

Manufacturing Companies in Kolkata

A Comprehensive Directory and Industry Guide to Kolkata's Industrial
Landscape

West Bengal | Heavy Industry, Jute, Steel, Chemicals & Beyond

Kolkata, the cultural and commercial capital of eastern India, has a proud industrial heritage stretching back over 200 years. From the era of British-era jute mills along the Hooghly River to modern-day engineering conglomerates and pharmaceutical manufacturers, the city remains one of India's most significant industrial centres. This comprehensive guide explores the manufacturing sector of Kolkata — its history, key industries, leading companies, industrial zones, challenges, and the exciting future that lies ahead for this storied manufacturing hub.

1. Industrial Heritage of Kolkata

Kolkata's manufacturing story begins in the early 19th century when the British established the first jute mills along the Hooghly. By the early 20th century, the city was the undisputed industrial capital of British India, hosting steel foundries, cotton mills, paper factories, and chemical plants. The iconic Tata Steel plant in nearby Jamshedpur (1907) and the formation of the Indian Iron & Steel Company (IISCO) at Burnpur were landmarks of this era.

Post-independence, Kolkata continued to attract

heavy industry investment, particularly in engineering goods, electrical equipment, and chemicals. However, the 1970s–90s saw industrial decline due to labour unrest and policy issues. The

2000s brought revival through economic reforms, SEZs, and new investments in food processing, pharmaceuticals, and IT-enabled manufacturing.

Manufacturing Snapshot – Kolkata & West Bengal

Indicator	Data
Contribution to State GDP (Manufacturing)	~15%
Registered Industrial Units (WB)	90,000+
Major Industrial Corridors	Hooghly Belt, Durgapur, Haldia
Key Export Products	Jute, Engineering Goods, Leather
Industrial Employment (WB)	Over 25 Lakh workers

2. Key Manufacturing Sectors in Kolkata

Jute & Textile Manufacturing

Kolkata is the global capital of jute manufacturing. The Hooghly-Rishra-Serampore industrial belt hosts over 70 jute mills employing lakhs of workers. India produces 60% of the world's jute, and Kolkata is at the heart of this. Major players include Birla Jute, Cheviot Company, and Andrew Yule & Co.

Steel & Metals

The Durgapur Steel Plant (SAIL), IISCO Burnpur, and Braithwaite & Co. have long anchored the steel manufacturing corridor. Kolkata's metal fabrication and foundry clusters in Howrah and Liluah supply engineering goods across India.

Electrical & Engineering Equipment

Companies like CESC, Crompton Greaves, and Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) Kolkata unit produce transformers, switchgear, and power distribution equipment for the national grid.

Chemical & Petrochemical Industry

The Haldia Petrochemicals complex and Indian Oil's Haldia refinery are anchors of the petrochemical corridor near Kolkata. In the city itself, dye manufacturers, fertiliser companies, and specialty chemical producers operate in Budge Budge and Taratala.

Pharmaceutical Manufacturing

Kolkata has emerged as a significant pharma manufacturing hub, particularly for generic drugs and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). Companies like Emami, Piramal Healthcare, and several mid-size generic manufacturers have plants in and around the city.

3. Leading Manufacturing Companies in Kolkata

ITC Limited (Tobacco & FMCG Division)

Headquartered in Kolkata, ITC's manufacturing operations span cigarettes, paperboards, agri-products, and packaged foods. Its Virginia House headquarters oversees factories spread across Bengal and Andhra Pradesh.

Emami Limited

A leading FMCG and pharmaceutical conglomerate based in Kolkata, Emami manufactures health and beauty products at its plants in Pantnagar, Dongari, and Abhoypur. It is known for brands like Zandu Balm, BoroPlus, and Fair and Handsome.

Andrew Yule & Company

One of India's oldest conglomerates, Andrew Yule manufactures electrical machinery, fans, circuit breakers, and tea. Its Kolkata-based electrical division supplies switchgear and transformers to state utilities.

Titagarh Rail Systems (TWIL)

A major manufacturer of railway wagons and freight cars, headquartered in Kolkata. The company has been a key supplier to Indian Railways for decades and recently expanded into metro rail coaches and bridges.

Exide Industries

India's leading manufacturer of lead-acid batteries, Exide is headquartered in Kolkata and operates large battery manufacturing plants in Shyamnagar (West Bengal) supplying automotive, industrial, and solar storage segments.

Balmer Lawrie & Co.

A public sector conglomerate with manufacturing in industrial packaging (steel drums, barrels), lubricants, and leather chemicals. Its packaging plant in Kolkata is among the most modern in South Asia.

4. Industrial Zones & Manufacturing Corridors

Howrah Industrial Area

Often called the 'Sheffield of the East', Howrah is Kolkata's twin city and its largest manufacturing cluster. Thousands of small and medium-scale foundries, metal works, machine tool makers, and

auto component manufacturers operate here. Products range from hand tools and agricultural equipment to precision castings.

Taratala & Budge Budge (South Kolkata)

This corridor hosts chemical manufacturing, petroleum product blending, cable manufacturing, and food processing units. The Kolkata Port trust's proximity makes it ideal for import-dependent industries.

Durgapur Industrial Township

Located 160 km from Kolkata, Durgapur is West Bengal's largest planned industrial city. Home to Durgapur Steel Plant (SAIL), Durgapur Projects Ltd., CESC power plants, and hundreds of ancillary engineering units.

Haldia Industrial Complex

Haldia, 125 km south of Kolkata, is a major port-based industrial complex with Haldia Petrochemicals, Indian Oil Haldia Refinery, GAIL terminals, and multiple chemical processing plants. It handles crude oil, LPG, and fertiliser logistics.

