

**EDITORIAL**

## Let the Indian Masses Awake

*By: Piyush Pant*

You can fool some of the people all the time but you can't fool all the people all the time, says an adage. And this is being seen in the emerging scenario in India where people have now started seeing through the designs of the political leaders and the rulers. That's why they have now begun to resist the anti-people policies and programmes of the Government and also asserting themselves through protests and struggles. Hence issues like security, survival, displacement and sovereignty are getting at the core of their struggles. This upsurge in people's movements and struggles is not sudden, what has accentuated its fury is the abysmal behaviour by Indian rulers who have lost all respect for the life, liberty, dignity and labour of the people. The Indian masses remain fools in the eyes of the self-seeking Indian politicians whereas the fact is that it is not the display of their foolish behaviour, rather it is the act of their perseverance. They genetically tend to give a long rope to their rulers in the hope that good sense would ultimately prevail upon them. But people's perseverance can not, and should not be tested for long. Once they decide that enough is enough, they resort to direct action. Thence springs their anger and protest, finally culminating into rebellion. This is exactly what is happening now in India.

The name of the game being played by the politicians is 'displacement'. The land and livelihood of lakhs of poor, farmers and tribals are being taken away just for the benefits of MNCs and comprador business houses. And those who are fighting for their rights of livelihood and are opposing displacement are being branded as people opposing industrialization and development. This is what is happening in India with those raising their voices against the capital-intensive, market-friendly neo-liberal reforms-be they oustees of Narmada dam, adivasis from Kalinga Nagar or farmers from Singur and Nandigram. The message is clear: slogans like land for the tillers, land for the dwellers and land for the poors now seem to belong to the bygone era and have been replaced by slogans such as land for compradors, land for Multinationals, land for the mafias, land for the rich and powerful, land for the animals (sanctuaries) and land for SEZ.

In the emerging scenario the role of the state, on the one hand, has become that of oppressor of the people and suppressor of their rights and genuine demands, on the other hand it is making itself a convenient tool to fulfill the designs of multinationals and their Indian cohorts. While rendering agricultural production to stagnate and even decline fast by pursuing pro-imperialist and anti-farmer agrarian policies and dumping the much needed land-reforms, the ruling elite, on the other hand, is usurping the fertile agriculture land to pass it on to the big corporates for setting up of multiplexes and special economic zones. Thus the big carnival of loot and plunder of country's resources is shamelessly on by the political fraternity, bureaucracy and corporate world without giving thought to the plight of the people being rendered homeless, jobless and landless due to troika's hedonistic pursuits. And all this is happening in the name of development, rapid growth in the economy and making India shine and emerge as great power. But the question is

### **In This Issue**

1. Kalinga Nagar: The Heat and Dust of a Highway
2. Bistapan Birodhi Sankalpa Janasamabesh (2<sup>nd</sup> January 2007, Bira Bhumi (Ambagadia), Kalinga Nagar)
3. Kalinga Nagar : Martyrdom of Adivasis Put Pro-Imperialist Development Policy in the Dock
4. Singur : Peasantry is Fighting Revisionists' Use of State Terror to Implement Tata's Brief
5. Zone of Conflict
6. No Displacement; No Rehabilitation; Only People's Development
7. This is Licence to Loot ... Hence Our Struggle
8. The States : Profits Over People
9. Allahabad (UP) : Mass Struggles of Peasants Continue
10. Justice Needed At Indira Sagar
11. Huge Protest and Declaration of Struggle by Over Ten Thousand Maheshwar Dam-Affected People
12. Preparing to Repeat a Dammed History
13. A Familiar Battle at Tadadi
14. Hoshangabad Adivasi's Struggle for Survival
15. We Are Not Alone

**appeal**

**Action Programme for People's Economics and Allied Literacy**

at what cost?

Initially people did believe their rulers; they had great faith in constitutionally sanctioned role of the welfare-state. Hence they did accept their displacement with the promised assurance of honorable rehabilitation. But they have had such a bitter experience of rehabilitation during the last fifty years that the reality is now gradually sinking deep into their psyche. They have got convinced now that these anti-people and self-seeking rulers of India are not merely unwilling of providing proper rehabilitation but are simply incapable of. They really don't have the will-power to catch the bull by its horns. The 56 years' observation and experience of Indian masses have shown that Indian rulers have now given up their will to rule effectively, instead they seem interested only in looking after their own interests. They see this instinct reflected in Indian rulers' much familiar talk of lack of resources needed to give a thrust to economy and thus the need to invite foreign capital. Today, Indian people are watching with disgust the shameful role of politicians and ministers as commission - agents of foreign corporates.

So the people of India are no longer ready to take Indian rulers at their face-value. They no longer trust the promises made by them. They are now ready to take up cudgels against them and resist their designs. As the author Howard Zinn, in his new book 'A power governments can not suppress', says: *"Change in public consciousness starts with low level of discontent, at first vague, with no connection being made between the discontent and the policies of the government. And then the dots begin to connect, indignation increases, and people begin to speak out, organize and act"*.

Yes! Indian masses have begun to organize and act. They did so and are still doing so against Sardar Sarover dam, they did so in Kashipur, they are doing so in Kalinga Nagar, Singur and Nandigram. Orissa has seen revival and emergence of such movements on large scale. In Kashipur a sustained struggle against bauxite mining is going on. Since 1993 local adivasis and dalits have been resisting the entry of Utkal Alumina, whom they look at as threatening their livelihood and environment. But ignoring the sentiments of the people the state government, in 2005 alone, signed as many as 43 memoranda of understanding with various corporate bodies for setting up of their industrial units. People coming out in protest against industrialization, which threatens their livelihood, is not new to Orissa but the ongoing movements differ in nature as they have worked out an unprecedented unity among the tribal and backward masses against the industrial houses and

the state itself. Since 2nd January 2006 the tribals of Kalinga Nagar have launched an indefinite economic blockade on National Highway 200. The place where 13 victims of police firing were cremated has been named as Bir Bhumi and on May 23, 2006 about 5000 women from Orissa, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh took out a rally and resolved not to lift the blockade which has already completed one year. The sustained struggle by the people of Orissa and the solidarity shown by the people of neighbouring states has now forced the Tata Steel Company to announce a package for the displaced families. Similarly people in Niyamgiri are also up against the Vedanta Alumina Limited for setting up a plant at Lanjigarh and mining of bauxite from the Niyamgiri Hill Complex. A mass movement is going on there since 2004 and on April 7, 2004 a Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti was formed to protect the forest, land and water of the area. The people of Jagatsinghpur district in coastal Orissa have been actively engaged in a protest movement against Posco, a South Korean company planning to set up its 51000 crore steel plant. The Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti, an organization of the local people, has been leading the movement.

Besides farmers, tribals too are waging a close battle with the government against its plan to lease out forest land to private companies. On December 10, 2006 around 7 thousand tribals of more than 100 villages demonstrated at Betul Collectorate, each of them serving written notice on government through Betul Collector saying that government land should be given to them instead of companies. They also demanded full right over forest.

People's resistance to displacement is gaining ground all over the country. Widespread opposition to the acquisition of agriculture lands for multiplexes, ports, private industries and special economic zones has become the order of the day giving sleepless nights to Indian politicians and Indian and foreign corporate houses bent upon looting indigenous resources and relegating indigenous people to a state of penury. Dadri in UP, Singur in West Bengal, Gangavaram in Andhra Pradesh and Sangrur in Punjab have been witness to farmers' resolve to oppose government's design to displace them from their agricultural lands. Such has been the impact of people's opposition and protest that the governments, at the state (W B) and also at centre had to give a second thought to the question of land acquisition.

And here lies the hope for the masses and also a lesson that nothing short of mass-action can force the establishment to mend its pro-imperialist and neo-liberal policies.

## Kalinga Nagar: The Heat and Dust of a Highway

*By: Ish Mishra*

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2007 -- the first anniversary of the martyrdom of anti-displacement agitators - thousands of people from across the country gathered at BIR BHUMI (Ambagadia village) in the Kalinganagar area of Sukhinda valley in Orissa to participate in the Bisthapan Birodhi Sankalpa Janasamabesh (anti-displacement convention), organized by the Bisthapan Birodhi Janmanch (BBJ) to pay tributes to the martyrs who laid their lives in the anti-displacement struggle, and to reaffirm their resolve to carry the fight to its logical conclusion. Thirteen stone pillars have been erected there in memory of the dead. It also marked the first anniversary of the heroic struggle of the people, successful blockade of a National Highway, now for over a year that is unheard in the recent history. The intensity, quality and the magnitude of the movement forced the government to announce its willingness to hold negotiations with the agitators.

Till few months ago government was adamant. "The government stopped all dialogue after we had one with the chief minister," according to Ravi Jarika, a leader of the BBJ. "All promises including withdrawal of cases against us were forgotten. It's the government and not us who created this situation in Kalinganagar and people anywhere will rise in revolt whenever the government behaves in such fashion." In July 2006, Balkishore Panda, the ADM Kalinganagar had adamantly told a fact-finding team of Janhaskshp (a human rights group), the "land had already been acquired" and the tribals holding on to their lands are "legitimate" and "illegitimate" encroachers. In January 2007, the Collector of Jaipur (District Head Quarter of Kalinganagar), Arvind Padhi had to change the official claim. "The interests of the displaced will not be compromised in the industrialization process". The families of the dead are part-and parcel of the movement have summarily rejected the compensation offers of Rs. 10 lakhs. "Thirteen people have laid down their lives not to get more money but to retain our land. That stand can never change," said Hara Jamuda of Chandia village.

This Congregation of people - representatives of the progressive radical Political Forces including the parties of the radical left, Mass Organizations, the Mass Movements, Anti-displacement organizations -- from the villages of Kalinganagar and surrounding villages across the Sukhinda valley, other parts of Orissa and from across the country saluted the martyrs and resolved to intensify and expand the movement and link it with other anti-imperialist movements. A draft declaration - The Kalinganagar Declaration -- on the future of the movement was

circulated in which all out opposition to acquisition of agricultural land for industrial/commercial/SEZ purposes was reasserted. On a planted PIL by someone supposedly having suffered irreparable loss due to the Road blockade, as expected Orissa High Court recently passed a judgement ordering the removal of the blockade. Character of the judiciary of any legal system is same as the character of the ruling classes. Government wants to use coercion through judiciary. Government through its home secretary has expressed its desire to talk to the leaders of the movement. The BBJ leadership is always open to talks but has warned of militant retaliation by the masses if the government uses the force.

Since 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2006 the people of Kalinganagar, a tribal belt in the mineral-rich Sukhinda valley of Orissa, are fighting a valiant battle. It was on this day 13 Adivasis were killed by Navin Patnayak government's extreme brutality and barbarism at the behest of a corporate house - TATAs. The limbs - palms and other parts -- of the dead bodies, were cut off and not returned to the relatives. This barbaric arrogance on the part of the state-corporate nexus, is a reminiscence of the barbarism witnessed during the Colonization by the Europeans in general, and colonization of Americas in particular. So not so surprisingly, the commanders of the attack --the District Collector and the SP -- directly responsible for ordering the firing and trapping the fleeing protesters with the landmines, have been duly rewarded with virtual promotions. According to Birsingh Gop of Chandia village, a victim of land mines explosion, the mines were laid before the Police action of 2<sup>nd</sup> January with the purpose of killing and maiming the people.

Inspired by the martyrdom of their co-protesters against forced displacement, the villagers resolved to intensify their struggle. They organized themselves under the banner of Bisthapan Birodhi Janamanch with a leadership and a core group emerged from within the movement. They have been able to prevent the NGO'isation and are not dependent on "revolutionary" intellectuals "from above" for guidance in planing their strategies and tactics. They have their own organic intellectuals. They refuse to discuss the merits and demerits of any R&R package. They are firm on their stand - No Displacement. They are also firm in their resolve to continue their struggle undeterred by coercion and harassment; threats and appeasement by newer and newer R&R packages; Court Orders; and planted dissention and allurements. The sense of co-victim has brought the Adivasis and

non-Adivasis together on one platform. All the attempts to disrupt this unity have been foiled by the people. The area around the NH200 that goes up to the Paradip port has been declared out-of-bounds for the company -Tata -, state officials and their agents. The brutal repression of the movement and tribal' valiant fight have transformed the Kalinganagar from a proper noun to common noun

According to a news report, "at least three land surveyors working for Tata Steel were beaten up Wednesday in Orissa's Jajpur district by angry villagers who fear the company's proposed steel plant in the region would displace them. The incident took place near Kalamatia village in Kalinganagar industrial complex, some 60 km from the district headquarters of Jajpur, when a team of GO Design, a private firm hired by the Tatas, was conducting contour surveys" (IANS 17 January 2007).

**In fact the district administration has been trying to take over the land for the Tata's proposed steel Plant for the last few months after an attempt to start construction on May 9, 2005 was foiled by the resistance of the local Adivasis. Adivasis, aware with the fate of displaced by other mining and industrial projects in the Sukhinda Valley and elsewhere claimed that they will not vacate the land till their demands are met. From 23rd December 2005, people started getting feed back regarding Government's intentions to evict the tribals from their land by force. According to Chkradhar Haibru, the President of BBJ, the agitators conveyed back the message to the administration that such a move will lead to do or die resistance. During their annual convention at the Chandiya village on 1st January, the people came to know through their sources in the administration that the TATAs would initiate Boundary wall construction on the 2nd January 2006 without taking the consent of the people. The tribals decided to oppose this attempt also, as they have opposed the earlier ones. On 2nd January 2006 in the morning, the district administration including the Collector and the SP and TATA Steel officials reached the site with a bulldozer, and started construction of the boundary wall. The team was escorted by 12 platoons of armed police equipped with sophisticated weapons.**

Seeing the beginning of the work, approximately 100 tribals gathered, and a four-member delegation was formed to go and talk to the district officials present at the spot. People say that the four-member delegation went to meet the district administration. As per the warning given to the administration, many

of these people were armed with traditional weapons. When the group of tribals reached the ditch dug to erect the boundary wall, and were about to cross it, they heard the police sound a whistle, and saw a policeman pull a rope. The people say that after this there were large explosions in the ditch and two persons fell down dead. There had been no warning and no indications from the police before this happened. Simultaneously tear gas, rubber bullet firing and actual firing started. Chaos ensued, with people running here-and there. Even the unarmed local policemen panicked at the firing and the explosions, and people say that in this panic one or two policemen fell into the boundary wall ditch and were injured by the tribals in the heat of the moment. On hearing the sound of explosions and firing, more tribals from the nearby settlements rushed to the site. The firing was indiscriminate and continued for over an hour. Even people who were 200-300 meters away were injured. Many people who were trying to escape have bullet injuries in the back, whereas others, who stood and tried to fight back, have been injured in neck and torso in front. A tribal woman, who came out from her house to see what was happening, was struck by a bullet and died. The representatives of BBJ allege that the police picked up three Adivasis who were lightly injured and couldn't run away and their hands were chopped off. They died from loss of blood in the Jajpur hospital. The police was armed with sophisticated weapons and the tribals claim that people at a distance of 400 meters were felled by bullets. The agitators ask the pertinent question, that why the administration and the Tatas started the boundary wall construction despite knowing about the tremendous resentment of the local tribals that too with the 12 platoons of Security personnel.

The firing incidence strengthened the determination of the tribals to fight back and to continue their resistance. They don't trust the parliamentary parties because of obvious reasons. The leadership of the movement is entirely in the hands of the tribals. Those who visit there from outside are treated as solidarity groups if they agree to accept the demands of the tribals. The mainstream media, middle class and ruling elites are not able to digest this simple fact. Therefore, there is deliberate attempt to brand the tribals as Maoists both by the bureaucrats and media.

Bisthapan Birodhi Samkalp Samabesh renamed the place of mass cremation (Ambagadia village) as BIR BHUMI in the memory of the martyrs who laid their life in the anti-displacement movement a year ago. According to the declaration, "People are, therefore, now aware about the real reasons behind displacement in forced to become casual workers without any rights. The anti-displacement movement

of the people makes it clear that henceforth people are not willing to accept this humiliating process. In the past, Crores of peasants and rural poor in Kalinganagar, Orissa and other parts of India were forced to accept displacement in the name of development of the country, which is actually the development of the MNCs and their agents. The masses of India are no more prepared to give this kind of sacrifice." The speakers at the meeting analyzed and explained that due to big industries and projects people are losing their lands and employment and nature is getting devastated. They said that the displacement is accelerating the pace of cultural degeneration of the people. The poor, fighting hard for his land rights, the declaration asserts, "would no more tolerate the policy of alienating the land in the name of rehabilitation and resettlement." Underlining the nature-devastating nature of the present model of industrialization and its very little employment potential, the declaration maintains that the big projects are being established in the interests of a miniscule minority - national and multinational corporate houses. "This kind of industrialization is anti-people and against the interests of the country. Thus it is the duty of all patriotic Indians to oppose the name of development. Displacement is alienating the lands of the peasants and taking away the livelihood of the poor. Displacement by mining and industrialization projects is converting the peasants and rural poor into destitute. The Orissa government, boasting of the best R&R policy in the country is indeed protecting the interests of big industrialists -- the Tatas, Zindals, the Mittals, the Ambanis, the Birlas, the Anil Agrawals and the MNCs such as POSCO."

