

# CM's Japan visit to ensure MTHL, Metro III work begins in 2016

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**Mumbai:** Work on the Sewri-Nhava Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) and Colaba-Bandra-Seepz third Metro line may begin at the onset of 2016.

Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis is set to sign an agreement with the Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA) for funds to build the MTHL, which will bring Mumbai and Navi Mumbai closer by half an hour.

Officials from the chief minister's office said the JICA had promised a loan for MTHL at an interest rate of 1.75%, and the government would earn revenue through a toll. The Japanese prime minister is slated to be present during the signing of agreements between the state and the JICA.

Metropolitan commissioner U P S Madan said early funding for the Metro and MTHL, without bureaucratic delays, to start work early next year was the main aim of the meetings during the CM's Japan visit. Fadnavis, along with a delegation of officials, has proceeded on his tour to attend the unveiling of Dr B R Ambedkar's statue at Koyasan University. The statue has been gifted by the state.

Pic for representation



Madan said a preliminary agreement over funding for the Metro had been reached, to reduce procedural delays in ensuring early funds.

The JICA is set to carry out public consultations for the 22-km MTHL on September 15. The JICA is likely to provide a 80% loan for the project. The consultations will be held at the Sewri Koli Samaj Hall, 22/1 Koli Samaj Society, Sewri, Koliwada (E), at 10am on September 15. A public notification on the meeting said the JICA will explain

the project background, objectives and expected environmental impact assessment and expected mitigation measures.

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority will execute the Rs 11,000 crore project on a cash contract. The Union government has approved 20% of the project cost as the viability gap funding. The JICA will help enhance constructability and shorten the project's construction period, given its experience in the construction of long sea bridges.

The project has been dogged by controversy since it was proposed in 1984. Environmentalists, led by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), had sought a change in alignment. They want the starting point 700 metres south of its current position in Sewri. BNHS argued that the realignment was crucial to save the Sewri mudflats and flamingoes.

Senior state officials, who had been to New Delhi to discuss the MTHL project, last week promised to submit a proposal to carve out a sanctuary for flamingoes before the state wildlife board, so that it could be taken up soon with environment ministry and National Wildlife Board for clearance.