

## McDonald's Plans First Vegetarian Restaurants Globally in India

By Malavika Sharma

Sept. 5 (Bloomberg) -- McDonald's Corp. will swap its trademark burgers for potato sandwiches when it opens two vegetarian restaurants in India next year, the first such outlets globally for the world's biggest restaurant chain.

The fast-food chain will open two new outlets in northern Indian cities that are pilgrimage sites for Hindus and Sikhs, according to a spokesman for the company's north and east Indian operations, who declined to be named. McDonald's already keeps beef and pork products off the menu in India where a majority of the population are Hindus and Muslims.

The attempt to draw religious Indians shows how the Oak Brook, Illinois-based company is attempting to boost sales by catering to local tastes outside its home market. The vegetarian restaurants will include offerings such as the McAloo Tikki burger, a sandwich with a mashed-potato patty and the Pizza McPuff, a vegetable and cheese pastry,

One of the vegetarian outlets will be in Amritsar, where the Golden Temple, a holy site for Sikhs, is located. The other will be in Katra in Jammu and Kashmir in the north, which houses one of the main pilgrimage sites for Hindu people, according to the spokesman. McDonald's sells Chicken McNuggets and fish burgers in its regular Indian outlets although its traditional beef burgers aren't available. The cow is sacred to religious Hindus, who don't eat beef.

India, the world's second most populous nation, is

important for McDonald's as it increases sales overseas. The country's large population, growing urbanization and increasing number of people joining the workforce may help the fast-food industry expand from 47 billion rupees (\$840 million) in 2010 to 146 billion rupees in 2014, according to estimates by researcher RNCOS E-Services Pvt.

McDonald's operates as many as 271 stores in India through partnerships with two local Indian companies, Connaught Plaza Restaurants Pvt. for the north and east, and Hardcastle Restaurants Pvt. in the west and south.

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