Falta Special Economic Zone (SEZ)

India's oldest SEZ, Falta near Kolkata, hosts export-oriented manufacturing units specialising in electronics, garments, leather goods, and chemicals for international markets.

5. Small & Medium Manufacturing Enterprises

(SMEs) in Kolkata

While large conglomerates grab headlines, Kolkata's manufacturing strength is deeply rooted in its vast network of SMEs. These enterprises account for over 60% of the city's industrial employment and contribute significantly to exports.

Leather Goods & Footwear: Kolkata's leather industry, centred in Topsia and Tangra, produces bags, shoes, belts, and garments for both domestic brands and international buyers including European labels.

Brass & Bronze Metalwork: Artisan-level and industrial metal casting in Belur-

Bally and

Santragachi supply decorative items, idols, plumbing fittings, and machine components.

Garment & Hosiery Manufacturing: The Gariahat-Ultadanga-Metiabruz

cluster is a major hub for

readymade garments, knitwear, and ethnic wear manufacturing, supplying retailers across India.

Food Processing: Rice mills, flour mills, mustard oil expellers, and spice

processing units are

widespread in the suburbs. The proximity to fertile farmland of West Bengal and Odisha drives this

sector.

West Bengal's MSME Department and the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation (WBIDC) provide financial assistance, land allocation in industrial parks, and technology upgradation support to nurture these enterprises.

6. Government Policies Supporting

Manufacturing in Kolkata

The West Bengal government has introduced several policy initiatives to attract investment and revive the manufacturing sector:

Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS): An annual investment summit that has attracted billions of dollars in MoUs across manufacturing, infrastructure, and IT sectors. The 2023 edition secured investment commitments of over INR 3.76 lakh crore.

Silpa Sathi Portal: A single-window clearance portal for industrial approvals in West Bengal, significantly reducing the time taken to obtain licences, environmental clearances, and land permits.

West Bengal Industrial Policy 2022: Offers GST reimbursement, stamp duty exemption, electricity duty concession, and capital investment subsidy for new manufacturing units setting up in notified industrial areas.

Food Park and Agro-Processing Zones: State-supported food processing clusters at Panagarh, Sankrail, and Uluberia support value addition in agri-commodities, a key strength of the Bengal economy.

7. Challenges Facing Kolkata's Manufacturing Sector

~~Despite its historic strengths and recent policy push, Kolkata's manufacturing sector faces several structural and operational challenges:~~

- Ageing industrial infrastructure: Many factories, especially in the jute and metals sectors, operate with equipment that is decades old, impacting productivity and quality competitiveness.
- Land acquisition difficulties: Urban land scarcity and legal complexities in acquiring new land for greenfield projects remain persistent bottlenecks.
- Power reliability: Although improving, power supply consistency in industrial areas outside Kolkata Municipal Corporation limits can still affect output.
- Skilled labour migration: Skilled workers from West Bengal frequently migrate to Delhi-NCR, Pune, and Surat for better wages, creating talent gaps in specialised manufacturing trades.
- Logistics & port congestion: Kolkata Port (Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port) has faced issues of silting and capacity constraints, though the Haldia terminal has partially addressed this.
- Perception challenge: Despite genuine improvements, Kolkata continues to battle outdated perceptions of industrial unrest, discouraging some domestic and foreign investors.

8. Emerging & New-Age Manufacturing in

Kolkata

Kolkata is witnessing a new wave of manufacturing investment in sectors aligned with national and global megatrends:

Electric Vehicles (EV): Several EV startups and component

manufacturers are setting up in the

Kolkata-Durgapur corridor, leveraging the region's engineering talent and steel supply chain.

Aerospace & Defence: HAL's Eastern Region facility and DRDO labs in the city are attracting aerospace component manufacturing and maintenance, repair & overhaul (MRO) investments.

Solar & Renewable Energy Equipment: With West Bengal's solar energy push, manufacturers of solar panels, mounting structures, and inverters are establishing units in the Falta SEZ and Kalyani industrial area.

Medical Devices: Kolkata has a strong diagnostics and medical equipment tradition. New companies are manufacturing imaging devices, disposable medical supplies, and point-of-care diagnostics for domestic healthcare and export to Southeast Asia.

Green Chemicals & Bioplastics: Leveraging the jute agri-waste and natural fibres available locally, innovative firms are building bio-based materials, bio-packaging, and specialty green chemical units.

9. Future Outlook & Investment Opportunities

The outlook for manufacturing in Kolkata is cautiously optimistic. Several macro factors work in its favour as India accelerates its 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' agenda:

Strategic Location: Kolkata is the gateway to Southeast Asia and acts as the logistics hub for ASEAN trade routes under India's Act East Policy. The city's port connectivity gives manufacturers natural export advantages.

Large Consumer Market: Eastern India — comprising West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha — represents a combined population of over 300 million, creating enormous domestic demand for manufactured goods from FMCG to engineering products.

Improving Business Climate: West Bengal has climbed consistently in the Ease of Doing Business rankings. The Silpa Sathi portal, improved power infrastructure, and industrial land bank availability signal a more investor-friendly environment.

Skilled Workforce Pipeline: Technical institutes like Jadavpur University, BE College (IEST Shibpur), and numerous ITIs supply a steady stream of engineering graduates and diploma holders to the manufacturing workforce.

Conclusion

Kolkata's manufacturing sector, backed by a rich industrial legacy, strategic geography, abundant raw material linkages, and improving government policies, is poised for meaningful revival and growth. From the iconic jute mills of the Hooghly belt to new-age EV and medtech factories, the city's industrial identity is evolving. Investors, entrepreneurs, and job-seekers who look beyond the stereotypes will find Kolkata to be a compelling destination for manufacturing excellence in 21st-century India.