

# Update

Series 14

**SEZ Juggernaut: Blood on the Wheels**

■

**The Road to “Industrialisation”, “Development”...**

■

**Genocide in Nandigram: A Dossier**

■

**“Nandigram Syndrome” pervades India**

■

**Changes in SEZ Acts: ‘One step backward, two steps forward’**

■

**Mirage of ‘China Model’**

■

**Labour Standards in Chinese SEZs**

■

**Violent Land-grab in China**

April 2007

## SEZ Juggernaut: Blood on the Wheels

Well before the inking of the projects of chemical hub (SEZ) in Nandigram with the Benny Santoso of Salims — the Indonesian tycoons — on 31st July of 2006 — tensions and oppositions were brewing in East Midnapur where vast stretches of land were earmarked to be acquired. *Times News Network* reports on 23.06.2006:

...[A] sizeable section stood on the other bank of the Haldi river during Santoso's visit on Wednesday, **resenting** government's land acquisition drive. That perhaps explains why these people couldn't cross the river. "Do you have a piece of land? Otherwise, you won't realise the pangs of losing the roots," a visibly angry Seikh Safiur Rahman of Rajaramchak village told TOI [Times of India]. The next stop was Char-Kendemari. Villagers here mobbed the car and wanted to know where it came from. "**Good that you are from the media. Otherwise, we would have smashed the car,**" locals said. On Wednesday, these villagers organised street meetings at Kendemari, Bar-Kendemari Chak to "thwart government's bid to grab agricultural land". **The defiance has sent shudders down the CPIM ranks** in East Midnapore. The CPIM's peasant arm — Pradeshik Krishak Sabha — has planned to reach out to each household and convince villagers about how they can benefit from the compensation offered for the acquisition plan for the mega chemical hub. But such campaigns would have little effect on farmers and fishermen of Nandigram who have made up their mind. "**We're ready to take on the government, but won't part with our land,**"....

But, the Left Front government (led by CPIM) couldn't read the writings of the wall. They acquired vast amount of land in **Rajarhat** turning it into a hub of super rich. They acquired the lands of **Chandmoni tea estate** in the outskirts of Siliguri firing upon hundreds of protesters and killing some of them in the past. They are doing it anywhere in the state suppressing minimal murmurs of protests with their arm-twisting politics and well-knit organisations. They cannot imagine that the people of Nandigram — a region of 1.75 lakh people and a traditional left citadel well-controlled by their party-machineries — can revolt against their own party in such a stubborn manner! One of the CPIM MLAs quipped:

CPIM MLA and chairperson of Haldia municipality Tamalika Panda Seth looked unfazed by the reactions. “These are nothing new. Government faced similar problems while acquiring land for the Haldia Petrochemicals project in the ’90s,” Ponda said. (*ibid*)

Five months after the above incident, it was reported that Nandigram was still simmering against the upcoming SEZ defying the dictum of their leaders:

Farmers in these areas have refused to give up their fertile agricultural holdings and tension gripped the area when Lakshman Seth, CPIM member of parliament from Tamluk tried to intervene. He was denied entry to a farmers’ meet in Nandigram on Monday. (*Times of India, 30.11.06*)

Since then Nandigram turned into a boiling pot where thousands of people — once the loyal voters and cadres of the ruling party — revolted to part with the decision of taking away their livelihoods and dwellings. **On January 3 of 2007**, this mood of revolts burst out when a notification of Haldia Development Authority (HDA) was circulated regarding the Chemical SEZ. This notification made Nandigram a battlefield as the police of the Left Front government fired rounds of bullets on the demonstrators. Thousands of people, overwhelmingly composed of women and children fought the policemen, chased them away and torched police vehicles. Unfazed by this ‘audacity’ of the protesters, now came the **brutalities of the ‘Harmad Bahini’ (murderous thugs) of the CPIM under the cover of darkness of night of 6-7th January** and at least nine persons were killed and dozens were maimed. The newly formed body of the protesters — **‘Bhumi Uchhed Pradirodh Committee’** (Committee to Resist Eviction from Land) — comprised common people **rejecting allegiance to any parliamentary parties took the leadership of the struggle**. They formed their own forces of resistance, mostly armed with traditional homemade weapons and courage. They formed their **own leadership** who are not puppets of the parliamentary parties. In each of their demonstrations since the mayhem of 6th January, the women took the forefront reminding histories of peasant-movements of the past.

