

Rs 1600-cr boost to state industry

Udit Prasanna Mukherji | TNN

Kolkata: In the gloom, a ray of hope. The Chennai-based Shriram Group has lined up a Rs 1600-crore coal gasification project in Haldia at a time when a host of big ticket projects have been shelved due to the political uncertainty in Bengal.

The Rs 40,000-crore group from the south is one of the biggest players in finance in the country. It has already floated a company — Haldia Chemicals Ltd — for its proposed venture in Bengal. If it materialises, this will be the third project of the Shriram Group in the state. It is investing close to Rs 2,000 crore to set up an IT and auto component park in Uttarpara. The group's Ennore Coke has already invested Rs 100 crore in a 1.3-lakh-tonne coke oven plant at Haldia and has started producing metallurgical coke.

"This will perhaps be the first gasification project in the country. We shall use Lurgi technology for the venture," Ganesh Natarajan, director of Haldia Chemicals, told TOI. The ammonia produced here can be used in fertilizer and other industries. They have identified a 100-acre plot which, the Haldia Development Authority has assured, will be handed to them in a few months.

Shriram Group has written to WBIDC for equity participation in the venture, Natarajan said. "We have offered 5% stake to WBIDC in the gasification venture. Talks are on. We can

Hope Floats



- ▶ Coal gasification plant to come up in Haldia
- ▶ Plant to have a daily production capacity of 1,050 tonnes
- ▶ Chennai group sure of starting operations by end-2010
- ▶ Firm investing around Rs 2,000 crore to set up an IT and auto component park in Uttarpara

raise the offer," he added.

WBIDC officials feel the Chennai group has offered a "lucrative proposal". "HDA has assured them about the land, considering the importance of the project," they added.

Natarajan is confident of starting operations by end-2010. The plant will have a daily production capacity of 1,050 tonnes. "We plan to source coal from Mahanadi Coalfields. MCL coal is suited for our project. The coal requirement of 1 lakh tonnes a month will not be difficult to meet," he added.

Power firms, however, do not prefer MCL coal for its high ash content.