Hitherto anti-displacement movements have centered their demands and mobilization on better Relief and Rehabilitation (R&R) package. Leaders and activists of Bisthapan Birodhi Janamanch are well acquainted with the fate of displaced communities by other projects in and the outside their area. The horrifying stories of land "acquisition" for mining and already existing steel plants are still fresh in their memories - particularly the story of Neelanchal Steel Plant, a public sector unit. Chandradhar Haibru, the President of the BBJ recalls the gory events of that tragic night as a nightmare. Bulldozers accompanied by the Police trucks arrived in the village in the dead of the night. The unsuspecting, sleeping villagers were woken up, bundled into trucks and carried away to jail, reminding the Nazi style of carrying people to the Concentration Camps. The hearths and homes, the forests, the orchards like everything else were razed to the ground in a few hours time. The number of the uprooted families was 639, out of that only 100 have been "rehabilitated" with cash payment and put into

company controlled "colony", a euphemism for tin roofed structures without any Panchayat rights. They are transformed from a happy farming community with spacious homesteads into wage earners on the mercy of the "company" living a slum-like existence. Rest 539 families disappeared. No one knows their whereabouts and the government and the company have no answers. Like the displaced peasants of other mega and not-so-mega projects, they must have become part of slum or footpath dwellers in some of the cities. Stirred with shock and surprise people became aware of the reality of Development. The activists of BBJ, many of them graduates and post graduates who are farmers by choice, are well aware with the histories of displacements and anti-displacement struggles. They want to remain content agriculturists and are determined to refuse to be proletarianized at the altar of the Development.

They are happy farming communities living in perfect harmony with nature. The crux of their seven-point demand is "No Displacement", proper rehabilitation of already displaced by other projects with land and punishment to guilty officials responsible for the brutal attack on the peaceful protesters, killing 13 and wounding and maiming many. As compared to many other tribal belts, the Munda tribals of these villages are quite mindful of education. Rajendra Jharika of Ambagadia village, a core group member of the movement, is a postgraduate in Sociology from the Utkal University, Bhubaneswar. He resigned a government job and is a farmer by choice. After giving the horrifying details of the lives of the earlier development-induced oustees of the area and other parts of Orissa, he argues with technical details that a steel plant needs only 50-60 acres of the land but they acquire thousands of acres, probably for the future real estate development. Tatas alone plan to eventually acquire over 180 Sq.Km area in this mineral belt. He along with many other co-agitators expresses concerns over the over -production of steel beyond the national needs. They also expressed their anxiety over the large-scale export of the mineral ores, particularly the iron ore, raising the doubts upon the "patriotic" intentions of the government and the corporate houses. In this village (Ambagadia), there are other educated men and women pursuing farming by way of choice. The nearest college is 8 Km away. There are 30 college going students in the village - 10 of them girls. All of them are determined to give up their lives but would not leave their land. They are also acquainted with the history of industrial revolution that was accompanied by proletarianization and pauperization of self-sufficient agricultural communities. In Chandia, one of the villages "already acquired" according to Birakishore Panda, the ADM,

Kalinganagar, the landmines laid to trap the protesters on 2nd January 2006, have irreparably damaged Birsingh's legs and he is not sure, whether he would be able to walk on them again. He is agonized and tormented by the design of trapping the people between the Police bullets and the land-mines fencing, and pained at the governmental callousness and indifference towards Adivasis and excessive favour to corporate houses. But ready to further face repression, he is not disappointed and feels confident of continuing the struggle on his crutches.

Well, as always happens there are always traitors in any movement. Few, very few people have been bought over by the government and Tata. But the movement is so powerful that sold-out agents have no courage to face the villagers and have disappeared from the area. Opin Jamuda of Atti village lost his son in the Police firing refuses to discuss any R&R package and is determined to fight till the end. Natti Angarai of Gobarhatti village declared, "we shall give up our lives but not the land. The Government has killed our 13 comrades, we shall not leave the land even if 13000 are killed. People are determined and the movement is gaining momentum and expanding its support base. Oustees of previous mining and industrial projects, anti-displacement mass organizations, pro-people political parties and democratic intellectuals from all over the country have openly come out in its support as was witnessed in the Bisthapan Birodhi Sankalpa Samabesh.

Subhanshu Sekhar Das is an advocate in Jajpur, the District head quarter of Kalinganagar. After talking the follies of the displacement based industrialization, charged the government for allowing the so many plants and industries to use the ground water in violation of the Supreme Court orders, as a result of which the level of ground water has come down to alarming levels. He expressed the hope that the Kalinganagar movement shall eventually grow into an All India anti-displacement, anti-imperialist movement. Professor S.A.Tahir an oustee of the Jindal Steel Plant expressed dissatisfaction over the R&R. According to him only 8 of the 58 ousted families have been "rehabilitated" on the outskirts of the Jajpur town. He expressed his resolve to join the movement despite the allurements and the threats from the government. In his opinion the firing was part of a deep conspiracy. Rjendra Sarangi of Lok Pakkha, a supporter of the movement, is quite confident of the expansion of the base and the support. In July 2006, when a team of Delhi based Janhastakshep - movement against Fascist Designs, held a meeting of intellectuals in Bhubaneswar after

the visit to Kalinganagar, it was attended by a large number of academics, students, artists, writers and poets. Sudhir Nayak, editor of a pro-people Oriya journal Pragatiwadi had informed the gathering that the situation is fast changing and the middle class and the students have begun to debate the issue of displacement in the broader political economic context of the development. Rabindra Sahu a popular Oriya poet linked the displacement with the ideology of capitalism and emphasised that its opposition is imperative responsibility of the radical political forces.

The history of displacement-based development is as old as the history of industrial revolution itself. Slums became the logical corollary of skyscrapers, the landmark symbol of the capitalist development. This model practiced by Europeans, acquired barbaric heights in "developing" the continents of Americas, Africa and Australia, where the original inhabitants were enslaved, massacred or marginalized and fenced into "reserves" or the exteriors. The similar barbarism, of course not at that scale and intensity, is being "legally" resorted to by the state-corporate nexus against the Adivasi peasants for "developing" the Kalinganagar Industrial Complex in the Sukhinda Valley of Orissa.

The Kalinganagar has raised the issues that question this anti people development model and insist upon the debate over the alternative models. Shiny Shenoy, President of the BBJ's Women's Committee lost her son in the Police firing but undeterred by allurements and threats, she is determined to be in the forefront of the struggle till the last drop of her blood. After talking in details about the newer methods of mobilization in general and among the women in particular, she delved upon the limitations of the representative democracy. She regretted having voted for Praful Gadai, the Finance Minister of the state, who instead of acting as people's representative was acting as the agent of Tata. Then, reminding of the Eklavya, she added to it that the Adivasis are used to give away their thumbs but they have learnt to shoot the arrow without using their thumbs. Only future would tell how heroically and for how long the determined villagers can hold against the formidable state-corporate nexus, but the unprecedented support from various quarters, despite the joint conspiracy of all the ruling class parties against it, gives us a ray of hope.

In the light of all round opposition to the land acquisition for SEZ and other industrial/commercial purposes the results of the Kalinganagar movement would set the precedent.

**Bistapan Birodhi Sankalpa Janasamabesh**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> January 2007, Bira Bhumi (Ambagadia), Kalinganagar**

*[A draft declaration prepared by the Bistapan Birodhi Janmanch, Sukinda is for the consideration of all the speakers and the participants in Bistapan Birodhi Sankalpa Janasamabesh on 2nd January 2007 at Bira Bhumi (Ambagadia), Kalinga Nagar organised to pay tributes to the 13 tribals who attained Martyrdom in the police firing on 2nd January 2006 while participating in the Anti-Displacement Struggle Against the TATAs and the Government. We are giving below the aims and objectives adopted by BBSJ as given in the Draft Declaration - ED.]*

**1. No Cultivable Lands For Industry and No land to MNCs & SEZs:** Bistapan Birodhi Sankalpa Janasamabesh on 2nd January 2007 at Bira Bhumi (Ambagadia), Kalinga Nagar adopts the following aims and objectives so as to strengthen the anti-displacement movements of Kalinga Nagar, across Orissa and India.

- (i) Save Agriculture, Save Livelihoods: According to the people of Kalinganagar and most villages of Orissa and India agriculture and allied livelihoods such as fishing, animal husbandry, forestry are the only sustainable livelihoods for the majority of the people. The Government is unable to provide any other sustainable livelihood after taking away agriculture and other allied livelihoods. Thus the Government can not be henceforth allowed to take away the existing sustainable livelihoods that is agriculture and allied activities which are intrinsically dependent upon land and common property resources such as forests, streams, ponds, grazing lands, etc.
- (ii) No Cultivable Land and Forest Land For Industry: Apart from protecting livelihoods, the objective of not allowing cultivable land and forestland for Industry is to ensure food security for the entire population of India, which is already under tremendous strain. Thus no cultivable land and forestland will henceforth be allowed to be acquired for Industry.
- (iii) No Land for MNCs and SEZs: Establishment of Industry and business by the MNCs and establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are against the interests of India and its people. The MNCs are coming only to loot the natural resources of the country and exploit the Indian economy. The SEZs are meant for taking away all the prime land in the developed zones of the country, pay no taxes to the Government thereby crippling development expenditure, take away the rights of the labour and capture our markets. Thus no land would henceforth be given for MNCs and SEZs.
- (iv) All the proposed industrial projects, SEZs which hamper Agriculture of Kalinganagar, Orissa and India, which are to be located in cultivable lands and forest lands, which are to be established by MNCs and all SEZ projects in Kalinganagar, Orissa and India should be shelved forthwith. Wherever land has been acquired for these purposes it should be returned to the peasants.
- (v) All agreements/policies/programmes that have been finalised to marketise water and handover the water resources of Sukinda, Orissa and India to private companies should be scrapped. Stop with immediate effect drawl of water by different industries that ignore the priority of water allocation for the entire population and irrigation from the rivers of Mahanadi, Bramhani and other rivers of Orissa and India.
- (vi) Immediately stop all police and state repression on those who are fighting to protect their lands, homes and livelihoods and withdraw all cases filed against them. Immediately release all people who have been wrongfully confined by the police and stop further repression on tribals, dalits and other people across the country.
- (vii) Strengthen Other Anti-Displacement Movements: Today's Janasamabesh expresses full solidarity with the Kalinganagar Movement and the several anti-displacement movements across Orissa and India and vows to take effective steps to strengthen all these movements. By mentioning the names of a few anti-displacement movements as has been given below all those who are present in this Janasamabesh feel extremely proud:
  - ✿ The Anti-Posco Movement (in Kujang block of Jagatsingpur district, Orissa) going on for the last one year have been successful in preventing officials entering into the villages proposed to be displaced,
  - ✿ The Kashipur (Rayagada district, Orissa) Movement against Utkal Alumina that has been going on for the last 13 years, without being cowed down by severe police repression and the tricks of the company has revived once again,
  - ✿ The Anti-Vedanta Movement in Lanjigarh (Kalahandi District) has recently begun to receive support from different quarters and people are organising themselves to vehemently oppose any move to mine bauxite in the hills of Niyamagiri and the nearby hills,
  - ✿ The Lower Suktel anti-dam movement, the several anti-sponge iron factory movements in the districts

- of Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Dhenkanal, Anugul, and other districts are beginning to gather momentum,
- ✿ In the Keonjhar district movements against the large-scale iron ore mining projects and the proposed Mittal steel plant project are beginning to take shape,
  - ✿ Movements against several bauxite mining and Alumina projects proposed in the districts of Koraput, Rayagada and others are beginning to take shape,
  - ✿ Movements against the proposed private port in the mouth of river Subarnarekha in Baleswar district and the proposed Vedanta University on the seacoast near Puri are beginning to take shape,
  - ✿ The peoples' movement against the TATA car project in Singur, West Bengal promises significant gains for the anti-displacement movements across India,
  - ✿ The Dadri movement in Uttar Pradesh against the power plant by the Reliance has led to a situation where the land continues to be occupied by the peasants,
  - ✿ The Anti-displacement movement in Sangrur district in Punjab, the anti-displacement movements in the Raigadh district of Maharashtra (against SEZ of Reliance) and several such movements in Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh are beginning to make an impact.
  - ✿ The anti-displacement movement of Gangavaram in Visakhapatnam district of A.P has demonstrated peoples' resolve against displacement for establishment of a private port.
2. **Resolve For Action:** All Political Forces, Mass Organisations, Mass Movements and over 10,000 persons present in today's Janasamabesh agree to the above statements and the objective of "Saving Agriculture and Livelihoods, No Cultivable Lands and Forest lands to Industry and No Lands for MNCs and SEZs" and also agree to jointly take actions towards implementing such slogans. The Bistapan Birodhi Janmanch, Sukinda shall take the required initiative both at the state and the All India level to launch a joint struggle in support of all the above-mentioned demands, the objectives and the slogans. All Political Forces, Mass Organisations and Mass Movements present today in the Bistapan Birodhi Sankalpa Janasamabesh on 2nd January 2007 at Bira Bhumi (Ambagadia), Kalinga Nagar shall make full endeavor in this regard."

### **Kalinga Nagar : Martyrdom of Adivasis Put Pro-Imperialist Development Policy in the Dock**

On the 23rd of May 2006, the Mahila Committee of the Bisthapan Virodhi Jan Manch, Sukinda, held an Anti-Displacement Women's Conference. The Vir Bhumi located just off the National Highway 200, wherein lies the cremation ground of the martyrs of the agitation, was their backdrop. The NH road strip between the tree trunk blockades placed about 100 meters apart on the National Highway was their stage. Here gathered some 3000 women of the area to hear the Jan Manch Sukinda Mahila committee leaders and women invitees from other organizations, speak against the policies where displacement is sold by rulers in the name of development.

They nodded gravely in approval as women of their area and some other areas vowed not to be alienated from the land where the bones of their forefathers lie buried. In rapt attention they heard women tell of the problems faced by displaced women: the loss of community security, the ugly face of cultural degradation due to exploitation by the alien society they are thrown into, loss of identity and of livelihood. It is significant that of the women participating from the villages of the area the largest number were drawn from Gobar Ghati Colony: the rehabilitation colony set up by Jindal Co. in the area for those families displaced by

Jindal Co. in Kalinga Nagar. What Kalinga Nagar struggle has done? The Kalinga Nagar struggle has challenged the pro-imperialist, pro-comprador capitalist policies of the Central and State Govts.

Several important issues have emerged from this struggle. The struggle has brought out the bitter experiences with displacement and rehabilitation of tribals in Orissa and in the rest of India. Displaced in the country, especially tribals, have reached some conclusions. Not only are ruling classes of the country not serious about rehabilitation of the displaced, actually they are incapable of it, The Adivasis of Kalinga Nagar were initially not against the setting up of industries in the area. But the years of experience of displacement has filled their lives with bitterness. They were doled out promises of development but only unemployment, helplessness, and destitution fell to their share.

The Bisthapan Virodhi Janmanch (Sukinda) was established towards 2004 end. It was the result of the new consciousness among the tribals of the area. An extremely important aspect of the Kalinga Nagar struggle is that, in effect, it has challenged the industrial policy born out of the pro-imperialist new economic policies being implemented by the Central and State Govts. Enormous license is being given to multinational

companies and comprador business houses for loot of cheap labour and natural resources. For their profits, the land and livelihood of lakhs of tribals and of poor are being snatched away. The mineral resources rich adivasi areas of Orissa are a special target for their rapacious eyes. Alongside, these areas have become important battlefields against these policies. The struggles in Kalinga Nagar and other areas of Orissa have countrywide importance and effect. These struggles are important parts of the struggles of people of India for new democratic revolution. The Kalinga Nagar agitation has exposed the hoax of development perpetrated by the ruling classes, which is in fact only for imperialist capital and a handful of compradors at the cost of the common people. How did Kalinga Nagar struggle develop? On 2nd January 2006, the Naveen Patnaik Govt of Orissa gave a new year gift to the tribals and displaced of Orissa. Police fired on tribals opposing Tata Company's attempts to set up a boundary wall in Kalinga Nagar situated in Sukinda area of Jajpur District. 12 Adivasis were martyred and 35 others injured by police firing one of the injured died three months later at AIIMS (New Delhi) taking the toll upto 13. One policeman was also the target of the Adivasis angered at the martyrdoms and police firing. The police tried to falsely paint the entire incident as a police response to the targeting of a policeman by the Adivasis. However the Collector was forced to admit that it was the police which fired on Adivasis protesting against land encroachment. The firing on 2nd Jan 2006 was no accident but was the well thought out plan of the BJD-BJP Govt. of Naveen Patnaik to teach a lesson to the displaced Adivasis. Due to the opposition of the displaced advasis, two months earlier also, the Tata Company's programme to build a boundary wall had been foiled.

The presence of over 400 police personnel besides the SP and Dist Magistrate at the site on 2nd January itself demonstrates that the events were a well thought out conspiracy. On 9th May 2005, at the occasion of Bhumi Pujan on the Adivasis land in Kalinga Nagar by Maharashtra Seamless the police had so brutally lathi-charged the displaced Adivasis that they fled to the surrounding forests and mountains to hide. 25 women, children and one old man were arrested by the police while two children and two old men died of exposure and injuries while hiding in the mountains. In the events of 2nd January 2006, a major example of police barbarity was also the fact that of the bodies handed over to the people by the police, the hands of six were cut off, some upto the wrists and some including part of the forearms. It is also a fact that one of the killed had only one bullet injury and that on the leg. This lends credence to many reports that some of the injured became victims of later police brutality. Similarly the people say that the six dead were alive when police took them away from the area of protest.

