

Indian casino king in Nepal gets marching orders

A [New Delhi](#) chartered accountant who became known as Nepal's casino king after establishing a network of seven casinos here has been given marching orders after incurring the displeasure of the royal family, a report said.

Rakesh Wadhwa, who became a legend after teaming up with American expatriate R.D. Tuttle and enjoyed a monopoly in Nepal's flourishing gaming industry, has been asked to quit after becoming a victim in the skirmish between the royal family and Maoists, Ghatana R Bichar weekly said Wednesday.

Wadhwa told IANS that he had not seen the report and would not be able to comment on it immediately.

Wadhwa heads Nepal Recreation Centre that runs seven casinos from seven five-star hotels in Kathmandu. The latest one, Casino Shangri-la, was opened recently with much fanfare by Bollywood star Urmila Matondkar.

The casinos are one of Nepal's biggest tourist attractions, drawing thousands of Indians, and pay the government an annual royalty of Nepali Rs.15 million each as well as other taxes.

According to the weekly, a substantial amount of the money made by the casinos is paid to the Narayanhity royal palace.

However, the palace money dipped in recent times after King Gyanendra lost his place as head of government due to a mass uprising and the Maoist insurgents reached an agreement with the new multiparty government.

With the guerrillas poised to join parliament Jan 15, their campaign to abolish monarchy and transform Nepal into a republic has received a new momentum.

The Maoist trade union has increased its activities in Nepal's business and industrial sectors. During their examination of the casinos' profits and expenses they discovered that a large sum is paid into King Gyanendra's coffers every month, the report said.

The rebel union is said to have begun opposing the arrangement, causing the casinos to decrease the payments to the palace.

Angered by the drop in the money, the palace began pressuring Tuttle, who, in a bid to find a scapegoat, sent a letter to associate Wadhwa last week relieving him of his responsibilities, the weekly said.

However, other labour unions in at least three casinos are supporting the beleaguered Indian casino king, the weekly said. There was no immediate statement from the casinos.

Sudeshna Sarkar (© IANS / India eNews)