

## Mumbai's bridge over sea gets connected

A 5.7 km bridge over the Arabian Sea connecting the northern suburb of Bandra with Worli in central [Mumbai](#) achieved a milestone Wednesday with the linking of the approach spans from both sides.

'This means that the physical structure of the 5.7 km long bridge is ready. Now, we shall complete the related works to facilitate traffic movement on its eight lanes. We plan to complete it early-January 2009,' Public Works Department Minister Anil Deshmukh told IANS here.

While the approach roads on both sides were ready, the most vital link in the Bandra-Worli Sea Link (BWSL) - two cable-stayed bridges of total 850-metre length - have been finally connected.

The cable-stayed design permits free movement of the fishing boats in the area and it will be a landmark bridge in the country, and the first one constructed on the sea.

The total length of the bridge is 4.7 km, excluding the approach roads, while the cable-stayed portion is 850 metres. At the farthest point the 57-span bridge runs a kilometre away from the shore, and the closest is 300 metres from the shorelines at Bandra and Worli.

At the centre of the bridge will be a tower with a viewers' gallery, which will offer a bird's eye view of the spectacular Mumbai skyline on all sides, dotted by lush green hills, skyscrapers and tiny fishing villages.

Work on the prestigious project started in 1999 at an estimated cost of Rs.4 billion (\$100 million). Delays, design changes and dilly-dallying on its route led to project cost escalation by a whopping four times.

As per the present plans, after the commissioning of the Bandra-Worli portion, the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC), which is overseeing the project, will extend it to Nariman Point, a distance of around 13 km, at a cost of Rs.42.29 billion.

The subsequent plan is to extend it right up to Borivli, the northwest tip of Mumbai, via Versova.

With the connection of the approach roads to the main bridge, the work is now 80 percent complete. It will slash the 45-minute travel time between Bandra and Worli, a distance of 10 km, by at least 30 minutes.

When the BWSL is extended till Nariman Point, it is expected to reduce the travel time between south Mumbai and Mumbai airport, from the present 100 minutes, to barely 25 minutes.

While two-wheelers and multi-axle heavy vehicles will be banned entry, other vehicles shall speed at around 100 km per hour with a capacity to carry nearly 150,000 vehicles per day.

'Since the project is being implemented on a build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis, it is proposed to levy a toll of Rs.30 for cars, Rs.45 for light vehicles and Rs.60 for heavy vehicles,' Deshmukh said.

The minister added that the BWSL would be an 'Intelligent Bridge' encompassing state-of-the-art

system for monitoring, surveillance, information guidance and emergency support systems.

It has been built by the civil engineering giant Hindustan Construction Company and has secured expertise and inputs from countries like Austria, Egypt, Germany, Philippines, Serbia, Switzerland and Thailand.

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