The police barbarity on 2nd January severely angered the common people of Orissa. People picked up the six mutilated bodies and marched to the police station. Seeing the police arrangement at the police station, the tribals blocked the National Highway leading to Paradip port by placing the bodies on it. Thousands of people collected from surrounding villages. The roadblock thus set up on 2nd Jan 2006 persists till today, and this has become an important aspect of the Kalinga Nagar struggle. The displaced Adivasis have courageously showed an example of people's struggle against police repression. An important point is that the struggling people did not get at all panicky by the police repression, and their morale has not dropped. Rather their desire to strengthen their struggle has only been intensified by it. The significance of the Kalinga Nagar struggle is not in the police repression but in the militant resistance by the people with determination. The state was engulfed in outpourings against the police firing. The state capital Bhubaneswar, Cuttak and other cities witnessed protests. Along with tribals and displaced, students, youth and well known intellectuals came forward against this barbaric act of the state administration. At that time rumblings began even within the BJP and there was talk of withdrawing support to the Naveen Patnaik Govt though its aim was to save the BJP from becoming a target of people's anger. On 7th Jan. Cong. and other opposition parties called for a statewide bandh. The bandh success was unprecedented and clearly bespoke that people of the state oppose the anti-people industrialization policy of the Naveen Patnaik Govt. CPI (ML) New Democracy also organized big demonstrations in Parlekmundi, Saroda and other places. However the Cong. and ruling class opposition parties tried to limit the issue to a protest against police repression.

Under the impact of the Kalinga Nagar agitation, movements of displaced people began in other parts of Orissa. People displaced from land acquired for the Rourkela steel plant are also desperate for rehabilitation. Their organization blocked all the roads leading to the plant demanding that they be either returned their land or they be given employment. Their demands were immediately attended to, to keep the fires of Kalinga Nagar from spreading. Displaced from Mahanadi coalfields disrupted work in the coalfields and demanded return of their lands. Struggles of the displaced advanced in Koraput and Sundergarh.

On 20th January, the Jan Sangharsh Samnvaya Kendra organized a rally and mass meeting at Bhubaneswar to focus on the issue of displacement in the name of development, along with other issues raised by Kalinga Nagar struggle. Over 8000 people participated in the programme, where the mass meeting was addressed by speakers from CPI (ML) New Democracy, CPI (ML) Kanu Sanyal, Daman Virodhi Manch, Jan Pratirodh Manch, Anti Imperialist Front, Bisthapan Virodhi Jan Manch Sukinda, Prakritik Sampada

Suraksha Samiti of Kashipur, Samajwadi Jan Parishad and other organizations. On 21st January 2006 a big oath taking ceremony was organized at Veer Bhoomi; the point off the National Highway to Paradip where the bodies of the martyrs were cremated.

On 20th and 21st January the revolutionary organizations working in Orissa and adivasi organizations came together in the programmes to raise the issues of tribals and displaced and to outline the way for struggles of tribals to forge ahead separate from ruling class parties. This disturbed not only the ruling BJD-BJP combine but also parties like Congress. Taking up several mass programmes like cycle marches, mass meetings to propagate their views and demands, the tribals organized as Bisthapan Virodhi Jan Manch Sukinda in Kalinga Nagar are firm on refusing displacement in the name of development.

The Govt. of Naveen Patnaik has been continually prevaricating and initially announced that no talks would be held if the roadblock was not lifted. This was not accepted by the Bisthapan Virodhi Jan Manch Sukinda. Being utterly sure that any attempt to forcibly remove the obstruction would be met by determined and fearless resistance which would only leave the option of a blood bath by the state, eventually Naveen Patnaik Govt.

agreed for unconditional talks in May 2006. 25 representatives of the Bisthapan Virodhi Manch Sukinda participated in the talks, which were led by Naveen Patnaik himself. Since their demands for suspension of officials and withdrawal of cases were not agreed to, the roadblock was not called off. The Govt. agreed to returning the cut hands but in a cruel joke offered some rotting pieces of flesh in place of 'cut hands preserved for identification', which was turned down by the representatives and which has only fanned the anger of the local people. Meanwhile Orissa, where the state Govt. is on a binge of handing over land and resources for mining industries to MNCs and corporates, is aflush with anger.

Those villages threatened to be displaced by the POSCO Steel Giant have organized against any attempt by the company to actually occupy land. Displaced of Hirakud dam and of industries and mines dotting the state are beginning to make themselves heard and felt. All progressive, democratic and revolutionary forces must extend support to the Kalinga Nagar agitation and must build similar agitations in Orissa and in other parts of India against anti-people displacement policies in the name of development.

*(Courtesy: New Democracy; 31st July 2006)*

#### Action 2007

#### **An Appeal for National People's Movement 2007**

People's Struggles against Displacement, Privatization and Monopolization of resources have been sought to be crushed by a Government-Bureaucracy-Corporate nexus ably supported by Media megaphones - that justifies, rationalizes and builds ground for - and creates an atmosphere for such machinations. The issues of survival, security, sovereignty are at the core of varied action by citizens, may it be struggle or reconstruction.

The rare pro-people legislation such as RTI, NREGA have sought to be diluted or sabotaged. And the promised ST (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2005 has been put on the back burner. The Comprehensive Acts for unorganised workers as also the displaced are yet to see the light. Within 2 years of election and some pro-poor noises the UPA Govt. has started following the path of the NDA's "India Shining"... calling it "India Growing" with no agenda of justice. The governments in power in all the states are being challenged through the struggle between the people & the State with each of its organs changing face -turning against the poor.

Death & Displacement take place at an even more vigorous pace and cruel manner as evidenced by the farmers' suicides in Maharashtra, Kerala and the killings in Orissa.

The need of the hour is that all Peoples' Movements and mass-based organisations bring the Govt. and policy-makers to account through a strong, counting and radical mass action on a few basic, commonly agreed issues in Delhi and at the State level.

Our strategies will have to be novel and effective. Our action is to be indefinite & evolve into a series of responses all over the country. We must not allow State machinery to ignore and sideline our protest as usual.

Activists representing various alliances working with Farmers, Farm-Workers, Fisher people, Unorganized Workers, Trade Unions, Adivasis, Urban Displaced and prominent individuals met over two days in Delhi to brain storm and chalk out a continuing agitational Action Plan to resist the onslaught on the poor and toiling masses across the country. The onslaught that has myriad forms and is sought to be perpetrated in multiple locations displaces, dis-employs, dispossesses and dehumanizes the common people to favour a select few. It may be in form of land acquired forcibly at much below market rates for SEZs, or destruction of slums or removal of vendors in the name of JNURM, or the killing of adivasis trying to protect their lands in Kalinganagar or other places. The same is also resulting in the suicides by farmers whose economy as well as dignity is at stake. Same is the situation of dalits & minorities.

*National Alliance of Peoples' Movements*

## **Singur : Peasantry is Fighting Revisionists' Use of State Terror to Implement Tata's Brief**

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Nine hundred ninety seven acres of multicrop land in Singur area of Hoogly district (West Bengal) is the arena where an exposure of those who mouth leftist slogans while very much being representatives of ruling classes, is on and much more effectively than lengthy theoretical discourses. It is one more arena where peasants of India are giving a fight to forcible displacement from agriculture and from their lands. It is an arena which proves that all sections of ruling classes, wherever in power, are willing to go all out to act as brokers of Corporates and MNCs, against the interests of the peasantry and of agriculture.

Nine hundred ninety seven acres of multicrop agricultural land are being acquired under the hated, colonial Land Acquisition Act 1894 from a peasantry who is resisting the acquisition. The explanations being offered by the CPM led Govt. of West Bengal as well as PBMs of CPM through newspaper articles are the same as those of Govts. in other parts of the country. They don't answer anything, just like the answers of the BJD-BJP Govt. of Orissa about Kalinganagar. CPM led WB govt. and CPM spokespersons have all failed to explain why Land Acquisition Act has been used by the state govt. to acquire land for a private corporate house. If, as Budhadeb Bhattacharya asserts, a one lakh car is a peoples car, can this be accepted as the CPM definition of who are the 'people' of the country for whom their 'people's democracy' is targeted? It effectively knocks out the entire landless, small and perhaps even middle peasantry, and the vast sections of working class.

CPM led West Bengal Govt. explains that it has given high compensation for the land- 9 lakhs per acre for monocrop and 12 lakhs per acre for two crop land. Instead of working on the land throughout the year, the money can be shut in the bank and the only 'work' required is to withdraw the interest. Is this the way the peasantry looks at land and agriculture? What about the people's contention that Singur land is multicrop land and the known tendency of all govts. to undervalue lands during acquisition? What if the peasantry do not wish to give up their lands for a Tata project, regardless of amount of compensation? Whose 'private' rights will the CPM led Govt. support, that of the peasants to their land or of the Tatas to beckon up what they choose through hired servitors- CPM led W. Bengal Govt. has already chosen, and is playing the role of Tata's goons to the hilt.

While the CPM led West Bengal Govt. claims that the Govt. has received consent letters for the

acquisition of 950 acres of land from the peasantry and the owners of the remaining 47 acres can be 'rehabilitated' (not left alone), the Jami Rakha Committee of Singur has contested this. Reports cite a figure of 464 acres where farmers are yet to accept compensation. Will the Govt. like to answer if 20,000 police and thousands of other Tata guards (read CPM cadres) were needed to flood Singur, sequestered in the area and warded off by Sec. 144 from surrounding areas, to forcibly fence merely 47 acres? Was the rape and murder of Tapashi Mullik, an 18 year old activist of Jami Rakha Committee necessary to bring to heel only the landowners of 47 acres? Why is the CPM led Govt. not allowing leaders of other organizations to enter the area and hear from the people that they had consented to Budhadeb's fancy 'industrialization'? Or is CPM afraid that the so-called consent will vanish into thin air if the curfew like conditions are lifted and the people left free to air their real feelings? Why are the CPM leaders so afraid of the people who they claim have voluntarily given away their lands? If it was so, why did CPM resort to using Land Acquisition Act which does not give the people the right to say no? It is probably too late in the day to expect the revisionist chieftains to be bothered about growing food insecurity in the country and not to hand over multicrop land to Tatas.

Though food availability in this land of vast population is steadily declining, revisionist leaders like their counterparts of other ruling class parties look forward to their place under imperialist sun. Their regime is to grant relief to the MNCs and corporates and destitution to peasants and workers. This is their new Marxism devoid of all traces of pro-people 'dogmatism'.

CPM led West Bengal Govt. claims that by giving the 400 sharecroppers a share of the money for the land (obviously only to the registered ones) and five years of consolidated minimum wage to agricultural workers (reportedly 1500 come over annually from Burdwan to work on these lands throughout the year) it has fulfilled its commitment towards the people. Would it care to answer, where do the displaced go? Will these newly born homeless, deprived of employment not add to the army of unemployed and underemployed? Will their lives not face social uprooting? And by the way, why do the 'Left' Front leaders extend support to tribal protesters at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi who demand 'land for land'?

**The Singur Jami Rakha Committee was formed locally in Singur by the villagers to fight back**

**attempts of the State Govt. to forcibly acquire land. While some might have accepted compensation, specially absentee owners, there is large section which is fighting the acquisition. This much is clear firstly from the extent of repression and isolation which the West Bengal Govt. used to force fencing and which it is using to defend it. So many local people need not have been arrested under Section 307 if only a tiny fraction of land was being disputed. It is the widespread opposition of the people to the acquisition which is prompting Trinamool leadership to take interest in this struggle. It is a fact that Trinamool, a ruling class party, is the dominant force in the area and in the Jami Rakha Committee. All ruling class parties support the pro-imperialist new economic policies, but the widespread opposition of the people to displacement is prompting some of them to join the struggle like Trinamool in Singur. The first attempt by Tata to survey his 'promised lands' had ended in a fiasco for Tata who was gheraoed by the villagers and made to promise not to return, obviously a patently false promise like Tata's other promises to bring benefits to the people. So now the CPM led WB Govt.'s apparatus and forces have gone in his stead. What West Bengal 'Left' Front Govt. has done in Singur in service of Tata is in no way less than how the BJD-BJP Govt. of Orissa worked for the same corporate house in Kalinganagar or Mulayam Singh gov't. for Ambani in Dadri.**

The Govt. crackdown on the farmers of Singur began on Sept. 26 '06 when policemen flooded the area against a dharna at the BDO office. In the lathicharge there, one villager, young Raj Kumar Bhul, succumbed to injuries. A large number of people sustained injuries and the police chased the people, beating them. A month later, a four member commission of Mahasweta Devi, Medha Patkar, Dipankar Chakravorty and Malay Sengupta held a public hearing and indicted W. Bengal Govt. for use of excessive force against the protesters. They also pointed out that the land records of the Govt. of West Bengal are old and do not correctly reflect the current picture regarding the nature of land, which is multicrop land. It unequivocally condemned the "massive police action" on "squatting peaceful farmer families" at Singur BDO office on Sept. 26, 2006, and said "Minimum legal procedure of use of force to disperse assemblies of people have not been followed and even the relevant directives of the Supreme Court have

wantonly been violated." They called for an enquiry by an agency other than police and CID into the conduct of the police with the persons taken into custody.

On 02.12.06 severe police repression was unleashed on the villagers of Khaserberi. The police with the help of CPI(M) cadres carried out severe repression by entering the houses of the leaders of the Krishi Jami Rakhsa Committee . Those houses were specifically targeted who have declined to give up their land. The entire people of the country witnessed the barbaric act of the police beating up of the activists of the movement which reminded of the police beating on the workers of Honda at Gurgaon. The police went berserk firing tear gas shells, rubber bullets, breaking doors, entering bathrooms and breaking sanitary pans and even kicking the food which was being prepared at homes. A total of 48 people were arrested out of which 16 were women including a 65 year old woman. Four of these people were seriously injured due to police repression and were treated at Imambara Govt. hospital under police supervision. It is alleged that torture by the police continued in the jails also. Case under sec 307 i.e conspiracy of murder was made against those arrested. Besides cases for illegal gathering, resisting work of gov't. officials etc charges were also framed against them.

on 08.12.06 police repression was again on full flow when they mercilessly beat up journalists covering a Singur march. The police gheraoed the journalists of the print and electronic media covering the incident. They then were mercilessly beaten up. Cameras of the journalists of ETV, Doordarshan and TARATV were broken by the police. The journalists were put on the ground and kicked by the police. Several other journalists were also injured.

Instead of enquiring into the death of the village youth or taking steps to withdraw the false FIRs lodged on Sept. 26, the West Bengal Govt. pressed ahead with forcible land acquisition. In the last week of November 2006 a massive police force was concentrated in Singur and entry of people into the area checked. On December 1, '06, Section 144 was imposed in the entire area, 20,000 policemen flooded it along with CPM cadres in the alias of security guards and forcible fencing was carried out. Newspapers carried photographs of protesting peasants; alongwith the 20,000 police, the Sec. 144 which remained in place for weeks, the heinous murder and rape of local 18 year old activist Tapashi Mullik- all this hardly substantiates CPM's contention of a willing peasantry bending over backward to be displaced and unemployed for the sake of CPM-Tata's 'people's car'.

*The Maha Mumbai Special Economic Zone project of Reliance faces resistance from residents of villages which may be acquired for it.*

CHIRNER village has a history of resistance. On September 25, 1930, local people staged a "jungle satyagraha" here against the British when they were denied their right to collect firewood. Nine people were killed in police firing, including a mamlatdar (district official) who refused to give orders to fire. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar fought the case for the satyagrahis.

Once again, Chirner is witnessing a fight. But this time, the residents are not confronting the British empire. They are fighting against an Indian company - Mukesh Dhirubhai Ambani's Reliance Industries Limited.

What the company wants to set up is not very different from the East India Company's trading zones. Reliance wants to develop a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Chirner. **An SEZ is an enclave where no taxes are collected, there are no labour laws and there is no local government - on land taken for a pittance. That is the Maha Mumbai SEZ project.**

It will be Mumbai's satellite city spread over 35,000 acres (1 acre is 0.4 hectare) - one-third the size of the metropolis. **Since the government has cleared Reliance's request for it to be the special planning authority, the company will have complete control over the development of the entire area.** With land prices shooting up, undeveloped areas outside the city are the next big booty for real estate developers. Before anyone could lay their hands on it, Reliance has gobbled up the entire stretch from Navi Mumbai to Dharamtar creek. And the government is acting as its real estate agent. **It will acquire 45 villages for the Reliance project.**

"Money comes and goes. Land never leaves a person's hand. That's why we won't let them take our land. We are self-sufficient," says Praful Kharpatil, a local leader. **"It won't create employment for us. The SEZ will employ only highly educated people. They will make us security guards or peons, and won't let us enter the gates. After all the development that has already taken place here, graduates are working as loaders in the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) container warehouses. So isn't it better to have your own land?"**

SEZs are being hyped as our pathway to prosperity. Maha Mumbai is supposed to be the largest private SEZ in the world. **"The company would not have been able to buy such a large chunk of land in the open market, so the government had to acquire the land for them. This is what happens when planners are more excited about a project than**

**people," said a government official.**

Most of those whose land will be acquired are Agris and Kolis, traditional farmers and fisherfolk. "We were ousted from Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. Where are we to go? Can you see us anywhere in this picture?" asked D.K. Patil, pointing to the glossy SEZ brochure cover with skyscrapers, an airplane and a golfer. "We won't get jobs here. There's an Agri saying: Mumbai tumchi, Bhaandi ghasa aamchi [Mumbai is yours, but you will wash our dishes]. That's all they will make us do."

