

Bengal's airport city nears completion

Debajyoti Chakraborty | TNN

Kolkata: Ever since the anti-land acquisition movement gained momentum in 2006-07, few projects have made progress. IISCO Steel Plant (Rs 18,000 crore), Durgapur Aerropolis (Rs 10,000 crore) and Matix Fertilizer (Rs 5,000 crore) are the three that have, all of them in the Assam-Durgapur belt. It even drew the notice of US ambassador to India Nancy Powell, who highlighted the importance of the region at her meeting with chief minister Mamata Banerjee last month.

While ISP and Matix are industrial units, the airport city is an infrastructure project that has the potential to transform the region's outlook and economy. The private sector project that kicked off within a month of Ratan Tata announcing the Nano plant pullout from Singur is today the state's most prestigious showcase project.

The Rs 600 crore greenfield



The air traffic control tower is 97% complete

airport that forms the heart of the aerocity project, is nearing completion. The runway is 97% complete, passenger terminal building 92%, air traffic control 97% and operational building (service cluster block) 97% ready.

"The airport will be ready for flight services by August-September. Thereafter, there are regulatory compliances that need to be met. The category C airport, like Patna, should be ready for flight operations by this year end," a source told TOI. Talks are underway with all airlines. Chances are, the first flight will be on the Kolkata-Durgapur-Delhi sector followed by connections

to Mumbai and Bangalore.

"Once the airport becomes operational, several other sectors will open up. There is tremendous scope for hospitality, IT & ITES and health sector," said Kenneth Scott, general manager of Pride Hotel in Rajarhat. Pride is keen on a hotel property at the airport city that has zones earmarked for residencies, IT offices, hospitals and low-pollution industries.

Rajendra Prasad Khaitan, a prominent chamber of commerce representative from the region, feels the airport is a tremendous business opportunity for the region that was once called the Ruhr of India.

BAPL director Partha Ghosh feels the airport will not only serve towns in south Bengal, it will also be of use to residents and businesses in Dhanbad and Bokaro. With a six-lane highway on the anvil from Dhanbad to Panaguri, the connectivity with Andal and western Jharkhand will become even faster.