

Mamata to make five-day trip to Singapore on August 17

City businessmen to accompany

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Kolkata, August 17

In a bid to woo investors to come and invest in a state, which has developed an anti-industry image over years, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee is all set to make her maiden overseas trip to Singapore on August 17 with a business delegation that will include about a dozen of city industrialists like Sanjiv Goenka, Harsh Neotia along with presidents of the local chambers.

West Bengal finance and industries minister and former Ficci secretary general Amit Mitra and chief secretary Sanjay Mitra will accompany Banerjee on the five day trip. Some of the other departmental secretaries are also likely to be the part of delegation.

Banerjee will leave for Singapore on August 17 evening and will return on August 22.

Although the state government is yet to make the formal announcement sharing the details, sources said CESC chairman Sanjiv Goenka, Ambuja-Neotia group chairman Hrush Neotia will be part of the business delegation which will include about 10 to 12 city businessmen.

Invitations have been extended to presidents of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), Bengal National Chamber of Commerce Industry (BNCCI), Merchants' Chamber, Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and Bharat Chamber of Commerce, to be the part of the business delegation. Apart from BCCI presi-

dent Kallol Dutta, who has conveyed his inability to be part of the delegation due to other engagements, rest are likely to accompany chief minister to Singapore.

Also Partha Ghosh, chief executive officer and director of Bengal Aerotropolis Projects Ltd (BAPL), of which Singapore's Changi is the leading promoter, will be part of the business delegation.

Incidentally, it is on an invitation from the Singapore government and Changi Airports International (CAI), Mamata Banerjee will be visiting Singapore. Changi Airports International chairman Kee Teck Koon along with a five-member Singapore delegation had met Banerjee on July 11 to extend the invitation. CAI is the leading promoter of the long-delayed airport city project at Andal near Durgapur.

Although the itinerary of the trip is yet to be made public, sources said in first two days Mamata will have a bilateral meet with Changi officials there. Apart from discussions on some of operational bottlenecks, Banerjee could also finalise the deal leading to Changi's increase of stake in Bengal Aerotropolis (BAPL), the special purpose vehicle (SPV) executing the project. CAI, which has invested as much as US\$100 crore in the project so far, has been looking to increase its stake for quite some time, and the state government has indicated in the first go CAI has expressed its intent to increase stake from 24 to 32.5 per cent.

Some MoUs are expected to be signed by members of the business delegation.

Besides, apart from assessing the potential areas of tie-ups between Singapore and

west Bengal, Banerjee is expected to meet the heads of multinational companies. "Several global companies have headquarters in Singapore and planning to fix meetings between these companies and the Bengal government is currently on. A report on the potential areas of investment namely education, infrastructure, health services, tourism, particularly eco-tourism and others is being prepared," said an official.