

UP: Focus on Purvanchal, PM Narendra Modi to open AIIMS, fertilizer unit in Gorakhpur today

TNN | Dec 7, 2021, 04:12 AM IST



LUCKNOW: After inaugurating and laying the foundation stones for various flagship projects, including the 341km Purvanchal Expressway and Noida international airport, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be back in UP on Tuesday, this time in CM Yogi Adityanath's home turf Gorakhpur, for the inauguration of AIIMS and a fertilizer plant. This would be PM Modi's first visit to Gorakhpur ahead of 2022 Assembly election in UP. The foundation stone for both the projects were laid by the PM on July 22, 2016.

The PM's visit to Gorakhpur, the political nerve centre of east Uttar Pradesh, gains importance as the BJP has stepped up the electoral spade work to take on the opposition in Purvanchal region comprising around 160 assembly seats.

While AIIMS will improve medical infrastructure in east UP, the fertilizer factory is likely to help the BJP to reach out to the farming community, especially after the repeal of the three farm laws which were at the center of a raging farmers' agitation for the last one year.

The revived fertilizer unit, to be operated by Hindustan Urvarak and Rasayan Ltd (HURL), will have an installed capacity to produce 3850 metric tonnes of 'neem coated' urea per day and 12.7 lakh metric tonnes of fertilizer per annum. This will augment the domestic production of urea to meet the existing demand of 350 lakh tonnes. Currently, the government is forced to import about 100 lakh tonnes of urea.

After remaining shut for over 30 years, the Gorakhpur fertilizer plant has been revived and built at a cost of around Rs 8600 crore. The plant, operated by the Fertilizer Corporation of India (FCIL), was set up in 1969 for urea production with naphtha as feedstock.

The unit was closed in 1990 following losses stemming from technical and financial non-viability of operations, particularly the high cost of naphtha. An accident of an employee in the plant is also said to have contributed to the closure of the unit.

The demand for revival of the plant was being raised for nearly two decades.

According to political analysts, PM Modi could use the occasion to corner the opposition for neglecting the "popular demand". The PM had raised the issue of the Gorakhpur fertilizer factory ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. After becoming the MP from Gorakhpur in 1998, Yogi Adityanath also consistently raised the demand in the parliament for the factory's revival.

Officials said the plant would not only supply urea to farmers in east UP but also in neighboring states. "It will help in generating direct and indirect employment for both skilled and unskilled manpower of the region. The plant will help in facilitating development of small and medium scale industries as well. It will also play a part in ensuring price stability in the domestic fertilizer market," the PMO said in a statement.

The central government has galvanized the revival of five fertilizer plants in Gorakhpur, Barauni (Bihar), Sindri (Jharkhand), Ramagundam (Telangana) and Talcher (Odisha), which have the potential to augment the country's overall urea production by more than 60 lakh tonnes per annum.

Likewise, the fully functional complex of AIIMS, Gorakhpur, has come up at the cost of over Rs 1,000 crore. It would not only serve the districts of east UP but also neighboring Bihar and even Nepal. The facility will boost healthcare infrastructure in Purvanchal which has been hit hard by vector-borne diseases, including Japanese Encephalitis.

The government's endeavour provisioning quality tertiary healthcare was projected by former PM late Atal Bihari Vajpayee during his Independence Day speech on August 15, 2003, when he announced the 'Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana' (PMSSY) to establish six new hospitals with modern facilities on the lines of AIIMS, New Delhi. These were set up in Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Jodhpur, Patna, Raipur and Rishikesh.

Officials said PM Modi took Vajpayee's vision forward by announcing 15 AIIMS in different parts of the country in the last seven years.

These facilities, which are in various stages of completion, are coming up in Gorakhpur (UP), Nagpur (Maharashtra), Kalyani (West Bengal), Mangalagiri (Andhra Pradesh), Bibinagar (Telangana), Bhatinda (Punjab), Deoghar (Jharkhand), Guwahati (Assam), Bilaspur (Himachal Pradesh), Vijaypur (Jammu), Awantipora (Kashmir), Rajkot (Gujarat), Madurai (Tamil Nadu), Darbhanga (Bihar) and Manethi (Haryana).

The projects get reflected in higher budgetary allocation in the health sector. The PMSSY allocation also went up from Rs 891 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 7517 crore in 2020-21.