After learning the hard way through the CIDCO acquisitions, the local people are demanding more than just a job assurance. "We should get a share in the business. We don't want to be serving but owning businesses. They can train us to manage businesses like warehousing on our properties," said Jeevan Gavan, a Zilla Parishad member from Uran. Others are asking for a share of Reliance's lease rent or shares in the company so that they have a source of regular income.

**In the 1980s, CIDCO acquired land from 95 villages displacing about 30,000 families to develop Navi Mumbai. Then too, villagers fought for a better deal. After an agitation in which two persons were killed in police firing, the government agreed to increase the rate from Rs.15,000 an acre to Rs.30,000, and agreed to return 12.5 per cent of the developed land back to the owner. It also promised jobs to every family.**

**"The state didn't deliver on any of its assurances. We got only Rs.15,000. Very few got jobs. They didn't give back 12.5 per cent of the land. They had also promised salt-pan workers 40 square metres. We are still fighting for that land. They have left us as beggars," said Dharma Patil (69), a salt worker from Agroli village in Navi Mumbai.**

There were not as many takers for the Navi Mumbai project as was expected. Several plots of land were lying unused. That is why CIDCO has sold a lot of it to Reliance and has become a 26 per cent partner in the Navi Mumbai part of the SEZ. "We want industry but not without labour laws or job security. We don't want bonded labour," says Sanjay Thakur, a leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

**An SEZ is a duty-free enclave considered foreign territory for trade and financial purposes. If you buy goods from an SEZ, you have to pay import duties. Under the newly formed SEZ Act, companies in the zone are granted huge concessions in customs duties, sales tax and even income tax. Mukesh**

**Ambani has even got the permission to be the special planning authority for the SEZ. His company will plan the development and create infrastructure for the area, including water and power supply. There will be no local government. A development commissioner will govern it.**

"It will be a new city, not just an SEZ, and will generate 25 lakh jobs," Chaware claimed. "There will be one million residents and exports are estimated at \$15 billion in 10 years. We are investing \$5 billion in infrastructure, including a dam and a power plant." The government has cleared 26 SEZs across the country, hoping to emulate those in China. At present there are eight SEZs functioning in India.

**But neither Reliance nor the government was willing to give any cost-benefit analysis of the project. What are the costs and losses - economic, social and environmental? Are the gains worth it?**

An internal assessment of the Finance Ministry has estimated that the country will forgo about Rs.90,000 crores in direct and indirect taxes over the next four years because of the SEZs across the country.

A large part of this loss is because export units that are now paying tax will shift to these areas ("Why the SEZ policy needs a rethink", The Hindu Business Line, May 26). Many wonder whether the pipedreams will actually translate into large-scale investment or is it just a real estate grab? The SEZ model is now being questioned even in China because it creates huge economic disparities rather than broad-based development.

That is the brand of 'progress' that the people of Chirner are also challenging. "Our vegetables and fruits get the best price in the market. Why should we sell our land?" asks Kharpatil. "We fought the British. Now we will fight our own government." Chirner village is preparing for round two.

### **Indian villagers protest site of Arcelor Mittal plant**

Hundreds of villagers, who fear losing their land, have filed petitions protesting the site of a 8.7-billion dollar Arcelor Mittal steel project in eastern India, officials said.

The world's largest steelmaker, Arcelor Mittal, on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2007 signed an agreement with the Orissa government to build its first Indian steel plant in the eastern state.

The plant will be located on a 8,000 hectare (19,768 acre) site in mineral-rich Keonjhar district, 300 kilometres (238 kilometres) northwest of capital Bhubaneswar.

But residents of 27 farming villages who fear displacement have petitioned district authorities against the project, a local official confirmed.

"The villagers are scared of an impending land takeover with meager compensation. They fear that as has been happening elsewhere, their lands will be snatched away from them cheaply," said a district official, asking not to be named.

Some 500 villagers demonstrated against the Arcelor Mittal project on Friday, one day after the agreement was signed.

"Why is the state government always keen to establish factories in agricultural lands? There's no dearth of barren patches in Orissa," said Bijoy Mohapatra, leader of the Orissa Peoples' Forum, a provincial political party backing the protests.

"The people are not against industries. But they oppose it due to an irrational and unjust rehabilitation initiative followed by the Orissa government."

Orissa, which has a quarter of India's iron ore reserves, has witnessed a rush by both Indian and international companies to invest in large steel plants there. India currently produces about 35 million tonnes of steel annually.

But the road for some has been bumpy with South Korean steel giant POSCO, which signed an agreement in June last year to build a 12-million-tonne steel plant in the state, yet to be allotted land because of farmer protests.

An Arcelor Mittal executive said after the signing that his group will try to address local concerns as it sets up the project, which the company says will create 5,500 direct and 15,000 indirect jobs.

"We are aware of protests against mega-industries in Orissa but our approach is different and we will certainly satisfy the society and take all possible measures to involve the local population," said Malay Mukherjee, who signed the memorandum of understanding with the state government.

The plant, which is expected to take almost five years to be fully operational, is slated to eventually produce 12 million tonnes of steel a year.

## **No Displacement; No Rehabilitation; Only People's Development**

*The following is a press Note released in a Press Conference on 21st Jan 2007 soon after the Anti-Displacement Conclave in Ranchi, Jharkhand attended by scores of organisations from several states.*

Today the vast sections of the people have been subjected to the worst kind of socio-economic crisis in the name of development. Today more and more tribals, dalits, minorities and the poorest of the poor are brutally removed from their forests, fields, lands, homes and cultures. They are being evicted in thousands from their lives and livelihoods. The powerful imperialist forces and their lackeys in the sub-continent are on their bid to capture the natural resources and perpetrate ruthless exploitation of labour. The people are rendered defenceless in the process of the **dreaded Displacement, Disorganisation, Destitution and Decimation.**

It is at a time that the need to unite and bring together all the fighting forces at the ground level against all forms of displacement under a single platform was mooted. And hence this preparatory meeting being held in Ranchi on the 20, 21st of January, 2007. In this meeting, representatives of organizations and individuals from various states such as Jharkhand, Bengal, Haryana, Orissa, Delhi, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh deliberated on the strategies to carry forward the movement against displacement at the sub-continent level. **'No to Displacement in any form'**, was the firm resolve of the Meet.

The loot of the Indian people started after the advent of British rule with the super-imposition of the principle of Eminent Domain that virtually extinguished the natural right of the communities over their habitat and livelihood. This imperialist paradigm continued even post-1947 and despite the adoption of a new constitution. The special provisions for recognition and honouring the tribal people's right under the constitution has been blatantly ignored that has sharpened the resentment of the people against the exploitative state.

After the creation of the new states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Uttarakhand at the instance of the imperialists this loot of the resources of the people has been facilitated under the new regime of globalization and liberalization. The surfeit of MOUs running over millions and millions of dollars has been executed without taking the people into confidence. The Anti-displacement meet rejected this development with disdain it deserves in the spirit of Tana Bhagat's Resolve against the British authority "Land is created by God, We are God's children, Pray, from where has the state appeared". **The Anti-**

**Displacement Meet in Ranchi called on the people to defend their habitat and their livelihood resources against the imperialists and the servile state.**

While farmers who are committing suicide with agriculture being rendered increasingly non-viable, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are being set up throughout the country as 'deemed foreign territories.' These are devices to divert people's attention as the logic of a more brutalized expropriation of the rural economy is ruthlessly unfolding. **The Anti-Displacement Meet called for the rejection of the National Agricultural Policy 2000 that has once again ignored the land reforms agenda and unabashedly embraced the corporatisation of agriculture.**

**The Anti-Displacement Meet rejected the entire scheme of Displacement-Rehabilitation.** Rehabilitation is an illusion that is used to co-opt the top-ten by the imperialists. Even the affected people of Bhakhra, the 'first temple of modern India' still awaits for their much-promised rehabilitation.

Extensive lands in Hatia and Rourkela had already been acquired that are without use. Let the State first place before the people the status of the already affected whose number runs into crores. Hisab Do (Give Account) is the call to the state before it decides to take even an inch of land that is the inheritance of the people. Let the state prepare 'Rehabilitation Plans' for these people and come clean with concrete results. For the people of India, the story Post-1947 can be summed up as 'an unbroken history of broken promises, dysfunctional programmes and blatant violation of laws, constitution and human rights.'

Dr. BD Sharma (Bharat Jan Andolan, KN Pandit (Trade union leader), B P Kesari (Jharkhand Vistapan Virodhi Samanwyaya Samiti Co-ordinator), Shashi Bhushan Pathak (Civil Rights Activist), D Barla (Journalist & Anti-displacement Activist), Rashmi Kathyayan (Advocate), Tridib Ghosh, and several others from various organisations participated in the discussion of the draft note on displacement. Earlier GN Saibaba (Revolutionary Democratic Front) presented the concept note on displacement that was to set the debate regarding the strategies to be undertaken in fighting the complex and challenging question of displacement that is affecting various

sections and peoples of the sub-continent.

Around 100 organisations from different parts of the country and various intellectuals have expressed their consent to actively be part of the Movement against Displacement. These include organizations from Orissa, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, the North East, Haryana, Kerala and Delhi.

The Anti-Displacement Meet while stressing the need to bring all the struggling organizations and the people under a single platform have given a RANCHI CHALO call towards convening the First Conference and Massive Rally on the 22, 23 March 2007. Towards this, a preparatory committee of all the participating organizations and a working committee to convene the conference and rally was also formed in the Anti-Displacement Meet.

### **Urgent Appeal: Two Lakh People, Adivasis and Farmers From the Narmada Valley Cry Halt to Destruction**

It is more than shocking that Gujarat, in connivance with the other states- M.P, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, and with no monitoring from the centre, has raised the height of Sardar Sarovar dam to 122 metres. They are also building a foundation for the gates to be put up between 122 & 138 mts, even when there are at least 35,000 families ( 1.75 lakh people) still residing in the submergence area of 122 mts & more than 40,000 families (2 lakh people) in the area to be affected at 138.68 mts, the full height.

The struggle of the last 21 years and the long battle in Delhi (March to May 2006), the much trumpeted survey by the PM appointed Shungulu committee (oversight group), our critique of it, is known to you all. When the Shungulu committee's report was submitted to the supreme court, the prime minister himself had stated through a report that dam construction (stopped at 119 mts, in july) would not commence without a review of resettlement and rehabilitation, in October.

No real review of the ground level situation was ever carried out. The R&R subgroup of Narmada Control Authority (inter-state) has not visited the valley since 2000, till date. The NCA chaired by the secretary, water resources at the centre, does not monitor R&R. All false reports, fake registries showing land purchase, incomplete record of oustees; betrayal & criminal act of submerging adivasi lands & houses in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra till 2006, is neither truthfully reported, nor taken cognisance of. Both Madhya Pradesh (with thousands – about 10,000 families eligible for land) and Maharashtra (at least 1000 and more adivasi families) not rehabilitated with cultivable, irrigable land, is violation of law, sc judgements, promises, propoganda and affidavits on oath. These governments do not even offer good, cultivable land and hundreds of adivasi families in Gujarat stand cheated due to bad, uncultivable land allotted.

It's a total betrayal and a clear message for all adivasis, farmers, fishworkers, labourers and urban poor to traders; all who are being promised rehabilitation only to be ousted, forcibly evicted in the name of development. While the lakhs of people in narmada valley who continue to stay put in the area to be flooded and already flooded, when the dam waters are far from being effectively utilized to satiate the thirst of the needy, when 40,000 crores worth sardar sarovar project is not proved to be the solution to Gujarat's water or M.P/ Maharashtra's power crisis, when crores of rupees worth compensation and R&R funds are pocketed by corrupt officials and leaders, the struggle has to continue, challenging no rehabilitation for sardar sarovar affected, asserting no more displacement.

Before all adivasis, large and small villages, townships, houses - pakka & kachcha, schools, dispensaries; temples & mosques; shops & markets; lakhs & lakhs of trees of neem, teak, mango, anjan, mahua, chironji, amla, ber, what not; best of agricultural land in nimad with record agri-produce (wheat, cotton, soya, sugarcane, papaya, banana, oranges & lemons, all fruits...) and in satpuda-vindhyas with jowar (millet), makkai (maize), sesame, hilly millets; everything in this oldest of the civilisations in the world, narmada valley, is drowned.

The submergence, you know, would be up to 214 kms long area (i.e. Mumbai to Nashik or Delhi to Agra and beyond)...and will bring devastation, not rehabilitation.

Do act with the urgency & commitment as ever.

*Narmada Bachao Andolan; January 2007*

## **This is Licence to Loot ... Hence Our Struggle**

*By: Medha Patkar*

Two editorials in the Indian Express (October 17 & 28, 2006) have interpreted my position on industrialisation and urbanisation as “opposition to not just economic modernisation” but also to the arrival of capital and technology in non-urban areas. Express wants all “rational and realist champions of India’s future” to come together to make their case — against ours!

Referring to some high profile agitators, the paper has argued common people should take non-agitatorist, credible options. These options, as I understand, are, first, giving away land for any and every kind of “industrialisation” and “urbanisation” — equivalent to “modernisation” and inevitable in a fast growing economy — and, second, accepting whatever comes by way of compensation. Farmers, activists should use the gains productively, Express says. Responding to what we do — empower people, question the new orthodoxy — Express raises an alarm: one editorial is headlined “India Bachao”. So it seems fair to conclude that Express has so much faith in industry and capital that it thinks the poor should seek them out and exchange their land.

**We think differently. There has never been so much opposition to urbanisation and industrialisation in India as there’s today. True, both were Nehruvian goals too. But there used to be a commitment to certain non-negotiables such as democracy and equity. Policy stands from the panchsheel (the tribal policy) to the panchayati raj reflected constitutional values, from which emerged certain rights. Our agrarian economy was to be supplemented and not replaced by industry. Agriculturists were to be both investors and beneficiaries. Of course, even then there were violations, deviations and aping the West. But these were questioned.**

Today there is neither any concern for balanced policies nor for distributive justice. Dalits, adivasis, farmers, labourers, especially those working in the unorganised/informal sector, are at the receiving end of urban renewals and industrial expansion. These people don’t know of the gigantic plans and the “impact” these plans will have on their life and livelihood till the projects become a fait accompli. There is then no space to intervene or contribute other ideas.

This is the case with the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (NURM) on the one hand and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) on the other. Both, especially the latter, are based on huge private investments. These plans, part of a neo-liberal agenda and informed by the arrogance of the market, are at the cost of the very sections of population who should have been the first to benefit. Farmers who are saying no to SEZs and have initiated struggles understand that their basic securities will be affected. True, some of

them are even otherwise compelled to commit suicide in certain regions. Yet the resource base they live on is valuable to them, even to small and marginal farmers. They demand and require a better thought out agricultural policy: market support, better storage facilities, appropriate local land and water harnessing measures and value addition through agro-industries apart from debt relief.

**The privileged who live far away from displacement sites may not know this but farmers, labourers, the urban and rural poor know what displacement entails. The past cannot be hidden, howsoever distortedly it may be presented by some in the media, or misrepresented by official monitoring agencies. Land-based rehabilitation was promised to Narmada oustees initially. The absolutely illegal option of cash in lieu of land is being imposed upon thousands of families. Thousands, especially the adivasis, protest this. Also a matter of record is that many, whether in Gujarat or Madhya Pradesh, are offered inferior quality lands. Whenever governments have had to stop work on the dam it was because truth was established — there are 40,000 families in the submergence area today — and truth was established only because of persistent struggle and Supreme Court directives.**

These lessons may escape those incapable of seriously engaging with development but not farmers in Dadri, Ghaziabad, Raigad, Singur and many other places. They are not ready to accept devastation in the name of development. Some sections of the elite, pro-market vested interests and certain media persons associated with these groups may take pleasure in the fact that some farmers in Singur or other venues of struggle can be lured or scared into accepting cash for land. These people are for commodification of land as well as of farming and everything associated with it. We are not.

We know that farmers who were paid in cash under the old Land Acquisition Act, 1894 mostly squandered the money or failed in their efforts to participate in the market. They became destitute. The state and society have a duty to protect the disadvantaged from market onslaughts.

The Express editorial and news story on Singur (October 28th) have distorted both the status and statistics related to land acquisition and compensation. The state industry minister’s own department data shows that the government has acquired all the land (997 acres) on paper through a one-sided process that did not involve obtaining consent. Out of this, farmers have received cheques for only 400-odd acres, that is 40 per cent of the acquired land. But all these cheques cannot be encashed since all ownership records are not updated. Express has also quoted the prices wrong. We have been officially told that the government’s own

estimate is that 10,000 families will be affected, including joint land-holders and labourers. The latter have not been officially recorded as yet and are not to be compensated. There was no queuing of farmers for cheques on the day (October 27) of our public hearing. This was falsely reported. One must ask will it have to be another Battle for Truth with the Indian Express, this time on Singur, which is not an SEZ but involves resource diversion, as was the case with Narmada?

