

Punjab announces 'cycle valley' in Ludhiana on eve of Sukhbir's China trip

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The Punjab government has set aside almost 300 acres on the outskirts of Ludhiana for setting up a "cycle valley"—a centralised facility for manufacturing bicycles.

Talking to HT, deputy chief minister Sukhbir Singh Badal said he, along with a team of half a dozen officers, will hold meetings with almost 30 cycle manufactures in Shanghai during his five-day visit to China that begins on Friday.

While the state would be hard-selling the "cycle valley" land to top cycle-manufacturing companies in the world--which are gathering in Shanghai for the 26th China International Bicycle and Motor Fair--the aim is to sign on-the-spot MoUs that could lead to something concrete in the days to come, said the deputy chief minister.

Other than the state government team, around 70 big and small cycle manufactures from Ludhiana are participating in 'China Cycle-2016'. This includes Ludhiana-based Avon Cycles and Hero Cycles. Also, TI India, the Chennai-based cycle-manufacturing company, which is opening its next manufacturing unit in Punjab, is participating in it. "TI cycles is coming up with its largest manufacturing unit in Rajpura on almost 60 acres of land that will be inaugurated in the first week of June," Sukhbir informed HT.

"Punjab already leads the country in cycle-manufacturing. However, we have been manufacturing low-end cycles for local consumption. There is an emerging market for high-end cycles across the world. These cost over Rs 1 lakh each and are becoming fairly popular in Europe as more and more people are taking to cycling. We are targeting that market. We already have a flourishing cycle industry, so trained labour is available, ancillary units are already in place and it would be most economical for any high-end cycle manufacturer to set up base in Punjab, near Ludhiana," Sukhbir said.

Sukhbir will be back on May 11. The officers will, however, be back on May 14 after participating in follow-up meetings. Senior officers accompanying the deputy chief minister include Karan Avtar Singh and DK Tewari, both part of the state's investment bureau.

"Other than cycle manufacturers we have a series of meetings lined up with food processing companies in Shanghai, whom we will invite to invest in Punjab. We are the only state offering tax-free environment for food-processing units. Also, we have almost 2,000 clear sites which total over 630 acres of land available across the state for setting up various industrial units," said Karan Avtar Singh.

This will be the second trip of a Punjab government team to China in the past one year. In August 2015, a team of officers led by industries minister Madan Mohan Mittal had visited several Chinese cities and met potential investors. On his return, Mittal had claimed that the Chinese were set to make big investment in Punjab and the state had accepted their proposal to set up an industrial cluster in the state as a joint venture. However, other than a

host of queries that the Punjab investment bureau has received from Chinese companies for setting up manufacturing units in the state, there is no large investment that has been committed by any China-based company in the state.

The itinerary

The deputy chief minister, accompanied by a delegation of top state officers, will visit an international cycle show on Sunday and attend a high-level meeting with China Bicycle Association. Sukhbir is scheduled to meet industrialists from agriculture, manufacturing, textiles and infrastructure development to impress upon the top honchos of China to invest in the state. He will also hold a meeting with vice-chairman, Shanghai Municipal Agricultural Commissioner, Feng Ziyong, on May 9 and visit Suzhou Industrial Park the next day.

Besides, he will also participate in an investment summit being hosted in Shanghai on May

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