

# For a piece of Delhi, try Weblo

## Co, In Business Of Selling Virtual Property & Celebrities, Launching In India

N Shivapriya  
MUMBAI

THESE days it is increasingly becoming easier to live in an unreal world. Even if you can't afford a house in Delhi, you could still buy the city and become its mayor. Weblo.com Inc, the firm that makes a business of selling virtual pieces of real estate, celebrities and domains on the Internet, is launching in India for interested buyers. So far, the firm claims to have made pots of money by selling Las Vegas three times over, Seattle, Vancouver, Disney World, Empire State Building, of course all in the virtual world.

Unlike the more popular Second Life, on Weblo you can buy and sell only what exists in the real, says co-founder and CEO Rocky Mirza, who started the firm along with long-time friend Anu Aujia and another partner, Colin Williams. Recently, the firm raised funding from Vantage



### Log On For The Good Life

Point Venture Partners that was also an investor in social networking site Myspace.com.

Its other investors are Macro-media founder Bill Woodward and Myspace chairman Richard

Rosenblatt. The less-than-a-year-old firm claims that Disney World was sold on its portal for a cool \$500. Las Vegas for a shockingly \$2,300 and other impressive numbers for other cities and properties. Everyone somebody buys and sells something on Weblo, the company makes a commission. First-time buyers purchase the properties from Weblo. Every piece of real estate, no matter where, costs a dollar, cities come for higher and their price is a factor of the city's population, the country's population and the Internet usage there.

There is also a registration fee and discounts for premium members. If you buy a city, you automatically become its mayor and earn a percentage every time someone in your city transacts. If you are only a landlord and not mayor, you earn 66 cents for every 1,000 visitors that visit your property and \$10 after you've managed 10,000 visitors. The math is to still be worked out for India, but Mirza says it will most likely be whatever the value translates to in rupees. For Indians, however, the registration fee and other charges have been waived. You can buy up to three properties, two celebrities, two domain and one city for free and start earning on them. "Mumbai and Delhi, unfortunately, have already been sold," he says in response to a query. Delhi has been sold twice and was bought by its current owner for \$250.

"They were probably bought by some Indians overseas," guesses Mirza. Celebrities Amitabh Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai and Salman Khan are also among those already taken. "Even though Internet usage in India is not high as of now, we expect it to be the next big market after North America. That's why we want to be here. Eventually, because of sheer number of people here we expect it to outgrow Canada and UK," he says. That's the bet his firm is taking by launching in India for free. And while he's doing that, he's just discovering that prices for real estate space in Mumbai are virtually stratospheric.