After this ghastly killing in January, the CM of West Bengal delivered some interesting comments:

....Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today conceded that “the government has committed a blunder by issuing a notice on land acquisition in Nandigram”... “I have asked the district magistrate to tear it (the notice) to pieces and keep quiet for some time. I am starting a political process to defuse the tension and **there will be no land acquisition until details are worked out** and a land map prepared after taking everybody into confidence,” .... (*www.telegraphindia.com/, 10.01.07*)

The CM of Bengal **never mentioned** in his speech that the order or planning of land-acquisition in Nandigram had been **withdrawn**. Seven days later, Biman Bose, allayed the fears of Nandigram residents in the following manner:

CPIM state secretary Mr Biman Bose today said **Nandigram was the last part of a project** that would take eight or ten years to complete. “The project starts from Barasat. **Nandigram is at the fag end**. No land has been acquired there. The process of acquisition may not even start now. (*www.thestatesman.net/, 17.01.07*)

It is noticeable, that Mr Bose never ascertained the protesters of Nandigram that no land will be acquired. **In fact, the Nandigram project was never abandoned formally**. Few days later the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) “formally cleared Indonesia-based Salim Group’s investments in the proposed SEZ in Nandigram” reports *http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/ on 07.02.07*. But the muddling up is going on. Four days later, it is reported by a newspaper: “Addressing a CPI(M)...closed-door meeting....held at the party’s Kolkata district committee office....Bhattacharjee urged the UPA government at the Centre to **redefine Nandigram as a chemical hub**.... Proceedings of the meeting was reported in CPI(M) mouthpiece *Ganashakti* today.” (*www.indianexpress.com/, 11.02.07*)

**Thus the issue of land-acquisition in Nandigram was very much alive**. It was endorsed by the representative of the Salim Group, who categorically stated in first week of March:

“I am confident our project in Nandigram will come up at the right time. **I have not heard about any change in the site**,” Prasoan Mukherjee, the Jakarta-based NRI associated with the Salim Group, said this afternoon after talks with Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. “**I have been told that the government is convincing the**

**villagers so that the project comes up at Nandigram,”** he added. (*www.telegraphindia.com/, 03.03.07*)

After the carnage in Nandigram on 14-16th March 2007, a TV-fame commentator asked:

.... [A]s Nandigram erupted and became a war zone, the Chief Minister went on record to say the notice had been mistakenly issued and he had asked the district magistrate to “tear it up”. This was in January. **So how does the state government explain that in March, 60 days later, the notification had still not been officially withdrawn?** And if it had, as the Chief Minister insisted in the assembly, why did the villagers believe otherwise? (*Barkha Dutt, www.hindustantimes.com/, 16.03.07; accessed 02.04.07*)

Hence the **complicity** behind the Nandigram carnage is almost clear. The CM of Bengal — a *bhadralok* (gentleman) face of the CPIM — never thought of the withdrawal of the foundation of SEZ in Nandigram. They (CPIM) were adamant of ‘industrialisation’ with the FDI of Salim Group in Nandigram. They never gave up their designs of land-grab. In fact, in the months following the January mayhem, they were continuing with their strong-arm tactics to defeat the resistance of Nandigram. It is almost known to everyone how the party with ‘communist’ tag continued bloodshed and intimidation by their ***harmad bahini*** during last three months from Khejuri, a still stronghold of the party.

Now came the days of 14-16th March 2007. The police-forces of the CPIM-led government armoured with sophisticated weapons accompanied by the drunk armed lumpens of the party — licensed to kill, rape and loot — marched into Nandigram (to “establish law & order” of the bourgeois state) and orchestrated a genocide.

We cannot narrate these barbarisms in our own words. It is narrated in the section: **‘Genocide in Nandigram: A Dossier’**. This section is prepared from the news collected from different media.

\*\*\*\*

**“Why was the carnage happened”? “Were the CPIM leaders going mad”?**

This question is aired by different persons, particularly the intellectuals, historians, analysts, social activists, etc. those have leanings to these ‘leftists’ till yesterday. This section of the society vehemently protested against the carnage, joined several rallies, launched several meetings condemning the violence perpetrated on the people of Nandigram. Even the students of Kolkata, Delhi, and some other cities joined several protest marches and are being active now in sending solidarities to the struggling people of Nandigram in many forms. Reliefs are being organised to be sent to the victims.

