



Punjab Steel Mills Fall Silent Amid Global Slump



In the last two years, almost 150 have downed shutters at Mandi Gobindgarh, the centre for production of secondary steel. Other industries like textiles too have started to explore options in neighbouring states.

Until a couple of years ago, the narrow

lanes of Mandi Gobindgarh, around 60 km from Ludhiana, would be crammed with trucks and its air would smell of metal. Migrant workers, mostly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, would sip their tea with dark faces, blackened due to repeated shifts near

the furnace. Then the town, also known as loha mandi, was the hub of secondary steel industry in India.

Much of that has changed now. The town wears a deserted look. The lanes are empty and the factories are closed. The air smells cleaner. There are few workers on the streets; most have left Mandi Gobindgarh in search of jobs.

The situation is not much different across Punjab. Industry seems to have run out of steam. Fresh investments have turned into a trickle. Joblessness amongst skilled workers is on the rise.

A combination of factors has led to this state of affairs the global commodity meltdown, industrial slowdown in the country, tax policies, and high cost of doing business.

As the tables illustrate, the share of manufacturing has declined in Punjab, and since 2011-12, the rate of growth of this sector has reduced significantly.

With stagnation in agriculture, this has caused Punjab to lag behind others in the march to development. Once the state with one of the highest per-capita incomes, it now stands tenth on the list. Its neighbour, Haryana, has a per-capita income 45 per cent more than Punjab's.

It's no surprise that resentment against the Shiromani Akali Dal-led government is running high across Punjab. Even its most optimist supporters give the party an outside chance of winning the election to the state legislative assembly next year.

The quiet factories of Mandi Gobindgarh reflect the somber mood across Punjab. "In the last two years, about a third of the 400 or so industrial units have shut down.

At present, there are around 250 industrial units which are working," says Vinod Vashisht, president of the All India Steel Rerollers Association.

Starting from the 1940s, the industrial units here had earned a name for themselves as a reliable source of secondary steel. Majority of the units here are electric furnaces which produce ingot from metal-scrap which in turn is used by the steel rolling mills.

This section is a compilation from various company press releases, business dailies & trade publications.

Social Innovators Awarded by JSPL Foundation



Extraordinary grassroots level workers and social innovators from across India have been presented with the JSPL Foundation's first Rashtriya Swayamsiddh Samman awards by union Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Minister Rajiv Pratap Rudy.

Nine individuals and 10 organisations from across sectors received the award, which carries a cash prize of Rs.1 lakh, at a function.

"The objective of the Rashtriya Swayamsiddh Samman is to bring out stories, yet untold, of courage, determination and a will to bring about a change in the society," the Jindal Steel and Power Ltd Foundation said in a statement.

Among the awardees was Genabhai Darghabhai Patel, who, was the first to start pomegranate farming in the Banaskantha region of Gujarat over a decade ago, which crop has now spread to cover more than 30,000 hectares of land accommodating

around 2.5 crore plants in north Gujarat and south Rajasthan.

Being differently abled, Patel said he found pomegranate cultivation an easier option than routine farming.

Highlighting the growing popularity of the fruit, he said the farmers in the area had sold their entire crop in a recent year to

the Adani Group, for export.

A second awardee was young Ankur Singh from Jodhpur, Rajasthan for his work in propagation of environmental and energy conservation education through cartoons and paper presentations.

Among the organisations awarded was CanSupport from Delhi, which is India's largest home-based palliative care for terminal cancer patients. This non-profit organisation provides home-based medical, nursing and emotional support to cancer patients and their families.

The programme looks after around 1,700 patients and families at any given time in the Delhi-NCR region, CanSupport founder Harmala Gupta said. She said CanSupport, which has the band Dire Straits' song "Walk of Life" as its anthem, is organising a "Walk for Life" in support of its work that is slated to flag off from Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on the morning of January 31.