That there is no state rehabilitation policy in West Bengal or any rehab plan for the Singur project-affected as yet — there's only cash compensation — that there was repression on the night of September 25, that such factors can damage the reputation of both the state government and the Tatas — why do Express editorials avoid any investigation of these issues and resort to propaganda?

**The issue is not just of displacement, which is of course serious; even the latest proposed National Rehabilitation Policy has nothing great to offer. One has to question the inevitability and justifiability of the state's plans. How can profit-making industrialists be granted the license to loot, tax free, when subsidy and support to farmers and 93 per cent of workers in the informal sector are denied?** When it comes to ensuring optimum wages for all and employment guarantee for not 100 but 365 days, our governments have a financial crunch. Why should the country then bear one and half lakh crore rupees revenue loss for SEZs? SEZs are not just deemed foreign territories; they are enclaves of exploitation within the country and amidst poverty.

How else can one describe compulsory acquisition and redistribution of large chunks of land, prime agricultural and preferred, adjacent to the cities, not in the interiors? In this, the largest democracy in the world, why should generations of old farmers submit and surrender their rich resources (although not properly evaluated even by market economists) when the sovereign Indian state continues to make use of a British legacy, the Land Acquisition Act, 1894?

If the state is for welfare, why is it afraid of a dialogue with people, who are not "subjects" but voter-citizens? As per the 73rd and 74th amendment of the Constitution, isn't it the right of communities, whether gram sabhas or basti sabhas, to be consulted — this also means seeking their consent — before plans are made to take away their livelihood? **Why can't communities or families who are required to invest their resources, following decisions made in Gandhinagar, Mumbai, Kolkata or Delhi, not ask these questions: who pays and who benefits; what is the acceptable limit of inequity between agriculture and industry; where are the guarantees that public purpose will be served and private purses won't be filled; is anyone doing a comparative analysis of livelihoods lost and new jobs created. Avoiding these only with a promise, a plan or a**

**new law will not work.**

There exists an alternative. It does not presume modernisation means Westernisation. It is not against using resources or ushering in technology. It grants communities rights to resources and it seeks their consent to any plan for reusing or redistributing those resources. Industrialisation like this won't kill industrious people, their skills and their capacities to harness resources. **We must think a hundred times before diverting our agricultural lands that are not only the basis for generating livelihoods, but also provide food security. Home industries, village industries and small industries with sustainable productive processes that counter the real threat of earth's resources being depleted within next five decades cannot be considered backward. The most modern technology will be chosen within the parameters of effective use of our manpower, not just efficiency. Large industry is not ruled out. But profit margins should be limited through strictest possible taxation for equity. Social and environmental impact mitigation should be made pre-conditions.**

This alternative is for equity, regional balance as well as for political sovereignty and freedom. It is for placing limits on the scale of corporate ambitions and on profits and wealth accumulation. This is not the kind of industrialisation or urbanisation adopted by the present rulers at the state and the Centre. And Ambanis, Mahindras, Tatas and Hiranandanis are not the common people in whose name the Constitution is written.

SEZs and urban renewal proposals are for vulgar profit, not for common people. So how can these policies not be seen as conspiracies by millions who are evicted and repressed? Mere Gandhigiri will not work. Hence the mass struggles, challenging the loot, the imperialism and colonisation within.

Against all odds and allegations, the battles have to continue. In Orissa, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra, the scale of diversion of agricultural land is more than one lakh acres in each state; in Bengal, the figure is in thousands of acres. Most of this is two-crop or multiple-crop land. Express doesn't think this is important either. The issue is not just of justice but food security. The fast-paced diversion of farmland will kill agriculture, destroy nature and create a crisis of survival. Neither FDI nor export-import feeds people or quenches thirst. Eight or 10 per cent GDP growth can't hide 50 per cent unemployment rates. The urban-industrial-global dreams being pursued are favouring the elites within and the profits to capital flow outside. Farmers can no more be betrayed by mere cash or promises of global markets. The distant and different cases of China and South America aren't relevant.

As a sovereign democracy let us strive for just, sustainable, indigenous alternatives. We stand and continue to strive for those.

## **The States : Profits Over People**

*By: Ali Kishore Patnaik*

*The attempts to suppress a people's movement against a mining project in southern Orissa led to the death of three tribal people in police firing.*

*Conflict over the mining of bauxite in the Kashipur region of Rayagada district in southern Orissa has taken a violent turn with the killing of three innocent tribal people. On December 16, two platoons of armed police entered Maikanch village in Kashipur block and opened fire at the residents. Abhilas Jhodia (25), Raghu Jhodia (18) and Jamudhar Jhodia (43) died and eight others sustained serious injuries.*

*Ever since the entry of multinational companies for bauxite mining and processing in 1993, the tribal people of Kashipur and Laxmipur blocks of Rayagada district, Dasmantpur block of Koraput district and Thuamulrampur of Kalahandi district have been apprehensive of displacement and loss of livelihood.*

Orissa is known for its rich mineral deposits. The assessed reserves of chromium and nickel ores and bauxite in the State constitute a substantial proportion of the total deposits of them in the country. Taking advantage of the process of liberalisation and the opening up of the economy, private companies set their sights on the Kashipur region, which has considerable concentration of bauxite. In the region, the Baphilimali hill is estimated to have a deposit of 1,957.3 lakh tonnes of bauxite, Kadingama li 914 lakh tonnes, and the Sasubo-humali hill 860 lakh tonnes. The Katuramali hill in nearby Thuamulrampur block has a deposit of 400 lakh tonnes. Utkal Alumina, a consortium of Indian Aluminium Company (INDAL) (now owned by HINDALCO, part of the Aditya Birla group), the Tatas (they pulled out in 1998), Hydro Aluminium of Norway (or Norsk Hydro) and ALCAN (Aluminium Canada), are in the forefront of the mining-related activities. The Orissa Mining Corporation, the State government organisation, has been sidelined in the process. In the case of Utkal Alumina, it is estimated that 1,750 hectares of land will be required for mining, the plant site, a township and dumping spots. Apart from this, a stretch of land approximately 20 km long and 50 metres wide will be required for conveyer and corridor maintenance. The entire project is 100 per cent export-oriented.

Ore would be mined from plateau tops in the areas. Just one plateau, Baphilimali in Kashipur block, has bauxite deposits in an area of about 10 sq.km. The crushed ore will be transported by a conveyer belt to the plant site.

Unaware of government rules, most of the tribal people do not register their land rights. In these areas land is broadly divided into two categories - forest and unsurveyed upland (Dongar). Upland constitutes about 60 per cent of the total land in tribal -dominated areas such as Rayagada, Koraput and Kondhamal. Such upland is considered unsuitable for cultivation and a record of right is not allowed in its case. Although the tribal people in the lowland areas own land, their rights are either not recorded or are recorded in the names of others. Illegal transactions of land are

common, and the tribal people are often at the receiving end.

Since the finalisation of the proposal, the Orissa government has actively tried to hand over the land to the companies. Government officials now say that the transfer of land has been made and that the tribal people have to vacate. Encouraged by the support from the State government and the local authorities, corporate houses claim that they are the real owners of the land.

Displacement of populations, loss of livelihood and damage to the environment and ecology of the region, which have been the consequences of mining and industrial activities, were kept hidden from the outside world or presented in a misleading manner.

Concerned over the prospect of having to leave their hearth and home, people started organising themselves. Road blockades, demonstrations and dharnas were organised in front of government offices at Kashipur and Rayagada. Survey teams of the companies were denied access to the area. Day and night vigil was maintained to prevent the entry of the government and company officials.

The responses of the tribal people were coordinated by organisations such as the Prakrutik Sampada Surakhya Parishad, the Baphilimali Surakhya Samiti and the Anchalik Surakhya Samiti. Every village now has a resistance body.

The State government, instead of winning the cooperation of the tribal people by accepting the community's customary rights over the land and water and of access to forest resources, alienated them. The government and the companies appear to prefer the path of confrontation.

Meanwhile, under the direct patronisation of the companies, a pro-project group has also been formed. Those who fight for the rights of livelihood and against displacement are branded as people who oppose industrialisation and development. The pro-project group propagated the idea that the mining of bauxite was the only means for the area to cross the boundaries of backwardness. The tribal people are

advised to sacrifice their "petty" rights in the "interest of the nation".

The pro-mining group, which includes professionals, traders, contractors and others feel that the tribal people would have gained enormously with the implementation of the projects. The government machinery, which is supposed to protect the interests of the people, are not perceived as such but are identified with the strident moves of these groups, which are not affected by the projects.

The December 16 incident was preceded by certain actions of an "all-party committee", which the tribal people looked at with suspicion. On December 15, under the leadership of N. Bhaskar Rao, Rayagada district president of the BJD, and Krishna Mohapatro, a former block chairman of Kashipur, a group of people reached Maikanch and allegedly tried to disrupt a gathering of tribal people who were to discuss a

"road blockade" (Chakajam) programme at Rafkana junction, 30 km away from Kashipur, scheduled for December 20. The programme was planned by the Paribesh Sampad Surakhya Parishad. The companies and the State administration obviously wanted to foil it.

The people resisted the efforts to disrupt the meeting. On December 16, armed with a first information report (FIR) filed at the Kashipur police station, two platoons of armed policemen led by Circle Inspector Subash Swain and Kashipur Block Development Officer (BDO) Golak Mohanty reached Maikanch. The policemen allegedly beat up the women and asked for the whereabouts of the men, who were hiding in the nearby hills. Hearing the commotion, the men returned from the hills. It is alleged that as soon as the policemen noticed the men, they opened fire.

Since 1993, the police have registered 80 criminal

### **Kashipur: Industrialisation Through the Barrel of Gun**

*By Independent Media Center, India;*

*31<sup>st</sup> January, 2005*

*"No one, I repeat no one will be allowed to stand in the way of Orissa's industrialisation and the people's progress".*

*- Naveen Patnaik (Chief Minister of Orisa)*

The Police in the East Indian state of Orissa have laid siege to a group of dalit and adivasi (tribal) villages around Kashipur that have successfully kept the Utkal Alumina Industries Ltd (UAIL) from mining Baphlimali – a mountain held sacred by local adivasis -- for 12 years now. Since December 1, 2004, a witchhunt has been on for indigenous and dalit leaders and their key supporters, and a massive police operation has been launched to terrorise people into allowing the bauxite mining and alumina refining project to come up. The Aditya Birla group and Canadian mining multinational Alcan are the major shareholders in the project. Norsk Hydro (a Norwegian company that had a stake in UAIL in 2000 withdrew from the project following criticism in Norway for its complicity in human rights abuses in Kashipur, Orissa).

On November 25, 2004 Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik was quoted as saying that anti-mining struggles will be firmly dealt with. Between December 1 and 16, at least 20 adivasi and dalit leaders from the area, and political leaders and elected state representatives from Left parties, have been placed under arrest. Journalists have been beaten up, and Ajit Majhi, a 11-year old tribal boy who went missing in early December, remains untraceable.

On December 1, 2004, a peaceful gathering of about 300 adivasis and dalit residents, predominantly women, was lathicharged [beaten with sticks]. Since then, all entry into and exit from the Kashipur villages have been barred, and the police has reportedly resorted to indiscriminate and unprovoked physical violence against the adivasi and dalit residents.

On December 16 – the fourth anniversary of the killings by police of three adivasi youth in Maikanch – a delegation of political leaders and elected members of the Orissa legislature led by CPI MLA Narayan Reddy were arrested. The police and about 200 hired civilian goons damaged six vehicles badly, and manhandled the delegates. Journalists accompanying the delegation were beaten up, and the video camera belonging to Samarandra Nayak, a writer and journalist, was forcibly taken.

Local sources say that the upswing in police violence is in preparation for a January inauguration of Utkal's complex in D. Karal village. The recent spate of violence began as police build-up intensified in and around the anti-mining villages, and the Orissa Government began building a police station and barracks for armed police to provide protection to the mining companies from the local villagers.

Mining of the bauxite rich Baphlimali mountain will disturb the local hydrology and deplete the springs. Mining and refinery wastes will pollute the remaining rivers and poison the lands, destroying the livelihood and sustenance bases of the adivasi and dalit villagers.

cases against the tribal people and activists. On several occasions, the police resorted to lathi charge. Activists were attacked and offices of the resistance movement were destroyed. Even mediapersons entering the area were not spared.

On a number of occasions the tribal people filed cases against anti-social elements who were involved in the attacks. But the police took no action. Even when mediapersons were attacked, the police did not react, for years.

The version of the police and the administration is that the police party went to Maikanch to investigate the "attack" on Bhaskar Rao on December 15. Residents of the village attacked the police party by means of bows and arrows and threw stones at them, and this forced the police to open fire, it says. Several political parties, such as the BJD, the BJP and the Congress(I) and the State administration allege that a non-governmental organisation, Agragamee, which has been working among the tribal people of Kashipur, for about 20 years, and its director Achyut Das are inciting the tribal people to resort to violence and refuse to vacate the area. It is alleged that the attack on BJD leaders was planned by Agragamee. The BJD organised rallies and meetings at Rayagada demanding the arrest of Achyut Das and a ban on Agragamee. It is a fact that Agragamee played a role in raising the consciousness of the people, uniting them and making them aware of their rights.

A three-member delegation of Left parties visited the area on December 19 and 20. The team visited Kashipur, Maikanch, Kucheipadar, Tikiri, Rayagada town and other places and met a number of people. It also met the Collector and District Magistrate at Rayagada.

On December 21, at a press conference convened in Bhubaneswar, the team members described the police firing as "pre-designed murder" to crush the movement against displacement. It was "murder" because all the three people who died received the bullets above the chest, they said. It cannot be disputed that the police opened fire as soon as they saw people coming down from the nearby hills because three cows and one buffalo that were grazing on the hillock also died. The team came to know that although the disputed area was a scheduled one, the resolutions of the panchayats were not considered and the rehabilitation and resettlement package was yet to be finalised.

The provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Area) Act, 1996 envisage that the gram sabha or panchayats are to be consulted before resettling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects. Acquisition of land for any project cannot be undertaken without consulting them.

The team observed that the details on the extent of land necessary to relocate the affected people had not been published. The R&R package over and above the compensation for the land acquired by the bauxite mining and alumina companies had not been updated yet. An objective and comprehensive study of the environmental implications of bauxite mining and processing units had not been undertaken yet, it alleged.

Several organisations have protested against the killings and supported the tribal residents' right to livelihood. At Berhampur, a day-long dharna was organised in front of the office of the Revenue Divisional Commissioner (Southern Division) by the Adivasi Dalit Vikas Manch on December 23. At Bhubaneswar similar protests were held by various NGOs.

The resistance to the alumina project and the police firing have important implications. Indian and foreign business companies are keen on exploiting the rich bauxite deposits in the Kashipur area irrespective of the social and ecological costs of such an effort. The entire State machinery has capitulated to their wishes. Successive governments, various political parties that have been in power, local elite and businessmen supported the alumina project. At the same time, the struggle of the people and their determination to make any sacrifice in order to protect their civil and political rights, rights to livelihood, and habitat clearly demonstrate that people at the grassroots are not going to tolerate the onslaught of market forces.

The attempts by market forces to exploit the mineral resources in Orissa have threatened a large number of vulnerable social groups with displacement, loss of livelihood and destruction of the natural environment. Hence, the main issue is to decide whether to accept the prevailing definition of development as provided by the market and the state or to look for alternatives emerging out of people's struggles. In other words, whether development should mean profit for capitalists or protection of the rights of the people and their prosperity.

*(Courtesy: Frontline)*

## **Allahabad (UP) : Mass Struggles of Peasants Continue**

*28 December, 2006*

Hundreds of stone quarry workers of Shankergarh area assembled in Ganne hill on November 18, 2006 to protest against the threats by landlords issued in mass meetings being held in the area under the banner of Jai Bhawani Sena. Big contractors and landlords had been conducting mass meetings in the area under this banner with naked display of illegal firearms. Some common workers were forced to attend these meetings and under the watchful eyes of the police general threats were issued against workers struggles and display of red flags.

This area has seen a number of movements against the landlords/contractors who force these workers to work virtually as bonded labour in their quarries and in the fields. In one movement led by AIKMS one of the contractors was forced to withdraw his claim of loan and interest and was forced to pay the worker unpaid dues of labour. In another movement workers of an adjacent village occupied a grazing land which was under occupation of a landlord, claim of which he had lost in a court. In another case peasants had physically fought to prevent a landlord from occupying the patta land of a peasant.

AIKMS moved to rally the people on Nov. 18 against the landlords' meetings and threats which had open support of the police. Farmers from the entire area attended in large number and took a pledge to continue their struggle. In the meeting a call was issued to support all the struggles being waged by the peasants of the area against the landlords on all issues. Landlord forces of the area have also made attempts to hold meetings of workers with local NGOs and revisionist parties to mislead the workers, but the workers have seen through this move.

