

Kolkata hosiery park to create 20,000 jobs, benefit 250 SMEs

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The Rs 100 crore hosiery and textile park coming up at Howrah district, six km from the Kona Expressway on the Delhi Road, developed by the special purpose vehicle (SPV), West Bengal Hosiery Park Infrastructure Limited (WBHPIL), is expected to generate more than 20,000 direct and indirect jobs, besides promising state-of-the-art training and manufacturing facilities to more than 250 small and medium units.

K B Agarwal, president of the West Bengal Hosiery Association, the nodal body of small and medium hosiery units in Bengal, said "WBHPIL has already purchased 325 bighas of land. Over 200 small and medium size units have already booked plots inside the park at a cost of Rs 22 lakh per bigha. Only 10 per cent of the land remains unoccupied, and it can house 10-20 units more."

The association is not worried about registrations for the remaining land. So far, only 10 per cent of the total number of existing units in the state have found place in the park. When fully operational, which it is expected to be by the end of this year, the park will house a total of 250-300 SME units.

There are more than 2,500 hosiery units in the state, with some big names like Amul, Lux

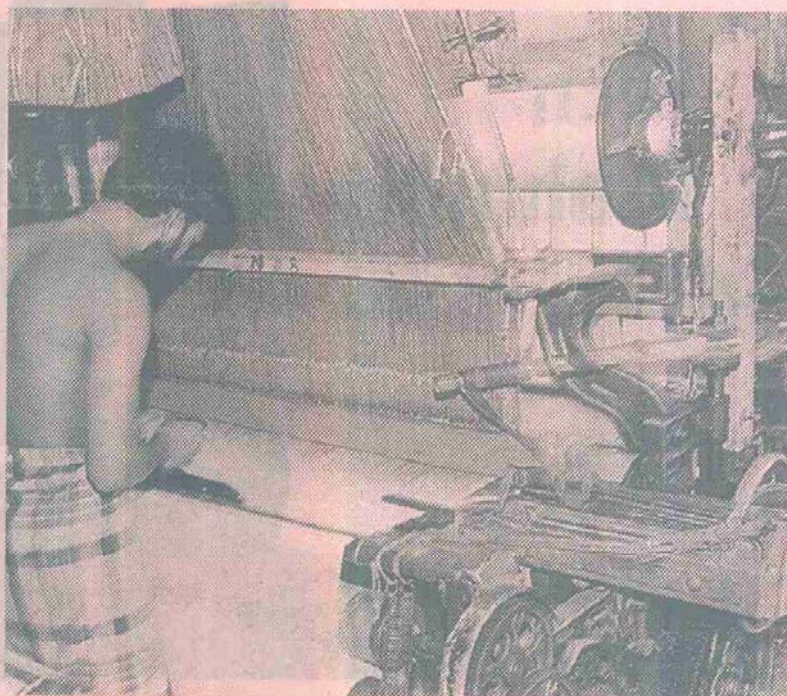
and Rupa, but almost 90 per cent of them are SME hosiery units that mainly cater to the domestic market. Despite the recent meltdown there had been no shutdown, but overall earnings were low, because of low productivity, pointed out Agarwal.

"The total annual production of all the units taken together is worth Rs 2,000 crore, which is comparatively lower compared to Tirupur, which exports around Rs 10,000 crore worth hosiery goods and supplies another Rs 2,000 crore to the domestic market," he said.

"We lack the infrastructure and training compared to Tirupur. Labour productivity is low in West Bengal because of lack of training, all of which will be addressed in the textile park. There will be separate training and manufacturing facilities for skilled and unskilled labourers," said Agarwal.

The 125-acre textile park is thus being developed as a special cluster zone, modelled on Tirupur in Tamil Nadu, which houses the country's largest hosiery and textile cluster with annual exports worth Rs 10,000 crore.

The park has also managed to get Rs 40 crore sanctioned under the Central government's Scheme of Integrated Textile (SITP) scheme. "The file applying for the grant stands approved. A grant of Rs 40 crore has been allotted. After the elec-



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tions, the funds will be disbursed once the new government is in place," said Agarwal. The state government, realising the employment potential of the textile and hosiery sector, has begun to take special interest in this sector and is also looking at buying the unused properties of the hundreds of sick units, which are lying locked in the state for such hosiery and textile clusters.

Manabendra Mukherjee, minister for tourism and micro and small-scale industries, said, "The textile and garment industry has always been one

of our focus areas, since we have the required manpower and skill. We like to promote it in our state through such parks. There are plans to set up eight textile parks within the next five years to meet the target of creating 10 lakh jobs from this sector alone. We are in talks with the Central textile ministry to realise this.

Recently, the state government inaugurated Paridhan, a state-of-the-art textile and garment park, which when fully operational is expected to generate more than 8,000 direct and 24,000 indirect employment opportunities.