

Hope Springs Eternal

With the right kind of policy framework Bengal can surely regain its past glory in the Indian economy, believes **Chandrajit Banerjee**



West Bengal, historically at the forefront of India's industrial growth and social change, enjoys major benefits of outstanding natural and human resources. With a strong industrial base, it can grow into a manufacturing and employment-generating hub of eastern India and emerge as a central player in India's vibrant growth story, given the right investment climate and proactive policies.

The state should emphasise on the growth of the manufacturing sector with a special focus on development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) for creating employment opportunities. Strong thrust in terms of technology penetration, brand definition, design and moving up the value chain should be provided for development of clusters, with special attention to marketability of cluster products.

Another important area we need to focus on is agriculture. A steady rate of growth of the agriculture sector is important, not only for ensuring food and nutritional security but also in creating income and wealth amongst the rural population and bringing about all-round development.

The services sector has been at the forefront of the growth of the West Bengal economy in recent times. While there is universal acceptance of the need for growth and development of the service sector, differences exist on its contours.

West Bengal has a huge potential to become an education and knowledge hub. Faculty exchange programmes with national and international colleges and universities could be encouraged for better exchange of ideas and practices.

A roadmap to provide quality and affordable health care needs to be developed. If planned and executed in a structured manner, PPP in healthcare is the best way to provide healthcare to the country's poor, especially in the hinterland.

It is imperative to look afresh at the strategic imperatives for employment

and employability in the state. Driving education and skill formation as engines of empowerment is the need of the hour.

The state needs to focus on creating ways and means of integrating the educational system with the skill delivery system, thus, enabling a seamless movement between the two. The focus of the government of West Bengal has been on re-establishment of the Brand Bengal. Special focus is being paid to quality and efficient execution of plans, schemes and projects.

Certain areas need to be addressed to further attract investments in the state. Creation of critical infrastructure like arterial roads, facilities around ports and airports, power plants, secondary and tertiary healthcare facilities in Tier II and Tier III towns would have to be added at a rapid pace.



Creation of manufacturing parks with adequate and assured power and water supply would help in accelerating the process of industrialisation. The state also needs to develop a facilitative ecosystem for public private partnerships, including elements such as single-window administrative clearances, introduction of comprehensive Land Policy and initiating land banks. In earlier times, West Bengal was one of the drivers of the Indian economy and I am confident that with the right kind of policy framework it can surely regain its past glory.

Banerjee is director general, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)