

West Bengal

The 'No Man's Land' for Industry

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The present Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee visited Singapore for drawing investment for the state. But if one looks at the industrial scenario of the state it will be pretty clear that the state has lost all its pre-requisites for setting up of any industry. The industries are regularly closing down due to unprecedented extortion and pressure created by TMC goons. The law and order is at its worst in the state. Mamata Banerjee took a mammoth team with her in Singapore. The Leader of Opposition Dr. SurjyaKanta Mishra has rightly said that no new investments have come to the state in the last three years. She won't be able to attract anything, even the realization of the up and down fares to Singapore will be hard enough, added Dr. Mishra.

Down memory lane if we go to 1986 it may be recalled that the then Chief Minister of West Bengal Jyoti Basu initiated to set up a petro-chemical industry i.e. Haldia PetroChem. He demanded the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to hold a meeting in that regard together with other Members of Parliament from West Bengal. Mamata Banerjee, Ajit Panja and Priyaranjan Dasmunshi were present in the meeting demanding the clearances required for setting up Haldia PetroChem. The central government ultimately said that there would be no industry at Haldia. For about 13 years central government had continuously denied the approval of the project. It was the determination of left leaderships and the continuous struggle waged by the common people of West Bengal that had fought and earned West Bengal the project. The now Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee was the one who had walked out of the meeting which was about to demand the approval of a petro chemical industry for the development of the state from where she was and is elected. Her walk out of 1986 had earned the people of this state a struggle of 13 years.

The people of West Bengal are in another spell of such struggle under the hood of TMC government chaired by the same 'walk-out' personality. West Bengal's pursuit of development landing hard and defeated due to the trails of its own Chief Minister.

What it *was*

On 2010 there were 209 letters of intents' to the state government from various industrial houses and the total investment amounted to Rupees 42765 crore. The then opposition TMC

was in very much active state in their agenda of installing anarchy throughout the state yet the West Bengal was in the eighth place in terms of industrial investment for that year. The next year, 2011, till the month of May there were Letter of Intents amounting to Rupees 3 lakhs 2 thousand five hundred and fifteen crore. Bengal was moved up six places and was in the Second place, behind Orissa. The much hyped Gujarat lost its vibrancy being a distant follower in the list.

During the six years between 2004 and 2011, more than 40 per cent of new manufacturing jobs created in India were generated in the then Left-ruled West Bengal. In all, 58.7 lakh manufacturing jobs were created across India. Of these, 24 lakh were in West Bengal. With 14.9 lakh jobs, BJP-ruled Gujarat was a distant second, shows the state-wise data accessed exclusively by *The Hindu*.

What it *is*

West Bengal has received a deadly blow in its run for industrial development due to the anti-development anarchist face of TMC and its supremo. This state have received 18 Letters of intent amounting to Rupees 596 crore last year. West Bengal rests at 18th in the same list making its own past a denied one.

Few days earlier, the state government in accordance with its reactionary character had shown proactive attitude to counter Mr. Ratan Tata as he; while visiting West Bengal have said that there is no such sign of any industrial development in West Bengal. The state government retaliated on Tata but the reality stays unchanged as the so-called 'unwilling' farmers of Singur are finding it hard to manage minimum bread and butter. The state government even in its most deniable and reactionary note cannot deny the fact that if there was the Nano factory of Tata, then almost two thousand people would have got job directly along with ten thousand downstream employment.

Now, here is a snap of industrial trail of West Bengal in the TMC regime:

- No heavy industry set up in last 38 months
- Assam has left West Bengal behind in investment.
- At least 100 industries got closed in last three years.
- Industries like Jessop, Dunlop, Hindmotor are on the edge, Haldia PetroChem is not very far to join the list.
- Industrial areas like Durgapur-Asansol, Barrackpur and Haldia are turning into 'no man's land'.
- Industries related to Jute, Tea and engineering are getting weakened day by day.
- People are losing jobs in a regular manner. Only Durgapur industrial area has witnessed a job-loss of eight thousand working people.
- Small and medium scale industries are destined to be sickened as the heavy ones are facing closer or a dead-lock.
- Extortion of the ruling party has become the single largest industry of the state.

From Industrial Areas to **Barren Remains**

Asansol Durgapur:

- No new investment in last three years.
- Water supply, drainage and road infrastructure is dismantled even in the areas where industrial production is still running.
- Not less than eight thousand people have lost their jobs.
- Nationalized industries are being robbed of machines and parts in broad daylight.
- 13 small and medium industries got dead-locked in last three years.
- When the government is observing silence, the goons of the ruling party are collecting extortion.
- Various coal mines of Ranigunj, Pandabeswar, Jamuria, Kulti and Salanpur area are either shut down or affected of illegal mining. The year 2013 alone is accounted for 700 reports of illegal mining in direct assistance of TMC agents.
- Shyam group has put a halt in the second phase of expansion in its Jamuria plant.

Barrackpur:

Government had announced setting up new industries using the lands of closed and sick industries. Those lands are being used in real estate by TMC agents and local criminals.

- The ruling party members are forcing workers to take VRS from industries.
- Leaders and ministers of TMC have left the workers open to the whims of authority.
- Young members of the families are being forced to leave the state in search of job.
- Plants are being robbed of essential spares and machineries.
- No new investment in last three years.

Haldia:

- Work in HaldiaPetroChem is at halt from 6th of July this year, without any official notification.
- Directly or indirectly almost seventy thousand workers who depend on HaldiaPetroChem are about to lose their means to earn livelihood.
- Those who were interested in setting up Plastic industry got no reply from the CM.
- Not a single industry came to Haldia even after the multi-crore venture of Bengal Leads.
- Logistics plant is facing a closer.

- Workers are losing jobs if they demand anything from the authority in direct involvement of the ruling party.

The Spell *Continues*

The chief minister has just returned in the state after her industrial visit to Singapore, the third sibling of 'Industrial Development Model' of her government. The second industrial meet was convened in Mumbai, from where no such investments came even after various claims of big investments by the government. And the first of such kind 'Bengal Leads', was held in Haldia, West Bengal. Investment scenario was same but the state government had a declared stand of 'this is only the beginning, investment would flood the state from the next time'. The 'next time' is yet to come. But Haldia, the land of a hard fought Petro Chem is facing its doom. As stated from the 6th of July this year there is a continuous shut down in Haldia PetroChem. Almost sixty five to seventy thousand workers are indirectly dependent where the direct dependency account is of three thousand and five hundred workers. Haldia was designed to be a hub of other downstream industries. As the then CM Jyoti Basu said, Haldia Petro Chem would populate numbers of downstream which would generate huge employment. Haldia, facing its own doom is now haunted by its own past so as this state.

Biman Basu, the Secretary of West Bengal State Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has said in a press conference that being the opposition party CPI (M) wants new investment to hit this state for setting up new industries and the youth of this state get employed in due manner. Then he stated his concern that unless the extortion-raj of the ruling party is stopped and the democratic rights in the state are secured enough there is a little chance of such industrial boom.

The West Bengal CM has now returned. Seems the people of the state who were waiting for updates on investments in industrial sector after her Singapore visit have to wait longer. By that time the news came which informed about another loan from market by the state government of rupees 1500 crore. It is reported that, in this list West Bengal have successfully secured the First place.

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