

Noida airport project set for November 25 launch by PM Modi, prep begins for 'grand event'

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GREATER NOIDA: The official launch of the Noida International Airport project by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely on November 25. Preparations have begun for a "grand ceremony" that will also be attended by the chief minister to kickstart work on the airport, which has a commissioning target of September 2024 and will be the Yogi Adityanath regime's infrastructure showpiece as the state heads into elections in early 2022.

On Monday, the entire local administration brass – district magistrate Suhas LY, Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) CEO Arun Vir Singh and police commissioner Alok Singh – along with MLA Dhirendra Singh visited the airport site in Jewar to finalise the location for the 'bhoomi puja' and foundation stone-laying ceremony.

Officials said four locations in Ranhera, Rohi and Banwaribas, villages whose land has been acquired for the airport, have been shortlisted. The site best suited for VIP movement of vehicles and helicopters, parking and a pandal to accommodate a large gathering will be chosen.

"We made a site visit to assess the requirements and draw up plans for the expected visit of the Prime Minister and chief minister along with other dignitaries. Although we have not been given any final programme schedule of the PM and CM, we have been told by the state government verbally to make preparations for the end of the month," Suhas LY told TOI. The outline of the airport, whose first phase is coming up on 1,334 hectares, has started taking shape with work currently on to build its boundary wall. The UP government has signed a concessionaire agreement with Swiss airports giant Zurich AG to build and operate the airport.

"We examined four sites for road connectivity, wires, low-lying area, flat land, parking, helicopter facility, etc and then checked them on tabletop through Google Maps. We are looking at over 50 acres of flat land to implement blue book guidelines to organise a national-level event," YEIDA CEO Singh said. "All these areas have a large field available in which a public gathering can happen. We will finalise the site in a couple of days," he added.

Singh said an event management company will be brought in the ceremony. "We will finalise the company by Tuesday or in a couple of days from the four that are empanelled with us. Around 1.15 lakh people will have to be accommodated for the ceremony," said Singh.

Dhirendra Singh, the BJP MLA from Jewar, said November 25 "would be a historic day in Jewar, which was a backward assembly seat before 2017". "Today, Jewar has become a favourite destination for investors due to the airport project," said Singh, citing the government's other mega project in the area, Film City, and industrial clusters that were being set up with the airport as the nucleus.

"It will be a day of great pride for the people of Jewar because the Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone of the airport. People from many nearby districts have started preparations to welcome the PM. The entire BJP and all public representatives have started preparations to make it a grand event," he said.

The ceremony is expected to be held in two parts – the 'bhoomi puja' and foundation stone-laying ceremony in the first half and public addresses by the PM and the CM in the second. Officials said senior BJP functionaries from the party's central leadership and ministers as well as aviation ministry officials are likely to be present at the event.