

Mitra Blames GST for Creating Massive Chaos Among MSMEs

Our Political Bureau

Kolkata: Justifying his party Trinamool Congress's stand on GST, Bengal finance minister Amit Mitra said that his apprehensions appear to be true as GST has led to massive chaos and confusion among small and medium industries.

He further added that the new tax has hit the exports too. Mitra and his party had insisted to postpone the GST roll out and publish a white paper on the preparedness of the centre, though the NDA government had gone ahead with its announced time frame and rolled out GST on time.

"We had foreseen the troubles that would arise during the switch to GST and accordingly, I had requested a postponement. I had also asked for a white paper on GST's preparedness. These were ignored. I knew that the GSTN would not be able to take such load and collapse soon since it was not properly tested," said Mitra.

The state finance minister was addressing industrialists at the Assocham (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of



SUBHAJIT PAL

The new tax regime has hit exports, Amit Mitra said

India) managing committee meeting held in the city on Thursday. Criticising the Centre's 'hasty' move on GST, he said that the new tax regime did not benefit the small and medium enterprises since the centre could not ensure a smooth transition into the new regime.

"The matter has to be taken up at the GST council. People are desperate now. The members of chambers have also requested me to raise these issues in the council meetings. They are confused with multiple rates and daily changes" he added.

Mitra further asked the chambers to place their views in appropriate forums if they are facing difficulties due to GST.

GST has hit exports and small enterprises, says Amit Mitra

Reiterates demand for white paper on GST rollout impact

OUR BUREAU

Kolkata, August 24

GST rollout has hit exports; it has neither benefited small and medium enterprises nor has there been a smooth transition to the new regime, West Bengal Finance and Industry Minister Amit Mitra, has said.

After an apparent pro-industry stand by extending support for the GST, the ruling Trinamool Congress has gone all-out in opposing the tax regime. From multiplicity of tax 'slabs' to inconvenience to small traders, the party has raised a variety of issues.

'Suggestions ignored'

Mitra, addressing industrialists at the Assocham (Associated

Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India) managing committee meeting held in the city on Thursday, criticised the Centre for not heeding his suggestions on the troubles that could crop up during GST rollout.

"We had foreseen the troubles that would arise during the switch to GST and accordingly, I had requested a postponement. I had also asked for a white paper on GST preparedness. These were ignored," the Minister said.

"SMEs are in jeopardy and now I come to know that even exports have been hit. I have asked (Arun) Jaitley ji to produce a white paper and call an emergency meeting. The matter has to be taken up at the GST Council. People are desperate," he added.

Mitra urged the apex industry body Assocham to speak out on the difficulties they face because of the new tax regime. He asked the industry body to "give in-



West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra speaks during the 4th Managing Committee meeting of ASSOCHAM in Kolkata on Thursday

puts" to him so that their issues can be taken up at the right forum.

Invest in Bengal

Mitra also sought investments from Assocham. He asked the industrialists to invest not just in projects but in human capital improvement also, through adop-

tion of ITIs, training programmes and so on. Investments, he said, were coming in sectors such as cement, mining, industrial and garment parks and so on.

Assocham released a study, 'Most Backward Regions of West Bengal', in which it highlighted the industry body's development strategy.

Tajpur on course, Sagar port on the backb

OUR BUREAU

Calcutta, Aug. 24: The Centre has initiated work to develop a port in East Midnapur's Tajpur after conclusively gaining majority control in the venture.

It will appoint a consultant to prepare a techno-economic feasibility report, a prerequisite for any major infrastructure project, and take the proposal to the Union cabinet for approval.

Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee conducted a top-level meeting with Calcutta Port Trust chairman M.T. Krishna Babu along with four ministers, the chief secretary and other bureaucrats to take stock of the progress.

The Tajpur initiative may put the proposed port at Sagar Island, which has been under consideration for around two decades, on the backburner. The Centre and the state have decided to build it later

because of the costs involved in evacuating cargo to the mainland.

"We will float a tender shortly to appoint a consultant to carry out a techno-economic feasibility report, which may take three-four months. Following this, we will take the proposal to the Union cabinet for approval. The project will be developed by Bhor Sagar Port Ltd, a joint venture between the state and the Centre," Babu said.

The Mamata Banerjee-government had originally come up with an alternative location for Sagar at Tajpur and toyed with the idea of inducting private operators to manage the port.

