

PM to visit Gorakhpur to open AIIMS, fertilizer unit

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Lucknow: Chief minister Yogi Adityanath's political backyard of Gorakhpur will be the next stopover for PM Narendra Modi, who has been on a whirlwind tour of the state to inaugurate or lay foundation of key infrastructural projects in the run-up to UP polls early next year. The PM has already clocked 7 visits in just 36 days.

He is expected to reach Gorakhpur in the first week of December to formally inaugurate the newly constructed AIIMS and a fertilizer factory — two key projects for which he laid the foundation, months before the 2017 assembly elections (July 22, 2016).

His visit to Gorakhpur, the political nerve centre of east UP, assumes significance even as BJP steps up the electoral spadework to take on an assertive opposition in the Purvanchal region comprising around 160 assembly seats.

While AIIMS is being dubbed as a flagship project to elevate the medical infrastructure of east UP, the fertilizer factory could potentially position the BJP dispensation to escalate its outreach to farmers, particularly after PM's decision to repeal farm laws which were at the centre of a raging stir for over a year. In fact, sources said, Modi may choose the Purvanchal turf to drive a message home in west UP, where many farmers have been up in arms against the three farm laws.

AIIMS-Gorakhpur happens to be one of the four such tertiary medical institutes after the ones in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Vidarbha, which were taken up soon after BJP formed the government at the Centre in 2014 and allocated an initial budget of Rs 500 crore for the purpose. The out-patient department (OPD) for the institution started in February, 2019, and the first batch of 50 MBBS students gained admission later that year. Sources said, the PM will inaugurate the OPD of 750 beds, which will be gradually raised.

Preparations are also in full swing for inauguration of the fertilizer factory, which will be operated by Hindustan Urvarak and Rasayan Limited (HURL). Sources said, secretary (fertilizer) Rajesh Kumar Chaturvedi has visited the site and held several rounds of meetings with officials over past couple of days.

The factory is proposed to produce 3,850 metric tonnes of neem-coated urea per day. In the first phase, the factory will cater to five states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In the second phase, fertilizers will be sent through railways to states that come within 1400km radius. Officials said, work on the factory was delayed in the wake of pandemic, followed by heavy rains and consequent flooding.

The factory was established on April 20 1968 by then PM Indira Gandhi. From then it ran uninterrupted till 1990. After the death of an employee, Meghnath Singh in an accident on June 10 1990, the factory shut down. After closure, the matter went to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR). On July 18, 2002, the then BJP government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee finally directed closure of the Gorakhpur fertilizer factory and 2,400 permanent employees were handed out voluntary separation scheme.