

From the Editor's Desk

Dear Friends,

If it is steel that you make, then India is the place to be. According to latest figures, 193 MOU's have been signed by various states with a total proposed investment of over a whopping Rs.5.14 lakh crores. The likely capacity achievable by 2019-20 will be over 290 million tons. Going by the thumb rule of Rs.4000 crores investment per million ton of additional capacity, the steel sector alone is likely to see investment of Rs 276,880 crore by 2012 and Rs 870,640 crore by 2020. Add to this the investment in infrastructure, in ancillaries and down stream projects and phew! That's beyond the capacity of my calculator!

Most of this investment will go to the states of West Bengal, Orissa, Chattishgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. States that are rich in minerals, with cheap labour and nearness to markets and ports. States that are home of the Maoists. The then Home Minister, Sri L.K Advani termed this "Red Corridor", as "Pashupati to Tirupati" hinted at Nepal which has since been "liberated".

Rampant Corruption, encroachment of forest and tribal land, lawlessness, pilferage of development funds, the systematic rape of justice, a complete breakdown of redressal systems, lack of governance and the wanton exploitation by the powers that be, in this wide swathe across India, has been a way of life since ages and have forced people to the brink. Naturally, the peddlers of Revolution and instant karma have moved in with the result that today, close to 8700 police stations are termed as "affected" with various threat perceptions.

And it is here, in the back of beyond, that this multi-lakh-crore kitty will be invested. Kalinganagar, Singur, Nandigram have already voiced their dissent. Will this voice become shriller and more strident in the days to come? Will the Naxal attacks on various industrial establishments as has been documented in the past be the portends of things to come? Are we putting in "good money" in "bad regions"? Are we in for a rude shock when massive displacement that will naturally be called for by these mega projects give rise to a ground swell of dissent and resistance?

Now to the other extreme. Will this huge amount, in its wake, bring peace and prosperity to this "war ravaged" zone? Will Mittal buy out Mao? Tata Steel, which grew up bang inside the tribal heartland has had a glorious record as a socially responsible corporate citizen and the measures it has taken to uplift the down trodden are stuff legends are made of. Will the others borrow a leaf from TISCO's books and ensure that the right balms are applied and the right victuals administered to ensure that frayed tempers and ruffled feathers are smoothened? Will development bring prosperity and all round gaiety?

Will hot metal spread cold and efficient mechanisms that will take development to the grassroots?

We have dedicated this issue to this lurking problem that the rest of the country busy spinning “India Happening” stories chooses to brush under the carpet. It is my sincere hope that we will be able to make you think, instigate a debate. For, this is no mere “law and order” situation that can be obliterated by the state using its full might. For one, we are not fighting imported terrorists here – we are training our AK-47’s and 56’s are the heart of fellow Indians, many of whom are more Indian than you and I, in as much that they have picked up the gauntlet that corruption and empathy has thrown to voice their protest and fight for what they believe is right. Secondly, perhaps more importantly, it is a fact that ideology can not be silenced with bullets. The blood that was spilled over Naxalbari did not go down the drain. We may have rejoiced throttling it in the 70’s only to wake up in horror today to see that quite literally, “a thousand flowers have bloomed”.

Eitherway, an epic is about to unfold. The mother of all struggles where minds, mines and money will fight for survival.

Do write back with your comments, suggestions and inputs.

Happy Reading,

The Editor