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**Navi Mumbai airport: CIDCO moves quick on 'star project'**

*Consultant in 8 weeks; eco-clearances, 'consensual land acquisition' on course*

**Kavitha Iyer**

**Mumbai, August 27:** On September 3, newspapers across the globe will carry tender advertisements seeking a consultant for the Greenfield airport to be built at Navi Mumbai. "Within eight to 10 weeks, we should have a consultant with international expertise on board," said G S Gill, vice-chairman and managing director of the City and Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra Ltd (CIDCO), which is developing the Rs 10,000-crore airport, to sprawl over 2,000 hectares of land.

While Gill called the proposed airport CIDCO's "star" project, other officials said the consultant will prepare the Detailed Project Report by early next year, to meet the target of beginning at least partial operations by 2012. Gill even admitted that the airport should have already been in existence by now.

"After getting in-principle approval from the Government of India and the CIDCO board, it has now gone to the Government of Maharashtra," he said, adding that focused work on three areas continues in the meantime: Appointing the consultant, obtaining the environmental clearances "expeditiously" and acquiring the balance land, about 500 hectares, spread across seven or eight villages.

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Gill said CIDCO hopes to develop a "consensual land acquisition" policy. "We will work at the grassroots with the active participation of institutions like the **Tata Institute for Social Sciences.** The rehabilitation policy must be acceptable

to the people,” he said. Also in store: “Elaborate social engineering techniques” undertaken especially to match the skill sets of the local people with the skill sets that will be required for the 20,000-odd jobs that will be created by the airport.

Although the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport is undergoing an overhaul being undertaken by the Mumbai International Airport Pvt Ltd (MIAL), it is expected that this airport will reach saturation point-over 40 million passengers per annum-by 2013. That’s why a second airport for the country’s financial capital assumes a key position.

While experts have repeatedly raised doubts over connectivity of the Navi Mumbai airport with Mumbai city, Gill said the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link being implemented by the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation should suffice, along with other road infrastructure being developed by CIDCO. “Our role is dispersal of traffic from the MTHL,” he said. “We have two major road projects for that, as well as plans to strengthen a national highway and a state highway.”

The airport is among the various infrastructure projects shortlisted by the government for seeking potential assistance from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). While the airport will be built through a public-private partnership mechanism, the state government may seek foreign financial aid for the Viability Gap Funding.