In Sadwan village a long battle has been continuing for last 8 months against a cement packing and another cement sheet plant established by the JP group. Local agricultural workers have been raising the issues of employment from the villages where land has been purchased, for payment of minimum wages, registration of the contractors many of who are local landlords, preventing these industrial plants from polluting the canal, compensation for crops damaged due to pollution and animals killed due to consuming the polluted water etc. Most of the employees have been brought from outside the area and are forced to live inside the plants.

The struggle was waged through mass meetings at the gate, obstruction of the work, rallies in the area and demonstrations at the tehsil. The management

responded with immediate retrenchment of all local workers. The landlords tried to threaten the workers and in one case one of them even beat up an old poor peasant lady cutting grass. The landlord was immediately beaten back and mass protest was held at the thana. The sum total of pressure brought by the sustained mass movement resulted in a temporary truce initiated by the administration resulting in a few of the retrenched persons being given employment on payment of minimum wage of Rs 104 for 8 hours while the rest of the workers are paid Rs 90 for 12 hours. The movement is continuing at a slow pace and the workers working inside are beginning to grow restless with the pressure of work, low payment and inhuman conditions.

In Ghoorpur area government apathy and connivance of the local landlords has resulted in failure of the local 4 km long canal from functioning optimally. Over the last 15 years, the area irrigated by the tail has remained deprived. As a result of this farmers of the area have not sown wheat for last 10 to 15 years. For last one year the farmers led by AIKMS took up this struggle and through repeated applications and demonstrations for maintaining the canal, supplying electricity regularly and running both the pumps simultaneously forced the administration to actually look into the problem. In the process the farmers had gheraoed an official in their area and forced the police to get him released after making a promise of running the canal properly.

The pumps were repaired, the illegal outlets were closed, but still water remained inadequate even when the electricity came. The pump operator revealed that he is under threat from the pradhan and the ex pradhan and other landlords of the area to run only one pump at a time, the logic being that the other pump is a standby. With only one pump operating the water could never reach the tail. The landlords' interest was to ensure that only the areas near the pump get ensured supply. While farmers prepared to put further pressure, the landlords instigated fights by some to be beneficiaries on frivolous ground and forced FIRs on some of the leaders. They instigated them to work towards only partial running of the canal saying that the full running would deprive them of water.

While AIKMS leadership enforced truce through explaining the real issues they prepared the people to go in for more decisive steps for running the canal. Finally in November the farmers sat on the main highway with dried, undeveloped paddy crop on their

heads and blocked the road. After more than 4 hours of the blockade the administration inspected the area and took measures for 22 hour electricity supply and regular operation of both pumps. With water supply being maintained, the question of re-digging the distal parts of the canal came up and the farmers were once again successful in forcing the irrigation officials to permit them to do so without the contractor, with payment to be made to them for the same.

This agitation, which has taken one full year has revealed to the farmers anti-people character of landlords belonging to their very castes who are also the people who monopolize posts of gram pradhans

and fair price shop dealers.

A few issues of non payment of wages for work done under village development programs have also been taken up through mass protests. These movements have forced the contractors to pay the workers wages which had remained unpaid for last 2 years.

These small successes have increased the interest and confidence amongst the masses in building their movements. The landlords are trying to undo even these victories and the administration is standing by them. To advance the movement, the people have to build more and more agitations on these and other issues and take steps to defend the movement.

## **Justice Needed At Indira Sagar**

*By: Angana Chatterji*

For those held captive by the Indira Sagar Pariyojana (also Narmada Sagar), the Madhya Pradesh High Court Order of July 27 and August 17, 2005 sets an unprecedented context for justice.

The people of the Narmada Valley are the nation's émigrés. They live within its borders, treated with contempt. In construction since 1984, the Indira Sagar multipurpose project is scheduled to displace over 175,212 people in western Madhya Pradesh. Records show that about 16 per cent of the displaced are adivasis. Almost 80 per cent of the total population engage in cultivation.

Most are economically disenfranchised. The Indira Sagar is one of 30 large dams on the River Narmada. At 262.19 metres, it stands to submerge 249 villages, 91,348 hectares of land, 41,444 of which are forests, to yield 1,000 MW of electricity and irrigate 123,000 hectares of land, a third of which is already irrigated. The resettlement and rehabilitation policy, shaped by the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award (NWDTA) of 1979, includes a land for land clause.

Even in its present and inadequate form, resettlement and rehabilitation provisions are systematically violated. Rehabilitation, when it occurs, discounts differences in culture and gender, ecology and society, occupation, religion, and ability. Families and communities are broken apart, forcing alienation, struggles with the unfamiliar, new forms of poverty, disrespect. Compensation amounts disable people from purchasing alternative agricultural land.

There are no provisions for socio-psychological rehabilitation that responds to the extensive trauma experienced by those displaced. Diverse categories of evicted peoples are excluded in determining

rehabilitation, in some instances disregarding their inclusion as stipulated by the government's own policies. The condition of disenfranchisement is used against the poor to invalidate their right to life and livelihood.

In July 2004, Harsud was evacuated at gunpoint, as 85 villages remained partially and fully submerged, and 32 others waited to sink. A Dalit woman from Bhavarali village testified: "They (government officials) said we were getting in the way of the dam. Sometimes I think it would be easier to drown, easier if my children were not born." The government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP) proposed to shut down 20 gates of the dam, ensuing submergence for 91 additional villages in the monsoon of 2005. On December 31, 2004, the GoMP ordered that the evacuation of 91 villages be completed by April 30, 2005, displacing 10,000 families.

That's when the people of Indira Sagar said "No." They refused to move. The government's diktat contravened the injunctions of the Supreme Court writ petition [(Civil) No. 1201/1990] that resettlement be completed in all respects at least six months in advance of any likely submergence, and the NWDTA, decreeing rehabilitation of all impacted families at least one year prior to submergence.

Over two decades, the people of the Narmada Valley have been profuse and prolific in their resistance to large dams, to the state capture of adivasi and peasant lands through development and nationalisation. In Indira Sagar, the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA, Save the Narmada Movement) involved itself since July 2004 to mobilise struggle. Solidarity across affected peoples of the Narmada has been integral

to shaping dissent to Indira Sagar.

In April 2005, a massive rally at Khandwa pledged to fight for justice. As homes were demolished, in May 2005, Ram Kuwar, from Khedibalwadi, Maan dam, others from Sardar Sarovar travelled to Indira Sagar to support and organise. On May 7, 2005, the NBA filed a writ petition [(Civil) No. 3022/2005] to challenge the state in court.

Chittaroopa Palit testified for 25 hours, on behalf of the 10,000 affected families. On July 27 and August 17, 2005, the division bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court passed its interim order.

The July 27 order expresses the court's outrage at the GoMP's December 2004 notification, citing that compensation efforts began only after April 30, 2005. In answer to the NBA's petition, the interim order adjudicated that the GoMP and National Hydro Development Corporation (NHDC, implementing authority) stop construction at 255 metres to halt the 91 villages from drowning.

The court directed that the government offer Rs 10 crores to recompense those evicted without compensation, without house-plots or agricultural lands, and in violation of the six-month rule. The court's decision extended to include the nearly 100,000 people impacted by backwater effect (in hydrology-speak, raising of surface water upstream as a consequence of the dam) who have until now been barred from rehabilitation processes. The court stated that the Narmada Control Authority (NCA) failed to monitor the submergence survey, and rehabilitation and resettlement of oustees.

The court asked that monitoring and grievance procedures be set up, ordering that the Grievance Redressal Authority convene weekly to receive complaints. The bench instructed that resettlement and rehabilitation of the 91 villages be completed by December 31, 2005. Conditional on which, the court ruled, the GoMP might commence the submergence of these villages during the monsoon of 2006.

While the court clarified that the NBA's conduct or intent are not in question, in retaliation, the minister in charge of Narmada development from the GoMP's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party has rumoured that the Andolan is engaged in corruption and anti-national acts. Immediately after the July 27 order, the GoMP disobeyed its prescriptions.

On August 3, 2005, Fatehgarh, an adivasi village on the Narmada, from where you can gaze at Joga Kala's historic fort, was attacked by 400 policepersons, two male residents beaten, 60 houses broken. The sub-divisional magistrate of Kannaud

harassed Meema, an adivasi woman, baiting her to leave. She refused, and was threatened and intimidated by the police.

Twenty-one houses were razed in mid-June. Flouting the six-month tenet and resettlement provisions, 200 resident families were awarded compensation, arbitrarily, in end-July. Three days later the police arrived, municipality workers participated, bulldozers cracked homes.

The people of Indira Sagar maintain hope in anguish, resolute in resistance. They are affirmed, even elated, by the court's decision, yet sceptical of the state's adherence to the rule of law. Their resistance is shaped by a larger despair, as they are forced to leave what is "home." The state apparatus, diverse, often incongruent, here, acts in concert, with methodical callousness, to subjugate.

The human rights practises of the GoMP, NCA, Narmada Valley Development Authority, NHDC, and its progenitor, National Hydroelectric Power Corporation, record the absence of transparent functioning, vast neglect and egregious abuses. How will the judiciary enforce accountability on part of the state and its affiliate corporations?

As we witness the magnitude of the disaster following passage of Hurricane Katrina through south/south-east United States, and the severity of ineptitude and racism in the US government's response, evidence suggests that the impact on New Orleans is compounded by the mismanagement of the Mississippi river, where the construction of 29 dams has led to the sinking of the Louisiana coast.

Large dams do not work. The world over, those economically poor and socially disenfranchised bear the burden of elite modernisation. Accompanied by liberal development, state-administered terrorism, majoritarian nationalism, and the consolidation of a cohesive middle-class base, nation building in India continues the subordination of marginalised castes, women, adivasis, religious minorities.

The imaginary of maldevelopment collaborates to displace and mutilate, commit ecocide, ethnocide (Narmada, Bhopal, Kashipur). A hundred thousand Harsuds: purposefully planned, performed, labelled "necessary," called "progress."

"Our struggle is for the Narmada, the people and the river, the forests and wildlife," Chittaroopa says, "it is also for a world we wish in which people are not pauperised, but treated with dignity and humanity." Will the state submit to those of conscience in Indira Sagar, to chart a different, ethical, course?

*Angana Chatterji is associate professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology*

## **Huge Protest and Declaration of Struggle by Over Ten Thousand Maheshwar Dam-Affected People**

*November, 2006*

**Dam work must be stopped and Project utility and Rehabilitation Plan must be established.**

**Narmada valley not prepared to suffer any further destruction - Warning by Indira Sagar, Omkareshwar, Man, Upper Veda, Bargi and Tawa dam oustees**

More than ten thousand people affected by the Maheshwar dam protested under the aegis of the Narmada Bachao Aandolan against this destructive dam in a huge rally and public meeting in Mandleshwar town. Large numbers of women participated in the rally and protest. Along with the Maheshwar dam affected people, several hundred representatives from other dams in the Narmada valley including oustees from the Indira Sagar, Omkareshwar, Man, Upper Veda, Bargi and Tawa dams were present in the rally. They demanded that the State Government must immediately stop the work on the Maheshwar dam, establish the beneficiality of the Maheshwar Project and a land based Rehabilitation Plan. The representatives from the various projects said that the Narmada valley had seen enough destruction in the name of development and was not prepared to tolerate any more. Many representatives from other people's organizations were also present at the programme.

At the outset of the program, the rally reached the Narmada ghats where the people resolved and reiterated their resolve to escalate their struggle to defend their rights. Speaking at the public meeting after the rally, Shri Alok Agarwal, senior activist of the Narmada Bachao Andolan said the all governments in a democracy have to be accountable to the people. Yet the Government has completely failed to establish the beneficiality of the Narmada projects or to show arrangements for rehabilitation and resettlement of the affected people. The people of the Narmada valley challenge and warn the Government that they were not prepared to tolerate any more destruction. They said that the voice of the Narmada valley would soon resonate all over the State and country. NBA activist Ms. Chittarooma Palit said that in light of the fact that the cost of electricity is prohibitively expensive, and the Rehabilitation Plan detailing extent of submergence, numbers and categories of people to be affected, agricultural land and other resources is yet to be prepared in the last nine years, because of which the Central government has issued orders to stop the Project construction, the State Government must immediately stop all work on the

project.

Sushilabai, Sarpanch Mardana village in the Maheshwar submergence stated that the preparation of the Rehabilitation Plan was a far cry. Even the surveys of the actual submergence at back-water levels was yet to be done, and the people were in the dark about what the actual extent of submergence would be. On the basis of the experience of Bargi dam, where 101 villages were slated for submergence, but 162 villages and 26 R &R sites were submerged when the dam was filled, and the recent experience in the Indira Sagar dam where surveys last month in only 24 of the reservoir rim villages showed a mistake of nearly 1000 acres of land and 1000 houses that had earlier not been accounted for and which would have been submerged without acquisition and rehabilitation and creating an enormous threat to the life of the oustees. Nearly 100 more villages were now left for re-survey where it was anticipated that several thousand more houses and acres of lands would submerge. She said that in the context of a Writ Petition filed by oustees of the Indira Sagar dam, the High Court had ordered that the re-surveys must be done by the Central Water Commission with the help of the Survey of India. Sushilabai said that the same NVDA (Narmada valley Development Authority) that had severely under-estimated the submergence in the Bargi and the Indira Sagar dams had also surveyed the Maheshwar Project. She demanded that the CWC and the Survey of India must survey the Maheshwar dam FRL and back-water levels so that the extent of submergence was known, and without this preliminary step of ascertaining the extent of submergence, the dam work must not be continued.

Shri Radheshyam Patidar of Village Pathrad in the Maheshwar dam submergence pointed out that a report prepared at the instance of the S.Kumars and the Project authorities themselves have found that three large areas close to the submergence will become severely waterlogged. He demanded that since these areas would become uncultivable and uninhabitable, the lands and houses in these areas must be acquired and the affected families must be rehabilitated and resettled with land for land and all rehabilitation benefits. Speaking at the rally, Shri Sheru, fisherman from Village Mardana said that it was not only a question of the impact on the farmers whose lands would submerge. He said that along with a rich land economy, the Maheshwar submergence area sustained a very rich riverine economy - where

several thousands of Kewats, Kahars and Dalits had prosperous livelihoods through fishing, draw-down agriculture, ferrying and sand-quarrying, all of which would be disrupted and destroyed due to the reservoir filling, if the dam is built. Most of these families have been excluded even from the reckoning of Project affected families. This exclusion was intolerable and all such families must be included and land entitlements must be given to them as required as per the Ministry of Environment clearance of January 1994. Addressing the rally, Maheshwar dam affected persons Shri Sanjay Nigam, Kalusingh Mandloi, Shri Jagdish Patidar, Kamlabai said that the people of the area were prepared for intense struggle to save the area and the State from sure economic disaster to be caused by this Project.

Shr Rajendra Patel of Indira Sagar area said that there had been massive unsalted submergence in the Indira Sagar area this year when the dam began to be filled. Waters have inundated many roads and access routes and threaten to submerge the Calcutta - Mumbai main railway line and several R&R sites. Shri Hakimbai of Bargi dam said that the same situation had transpired in the Bargi dam area in 1990 when the dam was filled and scores of villages not slated for submergence as well as R&R sites were inundated.

Shri Anil Trivedi, senior lawyer from Indore High Court addressed the rally and said that the struggle of the oustees must become the struggle of the common people of this country and that there was no other means of victory except struggle, struggle and more struggle.

Shri Bhagwan Sirwi from Sardar Sarovar , Ramkuwarbai from the Man dam area, Bana Bai from Uppre Veda dam, Shri Maujilal from the Omkareshwar dam area, Ms. Tara Barkhade from the Tawa dam area and many others addressed the rally and said that the struggles of the people of the

various dams must be fought together and the Narmada valley could no longer tolerate this wave of destruction.

Ms. Niti Dewan from Madhya Pradesh Mahila Manch, Shri Tukha Ram from Jagrut Dalit Adivasi Sangathan , Shri Bhuru Bhai from Adivasi Dalit Morcha and Shri Surabh Singh from Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sanghat also addressed the rally and expressed their solidarity.

At the end of the rally, the villagers gave a Memorandum to the District officials for the State Government demanding that the work on the Maheshwar dam must be immediately stopped, make the cost and extent of electricity to be generated by this Project and the current conditions of the Power Purchase Agreement public, thus establishing the beneficiality of the Project, get the work of re-survey at back-water levels done by the Central water Commission and the Survey of India, prepare a comprehensive Rehabilitation Plan with details of extent of submergence, detail number and categories of families to be submerged, provide details of agricultural land to be given to the families, include families who are working on the riverine economy, and who are in the severely water-logged areas close to the Maheshwar submergence, and make public the status of willful defaults and outstanding loans of the S.Kumars due to the State government and the status of the charges of "criminal conspiracy" against them due to financial irregularities and give a satisfactory explanation as to how the Project is being implemented by promoters with such a track-record of financial irregularities. The people warned the Government in the Memorandum that if State Government failed to do the above, they would undertake satyagraha and close the work on the dam themselves through a peaceful program of civil disobedience.



