

In Wings: Clearing airport slums

As GVK-SA consortium tackles hurdles in modernisation plan, talks begin with MMRDA and NGO Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres

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THE GVK-South Africa consortium has quietly begun work on a solution to rid the Mumbai airport of the predictable first road-block towards modernisation: the 85,000-odd hutments that welcome every jet touching down at the airport.

The joint venture company entrusted to put India's busiest airport at par with the best in the world has taken nascent steps to demolish these slum colonies by beginning dialogue with the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) and non-governmental organisation Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC).

While the GVK group was unavailable for comment, MMRDA Metropolitan Commissioner T Chandrashekar affirmed that they held the first round of discussions with the consortium last week. "But the modalities are yet to be worked out."

Ironically, both the MMRDA and SPARC found a mention in the Inspection Panel's report

to the World Bank earlier this month.

The report on the US \$940-million Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP) blamed the World Bank—it suspended its financial support to the roads and resettlement components of the MUTP—for "overestimating the capacity of the MMRDA and the NGO (SPARC) contracted to support project imple-

mentation".

But the MMRDA is hopeful.

At a cost of at least Rs 2,000 crore, the agency is planning to clear the land of the illegal shanties—identified in 30-odd pockets around the airport—by December 2008. As per plans, majority of the Project Affected Persons will be resettled at a 55-acre AAI plot in Dahisar.

- Airport encroachments**
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- 1 Rajendraprasad Nagar
 - 2 Zari Mari (Sevak Nagar)
 - 3 Bail Bazaar Targalli
 - 4 Kajupada (Sunder Baug)
 - 5 Shastri Nagar (Kurla)
 - 6 Sandesh nagar (Kurla)
 - 7 Kranti Nagar (Kurla)
 - 8 Zari Mari (Village Nagara)
 - 9 Tanaji Nagar (Mohali)
 - 10 Sanjay Gandhi Nagar
 - 11 Ambewadi
 - 12 Sambhaji Nagar
 - 13 Dr Ambedkar Nagar
 - 14 Ashok Nagar
 - 15 Gaondevi Nagar
 - 16 Old Agripada
 - 17 New Agripada
 - 18 Bamanwada
 - 19 Shastri Nagar, Bajiwada
 - 20 Inside IA Sports Complex
- TO BE RAZED FIRST NEXT ROUND

A new runway is possible

According to Australia-based Airplan, the firm appointed Global Technical Advisors by the Civil Aviation Ministry, a short parallel runway measuring 2,500 x 45 metres is possible at the Mumbai airport, provided hangars belonging to Air India are relocated, additional land is acquired for relocating hangars and for the runway and obstructions in the pathways are removed. The total cost of construction of the parallel runway—it will include compensation for removal of hangars, land acquisition and removal of encroachments—and associated taxi tracks is estimated to be around Rs 900 crore.

mitted in August 2005," added Chandrashekar. According to the study, the encroached area sprawls across 245 acres.

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) already knows—it failed to clear the hutments for more than two decades, largely due to votebank politics—it's in for the long haul.

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