

## Interview

## 'We Aim to Achieve Sustained Development and Multidimensional Growth'



The state of West Bengal has been home to chemical industry for more than a century. From pre independence era to the era of globalization the industrial growth of chemical industry has been much below the potential available in the state. In 2009 the state government received the approval to set up the PCPIR to promote the growth of chemical and petrochemical industry. **Nirupam Sen, Hon'ble Minister In Charge for West Bengal** contradicts the negative perception about the state and the state getting back on to a high growth track in an exclusive interview with **Mittravinda Ranjan**.

### **Walk us through the chemical industry in West Bengal.**

Chemical industry in Bengal has a glorious past. The initiators in this type of industry included stalwarts like Acharya P C Ray, Prof Raj Sekhar Bose, Prof P R Pay and Prof Gnan Ghosh among others. The formation of Bengal Chemicals inspired a number of scholars and businessmen and organizations like Calcutta Chemicals, Shalimar. Sur Industries, G D Pharmaceuticals, East India Pharmaceuticals, Bengal Salt, etc came into being. However, all

these were individual efforts, during the pre-Independence times. Foreign companies like ICI also had production unit(s) in Bengal.

However, post Independence, there was a change in scenario and by 90s, with the introduction and implementation of NEP, the situation became topsy-turvy. At the same time, ever since the Left Front was voted to power in 1977, we steadily sought to have a Petrochemical Unit in the state and ultimately got the permission in 1988. In fact, we had identified petrochemicals as one of the key areas of industrial

## East Special

growth in our policy approach to industrialization.

Presently, HPL downstream units have more than one lakh employees and with the recent expansion (Super Max), more employment opportunities will be created. Emboldened by HPL experience, many chemical players like Mitsubishi Chemicals Corporation, Tata Chemicals and others have invested in the state. In fact the investment in the expansion project of Mitsubishi in 2008 has been the largest FDI in the country.

It will be pertinent to mention that in the field of chemicals and petrochemicals, our state has maintained a steady position for the past few years and produces 12- 13 percent of country's total production after Gujarat and Maharashtra which contribute 62 percent and 15 percent respectively to the petrochemical production. The expansion of HPL and Mitsubishi and setting up of fertilizer plant in Panagarh by Matix Group is likely to take us to the second slot in the coming years.

### What is the policy of West Bengal State Government for industrial development?

The West Bengal Government has been steadily following a policy to bring about fast industrial growth coupled with employment generation and creation of employment opportunities by maintaining an inter-sectoral balance through creation of resources in both rural and urban areas and facilitating smooth transition from primary to secondary sector. We aim to achieve sustained development in the state, the concept highlighted in the Policy Statement of Industrial

Development, 1994.

### How did the shift of Nano project to Gujarat impact investments into the state?

Initially, shifting of project did come as a jolt and created tremors; however the state has already overcome this shock and moved ahead. In fact there has been an increase in

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industrial investments in the state and they have increased from Rs 4434 crores in 2008 to around Rs 7100

crores in 2009. This bears testimony to the fact that we are firmly back on the track.

### How do you plan to promote the brand West Bengal as there is a general perception of state being non industry friendly?

I think by now we have been able to shed that image. In fact, these days we are criticized for pro-industrialization policy. There may be few stray incidents that may sound discouraging, however on the whole we have been able to break out of that mold and the perception is changing for better. In the recent past during the overseas visits, state level delegations have received very good response.

I have been handling the responsibility of leading the Indian Government delegations to various countries in the recent past. We received warm welcome during our visit to Germany in April 2008,



Nayachar Island, site for PCPIR