## Preparing to Repeat a Dammed History

By: R Uma Maheswari

*Over 230,000 people in hundreds of villages to be displaced, tens of thousands of acres submerged, wildlife and forest lands inundated - the Polavaram project will repeat the great tragedy of displacement and environmental damage that has marked so many other projects in the country.*

"The day they show me and say to me 'this is your house, your tree, your land, your forest', I will go. Only if they show me all these. Not until then. Ask them to also show me the road to my forest, the hills, and ask them to give me my livelihood. I will go ..." says Suramma, a very vocal Koya woman of Chegondapally village, in Polavaram mandal in Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district. Suramma is one of the lakhs of people – many of whom are tribal koyas, koyadoras and kondareddis, besides dalits and few others - who will be displaced if the Indira Sagar dam is constructed at Polavaram. This possibility became a little more real recently when the state government obtained the Central environmental clearance for the project.

Ironically, the recent disaster that struck the Godavari river and the villages by its banks (along with a few facing backwater flooding) in early August 2006 provided a preview of what these villages might look like once the dam is built. For the disaster was worst precisely in those villages that stand to be submerged once the dam is built. There was water everywhere, where once there were roads, homes, schools, hospitals, and bus stands.

The Rs.8000 crore dam proposed at Polavaram will transfer 80 thousand million cubic meters (tmc) of water to the Krishna basin via a 174 km-long Right Canal, and to Vishakhapatnam district via a 181.53 km-long Left Canal. The project, proposes to irrigate 7.21 lakh acres in Krishna, Godavari (east and west) and Vishakhapatnam districts, and generate about 960 MW electricity. [1] Water from this project will also feed the proposed Vizag-Kakinada Industrial Corridor; two Special Economic Zones, the Apparel Park, Pharma City, probably a Naval Establishment, and perhaps an atomic research station. The project's stated aims are to irrigate 54 mandals in 4 districts - Krishna, Vishakapatnam, West and East Godavari; to sustainably increase agricultural production; to assure water supply for drinking in Vishakhapatnam and towns en route; to link the Godavari and Krishna rivers, thus reducing pressure on the Krishna waters; and also facilitate recreation, pisciculture, etc.

Small navigation provides support for many livelihoods on the river, besides being an important form of transport for many. (Picture by R Uma Maheswari)

Over 276 tribal villages in the agency areas of East and West Godavari districts and Khammam district will be submerged. Based on the 2001 census of these areas, it is estimated that 237,000 people will be displaced.

[2] About 53 per cent of those displaced will be adivasis, two-thirds of them being Koyas and Konda Reddis. More than 300 hectares of prime forest land, comprising the Papikondalu Wildlife Sanctuary, will also be inundated [3]. The likely agricultural loss is also phenomenal; in the submergence area, cotton is grown in over 10,000 acres, each providing an average of 150 person-days of work. Paddy is grown in 10,000 acres, providing an additional 75 person-days of work each. Tobacco is grown in 6,000 acres and gives 250 person-days of work per acre. And losses in other livelihoods will worsen this situation further. The levels of displacement of lives and livelihoods, besides destruction of environment from this project will far exceed the impact of the Sardar Sarovar dam over the Narmada river. What is more important, a lot many more tribal households stand to be displaced in this project when compared to the latter.

These likely losses have attracted the attention of the Supreme Court, and a Centrally Empowered Committee has been constituted to study and give recommendations to the SC. The team visited parts of the Polavaram dam-affected areas between the 29th and 31st of July 2006. But while this visit offered some sign of welcome scrutiny for such large-scale displacement plans, the three days were not enough for the team to visit the entire submergence areas; they went to Polavaram dam site, Bhadrachalam, part of Burgampadu, Koyda and through a small stretch of the Godavari river until Perantalapally via the Papikonda wildlife sanctuary area. Thereafter they left for Kolleru lake, which isn't part of the Polavaram dam affected zone.

And if the visit was a fact-finding exercise, it surely wasn't carried out as such. The CEC team visit happened like a visit sponsored by the government in power. All through it was the state administration's show - the choice of routes, the time the CEC spent on the field, the time they had to receive representations and memorandum from people, etc. The Chief Engineer, the officials in charge of the state guest house bookings - everyone, just about everyone gave the impression of this being some great confidential event, meant to be kept out of media and public focus. Even in Hyderabad there was no access to the CEC team for media or activists. Indeed, the one thing the CEC seemed determined to avoid was contact with the local people; instead the team focus on implications of the proposed dam for wildlife and forest conservation. Even a minor pilgrimage was accommodated even as the locals were avoided; the CEC found time in its short stay at Bhadrachalam town to visit the temple of Rama,

well outside the purview of the submergence zone. Even on this detour, the team carefully avoided routes passing through villages where opposition to the project is high.

Where do ordinary people, especially those whose livelihood is deeply tied to the land and the river, figure in the state's grand plan? If the CEC had coursed the Godavari, they would have witnessed countless everyday transactions that happen in the launches that course the river from Rajahmundry towards Papikondalu and other settlements along Godavari. One of the luggage launches, some of which start at 3 am at Rajahmundry each morning dumping luggage (provisions, fruits, vegetables, etc) for the village shops, among other things, for instance, makes about Rs. 1500 a day, if the going is okay. Or sometimes more. And of course they also take the occasional passengers. With the Polavaram project, these small-time navigation systems will no longer exist, their place taken instead by barges moving industrial goods all the way towards the sea-port.

There are many others too, 'indirectly' affected by the project but not counted among the project-affected in official circles. For instance, people like the teenagers Gangaraju and Varaprasad whose hired boat transports the fish and prawns of the numerous smaller fishing families settled along the banks of Godavari with thatched huts in the villages along the banks (at places like Pocharam, Nadupuru, Tadvada, Manturu, Singanapally, and so forth on both banks) from to the town. Each such trip - mostly between May and August these two youngsters make about Rs.12, 000 a month. Gangaraju not only uses the income to take care of his old mother but also continue his studies. He says, "idanta munigi pote i chaapalavaalu emavutaru?" If all this drowns (with the project) what will happen to these fisherfolk?

Incidentally, it was these itinerant fisherfolk who helped a large number of people from Kondamodalu survive the Godavari in spate, when all the government machinery failed. "i chaapalavaallu lekunte memandaram Godavarilo munigi poye vallam" (had it not been for these fisherfolk, we would all have drowned in Godavari), said Kondla Gangaraju, former member of the Mandal Parishad Technical Committee of Kondamodalu panchayat.

In Polavaram on 29th July 2006, nearly 1500 tribals gathered (under the aegis of the Agency Girijana Sangham, Rythu Cooli Sangham, and the Communist Party of India - Marxist) at the spill-way work site from early hours, and forcibly got the CEC to listen to their views. But at Koyda, police force was deployed to prevent villagers of Kasavaram, Tekupalli and Kosuluru from trying to meet the CEC team. The CPI (M) MP (Bhadrachalam constituency, Midiyam Babu Rao) and MLA (Sunnam Rajaiyah) were also present there with their support groups. Sondu Veeraiah,

Convenor, Adivasi Sankshema Parishad believed that "the administration and government have designed this tour of the CEC in such away that they do not touch any of the affected areas. They are hiding the real facts this way".

Karaka Lakshmi, recently appointed to the Mandal Praja Parishad (MPP) in the Panchayat elections from Karakagudem in Kunavaram mandal, said, "We came here to tell the CEC that we do not want Polavaram. We are just about getting some facilities; just about now our children are wearing pants and shirts, and going to school. It has taken a long time for us. Now we will lose all this if we move from here...".

One group the CEC had trouble encountering was in favour of the dam! a motley crowd put together by the local All India Youth Congress was raising slogans - "we want Polavaram." On closer scrutiny, however, one realised that quite a few of these pro-dam voices were from villages that do not fall in the submergence zone. Evidently, they had gathered to present the government's point of view, anticipating that the real locals were not in favour. One of them, a trust board member in the local Bhadrachalam Rama temple, said, "a little injustice (anyaayam) for a few is valid for development of the state as a whole ..."

But who decides these things? Surely not people like Illa Ram Reddy, sarpanch of the Kondamodalu gram panchayat, who says, "this land of ours has glorious history of struggles. Our forefathers waged many struggles against British colonial rulers in defence of our right to land, forest and self-rule. Korukonda Subba Reddy of Tutigunta village near Polavaram and seven of his followers were hanged to death by the British Government on October 7th 1858. It is our long experience, and hence our belief, that it is through struggle alone that we are able to survive and live. Sacrificing lives in defence of our common interests is not new to us. But we hope wise counsel shall prevail and so we fondly wish that we will be spared or another arduous struggle in the context of the Polavaram project ... We fervently hope the Empowerment Committee understands our agony ..." In a signed statement prepared with the help of one educated supporter, Reddy hoped "the C.E.C will protect the just demands of tribals who are fighting for their lives and forests and environment."

The total area of the wildlife sanctuary that would be submerged appears to be much larger than the stated area and the figures furnished to CEC and Supreme Court do not tally.

What will be the outcome of the CEC's tour? After its visit the CEC held a hearing on 8th August, and raised some questions for the government of Andhra Pradesh, to be answered before proceeding with the project. The committee noted that studies in respect of the extent of forest that would be submerged are incomplete. The

team also observed that the total area of the wildlife sanctuary that would be submerged appears to be much larger than the stated area and the figures furnished to CEC and Supreme Court do not tally. A few additional queries - on measures adopted to reduce the submergence of the forest, on the impact of the project on wildlife, and on mechanisms adopted to relocate and rehabilitate displaced people - were also raised. The ball may be in just about anyone's court now.

*(R Uma Maheswari is a freelance journalist based in Hyderabad)*

A few days ago, Kosi Babu of Chegondapally called to say that an Integrated Tribal Development Agency official visited his village in West Godavari district near Polavaram, and asked people to get ready to leave their villages for a 'better' future that would not ever be affected by the Godavari's moods. The natural disaster, it appears, has given the Andhra government another excuse for pushing ahead with the project. But Suramma's terms for relocation are nowhere in sight.?

## **A Familiar Battle at Tadadi**

*By: Sudhirendar Sharma*

*Disregard for local sentiment is now the norm in most large projects. At Tadadi, which has faced a long line of threats of displacement, the latest struggle is against a proposed 4000 MW coal-fired plant. With Coastal Zone regulators not very attentive to the violations of law, the villagers can rely only on themselves.*

**19 June 2006** - It had resisted setting up of a ship-breaking yard in 1987; it had successfully challenged the establishment of Barge Mounted Power Plant in 1996; and it hadn't let a sea port ravage its beauty in the year 2000. But the battles are not over for Tadadi and other fishing communities in the estuarine backwaters on the west coast near Karwar. Their next challenge looms, as the Government of Karnataka forces a 4000 MW coal-fired power plant on their pristine environment and livelihoods. And once again, the 'environment versus development' debate is on familiar turf, pitching ecological diversity and peoples' livelihoods against power generation and employment creation.

Why should Tadadi be the favoured site for most big projects? Undoubtedly, it holds currency for being in close proximity to the sea, and the consequent ease of shipping in raw materials - the proposed power plant will run on coal that will be shipped from Australia. Coastal sites also make it much easier to dispose off harmful wastes, and while this calculation is often made, it is in gross violation of the Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) provisions. But that is of little consequence in the present scheme of things, the CRZ regulations are rarely observed by large project developers anywhere in the country, let alone in news-remote areas. Disregard for local sentiment is also an established tradition, by now. In proposing the project the government has undermined the sustained protests against it by fishermen, and has also avoided all ecological rationale. No wonder, then, the entire affected community of over 25,000 people is up in arms against government's decision to uproot them. While the government may seem better prepared to face the opposition this time, it is up against a combined force of religious heads, community leaders and local elected representatives. In a recent meeting with the agitators, the Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy sought refuge in an empowered committee that will examine the social, ecological and economic concerns of the affected community. However, the leader of the protest movement M R Hegde believes that this is simply a political ploy to delay the decision.

Another familiar and cruel joke: the proposed project seeks to generate employment for the poor by first destroying their existing livelihoods. The growing penchant for achieving economic growth for a few undermines all other considerations. This dangerous trade-off cannot be justified on economic grounds, given how often such projects have failed to deliver promised results.

Tadadi is an amazing coastal site in Karnataka that overlooks the picturesque Western Ghats. The only free-flowing river of the Western Ghats, Aghanashini, empties itself into the Arabian Sea here, creating an incredible 1800 hectares of estuary in the process. Over 26 mangrove species offer perfect habitat for some 100 species of fish and other aquatic life. Trade in mollusks is reportedly worth Rs.5 crores each year. Salt production is an ancillary economic activity on which 800 families directly depend.

But all this is threatened; as infrastructure investment becomes the guiding mantra for overcoming fiscal deficits, each democratically elected government has systematically pitched people against people in an unending war on nature. Power cuts have been enforced along the cities in the region to justify the project - pitching urban dwellers against the agitating communities.

In many ways, this might turn out to be a decisive battle in the region, better known for the famous Appiko movement of the mid-80s. Though the communities are committed to their struggle, the government seems to be making a last-ditch effort to distance people from their traditional livelihood sources. As people's dependence on primary sources becomes reduced, argues noted environmentalist Pandurang Hegde, it becomes easier for the state to manipulate natural resources to meet its objectives. Of course, the fallout of such organised oppression by the state is exacting a price; recall the first-ever gun shots recently fired by naxals from the forests of Chickmagalur district in the Kudremukh region of the Western Ghats. Tadadi's agitations so far have been largely peaceful, but as the stand-off with the government escalates, that stance looks increasingly fragile.

## Hoshangabad Adivasi's Struggle for Survival

To: Chief Minister/Forest Minister, Madhya Pradesh Government

Dear Sir,

Adivasis of the Hoshangabad district in Madhya Pradesh have been fighting for their right to a dignified life. This struggle has now reached a critical juncture where your support is required.

### **Displaced time and against**

Adivasis of the Hoshangabad district have faced the tragedy of displacement because of several projects time and again. Tawa Dam built in the 70s displaced 44 tribal villages, proof range meant for the purpose of testing military weapons displaced 26 villages, and 9 villages had to be removed to make way for the ordinance factory. After the declaration of Satpura National Park in 1981, two villages were displaced. Forest department officials harassed five families of Neemghan village that refused to move out; the officials burned their homes to ashes.

People from all of these villages also met the fate of crores of other poor people who have been displaced all over India on some pretext or the other. While many of the villagers here weren't compensated at all, few of them received petty amounts ranging from Rs. 35 to Rs. 200 per acre. Half of these villages didn't stand any chance of receiving any compensation as they were forest villages where the government didn't recognize land-ownership rights. The government didn't make any efforts whatsoever to rehabilitate them at alternative sites in order to help them live a normal life. No one else cared to see if these people were able to make ends meet.

Finally, people organized themselves and we founded Kisan Adivasi Sangathan in 1985. Since then people have raised their voice and have protested through rallies, demonstrations, dharnas and foot marches. On December 9, 1995, local people organised a road blockade at Kesla on Bhopal-Nagpur highway. Police resorted to lathi-charge, several people were wounded and many more were arrested. Following this agitation, government of Madhya Pradesh constituted a secretary-level committee to look into the demands of the displaced people. Acting on the report submitted by the committee, the state cabinet took certain decisions, some of which were implemented while the rest of those decisions are yet to be implemented. While we continue to fight, we are faced with several other challenges.

### **Atrocities in the name of tiger conservation**

Government has declared three protected areas for wildlife conservation in this district- Satpura National Park, Bori Wildlife Sanctuary, and Pachmarhi Wildlife Sanctuary. All these protected areas were combined recently to form Satpura Tiger Reserve, to be managed under the Project Tiger. However, these protected areas are not only home to the tiger but several villages are also located inside these forests. There are 8 villages in the Satpura National Park, 17 inside the Bori Wildlife Sanctuary, and another 50 villages within the boundaries of Pachmarhi Wildlife Sanctuary. In addition to these 75 villages, there are 50 villages located close to the boundaries of these protected areas where people regularly make use of these forests. In recent years use of forest by these villagers has been severely restricted and local people are not allowed to work for their subsistence by harvesting and selling products such as honey, broom, ropes made with Bhabhar grass, Tendu leaves, Mahua seeds, and flowers, and other forest produce. Even grazing of cattle in the forest and harvesting of fodder and fuel-wood has been banned in these forest areas. This has led to a severe crisis of hunger and starvation. Rights of passage, which were recognized even in British times, have been banned so that local villagers and their guests cannot travel to some of the villages without being harassed by the forest officials. The development activities carried out by the elected village panchayats are not allowed either in these areas.

### **Ban on Fishing and Cultivation**

Tawa Reservoir made as a result of the Tawa dam has also been included within the boundaries of Satpura Tiger Reserve. People displaced at the time of construction of Tawa dam have resettled themselves along the banks of Tawa reservoir and earn their livelihoods by catching fish in the reservoir and doing draw-down cultivation in the submergence area after the reservoir waters recede. However Satpura Tiger Reserve authorities are trying to ban even these subsistence activities, which means that tribals of these 50 villages

may be displaced again and their lives and livelihoods may be devastated once again.

Rights to harvest fish in Tawa reservoir were won by the people displaced because of the Tawa dam in 1996 after a prolonged struggle. Following this victory, villagers organized themselves into 34 primary fishing cooperative societies and a cooperative federation known as a Tawa Matsya Sangha. The federation has been successful in enhancing fish production, employment availability, and members' income. By all accounts, the federation has performed far better than the contractors and government agencies that used to catch fish from the reservoir prior to 1996. The federation has received accolades from all over the country but some people in the state government have not liked federations success because we have neither bribed any one nor appeased the politicians. As a result several attempts were made to dismantle the federation but we have survived solely because of our unity, honesty and integrity.

