

Odisha government aims to beat Covid-19 reach with outreach

TNN | Updated: Jun 17, 2020, 11:15 IST

BHUBANESWAR: Battling the Covid-19 crisis on one hand, the state government is trying to attract investments on the other as it tries to revive the economy and generate employment opportunities. Following the discussion between chief minister Naveen Patnaik and Arcelor Mittal chairman and chief executive officer L N Mittal, more such dialogues are being planned at different level. Naveen may also directly interact with some of the industrialists in the next few months.

“The state government in association with industry-partner Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) are going to hold a series of talks with various industrial houses through web platforms in the next few months. Though the engagements are being finalized, our focus is to reach out to the investors in six focus sectors,” said Nitin Jawale, managing director,

IPICOL, the investment promotion agency of the state government. Tourism, food processing including seafood, chemicals, plastics and petrochemicals, electronics manufacturing, ancillary and metal downstream industries and textiles and apparels are the six focus sectors of the state government.

According to a Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the state has emerged as the most attractive investment destination, attracting 18 per cent of the total investments in the county during April-September, 2019. This is a tag the state government doesn’t want to lose, especially in the run up to the third edition of Make in Odisha conclave, scheduled towards the end of the year. “If the Covid-19 situation improves, the state government may hold some promotional campaigns ahead of Make in Odisha to showcase the state’s investment climate,” Jawale said. Official sources said a new industrial policy with focus on incentives is likely to be unveiled soon by the state industries and MSME departments.

With an eye on foreign direct investments, the state government has held webinars with international investor agencies like The US-India Strategic Partnership Forum and Japan External Trade Organization in May. Dialogues with industries apart, steps were also being taken to ease policies like land allotment process for tourism projects and relaxing labour laws by amending the Factories Act 1948 that increased overtime limit among others.

“Several other decisions were taken to help the lockdown-hit micro, small and medium enterprises that includes instructions to all departments and government agencies to clear pending dues of all MSMEs. A panel of ministers was also constituted, headed by finance minister Niranjan Pujari, to help the MSMEs to get back on track,” said a senior official.

Satwik Swain, secretary general of the Odisha Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises said the government must come up with a stimulus package for the survival of around 3 lakh MSMEs in the state. “I have raised the issue during a recent meeting with the state industries minister, who has assured of a stimulus package that is awaiting the government’s approval,” Swain said.