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**Spirituality, astrology a big hit at trade fair** 

*By Prashant K. Nanda, Indo-Asian News Service*

New Delhi, Nov 28 (IANS) The annual trade fair here ended with the business of spirituality, astrology and other new age sciences raking in huge profits.

Hypnotherapy, scientology, tarot cards, face reading, crystals and similar products and services attracted tens of thousands at the 25th India International Trade Fair (IITF) here that closed Sunday.

A special pavilion, called Mystic World and devoted to astrology, spirituality and alternative therapies, was introduced for the first time this year.

Bharat Nirman, a body devoted to promoting spirituality and human well being, put together the pavilion that had about 50 stalls. And people readily explained why they were there.

'I bought special crystals for my son who is not scoring good marks in school. As a strong believer in astrology, we have full faith in the power of stars,' said Bhavna Garg, who purchased an 'education tower'.

'The education tower will be placed on my son's study table. It will channel positive energy into him,' Garg told IANS.

Added Sajila, another woman: 'I am buying a pyramid crystal and a few other crystals. I will get them studded in gold and wear it as a locket. While for others it may look like an ornament, it will act as a stress-buster for me.'

Explained Sidhartha Gadia of Bharat Nirman: 'Astronomy, spirituality and tantra are not new in India. But we are slowly deviating from the path laid out by our forefathers. This was an initiative to popularise our faith.'

The pavilion also had five palmists who charged about Rs.100-150 per person to predict the client's future.

An associate of one of the palmists, Navin Gupta, said: '(Gupta) never read more than 30 hands a day. We charged Rs.100 a client, and people are satisfied.'

One stall belted out horoscope churned out by computers, for Rs.50 each. Many queued up to consult Blossom Furtado, who called herself a past-life therapist and clinical hypnotherapist.

'If you want to know about either you past life or future prospects, hypnotherapy is the best solution. We read the subconscious mind and provide the best possible solution to any problem,' Furtado said.

Following the enthusiastic response, the Mystic World organisers are planning to sign a five-year contract with the Indian Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), which organises the IITF.

Some visitors, however, questioned the rationale behind the pavilion. 'When India is considered a leader in IT, how can we promote superstition?

It is just a mockery of our society. Promoting astronomy and palmistry in

IITF is nothing less than ridiculous,' said Vikas Dayal, a visitor.

Added another visitor: 'Anyway, superstition is good business.'

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