

7% work at Pokhara international airport completed in 3 months



The construction of Pokhara Regional International Airport, which is considered as a project of national pride, appears to have taken pace.

However, within the span of nearly three months, just seven percent of the construction work that had commenced in mid-November last year has been completed.

According to project chief Dinesh Munakarmi, the pace of work as for now is satisfactory considering the amount of time. “Seven percent of the work has been completed, the work at the initial phase for larger construction projects are usually slower in the beginning. The work will be done at a faster pace now as the required equipment are now in our disposal,” Munakarmi said.

He explained that due to the delay in delivery of advanced equipment, there was delay in work as it had to be carried out using locally available material and technology.

“We now have more improved equipment, which will help us improve the pace of work. These high-tech heavy equipment were stuck at the port in Kolkata lately,” Munakarmi said.

Twenty-one heavy mechanical equipment have now been delivered to the construction site of the Pokhara Regional International Airport by the construction company China CAMC.

According to Munakarmi, 25 percent of earthwork that is being carried out at the construction site has been completed. The construction company aims to finish 80 percent of the earthwork by the end of FY2017/18 in addition to the construction of the terminal building and what remains of the sewage and water way facility.

The estimated cost of construction of the airport hovers at around Rs 22 billion. About 400,000 cubic meters of soil has been excavated from the ground for constructing the runway.

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The exchange of funds for this project has been smooth due to convenient agreements between the primary Chinese funding agency Export-Import Bank (EXIM) and the Government of Nepal.

Due to the irregular land formation in the airport construction site, excavators and dozers have been used to level the construction site for the runway. Due to ground rigidity, it has taken much more time than expected to level it, according to Munakarmi. Once the earthwork is completed, placements for the water way, runway, taxi way and terminal will be determined, according to the project officials. They estimated that the framework of the airport would be complete by May 2019.

The construction company has until July 2021 to complete the project. While the construction work is being carried out, EXIM bank has already agreed to provide subsidized loan for the project.

As per the agreement between the Government of Nepal and EXIM Bank, the loan must be paid back within 13 years. As the first seven years of this period is termed as 'grace period' the government will only have to commence payment after this period. According to officials, an agreement was made allowing Nepal to pay the debt in 26 installments within 13 years.

Total 521 ropani of land has been further acquired by the government for the purpose of construction of the airport. An agreement was struck between China CAMC and Nepal Civil Aviation Authority in this regard.

The land acquisition process for the airport began nearly four decades ago. However, as the 3106 ropani of land seemed inadequate, additional land was acquired.

Source: MyRepublica 28th February 2018