



(From left) Transport minister Suvendu Adhikari, Mamata Banerjee and Amit Mitra on the last day of the business summit in Digha on Thursday. Picture by Jahangir Badsa

Small-scale units get push

DEVADEEP PUROHIT

Digha: Chief minister Mamata Banerjee launched a clutch of production clusters across the state from the dais of the Bengal Business Conclave here on Thursday with the inauguration spree suggesting her government's thrust on creation of employment in small and medium enterprises.

From a common apparel production facility at Nungi in South 24-Parganas to a bell-and-brass metal cluster at Shyamnagar in Bankura, she kept inaugurating one project after another while state industry and finance minister Amit Mitra narrated the employment opportunities those units would generate.

The list of clusters included common facilities for steel fabrication, shellac, stone-carving, kantha stitch and

earthen items.

"We have decided to give a big boost to village industry," Mamata said in her address at the concluding session of the two-day business conclave.

Unlike in the past editions of the state government's business summit, where the focus was getting big ticket manufacturing industry in the state, the Digha show had two distinctly different dimensions.

First, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) got the centre-stage. Second, the state government took the lead in creating the necessary infrastructure.

"This is a clear indication that the government is trying to address the problem of joblessness," said a Calcutta-based businessman, who was present in Digha.

Over the past few years, business conclaves across In-

dia have been following the same template, which includes presence of some known faces of India Inc in the front rows, promises of big-ticket investment from the stage and finally announcement of proposals received on the final day of the show.

But the event in Digha was a departure as no lofty figure of investment proposals received during the summit was announced.

The fact that Mamata was trying to achieve a different feat was clear as she kept talking about how small and medium scale enterprises could create employment at a time the economy was going through a rough phase. "Small scale sector can generate employment. We all know the world economy is facing an acute crisis. But Bengal is safe as we focus on small scale sec-

tor," Mamata explained.

Sources close to the chief minister said she was aware that her political opponents were trying to cash in on lack of employment opportunities in the state. When five migrant day wage workers from Murshidabad were gunned down in Kashmir in October, Opposition parties sought answers on why youths were leaving Bengal.

Mamata said on Thursday that the deep-sea port in Tajpur and a coal mine in Birbhum were heading towards rollout. "We have got the clearance to mine 40,000 MMT out of 2 billion tonnes in the Deocha Panchami coal block. Once the mining starts, the state will never have any power crisis and the entire region's economy will change. Then, the port in Tajpur is also coming up and it will also result in economic benefits for the region," she added.

Sources said the Centre had given Nabanna the clearance to start mining in the Dewanganj-Harinsingha area of the coal block two days back.

Additional reporting
by Anshuman Phadikar