Yes, the killed, maimed, raped, frightened but the struggling masses of Nandigram (and of Singur to a certain extent) played an important role to arouse these masses of people, particularly the intelligentsia. These intelligentsia of different walks of life expressed their passion, anger and distrust in different way. The students of yesterday who hated “politics” are now beginning to be drawn into “politics” though mostly in an unconscious way. All these aroused persons/sections are now ridiculing the leftists of CPIM-brand as “neo-liberal”, “fascists”, “servants of corporates”, “beggars of foreign capital”, “anti-people”, “anti-poor”, etc. etc.

Well, this is a positive sign that bloodshed of Nandigram has awakened these persons. Moreover, these carnages acted like an eye-opener of many persons. But **UPDATE** has a humble question to these intellectuals and other ‘awakened’ persons. Were not these brands of leftists following the policies of the ruling classes for the last thirty years? In fact, if judged from a sober point of view it is clear that the ‘industrialisation’, ‘development’ *mantra* of the ‘leftists’ of West Bengal are nothing but the policies of the capitalist classes of India incepted (in the name of New Economic Policy or NEP) at the early nineties at the patronage of imperialist forces. Are not the ‘left’ parties like CPIM, CPI, RSP, FB, etc serving the ruling classes of India and the imperialist capital either directly or indirectly? **UPDATE** dealt this subject in several issues (particularly in **UPDATE 11 & 13**). Hence we are not going into this subject once again.

The CPIM leaders are now making several theories behind the carnage of Nandigram. One of these theories are that the ‘battle for Nandigram is not for land acquisition for the proposed SEZ. It is actually a battle to set up political control between rival parties’. Thus

the CPIM leadership wants to distort the fact that the upsurge of Nandigram is spontaneous against the move of land-grab by the state government. Interestingly, many analysts and intellectuals — who vehemently protested the carnage — highlighted the same version of ‘battle for political control’ to the benefit of CPIM. Judgment from this angle, in fact, casts a dark shadow on the **class-character of the Nandigram carnage**.

If judged from the reactions of the Government of India [henceforth GoI] and that of the capitalist barons, it will be crystal-clear that the **carnage in Nandigram is in fact the continuation of the policies of the capitalist classes sponsored by their imperialist masters**.

After the terror unleashed on 3rd and 6-7th January of 2007 in Nandigram, the GoI postponed its meeting indefinitely to be held on 10th January scheduled to clear more SEZs. A newspaper reports:

“External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee who heads the empowered Group of Ministers on Special Economic Zones **cited** the four **deaths in Nandigram and the “tension” in Singur** — which incidentally is not an SEZ — **to defer a decision and, in effect, putting 172 approved SEZs in deep freeze.**” (*www.indianexpress.com/, 31.01.07*)

Another business daily reports from Mumbai that the proposed SEZ of Reliance is **delayed** due to the **“widespread agitation in Singur and Nandigram** over forced acquisition of agricultural land by the West Bengal government”. (*Economic Times, 15.01.07*) Benugopal Dhoot, the newly elected president of Assocham & the chief of the Videocon Company rushed to the PM’s office on 18th January and “urged Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to convene a tripartite meeting of representatives of industry, farmers and state and central government to sort out the **ticklish issue of SEZs...**” (*www.thestatesman.net/, 19.01.07*) In fact, the **business houses are very much concerned about the delay and freezes on the SEZs**. In the two months between January 10 to March 14-16 (the days of genocide in Nandigram) these houses drafted several proposals of “human” rehabilitation & resettlement for the ousted land-losers, advocated measures of fabulous package of compensation to the oustees and lectured the

governments and parliamentary parties how to manage the “ticklish issue of SEZs”. Just before the Nandigram violence on 3rd January, when the fire of protests engulfed **Raigad district of Maharashtra, Paradeep of Orissa, Barnala & Amritsar of Punjab and some other parts in Haryana**, the Assocham released figures of SEZs those are stuck to the disputes on land acquisition. The report says:

There are as many as 250 proposals to create special economic zones (SEZs) in 21 states still languishing for their approvals from various governments, **mainly due to disputes on compensation package and acquisition of agriculture land** in the absence of suitable relief and rehabilitation package.... The 250 proposals will require about 25,000 hectares of land and have been awaiting approvals for the last 7-8 months with an estimated investment of over Rs 3,000 crore even in **forward looking states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and West Bengal....** ([www.navhindtimes.com/articles.php?Story\\_ID=01027](http://www.navhindtimes.com/articles.php?Story_ID=01027); accessed 03.01.07)

