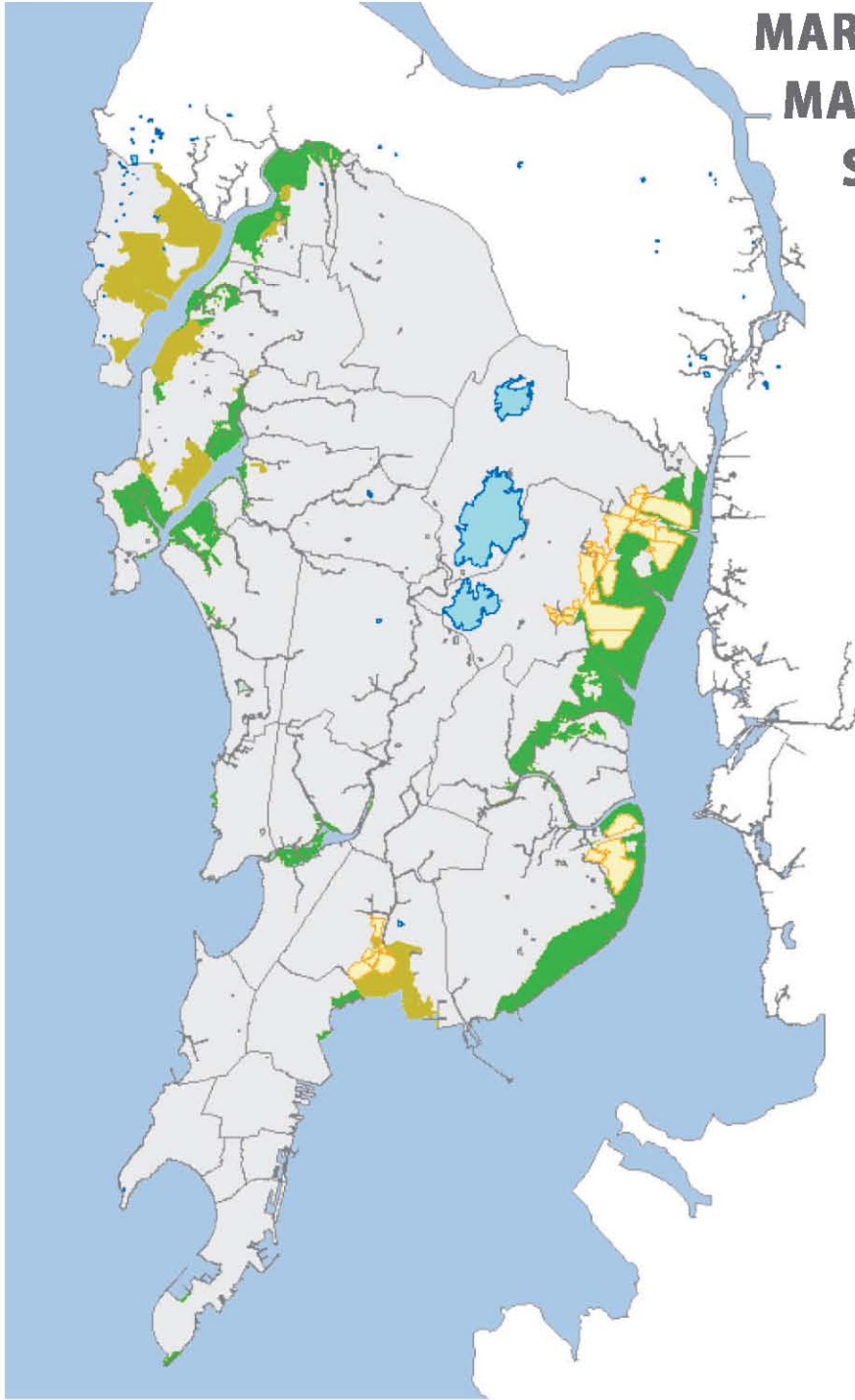


**MARSHLANDS  
MANGROVES  
SALTPANS**



Source: IJRI







# Development projects offered salt land sweetener by Nath

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NEW DELHI

**A**T a time when India Inc is scrambling to acquire large tracts of land for industrial development, especially special economic zones (SEZ), commerce & industry minister Kamal Nath has offered more than 5,000-acre salt pan land for development projects. The move is of significance since there is no problem in using salt pan land for SEZs unlike multi-crop agriculture, land the acquisition of which has been barred. Moreover, a large chunk salt land is located in Mumbai and Chennai where land prices are steep.

Among the major projects that could benefit from Mr Kamal Nath's offer is the Mumbai airport. The Maharashtra government, the Centre and the GVK-led consortium which manages the airport are in consultation to rehabilitate slum-dwellers encroaching the airport on salt pan lands.

According to details compiled by the department of industrial policy & promotion (DIPP), nearly 5,378 acres of salt pan land could be freed for development purposes. Salt pan lands are available in various other states like Tamil Nadu too, highly-placed government sources said. The salt department is part of DIPP and is represented by the salt commissioner.

