

# Andal airport set to take wing

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kolkata:** The airport, a critical component of Aerotropolis — the state's Rs 10,000-crore airport-township project — is all set to take off around September-October with operations by non-scheduled airlines. Among the companies the airport authorities are speaking to are Spirit Airlines, Pinnacle Air and North-East Shuttles. Flights by scheduled operators like Air India and Indigo Airlines are likely to commence sometime next year.

The prospect of the first fixed wing aircraft touching down at the airport near Durgapur has become bright with the state administration going that extra mile to clear all bottlenecks. Several issues coming in the way of the project were resolved on Wednesday with transport department taking a proactive stance to clear the deck. "More than 95% of work at the airport is over. One of the major bottlenecks was shifting of high-tension power transmission lines on the way of the approach-road to the airport. On Wednesday, this issue was resolved along with several others," said Partha Ghosh, MD of project promoter Bengal Aerotropolis Projects Ltd (BAPL).



REALITY SOON

Of the 96 high-tension transmission towers in the flight path, 50% were shifted by L&T. The remaining half lay on the approach way. Local syndicates dealing in construction material have been arm-twisting people working on the project, thereby delaying the completion. "Land holders were apprehensive. But principal secretary of transport department, Alapan Bandyopadhyay, assured them that the

right of land, on which the towers are being constructed, would remain with them. In addition, they will receive compensation," said Ghosh.

Bandyopadhyay said most of the bottlenecks have been removed. "We tried to ensure that all government agencies work in tandem to clear hurdles. Work on shifting the transmission line has started on Thursday," he said.

Another issue was the 4.2 km link between the airport and National Highway 2 without which DGCA clearance would have been a problem. Land acquired for this had been reoccupied by a section of land holders along a 900-metre stretch following the Mamata Banerjee government's policy against land acquisition.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is expected to undertake an inspection after a 4.2 km road linking the airport with National Highway 2 is completed. This will be followed by trial flights. The DGCA clearance is likely to take around two and a half months. BAPL is already in talks with several carriers for flights to the airport that has several industrial towns like Durgapur, Burnpur, Raniganj and Dhanbad in its catchment area.