On 5th February 2007, a business website expressed their concern more loudly lobbying for the foreign investors:

**The SEZ muddle is hurting corporate India and foreign investors.** Sources say that investments worth a whopping **Rs 40,000 crore** hang in the balance.... **George Soros is betting big on India.** And he is keen to jump onto the SEZ bandwagon. The Soros Fund Management wants to set up a multi product SEZ in India. Robert Soros, the Deputy Chairman of the Foundation met with Commerce Ministry officials on Friday. **Sources say he has sought greater clarity on the SEZ policy....** [S]everal business houses have told the Commerce Ministry that the government’s action has come as a complete surprise and will result in losses for companies that have already ordered plant and machinery for which they will have to pay full customs duty. The SEZ back has also **angered foreign investors.** ([www.Moneycontrol.com](http://www.Moneycontrol.com))

Singapore government shot a letter to the GoI expressing strong reactions on the freezes on SEZs:

The Singapore government has demanded an explanation from the Indian government for the current freeze on SEZ approvals and notifications. Singapore-based realty major Ascendes has \$1 billion investments lined up for its two proposed multi-product SEZs in

Tamil Nadu, which have now put on hold.... Singapore is, especially, disappointed over the freeze as senior officials from India had personally met Singapore officials to persuade them to invest in Indian SEZs.... (*Economic Times*, 07.02.07)

Finally, the CMs of “Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana have written to the members of the empowered Group of Ministers on SEZ conveying concerns of the investors who had lined up big investments in their states.” ([www.financialexpress.com](http://www.financialexpress.com), 01.03.07) The CMs also urged strongly that “a further delay in a decision on SEZs would result in flight of proposed investments from India to other countries”. (<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/> 02.03.07) Thus the pressure (of the foreign investors, in particular) was building up to force the GoI and other ruling parties of the states to make some arrangements to solve the problem of land-acquisition for SEZs at the earliest. It is discussed earlier that even the LF governments of West Bengal had not withdrawn SEZ project in Nandigram. In fact, the resistance put forward by the villagers of Nandigram is a pointer that they didn't believe the sugarcoated words of CM of Bengal.

Hence, the carnage in Nandigram is not an ‘accident’ or not a mere ‘battle to establish political control between rival parties’. **It is in fact, the implementation of the SEZ policies of the capitalist classes of India who are under tremendous pressure from imperialist finance capital.**

\*\*\*\*

Just after the January bloodshed in **Nandigram** and particularly after the carnage on 14-16th March 2007, the protests and agitations against the land-acquisition gained a new impetus all over the country. The protesters of **Kalinganagar** where the massacre of 13 tribals were orchestrated in January 2006 observed 2nd January as martyrs' day. The tribals blocked the Paradeep road till the first week of March for nearly 13 months! Latest reports from Kalinganagar indicates that the agitations and resistances are going still now. In **Jagatsinghpur district of Orissa**, the thousands of villagers are gathered to resist the entry of the the police and government officials from the first week of April, 2007 in the proposed site of SEZs of **Posco**. In fact, the Kalinganagar and January bloodshed of Nandigram halted the march of ‘industrialisation’ of the Orissa government till now. Particularly after the genocide in Nandigram and the subsequent resistances and

fight-back of the people this vigour of protests and resistances spread to Jharkhand, Chhattishgarh, Raigad (where the people were on warpath from the last year), Dadri (UP), and several places of Haryana and Punjab. In fact, a spectre is haunting the Indian ruling classes — the **spectre of Nandigram**.