The Centre threw a spanner in the plan by putting Sagar on hold after it was denied a majority stake initially. After several parleys at the political and bureaucratic levels, the state gave in to the Centre's demand.

"You are aware that Nithin Gad-



Amit Mitra with Assocham members in Calcutta on Thursday. Picture by Pradip Sanyal

kari had announced the development of a deep sea port at Sagar. That would require a bridge, which is huge. While that work is being done, there is an agreement to start with Tajpur," Bengal finance and

industries minister Amit Mitra said while addressing the members of the managing committee of industry association Assocham today.

"The draft in Tajpur is 15 metres and there is going to be a deep-sea

port. A large port with that kind of draft will be a game changer," he added.

While it is early days to work out the investment required, creating a 27-kilometre shipping line to get the vessels dock at Tajpur will alone cost Rs 2,000 crore along with an incremental cost of Rs 100 crore yearly.

The Centre-state partnership will create the maritime infrastructure — creation of channel and breakwater — and land development on the shore. Private players will be invited to build the berth and evacuation infrastructure.

Shipping sources said the port would be able to handle fully loaded panamax vessels of 75,000 dead weight tonne compared with the 20,000 tonne ships that now come to Haldia, allowing industries and trade to gain economy of scale in operations.

However, it will still not be able

to fully Odisha ports in bigger tonnes have been said an Dur chief in that the Island dump s In the at was bei The cussed t ing edth cause o tanker ment by costly T that m should i transpor hikari to

Mitra to woo chemical Inc

Top Gems & Jewellery Team To Visit City For Due Diligence

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: State finance and industries minister Amit Mitra is going to Mumbai next week to hardsell Bengal as the place of "huge potential" for chemicals and petrochemicals industries. A high-level gems and jewellery delegation led by Mehul Choksi of Gitanjali Gems is also coming to Kolkata next week to assess investment opportunities here, which Mitra said is an impact of the state government's roadshow in Mumbai last month in the run-up to the third Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) to be held in city on January, 2018.

Mitra was addressing the members of the managing committee of the apex chamber Assocham on Thursday. Later, he told reporters that the state government has adopted a sectoral roadshow approach for portraying Bengal as an investment destination. He pointed out that organising roadshows without any special focus does not yield result. So the state has adopted this approach, which he claimed Bengal is the first state to have adopted this in India. "Earlier, we did a roadshow for leather in Chennai, for gems and jewellery and apparel in Mumbai and now, we would do it for leather. We are getting a good response of these initiatives," he added.

According to him, time is ripe for in-

MUMBAI CALLING



▶ The Bengal finance minister will visit Mumbai to meet investors in chemicals and petrochemicals industries

▶ Gems and jewellery, leather, chemicals, food processing and mining are the focus areas for the state now

▶ The West Bengal government is adopting sectoral roadshow approach

▶ The state has organised sectoral roadshow for leather in Chennai, gems and jewellery and apparels in Mumbai

vestment in chemicals and petrochemicals in Haldia now. "Haldia Petrochemicals is operating at 97% capacity; MCC PTA also is doing well, too. TCG is also coming up with a refinery with Rs 20,000 crore investment. So there is a huge opportunity for downstream units in Haldia. I am going to Mumbai in the next few days to meet investors in chemicals and

'GST may lead to inspector raj again'

Goods and Services Tax (GST) may lead to inspector raj, feels state finance minister Amit Mitra. He argued that GST has an arrest clause and up to Rs 2 crore, it is bailable. But if it goes over Rs 5 crore, it would be non-bailable completely. "The danger is that it would give immense power to some officials. So if somebody wants, he can get after a trader or an industrialists," he added.

petrochemicals. They are keen to know the Bengal story in chemicals and petrochemicals," he added. The meeting is likely to be attended by chemical industry captains like Sanmar Group deputy chairman Vijay Sankar, Deepak Nitrite VC and MD Deepak C Mehta among others.

The state commerce and industries minister was also hopeful that the state is set to get some major investment from jewellery sector as Gitanjali Gems and some big Jewellery units of Mumbai would be coming to the city soon. "We have 2.50 lakh sq ft area at Ankurhati gems and jewellery park, out of which 1.75 lakh sq ft is booked but we still have ready space. Besides, there are new industrial parks coming in different districts," he added.

