

Tata's Singur land can be acquired for BHEL: Bengal minister

West Bengal Commerce and Industry Minister Nirupam Sen Thursday said if state-run Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) selected the land abandoned by Tata Motors in Singur, the state government would acquire it from the auto major.

'If BHEL selects the land, we will begin the process to get it released,' Sen told reporters here.

'We don't foresee any problem in getting the land back from Tata Motors,' he said on the sidelines of Eastern Print Pack 2009, a trade show relating to the print and packaging sectors.

Senior BHEL officials had Nov 12 inspected the land at Singur in Hooghly district, 40 km from here, to consider setting up a power generation plant.

Global auto major Tata Motors had planned to roll out the world's cheapest car Nano from the plant it was setting up at Singur.

However, it abandoned the 997.11-acre site following strident opposition by farmers, who were led by the state's principal opposition party Trinamool Congress. Protestors demanded the return of 400 acres taken from 'farmers unwilling to part with the land'.

Tata Motors has since then shifted the Nano project to Sanand in Gujarat, though it still possesses the Singur plot.

Tata Sons chairman Ratan Tata has said if the state government compensated the auto maker, the company was ready to return the land.

Talking about the proposed JSW Steel project in Salboni in West Midnapore district, Sen said the government expected the company to start work by next April.

JSW Bengal Steel is constructing a 10-million-tonne steel plant in Salboni on an investment of Rs.35,000 crore (Rs.350 billion/\$7 billion) -- the largest single investment in the state.

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