We may call up the expression (“**a sense of cold horror**”) of the Governor of West Bengal (a representative of the state apparatus) made on the day of Nandigram carnage: “Was this spilling of human blood not avoidable? What is the public purpose served by the use of force that we have witnessed today?” Moreover, one IT-famed billionaire — who has incidentally invested massively in the SEZ projects all over the country — Mr Narayana Murthy exclaimed:

“I agree that we cannot take land from farmers”.... He said that the recent Nandigram incident in West Bengal, ... is likely to have “some repercussions”. (*PTI, www.expressindia.com/, 21.03.07*)

Though feared from “some repercussions”, the ruling classes of India are so much aggressive that even this ‘spectre’ which is ‘haunting’ them cannot deter the marches of SEZs. On 5th April 2007, the GoI lifted the freezes on the SEZs and announced some cosmetic changes in the SEZ Acts to douse the flames of unrest. In fact, the ruling classes of India have been enjoying the strong backing of the imperialist capital. Unfazed at the ghastly killings on 14-16th March 2007 — and just after the genocide perpetrated — the president of US India Business Council (USIBC), Ron Somers came forward in support of the LF government in the following way:

....Ron Somers has come out in support of beleaguered chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee by stressing that American companies would not lose interest in the proposed chemical hub project despite the carnage at Nandigram. “The violence in Nandigram is tragic. That said, our companies know the Bengal government’s intentions for Nandigram are progressive.... Somers told TOI [Times of India] by an email on Friday....

The USIBC chief’s statement assumes significance in the light of the fact that he has been specifically requested by Bhattacharjee [i.e., the CM of West Bengal] and state commerce and industries minister Nirupam Sen to convince American chemicals and petrochemicals giants, including the like of Dow Chemicals, to invest in Bengal. The

USIBC represents the largest American companies investing in India. (*Times of India, Kolkata, 17.03.07*)

These words of the imperialist masters — made within two days of the carnage — clearly indicate that the carnage cannot hinder the mammoth projects of SEZs of the Indian ruling classes backed by the giant TNCs. Even the US TNC like **Dow Chemical** which are famed for its notorious role in making napalm bombs devastating Vietnam are involved in any way with the SEZ-march of the Indian ruling classes. In fact, just after the Nandigram carnage the political and business leaders jumped into the fray in fire-fighting mode to salvage their prestige before the global investors. Mr Kamal Nath, the commerce minister came forward with a hurriedly made a statement defending the SEZ policies:

[Kamal] Nath had ... said that violence in Nandigram was triggered due to acquisition of land and not the SEZ policy. **“We should not look at it as a SEZ issue** but one of land acquisition for industrial projects,” he said. (*www.financialexpress.com, 16.03.07*)

Nine days after the Nandigram massacre the PM of India assured the global and domestic capitalists that **“SEZ as an instrument of economic policy has come to stay”** with a “a more humane, more effective and a more just policy with regard to the resettlement of land oustees”. (*PTI, www.financialexpress.com, 23.03.07*)

This ‘confidence’ is echoed by the industrialists in the following way:

**“We don’t think that there will be any major impact after Nandigram as far as investors’ interests are concerned.** The state government can handle the issue,” president of Indian Chamber of Commerce S K Bangur says.... Confederation of India Industry (CII) also rules out the possibility of Nandigram acting as a deterrent to investors. **“If that was so, investors would not have gone to Gujarat after the Godhra riots,”** Biswadip Gupta, Vice-Chairman of CII (Eastern region) said. (*PTI, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/, 01.04.07*)

Thus the massive bloodshed and terror perpetrated on the people on Nandigram and the subsequent fight-back of the villagers who recaptured Nandigram within 36 hours from the clutches of the administration and the hooligans of the ruling party and the **“Nandigram syndrome”** engulfing many parts of the country **cannot halt** the aggressive marches of the SEZ policies of the ruling classes strongly backed by the

imperialist capital. **It is no surprise as the working classes of India are still at the beginnings of the beginnings of the ‘fight-back’ or development of class struggle.** Without the development of class struggle against the class-politics of the ruling classes and also against the imperialist domination as a whole it cannot be possible for the isolated and sporadic struggles of Nandigram or Kalinganagar to stall the onslaughts. At the best, these struggles can snatch away some concessions and ‘human’ compensations from the hands of the ruling classes.

In fact, the SEZ marches of the ruling classes of India is not an isolated phenomenon occurring only in India. It is a **global phenomena** initiated by the policies of the Economic Processing Zones (EPZs) in the so-called developing countries exploited massively by the imperialist finance capital. SEZs are the modern versions of the EPZs with a ‘glittering’ successes in China, Mexico or Bangladesh where millions of workers are being exploited in sweatshops selling cheap labour. Hence, the SEZ policies of the Indian ruling classes are strongly tied with the imperialist capital which cannot be overthrown by the isolated struggles of Nandigram or Kalinganagar, etc. Unless the working classes in alliance with the oppressed people of rural India (comprising agricultural workers, poor peasants etc) cannot appear at the forefront with class politics and struggle, these marches of SEZs cannot be overthrown.