The lease agreement for fishing rights in Tawa reservoir that Tawa Matsya Sangh signed with the MP government comes to an end on 23rd December, 2006. While we have submitted an application for renewal of the contract, so far there is no response from the government. Satpura Tiger Reserve authorities have also objected to the renewal of the contract and they argue that fishing cannot be permitted inside a national park. These are the orders of the Supreme Court, they argue. If the contract is not renewed, a unique experiment in cooperative fishing will not survive and hundreds of families will lose the only means of their livelihoods.

### **Dhain and Dobjhirna**

The forest department is making all-out efforts to push people out of the national park and the sanctuary. The forest officials are making villagers, life difficult by restricting their life-support activities and pressurizing people to leave their villages. People are being told that they have no option but to move out. Last year, Dhain village was displaced and resettled outside the Bori sanctuary. The site of resettlement was prepared after clearing 500 acre of standing forests by cutting 50,000 trees. A tribal village, Dobjhirna was already located at the site of relocation. The forest land encroached by Dobjhirna village was taken over from them to resettle Dhain. Forest department officials committed brutal atrocities on the men, women, and children of Dobjhirna village for taking control over the land. The department also tried to create a conflict between the adivasis of the two villages. People of Dhain who were resettled, are also now facing a severe crisis of livelihood. They are forced to sell head-loads of firewood for their survival. They are on brink of starvation and destitution.

### **Questions and more questions**

There are 75 villages located inside the Satpura Tiger Reserve, out of which 50 villages are planned to be relocated. The question is how many trees will have to be cut, and how much forest will be destroyed for resettling 50 villages if 50,000 trees had to be cut for settling just one village? How many more villages like Dobjhirna will be harassed? Why the government is so adamant on displacing and devastating tribals? The government and the 'Sahibs' have wiped out forests and the wild animals themselves. Why are we being punished for the crimes that have been committed by others? Why has government come up with such a law where animals are protected but there is no place for the people living in the forest areas? If we are thrown out of the forests, neither forests nor the tiger will survive. Don't we know what all the corrupt officials are capable of?

When we approach the government with our problems they excuse themselves by hiding behind the Supreme Court orders. Does it mean that the tribals and their lives are of no consequence for the government and the Supreme Court? How long we will be kicked around like footballs? We are not ready to tolerate this any more.

### **World Bank's intervention**

As if all of this was not enough, we are faced with another serious problem. The World Bank is also preparing to intervene in our region and forests. With loans from the World Bank and funds from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Government of India is launching a project on Biodiversity Conservation and Rural Livelihood Improvement. Eight landscapes across the country are to be covered in this project which also includes the Satpura landscape that we live in. The project claims to be based on people's participation and aimed at improving people's livelihoods, as the World Bank claims in every project. However, the truth is that the project will prevent people from entering the forests for harvesting forest produce. The project has also assumed that survival of crocodiles in Tawa reservoir is threatened because crocodiles are caught in fishing

nets and are not able to lay eggs because of the dry bed of the dam being cultivated by the people living there. This is factually not true as the number of crocodiles have increased consistently. Their intentions are clear to throw us out of the forests by hook or crook so that they could have unrestrained control over the forests. However, we are determined not to let this happen. We understand that this is a tough battle because government officials and ministers are blinded by the lure of huge funds that the World Bank is going to loan them. They don't see the people, they only see the money. And they can go to any extent to suppress the people.

When the World Bank entered the forests of Madhya Pradesh ten years ago with Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project, it led to innumerable atrocities, conflicts, and incidences of police firing in several places. People's movements across the state united together to protest against the World Bank project and the Bank was forced to terminate the project half way through. The World Bank and tribals once again stand against each other with different visions of who will control the forests of this country. Unfortunately, some NGOs such as the Madhya Pradesh Bigyan Sabha have shamelessly agreed to be part of this anti-people project.

In the light of the above crisis, we have the following demands:

- i. No village to be displaced from the Satpura Tiger Reserve and the traditional rights of the forest dwellers to be protected.
- ii. Fishing in the Tawa reservoir and draw-down cultivation not be banned and the fishing lease to Tawa Matsya Sangh in the Tawa reservoir be renewed for ten years.
- iii. World Bank's 'Biodiversity Conservation and Rural Livelihood Improvement Project' must be withdrawn. All the national parks, sanctuaries and forests be handed over to local villagers.
- iv. Dobjhirna villagers be given back their land.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned

### **Intellectuals in a unique protest against Singur, Nandigram**

Kolkata, January 24: City-based intellectuals, litterateur, doctors, advocates and artists staged a demonstration today at Metro channel near Esplanade, protesting against the "forcible land acquisition" in Singur and the killings of peasants and destruction of property at Nandigram.

Noted cultural groups and renowned artists joined in the protests by singing songs, drawing pictures, reciting poems and voicing their opinions on the incidents at Singur and Nandigram. Among those present were actors Aparna Sen and Bibhas Chakraborty, singers Kabir Suman and Shaonli Mitra and other intellectuals like Sunanda Sanyal, Sujoy Basu, Jaya Mitra, Gourishankar Ghatak, Ramaprasad Dey and Prabir Gupta. The sit-in demonstrations started at 12 noon and continued till 7 pm. After the protest rally of intellectuals on January 12, this was the second step taken by them. Following this will be a convention whereby the artists and intellectuals want to create a strong public opinion against the state government's actions in the two places.

"We will not sit quiet. The state government, under the garb of industrialisation is just snatching away land of the poor farmers and giving them to capitalists. The poor farmers are getting robbed," said Tapan Roychoudhuri, the person who organised the demonstration.

"Painters painted on canvases, singers sang songs of protest, elocutionists recited verses to protest against the state government's stand. They just drew daggers at the way the police is harassing the locals. Now hooligans belonging to certain political parties are creating ruckus in those areas," said Roychoudhuri.

"No one can sit mumb if there is something unjust going on in the state. The state government, through all these actions, is trying to create a state within a state, that is, they are trying to alienate people. This is wrong and hence we are raising voice so that it stops," Roychoudhuri said.

## **Asia**

### **Strike halts Indian port**

A strike by around 500 cargo handlers on January 22 halted all activity at the south Indian port of Cochin. They were protesting the decision of the Kerala Headload Workers Welfare Board (KHWWB) to reduce the number of workers' pools in the port from 17 to 5. The move would lead to the shedding of hundreds of jobs, as a pool contains 100 workers.

The strike, accompanied by a sit-down protest in front of the KHWWB's office, was organised by workers independently of the port unions.

### **Central Bank employees defend basic rights**

Around 40,000 Central Bank of India employees went on strike on January 22 to protest against "unwarranted attacks" by management "on employees, officers, trade unions and trade union leaders".

The strike affected clearing operations in the bank's 3,200 branches, with only a few senior management officials reporting to work. The United Forum of Central Bank Unions said the protest was against unilateral changes in staff-related policies such as transfers and promotions, and attacks on trade union rights. The union warned that more strikes across various zones are planned for February.

### **School lecturers protest over conditions**

School lecturers in the north Indian state of Himachal Pradesh held a mass sit-down protest (dharna) outside the deputy director of education's office in Hamirpur on January 22.

Their main demands were for a change in recruitment and promotion rules and the enforcement of the new elementary system of education in the next academic session. The lecturers oppose the system starting in mid-session and have decided not to teach classes 9 and 10 until their demand is accepted.

The School Lecturers' Association, organised the campaign.

### **Sri Lankan port, postal and railway workers hold protests**

Port workers picketed the Port Authority in central Colombo on January 17, demanding the payment of a delayed salary increase. They also want the Authority to cease moves to privatise the south port, end improper recruitment methods and provide workers with decent meals. The workers are threatening strike action on February 2 if their demands are not met by the end of the month.

Postal workers held a fasting campaign in front of the postal headquarters in central Colombo on January

18. They want a salary increase and overtime payments. Other demands include the confirmation of employment for long-standing casual postal workers and the establishment of a proper replacement and promotions scheme. Workers from 13 unions participated in the campaign.

Railway workers also held protests across 11 districts, including Colombo, on January 17. They are demanding union rights and an end to management corruption, privatisation and sell-offs. Workers protested at Ratmalana rail workshop, Gampaha, Kalutara, Galle, Puttalam, Kandy, Badulla, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Trincomalee.

### **Health workers launch pickets**

Health workers in Sri Lanka picketed 14 main hospitals across the country, including the national hospital in Colombo, on January 7. They are campaigning for a uniform allowance, overtime and holiday pay arrears and rectification of salary anomalies. They also want a decent promotions scheme for minor staff and allowances for trainee attendants.

All health workers, except doctors, participated in pickets at Nagoda, Ragama, Kurunegala, Matara, Galle, Monaragala, Badulla, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kandy, Ratnapura, Ridgeway Children's Hospital and South Colombo Teaching Hospital.

Health workers at the Colombo Eye Hospital picketed on January 19 and implemented a work-to-rule, demanding the reinstatement of overtime entitlements. They are calling for removal of the hospital's director and resolution of outstanding administration problems.

Doctors at the hospital began a work-to-rule campaign over the same issues on January 22. The industrial action impact on services at the eye hospital, which treats patients from all over the country.

### **Workers demand Philippines Labor Minister resign**

On January 22, around 50 workers protested outside the Cebu office of the Department of Labor and Employment. They called for the resignation of Labor Secretary Arturo Brion and demanded the Senate approve a proposed 125 peso (\$US15) per day minimum wage.

Rally organiser Dennis Derige of Partido ng Manggagawa (PM) said the protest was part of a nationwide campaign as the Senate began deliberations on the minimum wage proposal which had already been approved by the House of Representatives.

PM claims Brion is attempting to block the wage

increase by calling a meeting of 17 regional Tripartite Wage and Productivity Boards to cut across debate in the Senate and create confusion. Employer groups across the country are backing Brion's manoeuvre. PM is threatening mass protests if the wage hike does not pass the Senate.

#### **Taiwan factory workers protest redundancies**

The union representing 389 workers at the Panchiao household appliance plant in Taipei, Taiwan called a rally at the plant on January 20 to protest the firm's decision to shut down part of its operations on March 25, making 189 people redundant.

The factory owners, Tutang Co, said labour intensive production is being relocated to Vietnam and China to cut costs. Management said it had complied with the country's Labor Standards Law by giving 60 days notice before acting on the redundancies.

Protesters accused the management of embezzling money from the corporation's funds. A union representative said workers would stage another protest next week to pressure the company to change its decision.

#### **Striking workers picket Nestlé factory**

More than 600 workers and their families began an indefinite picket of Nestlé's Cabuyao Plant in Laguna in the Philippines on January 14. Fifty police were mobilised to negotiate an end to the protest. The picket marked the fifth anniversary of strike action by Nestlé workers.

Union of Filipino Employees-Drug, Food and Allied Industries Union (UFE-DFA-KMU) members walked out in January 2002 when Nestlé management refused to include a retirement benefits provision in a collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Many employees were sacked after they defied an order by Secretary of Labor Patricia Sto Thomas to end their protest and return to work.

There have been many clashes with police and workers have been threatened during the protracted strike. Union president Diasdado Fortuna was assassinated by unknown assailants while on his way home from a picket at the factory on September 22, 2005.

This month's picket was established to force the company into implementing a Supreme Court order issued in August 2006 stating that retirement benefits were a valid CBA item and directing the union and management to return to the negotiating table.

#### **Kashmiri cement workers demonstrate**

Wuyan Cement Factory employees in Srinagar, in the north Indian state of Kashmir, demonstrated in the city on January 10 to secure three months' unpaid salaries and other claims. While Chief Minister

Ghulam Nabi Azad promised last month that the outstanding salaries would be paid, workers have not received any payment.

Other demands by cement workers include modernisation of the plant, payment of six-year's outstanding provident fund contributions and an end to salary anomalies within the industry. The workers also want the government to increase financial support for the factory.

#### **Indian health workers demand wages**

Contract health workers from the Government Medical College and General Hospital in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh demonstrated on January 10 to demand the immediate payment of six month's outstanding wages.

Workers claim that the director of medical education was told on numerous occasions about the hardship caused by the unpaid wages but that authorities had ignored the issue. The demonstration was organised by Anantapuram Medical College and Hospital Employees Union.

#### **Indian transport workers protest insurance increase**

Auto-rickshaw and transport workers in the Indian state of Puducherry demonstrated outside general insurance companies on January 10 over a recent increase in motor insurance premiums. The demonstrators demanded immediate withdrawal of the price rise.

The demonstration was organised by the joint action committee of trade unions comprising of the Mini Load Carriers Workers Unions, Labor Democratic Front, and the Kamaraj Auto Workers Union. Workers have foreshadowed a strike if their demand is not met.

#### **Sri Lankan health workers protest**

Sri Lankan health workers protested on January 17 over health ministry delays in resolving outstanding work-related problems. The main protest was held outside the Colombo National Hospital and within sight of the ministry.

Auxiliary health workers are still without uniforms despite government promises to provide them four years ago. The Health Ministry is also planning to increase the price of meals presently provided at low cost to auxiliary workers.

Massive salary anomalies exist across all grades despite a government circular directing the health ministry to rectify the problem. The ministry also promised to pay eight months outstanding overtime and leave entitlements but this has not occurred. Moreover, a system allowing government workers to take out stress loans has been curtailed. The protests were organised by the All Ceylon Health Service

Union.

## **Australia and the Pacific**

### **Solomon Islands teachers boycott classes**

Teachers from the Solomon Islands capital Honiara who work in the provinces met on January 22 and agreed to continue a boycott of classes. Solomon Islands Teachers Association (SINTA) industrial relations officer John Lee Hatimoana said the industrial action would continue until teachers' travelling allowances for last year were paid. The teachers also demanded that the government withdraw and review work contracts they have been asked to sign.

SINTA officials met with the prime minister to discuss the issues but the results of their discussion have not been reported.

### **Aged-care workers in Western Australia strike**

Over 100 aged-care workers from Amaroo in Perth went on strike on January 16 to demand a wage rise. The workers, members of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, want a \$1 per hour increase. The strike action occurred during bargaining for a new enterprise work agreement. Negotiations have dragged on for four months.

A first-year age-care worker at Amaroo is currently paid \$14.84 an hour. The company has offered a 70-cent per hour increase, claiming that it had to cut staff to pay this amount. Employees have rejected this, pointing out that Amaroo is planning to build a \$7 million retirement village in the Western Australian coastal town of Denmark. They have placed bans on overtime, paperwork and cleaning administration areas.

## **Europe**

### **Health workers at state hospitals in Norway strike**

On January 18, hundreds of doctors and health workers struck at four of the largest public sector hospitals in Norway, in a dispute over pay and working conditions. Some 440 doctors, technicians, psychologists and other health staff struck at the University Hospital of Northern Norway in Tromsø, Ullevål University Hospital, Rikshospitalet-Radium Hospital and Aker University Hospital in Oslo.

The workers are members of the Akademikerne trade union. The action began following a breakdown in talks between the union and NAVO, an agency of state employers. The strike did not affect emergency surgery and child services. Psychiatry and cancer treatment were also unaffected, according to the *Aftenposten* newspaper. The health workers' union is calling for a pay increase of 2.5 percent. According to state mediator Svein Longa, this is unacceptable

to management.

NAVO employment director Anne-Kari Bratten said that management were attempting to set a benchmark for future pay agreements, "The economic expectations from Akademikerne were so great that they were far above a realistic framework for 2007 wage settlements. We cannot risk an overly high settlement so early in the year setting the tone for other negotiations later in the spring," she said.

On January 22, an additional 550 health employees joined the action at a further six hospitals in towns including Trondheim, Bergen, Fjorde and Telemark.

### **Dublin port workers serve strike notice**

This week workers employed at the port of Dublin in the Irish Republic served notice to strike to protest plans to train maintenance staff on tugboats. The action is set to go ahead on January 30.

The dispute began after nine shore-based staff were suspended after refusing to work the tugboats. The port employees are members of the TEEU trade union, which stated that the workers were being deployed on tugs without adequate training or equipment. The Labour Relations Commission has intervened in the dispute and is to hold talks with port management and TEEU this week.

### **Fujitsu employees in Manchester, England vote to continue dispute**

Employed at technology firm Fujitsu in Manchester, England voted to continue their ongoing dispute over union recognition, representation and the right to a 90-day consultation before redundancy. The workers are employed by Fujitsu on a number of the firms' outsourced accounts.

The Amicus trade union has now called a five-day strike to be held from January 29 to February 2. Earlier this month staff held a two-day strike and leafleted the firm's offices in Bristol, Crewe, London, Solihull, and Stevenage.

In an attempt to weaken any further strike action and to divide the workforce, Fujitsu has warned staff not involved in the dispute not to take leave during the five days of the upcoming action. The senior representative for Amicus at Fujitsu has been threatened with disciplinary action by the firm. Ian Allinson said this week, "We clearly think that's linked to my role in the dispute. We think one of the reasons the union was attacked in Manchester is that the company generally doesn't recognise unions. It feels like they're trying to break the union here to nip it in the bud."

### **Chinese textile workers strike in Romania**

Some 400 Chinese women employed legally in the clothing industry in Romania are on strike in Bacau,

