

Twenty km from the chaos of Raipur, Chhattisgarh is building a new capital, a Rs 50,000-crore project that is said to be modelled on the Malaysian city of Putrajaya ■ Joseph John

Amar Singh Sen, a farmer in Nawagaon, a village 20 km from Chhattisgarh's capital of Raipur, hasn't heard of Putrajaya, the federal administrative centre of Malaysia that came up in 1999, mixing the orderliness of Singapore with the openness of an American suburb. All Sen knows that in a few months, Nawagaon will be nothing like what it is now—thatched mud houses along kuccha roads and open drains. His is one of the 41 villages where Chhattisgarh's new capital, Naya Raipur, will come up, a city that is said to be modelled on Putrajaya.

Like most others in these villages, Sen is optimistic, but is a bit lost. "I am a farmer but have given up my land for the project. I hope it changes my life for the better. I can already see the roads coming," he says.

The drawing-board plan for the new city is slowly coming to life in these villages, on an impressive 8,013 hectares. The Rs 50,000-crore plan is ambitious: the city, once ready, will have one-fourth of its total area as green cover and will boast of world-class infrastructure, IT parks, business centres and residential complexes.

When Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh in 2000, Raipur found the spotlight turned on itself—it was suddenly the state capital but had very little in the name of infrastructure. A government hospital was turned into the Mantralaya and the state held its first assembly session in a make-shift tent in a school ground. Later, the building that housed the Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission and Research Centre was converted into the state assembly. The district circuit house became Raj Bhawan and the collector's bungalow the Chief Minister's residence.

Today, like most other Indian cities and towns, Raipur is an urban mess. Vehicles find their way through the crowded city centre on the sheer

strength of their blaring horns and the water and sewage system is on the brink of collapse. Black dust from the sponge iron plants on the city's fringes hangs over the city's air.

It was Ajit Jogi, the state's first chief minister, who came up with the idea of a new city. In March 2003, Congress president Sonia Gandhi laid the foundation stone at Pauta village, about 20 km from the present city. The BJP government, which came to power in the December 2003 elections, initially had reservations but when it decided to go ahead with the idea, there was a strong lobby within the party that wanted a change of location. So the present Raman Singh government excluded Pauta village, where Sonia Gandhi had laid the foundation, but decided to go ahead with the capital plan.

'Naya Raipur', wedged between NH-6 and NH-43 and 6 km from the state's Mana airport, is a burst of green. The town planners say they propose to keep it that way, with one-fourth of the city's total area as green cover. The city will have 2,500 hectares of public places, parks and landscaped greens.

The New Raipur Development Authority is the nodal agency for implementing the project. N Baijendra Kumar, NDRA vice-chairman and the state's principal secretary, says the bulk of the projects in Naya Raipur will come up on the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model. M/s CES, New Delhi, and City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO), Navi Mumbai, have been chosen as the prime consultants for preparing the Master Plan. Three construction companies, IVRCL Infrastructure and Project Limited, Mumbai; ERA Infra Engineering Limited and RAMKEY Infrastructure Limited, besides a host of other companies, have won contracts for key building projects in the new city.

These days, the cranes and the bulldozers drone incessantly, as work on the Rs 180-crore state secretariat is on in full swing. "We plan to shift the

Mantralaya by November 2011. Land has already been earmarked for the Vidhan Sabha and the Raj Bhawan, which will be shifted in the second phase," says NRDA Chief Executive Officer S S Bajaj.

Naya Raipur, with a proposed road length of 225 kilometres, will be the first green-field city in India to have dedicated bus lanes. Like Putrajaya, the city will have a 'grid-pattern plan', in which streets run at right angles to each other.

The city is also being promoted as a knowledge hub. The Hidayatullah National Law University, a premier state-

and food court. The deadline for these works has been set for 2012.

An amusement and recreational park with 3-D and 4-D theatre and space simulators, a five-star hotel and an amusement park are in various stages of finalisation. A theme residential township with a golf course, commercial office space, museum, art galleries, entertainment parks, a botanical garden, malls and a cultural centre are also on the drawing board. There are plans to turn the entire capital area into a Wi-Fi zone.

A central business district is to come up on 96.12 hectares to attract

NRDA has acquired about 90 per cent of the land required for the project. Of this, the Authority purchased 3,200 hectares of private land from farmers at a rate of Rs 10 lakh per acre and granted them a stamp duty exemption for purchase of land elsewhere. Plus, 2,777 hectares of government land have already been transferred to NRDA. Only 220 hectares have been acquired under the Land Acquisition Act.

"The families of Rakhi village—the only village that needed relocation as it came within the area of the capital complex—have already been given



Rakhi was the only village in the Naya Raipur area that got displaced. The villagers were given new homes (top) in the capital area and some have already moved in; a model of the capital complex

run law school, has already moved into its new campus in Naya Raipur. Besides, 200 acres have been allotted for the proposed Indian Institute of Management (IIM) near Pauta village, bringing this area back to the new capital zone. NRDA has also allotted land to the National Thermal Power Corporation to set up an Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT). An ayurveda university and a 'knowledge park' are also coming up.

A cricket stadium with a capacity of 60,000 is almost ready. NRDA is also developing a sports city on 53 hectares with an aquatic centre, indoor stadium, tennis complex, club

trade and business to Naya Raipur. Besides, the Vedanta Group is setting up a super-specialty cancer hospital. Power distribution and telecommunication network will be only through underground service ducts, avoiding overhead wires and cables. An underground sewage system with decentralised treatment plants has also been planned.

The most striking feature of this exercise is that only one village, Rakhi—of the total 41 villages that make up Naya Raipur—is getting displaced. The remaining villages will be merged with the urban landscape and upgraded with urban infrastructure.

new homes in the capital area," says Baijendra Kumar of NRDA. "Every adult member in each family was treated as a separate entity. So if there are three adults in a family in Rakhi village, all three were given separate houses at New Rakhi village. A number of families have already shifted to their new homes," he says.

By 2031, the town planners say, Naya Raipur will be a full-fledged city with an estimated population of 5.6 lakh. The Railways has agreed to lay a new line and set up a new station in Naya Raipur. For the people of Raipur, that's another stop in their city's 10-year journey as capital.