the CAG report, India's bid document in 2003 estimated 30,000 spectators but a study commissioned by the tourism ministry in 2009 assessed the number at 1 lakh - which translates into 40,000 rooms. Thus, after considering the existing 11,000 hotel rooms an additional requirement of about 30,000 rooms for tourists was projected," the report explains.

India's bid document had stated, "Delhi very easily offers much more accommodation than is considered appropriate to cope with the anticipated inflow for CWG 2010." It assessed a total of 7,927 rooms in the starred category. But a few years later, notes the Equations report, the figure of 40,000 rooms started doing the rounds.