

N BENGAL TOUR - Mamata to unveil two food projects

Kolkata Siliguri:

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mamata Banerjee will announce two food processing projects during her North Bengal tour beginning Tuesday . One of the projects is getting a grant from US Agency for International Development (USAID), the first of its kind in agriculture in North Bengal.

The state government officials said that both projects will be inaugurated by Mamata at the Kanchenjunga Stadium in Siliguri. Keventer Agro Ltd and Metro Dairy -the two Keventer Group firms -are implementing the twin projects. This will also mark the entry of Keventer in North Bengal.

Mamata on Monday attended a business summit held at Uttarkanya in Siliguri. The chief minister announced that Coca Cola will invest another Rs 250 crore in their Raninagar plant in Jalpaiguri. **She also asked the chief secretary to set up a single window system at Uttarkanya to help out entrepreneurs interested in investing in North Bengal.**

Keventer managing director Mayank Jalan said the group is setting up an ice cream plant in Malda with an initial capacity of 36.5 lakh litres per year (10,000 litres daily). It is also setting up a state-of-the-art cold storage and ripening centre for bananas with a capacity of 5500 MT per year at Dabgram in Siliguri. USAID has sanctioned a grant of \$2.2 million already for empowering banana farmers.

"As a company , we see enormous opportunity in North Bengal due to its location as the 'gateway to the northeast' and due to availability of agri-resources like mangoes, oranges and pineapples," Jalan said.

According to Jalan, Keventer Agro is currently working with CII-FACE and USAID in the banana project to improve farming practices and yields. "More than 3,000 farmers have been provided with G-9 tissue culture bananas as well as farming technology. The G-9 variety of bananas leads to a 40% improvement in farmers' income because of better yield and decreased growing time.