

# Develop border belts as industrial hubs: Amarinder Singh tells Centre

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Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh on Wednesday urged the Centre to evolve a comprehensive policy to develop border belts into industrial hubs to counter the economic threat posed by China. Speaking at an interactive session for industrialists organised by the CII and Punjab Bureau of Investment Promotion in New Delhi, he also reiterated his demand for a special package for the border states of Punjab and Rajasthan.

Amarinder said he had raised the issue of setting up industrial corridors in border areas, especially from Pathankot to Pakistan border, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month and was hopeful of a positive response. He assured the industrialists that their investments would be safe in Punjab and his government would extend all possible support to them. He said investment worth more than Rs 10,000 crore had already come into the state and that his government was targeting to triple the amount annually.

His government, the Punjab CM said, was there to facilitate industry, whose interests would be kept in mind while formulating policies. "The work culture in Punjab is highly conducive to promote industry, which is needed to generate employment and revenue in the state," he said. Capt sought industry's inputs to further strengthen the new industrial and business development policy, which was designed to promote ease of doing business. He reiterated his commitment to make Punjab the most favoured investment destination in the country.

Pointing out that Punjab lost out on industry at the time of the state's partition in 1966, he sought the industrialists' constructive support for its development and to deal with problems such as groundwater depletion, agricultural crisis and unemployment. Amarinder also stressed the need for policy initiatives for better water management, given the critical water situation in the state, and crop diversification to overcome the crisis and improve farm income. During a question-answer session that followed, he said the state cabinet had recently approved operational guidelines for the industrial policy implementation, which placed significant focus on renewable and solar energy.

Invest Punjab CEO Rajat Aggarwal said the state was placing special thrust on rooftop projects, besides providing land on lease coupled with incentives. The CM also held one-to-one meetings with some of the industrialists to discuss specific areas of investment and cooperation.

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