

Modi cooks facts to sell dreams to AP Inc

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: Back home in Gujarat he may be better known as the 'vote ka saudagar' for his ability to draw votes during elections. But for a change in Hyderabad on Sunday, Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi, who was labelled as 'maut ka saudagar' by Congress supremo Sonia Gandhi for his role in the post-Godhra carnage, played a 'Sapnon ka saudagar' to the hilt in his attempt to woo AP Inc to Gujarat shores.

In a presentation laced with fiction, Modi tried to hard-sell Gujarat as the land of milk and honey to corporate barons of AP at an interactive session as part of his roadshow for the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat 2011 hoopla.

For starters, he pitched Gujarat as a state that has lost 'zero' mandays to labour unrest. What Modi conveniently forgot to tell the audience was that just about a month ago, work at US carmaker General Motors' factory at Halol near Vadodara had come to a grinding halt for nearly five days due to strike by workers demanding wage revision.

In his eagerness to lure AP Inc, Modi sold dreams of a state that offers 24x7 power even in its remotest villages. Of course, he glossed over the fact that the quality of power being supplied to villages fringing even Gujarat's biggest city — Ahmedabad — leaves much to be desired.

In his characteristic glib style, Modi tried to

pooh-pooh the central government's figures of a 4% national agricultural growth, saying that the actual growth rate was only 2-2.5%. Instead, he made tall claims about Gujarat notching over 12% agricultural growth for the past few years thanks to water harvesting efforts like checkdams undertaken by his administration.

What the smooth-talking Gujarat CM forgot to tell the highly impressed audience was that agri-

cy has exposed Modi's claims about Gujarat's miraculous agricultural growth during his reign as being misleading.

The study found that Gujarat's agriculture grew on an average by only 4% in the 2000-01 to 2008-09 period as against claims of over 9% growth and that the real 'miracle growth' of 10% in Gujarat's agriculture occurred in the 1988-1998 period when Modi was not in power.

In an obvious bid to



SAPNON KA SAUDAGAR!

The Institute of Resource Analysis and Policy, Hyderabad, has punched holes in Modi's claims of Gujarat's miraculous agricultural growth

cultural growth in Gujarat has been in the negative for the past two consecutive years as the state continues to be dependent on rain for agriculture.

While in 2008-09, Gujarat's agriculture growth was a shocking minus 12%, in 2009-10 it improved slightly but still remained in the red at minus 3.3%! And these were statistics shared by Gujarat government officials in a meeting with Planning Commission vice-chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia just about six months ago!

In fact, a March 2010 study titled 'Gujarat's agricultural growth story: Exploding some myths' published by the Hyderabad-based Institute of Resource Analysis and Poli-

dazzle bigwigs of AP Inc, which has over the past year or so been facing an uncertain business climate due to political reasons including Telangana, Modi and his men sought to project the 2009 Vibrant Gujarat blitzkrieg as a mega success with over 46% of large projects seeing positive development on the ground.

The stark reality: of the proposed over Rs 12 lakh crore (\$240 billion) worth of investments committed during the 2009 edition of the Vibrant Gujarat show, only a meagre 5% of big projects (Rs 62,622 crore worth) have progressed beyond the MoU stage with the remaining investments so far being nothing better than scraps of paper.