Some salt pan land in Tamil Nadu is being allotted to public sector companies like EPCL. This includes areas identified at Ennore near Chennai for port expansion and a power project. Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corp (Tidco) is also in talks for using salt lands for a SEZ, the sources said.

Mr Kamal Nath feels use of salt lands for industrial development could make a significant impact in Mumbai. "Several rounds of negotiations have already been held with state government authorities," the sources said. The hurdles that need to be overcome are litigation and encroachment so that these lands can be put to good use. "In Mumbai, salt

pan lands are spread all over the city and the current value is in thousands of crores if litigation and encroachment are overcome," they added.

A key proposal under consideration is to use salt pan lands in Mumbai to relocate the slums that are encroaching airport land. If the slums are not relocated, expansion and modernisation of Mumbai airport would be impossible. The GVK-South African Airports consortium, which manages the airport, has not been able to get land for expansion since encroaching slums have not been cleared.

Salt pan lands could also come in handy for facilitating SEZ projects near Mumbai, the sources said. Once corporates acquire land in areas like Navi Mumbai, salt pan lands could be used for rehabilitation of outcasts. These lands are fit for residential purposes except in the case of creek lands which are unsuitable for development, the sources said.

As the government has terminated the lease of several salt works, nearly 1,852 acres of land could be made available for development. However, some of the salt works have moved court against termination of licences. In the case of another 1,827 acres of land, officials have cited ownership disputes involving 21 salt works.

In Kanjar village alone, nearly 350 acres of land is in clear possession of the salt commissioner. In addition, another 350 acres is now being used by the Maharashtra government as dumping ground.

In Mumbai, there are more than a dozen plots of 5 acres which are being offered to the Mumbai Port Trust for relocating encroachers holding up development of a container terminal. Nearly 98 acres of land has been handed over to the ministry of urban development for socio-economic projects while the government has handed over 27 acres to a private party following a Supreme Court verdict.

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## Civil Aviation ministry seeks salt pan lands to rehabilitate slums near airport

**Praful Patel: Hope to start work on Navi Mumbai airport by year-end**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MUMBAI,  
APRIL 23

**I**N A bid to clear some of the encroached land at Mumbai airport, the Civil Aviation Ministry today asked the Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) led by Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar to get 200 acres of salt pan lands released to rehabilitate slums encroaching upon the airport.

"The Group of Ministers, in turn, has decided to ask the Maharashtra Government and the Central agencies to identify atleast 70 hectares of land that is free from encumbrances and may only require

a change of land use," a Civil Aviation Ministry official told The Indian Express. Sources said while the salt pan lands were owned by the Central Government, there were certain issues relating to ownership and possession which needed to be addressed. "The ministry is of the view that those lands where only a change of land use is needed can be released for rehabilitation purposes sooner," the official said.

Faced with a severe land crunch at the Chhatrapati Shivaji International airport at Mumbai, Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL) has been struggling to exe-

cute modernisation and restructuring works. Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel recently admitted that works at Mumbai airport had gone a "little off-track" with the state government failing to take adequate measures to tackle the slum issue.

Patel today said that his ministry had spoken to the Maharashtra Government and had sorted out all the land-related issues for the proposed Greenfield airport at Navi Mumbai. "We are planning to move the Cabinet shortly on Navi Mumbai and hope to start work on the project by the end of the year," he said.

Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, Chief Secretary D K Sankaran and top state bureaucrats attended the meeting. Sankaran said that a "number of issues had been discussed" in the meeting, but said that no decision had been taken as a lot of issues were involved. Some additional information had also been sought.

The EGoM, which has been convened by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, also consists of Union Commerce Minister Kamal Nath, under whose purview the lands fall, Environment Minister A Raja and Urban Development Minister Jaipal Reddy, among others.

Source: The Indian Express



# Waiting for Salt to Turn Gold

## Nauzer Bharucha

Just 10 Families Control Over 3,000 Acres of Salt-Pan Land In Mumbai. Read Who Owns What First in TOI

Mumbai: Mumbai's builders have sensed their next big development opportunity on the vast expanse of salt-pan plots.

Though the state government maintains development on salt-pan land will be only for rehabilitating slum dwellers, senior officials have told TOI that some of the biggest names in the realty industry are lobbying with the government to free up the locked land. If they succeed, it will be their next big victory after the Supreme Court verdict that lets them develop mill plots.

A few builders have already tied up with some of the salt-pan owners and others are trying to buy out their future development rights. "With so much at stake, it is to be seen whether the government frames a fair and transparent policy applicable to all, or one which will favour a few," is how an industry analyst explains the on-going developments.

TOI has dug out a comprehensive list of people who control these sprawling tracts; they could be sitting on a goldmine worth thousands of acres, if the government opts to yield to the developers' demands. TOI spoke to various salt department officials and real estate industry insiders, and found that just 10 families controlled over 3,000 acres of salt-pan land in the city.

Salt-pan plots are spread over 5,500 acres, in

Ghatkopar, Chembur, Mandale, Turbhe, Anik, Wadala, Kanjurmag, Bhandup, Nahur and Mulund in the eastern suburbs and Malvani, Dahisar, Mira-Bhayander and Virar in the western suburbs.

