



36°C-23°C  
Mainly clear sky

Humidity: 76-63%  
Sunrise: 06:40 hrs  
Sunset: 18:04 hrs  
Moonrise: 07:16 hrs  
Moonset: 18:53 hrs

122

Number of double-decker buses in Mumbai

# dna OF mumbai

## 'Cluster development key to city's growth'

Cluster development holds the key to the ordered growth of Mumbai. Instead of redeveloping individual buildings, town planners, architects and developers have floated the cluster development concept in which several old buildings are jointly taken up for redevelopment. The government has accepted this idea. The first project to be approved under the scheme is One Avighna Park in Parel. All eyes are on the project as its success could influence the course of the city's growth. Nishant Agarwal (32), managing director, Avighna India Ltd, talks to dna's city editor S Balakrishnan about the project. Following are excerpts.

**One Avighna Park at Parel is the first cluster development project approved by the BMC. What exactly attracted you to this project?**

Real-estate development opportunities in Mumbai are typically small land parcels leading to "pencil buildings" with very little open spaces, minimum amenities and zero infrastructure. The state has attempted to solve this by encouraging large-scale development that allows for proper planning with continuous road widening, infrastructure and amenities.

Avighna's approach to real-estate development is unconventional - quality not quantity and zero debt. This less trodden path doesn't allow us to take on projects that are too small as our cost structure is extremely high and the economics doesn't work. Given the project's size and scale, we were able to invest a lot of time and effort to develop a truly international product. The project is already the winner of 18 prestigious awards.

The location of this project was a big attraction. The Bandra Kurla Complex and Nariman Point are an easy 15-minute drive away from Parel. Premium shopping and entertainment options such as Atria and

PVR Cinemas are five minutes away. Besides, we expect the badge value of a south Mumbai residence would wear down as well - after all, most south Mumbai residents make a lot of compromises like insufficient parking, poor amenities, low ceiling, leakage.

**What is your take on cluster development per se?**

I believe that it is critical to encourage large-scale redevelopment projects under the Development Control Rule (DCR) 33(9). The objective of DCR 33(9), which deals with cluster development, is to encourage large-scale redevelopment proposals, which in turn will allow for proper road widening, adequate parking, sewage treatment plant, water harvesting, and so on. Cluster development schemes also allow for a unified urban character instead of random mixed architecture.

Having said that, cluster development schemes are yet to take off in a big way. The primary reason is that the current cluster development policy is not very attractive.

**On which property are you developing One Avighna Park? When did you start work on the project?**

One Avighna Park is being developed on New Islam Mills Compound, measuring about 6.5 acres. We acquired the land in July 2006 and worked hard for four years to get consent from the more than 650 tenants, to design the rehab towers, sale towers and get all sanctions. Construction activity commenced in the fourth quarter of 2010. In 11 months, we handed over the rehabilitation towers to the tenants. As far as the residential towers go, work is in progress on level 51, with a 2014 scheduled delivery.

**How many tenants occupied the property and how many of them have you resettled in the rehab segment?**

There were more than 650 tenants and we have rehabilitated about 580 in seven



**To make the scheme more attractive (and in some cases viable), the government should offer at least the same entitlements and incentives that are offered to projects under DCR 33(7)**

— Nishant Agarwal, MD, Avighna India Ltd

23-storey rehabilitation towers. The rehab towers have been recognised at the International Property Awards, London, as the 'Best Residential Renovation Redevelopment in India'. Also, these are the first rehab towers in the city to get IGBC Gold Certification.

**What will be the total built-up area of the project once it is completed? Will it be spread over more than one tower?**

The total built-up area is about four million sqft which covers seven rehabilitation towers that have been completed, two 64-storey residential towers which are in progress and a 20-storey commercial/luxury hospitality tower that is being designed and developed.

**What are the highlights of the project? What is the total cost?**

Our primary objective is to deliver a very high quality product with a very long life span. This starts with our design, our material selection and most importantly workmanship. For instance, we have imported switchgear from France, windows from Germany, water-proofing products from Malaysia, fire fighting systems and pipes from the UK.

We've hired more than 300 highly skilled workers from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to ensure international standards. Naturally, this will raise costs and capital expenditure. But given the long-term benefits, it is certainly worth it. There's a reason why buildings in London or New York do not have leakages - it's high quality materials and workmanship all the way.

All apartments have been designed according to Vastu. Minute aspects related to function, space planning and circulation patterns have been thought through in detail, whether it is service routes from the kitchen to the garbage chutes, designated space for washing and drying, or even location of air conditioning units. Moreover, all apartments have service entrances for service staff (postman, milkman, vegetable vendors, electricians, gardeners) to avoid intrusion on the privacy of residents. Our unique design offers residents a private plunge pool and a 25 ft high landscaped deck in every apartment. Unfortunately, such features will become rare in future due to the revised development control norms.

Perhaps, the most important aspect is that we are closely screening buyers to ensure creating a community of like-minded people. **Since you are the first to implement a cluster project, what specific problems did you face?**

Redevelopment under DCR 33(9) is a much larger undertaking, which in turn means the developer has that many more stake-

holders to manage, like landowners, tenants (who have various political agendas), etc. As part of the larger cluster, the developer is required to take up projects otherwise not viable, provide infrastructure, open spaces and so on. The disconnect is that even though the burden is significantly higher, the scheme is not as attractive and rewarding as other redevelopment proposals.

**What rule changes do you favour to expedite such projects?**

Maharashtra has realised the need to seriously promote cluster development or DCR 33(9). To make the scheme more attractive (and in some cases viable), the government should offer at least the same entitlements and incentives that are offered to projects under DCR 33(7).

**All eyes are on the success of One Avighna Park. Are you confident of delivering?**

One Avighna Park is perhaps the most eagerly awaited project. We will deliver the best quality and in a timely manner. Internationally renowned consultants are designing One Avighna Park. Their excellence has been recognised by several prestigious forums like IPA, London. Already, 51 floors have been completed, so it can be said with confidence that we will deliver in 2014.

**Will One Avighna Park be a fully residential project or part commercial?**

One Avighna Park comprises twin 64-storey residential towers. Part of the total development on the 6.5 acres may include a commercial/luxury hospitality component. The area allotted for residential towers will be clearly demarcated to ensure complete privacy and safety.

**What is your next major project?**

We have multiple land parcels in Mumbai. At this point we are totally focused on delivering One Avighna Park. Once this is delivered, we will direct our focus towards one of the others.