
Haldia caught in a political crossfire - Report

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BS reported that Haldia Petrochem factory Haldia has started feeling the heat of the political crossfire in the state.

The Tamluk Lok Sabha constituency which includes the Assembly constituencies of Haldia and Nandigram was wrested by the Trinamool Congress from the Communist Party of India Marxist in the last elections by a handsome margin of 120,000 votes. As a consequence, Mr Lakshman Seth of the Left who ended up on the losing side had to give up the chairmanship of the Haldia Development Authority, which facilitates planning, land acquisition, social welfare, among various other activities.

Industry at Haldia a major port and commercial hub has been caught in the middle of this power transition. Consider this RPG's power utility, CESC is unable to erect evacuation towers due to land issues and the third phase of its ongoing expansion of 250MW has already been delayed by seven to eight months.

For its Haldia project, the delay in a 40 acre land acquisition has held up the financial closure for the first phase of 600 MW which is a part of the Greenfield 2,000 MW project.

The original plan was that the land would be acquired by the government, but the company is now going for direct purchase because of the inordinate delay.

Apeejay Infra Logistics Pvt Ltd a 50:50 JV between the Apeejay Surrendra group and Eredene Capital Plc, planned to set up a 90 acre logistics hub at Haldia. The land has been acquired by the government, but after work began on the boundary wall, the land-losers, supported by the Trinamool Congress, started demanding more compensation.

It's not land related issues alone. The muscle flexing by the CPI-M and the Trinamool Congress affiliated trade unions at the existing units have meant labor trouble at the 388 industrial units. Both the trade unions are suddenly eager to take up the cause of contractual laborers and demanding wage hikes.

Mr H M Nerurkar executive director India and South East Asia operations of TATA Steel said that there are some issues. It's not bothersome now, but we are keeping a watch.

TATA Steel's 100% subsidiary Hooghly Met Coke & Power Company has a 1.6 million tonne coke project at Haldia.

Mr TV Ramanatha MD & CEO of Exide Industries said that "The situation isn't out of control. We are negotiating wage agreement with contractual laborers."

Haldia Petrochemicals sources say the company has been facing labor related issues every now and then.

Though companies are cagey to talk about it openly, the problems have been brought to the notice of all stakeholders Trinamool Congress, the state government and the Confederation of Indian Industry.

(Sourced from Business Standard)

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