Among those who possess the largest salt-pan tracts in the city are the Walawalkars. Records say the family still has about 882 acres between Nahur and Mulund. "We bought the land in 1982 from the Badrukas. But 500 more acres of our land was taken over by the government in Kanjur. The new dumping ground is coming up there," Samarth Development Corporation head Vikas Walawalkar said.

The Walawalkars also owned the land, on which, the entire Lokhandwala Complex in Andheri came up. The family purchased about 200 acres from the Oshiwara Land Development Corporation three decades ago and then sold parts to builders. It, however, kept a portion of it to develop itself.

Another big salt-pan land owner is builder Mahesh Garodia, who controls about 500 acres between Kanjurmag and Bhandup. The Garodias have projects mainly in Ghatkopar. They set up the Garodia Nagar residential complex about four decades ago.

The Garodias signed an MoU with builder Sunil Mantri's Anjir Properties in 2002. According to the MoU, a copy of which is with TOI, Mantri must get the approvals, sanctions and exemptions from government agencies for development. This includes permission for change of use.

In lieu, the Garodias will surrender 20 per cent of the

land to Mantri. "The title of the 20 per cent share of land will be clean, clear and marketable," the MoU adds.

The late Fali Bomanjee's family holds 467 acres in Kanjurmag, Bhandup and Nahur. His legal heirs, including wife Piloo and son Yazad, early this year announced they were the owners (lessees) and sole occupants of this lease-hold land after builder Ajmera claimed right to the property. The Bomanjees also control 84 more acres of salt-pan plots in Trombay. The family says it has been in possession of its salt-pan land since the 1940s and still manufactures salt.

Another big owner in Trombay is Sunil Majithia, who controls a 178-acre sprawl. The Majithia family, into real-estate development, claims it has possessed this land since the 1950s.

Lalit Gandhi of Lok Group controls 178 acres of salt-pan land in Mankhurd. A part of this sprawl falls under the no-development zone, but the Lok Group is fighting a legal battle with the Central government over this land. Gandhi acquired this huge property from Jayantilal Thanawala in 1994.

The Kotwal brothers — Keki and Noshir — own about 250 acres of salt-pan land in Mira Road. They ran the Kotwal Dyeing and Printing Works factory at Tardeo that they later sold. The Great Eastern building has now come up in its place.

The Belgaum-based Gogte family also has a vast (between 400 and 500 acres) tract in Nallasopara. All salt-pan plot owners have been fighting a legal battle for the past two decades with the state and Central governments over the land title. In the last century, these plots were given on lease to individuals to manufacture salt. But the last of the leases are slated to get over by 2016.

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2,177 hectares of land can be used to house 80,000 slum families

Shubhangi Khapre

The Centre has in principle given clearance to the state to develop 2,177 hectares of salt pan land for housing projects including rehabilitation of project affected people (PAP) and relocation of slums around airport and Bombay Port Trust (BPT) in Mumbai. Although ministry of environment and industry have raised some objections, the Group of Ministers (GOM) overall prevailed and gave a nod to development of salt pan land in Mumbai for rehabilitation of over 80,000 slums families which come in the way of infrastructure development of the commercial capital.

The union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar headed the group of ministers (GOM) meeting in Delhi. Other ministers at the meeting were union power minister Sushil Kumar Shinde, minister for industry and commerce Kamal Nath, urban minister Jaipal Reddy and law minister H R Bhadrachari. The chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh along with state chief secretary D K Shankaran were specially asked to attend the meeting to explain the Mumbai problems.

According to a senior urban development officer, "There was an unanimous view that government should utilise the idle salt pan land for rehabilitation of slums and also low economy housing. Almost two-third of the salt pan land belonged to the centre and remaining state and private players who were given the land on lease."

However, the final plans to develop the salt pan housing projects on "no profit-no loss" roping in private developers is yet to be finalised. A senior secretary in chief minister office said, "There are several options under consideration which includes handing over 25 per cent of the land for development to private developers for commercial purpose and in return he builds houses free to relocate slums settled on state and



**Centre-state want to develop 2,177 hectares salt pan land under title to rehabilitate PAP/slum colonies. They also want to rope in private developers to ensure neither that the state nor centre will need to make fresh investments for housing slums/PPA.**

**The salt pans** have been leased directly to salt cultivators till 2016. They cannot sub-let the land.

**The Centre** and state admit they cannot claim land as almost one-third of the 2,177 hectares is under litigation.

centre land like Mumbai Airport, BPT and other state government plots within city. Another formulae is that developers should be given a land for shopping complex or malls and in return he invests the money for slums housing in same proportion."

It is estimated that one hectare of land (salt pan) can accommodate 500 houses each of 225 square feet. Government want to rope in developers to build houses for the PPA slum dwellers and use the extra Floor Space Index (FSI) awarded to them for recovering their cost with marginal profit.

Both the state and centre has admitted that salt cultivation is no longer a lucrative business. Most of the salt pan holders have misused the land thus promoting illegal encroachment according to the government findings. The centre has awarded the salt pans to individuals on lease till year 2016. Majority of the salt cultivators have moved to different jobs as returns from salt making is negligible.