

From the Editor's Desk

Dear Friends,

A resurgent West Bengal is the flavour of the day. Upcountry industrialists and pundits who had written off the state till the other day are suddenly singing paeans and there is a genuine “feel good” factor at work. I was talking to this friend, a keen watcher of the state, who likened the sudden explosion of industrial activity in the state with the Mahabharata, stating that the battle lines have never been drawn this clear: on the one hand are the positives- men, mettle, money, mineral and mentality and on the other are the Marxist mainline with their straight-jacketed ideology, the militant Mao-ists, Mamata with her belligerent and often incomprehensible rhetoric and the sundry menaces, including malaria.

He couldn't have been more apt. For in this post freight equalization era of free trade, money is naturally seeking locations that will give it the best returns. And West Bengal, with her rich legacy, the proven locational advantages and cheap, dedicated workforce is today a really tempting destination. Add to it the fact that the state has perhaps the least amount of political disturbance, a relatively less corrupt system and a government that is openly welcoming industrial investment and the picture becomes even more rosy. Suffice to say, West Bengal has a lot going for it.

However, there are dark clouds in the horizon. The primary cause of concern in the availability of land. With a high population density and the natural fertility of land ensures scarcity and pressure on agricultural land for industrial use. The result is inevitable, especially among a politically conscious population like that in West Bengal. Quiet murmurs of dissent become roaring thunders as on the local level, politicians irrespective of their colours cannot overcome the temptation of fishing in troubled waters with the lunatic fringe seeking to foment trouble in their quest for the limelight. Result? Singur, Nandigram.

The good news is that after the initial flayed tempers, all sides seems to be moving towards the high ground with the dawning of the realization that industrialization is not only inevitable but also the vehicle that will create wealth for the maximum numbers. A good rehabilitation policy and a humane handling of the feelings of the dispossessed, both by the Government and the investing Private sector with a communication offensive spelling out the advantages of this industrial resurgence, I feel, will swing the battle and West Bengal will regain her position that she had lost for a plethora of reasons, some not entirely due to faults of her own making.

We have tried to string together views for almost all positions and hope the readers will enjoy going through this issue as much as we have while creating it. Do get back to us

with your feed backs, brickbats and comments- they are what keeps us going in the quest for excellence.

Happy reading

Suvabrata Ganguly