

Shipyard project: Investors willing to wait for land

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata/Haldia: The proposed shipyard at Geonkhali, East Midnapore, may still be on the right track. On Friday, a day after Haldia MP Lakshman Seth warned of a pullout if land acquisition got delayed, officials of Bengal Shipyard Ltd met industries secretary Sabyasachi Sen, and said they were willing to wait for some more time.

Sen said that the company was worried about the situa-

some misunderstanding regarding land acquisition and the company had already begun direct talks with farmers. He also said that the company was open to both government and direct land acquisition.

In Haldia, Seth too indicated that the project may sail through. "We are hopeful that the project will happen. Investors are in a hurry. Most of the people are willing to give their land. Whatever resistance the area has witnessed is political. We don't want any confrontation on this issue," Seth said.

The proposed Rs 2000-crore project, spread on 494 acres, promises to generate more than 40,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Still smarting from the loss of face after land acquisition in Nandigram backfired, leading to a rout in the panchayat polls in the area, Seth is cautious not to ruffle feathers the wrong way this time. With Lok Sabha elections around the corner, CPM is wary of an electoral backlash. So far, owners of 253 acre in the four villages have agreed to give land.

"The matter is no longer in our hands. The government has to decide on the acquisition process. Land prices will be fixed only after it gives the go-ahead," said Seth.

Trinamool Congress, which spearheaded the movements against land acquisition in Nandigram, Singur and elsewhere in the state, is keeping itself away from the Geonkhali project. "We have never opposed the project. The government has announced a package which appears to suit the farmers. We want the company to talk to the farmers directly," said Shubhendu Adhikary, Trinamool's Contai MLA.

What Bengal Shipyard is offering landlosers

- **Four-six** decimals of land
- **Displaced farmers** who have lost homes will get two decimal land and financial help for house-building
- **One or more family** members to be given jobs
- **Landlosers** to get re-employment training as well
- **Those over 45 years** of age to get monthly allowances
- **Roads, electricity, drainage system, drinking water supply, primary school, health centre**

tion, but would wait till the government serves notice under Section 6 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894. "They will definitely see what happens after the notice is served," Sen said.

Karan Paul, chairman of Apeejay Surrendra group, one of the promoters, clarified that the group had not set any deadline. Paul said that there was