(Moreover, the path followed by any parliamentary party of the country in this present system cannot be the path of real ‘industrialisation’ and ‘development’. We have dealt this subject in **UPDATE 12 & 13** to a certain extent. In this issue we are trying to present our viewpoint in the section: **“Road to industrialisation and development”**.)

In the **‘model’ county like China** from which the ruling class of India (along with the ‘leftists’ like CPMs) have borrowed the concept of SEZs and from where they are learning to roll on the juggernaut of SEZs, the conditions are more serious. **Thousands of thousands of acres of land have been acquired there displacing millions of peasants and poor people in the name of SEZs, urbanisation and ‘development’.** The resistances built against this massive land-grab have been thwarted and suppressed at the gunpoint of the Chinese armies, polices and thugs. Moreover, **in**

**the ‘spectacularly successful SEZs of China the workers (particularly migrants from the countryside) were exploited like Dickensian age.** In fact, this Chinese ‘model’ of SEZs are going to be emulated in India.

In the above context, this issue of *UPDATE* will deal **four more** subjects: a) ‘Nandigram Syndrome’ pervades India; b) Changes in SEZ Acts: ‘One step backward, two steps forward; c) Labour standards in the Chinese SEZs. d) Violent land-grab in China.

– Update

## **The Road to “Industrialisation”, “Development”...**

These days a lot of talks are going on regarding the agenda of industrialisation & development. But surprisingly discussions questioning strongly the possibility of industrialisation & development in real terms in this present social-economic setting are rare. The CPIM party and a small part of intelligentsia close of CPIM are preaching the ‘industrialisation & development’ policy of WB govt as the ‘only’ choice if you really want industrialisation & development, otherwise you’ll be termed as ‘anti-industry’, ‘anti-development’. Contrarily, we are served with alternative ‘Model’(s) of industrialisation & development from parties like TMC (led by Ms Mamata Banerjee) who want to wipe off any ‘anti-industry’ tag stamped by CPIM and allies, from some groups or ‘Parties’ commonly known as Naxalite or ‘communist revolutionary’ and also from a part of intelligentsia that is working in support of Singur and Nandigram movement in WB and anti-SEZ movement in India in general, who are all opposing the ‘Model’ presented and practised by CPIM led govt of WB.

Is it possible for WB, or India in general, to carry out industrialisation & development *in real terms* through any of those Models suggested *in this present social-economic setting*? The truthful answer is a resounding NO, and we’ll try to explain that from theory as well as life experiences.

There are some awful and at the same time ridiculous books on ‘Development’ Economics which were once in the reading lists of under graduate and graduate students (we don’t know whether they are read now also). These books treated ‘development’ in isolated manner, i.e., out of international context and national socio-economic plus political context too. It was as if: See boys and girls, this way, through these ‘n’ number of ‘stages’ England developed, an industrial society was created (which is now purportedly passing to a post-industrial society), and following this model, these stages, your country too can attain industrialisation – so hurry for ‘Take Off’! In the same way industrialisation of US, Germany, etc was also *explained* in some economic histories. CPIM and its allies have that same kind of fancy, rather we can say craze as they see ‘There Is No Alternative’

to their Model. Their tongues salivate seeing ‘developed’, ‘industrialised’ South Korea, some ASEAN countries, etc and even perhaps Mumbai. Their dream is that Calcutta will one day become the South & Southeast Asian Commercial Hub. So as not be ridiculed for obscuring international economic reality, these Model-peddlers now add: See, how Globalisation – Liberalisation process has come in aid to this development model; see how generously capital is coming (and can rush in if you let them) in forms of FDI & FII! Surprisingly many of those who are opposing CPIM on this issue are proposing *Alternative Model(s)*, and by this action they are also sharing a big mistake, a grave error, that of spreading the illusion that industrialisation & development are possible *in this present social-economic setting*.

Why it is so that industrialisation & development are not possible *in this present social-economic setting*? Because those Model peddlers and/or makers don’t see and obscure an important factor – Imperialism, as those books obscure, obfuscate, conceal the role of colonialism, the colonies, their burden, their plunder, etc behind the development of England. Development along capitalist line, industrialisation etc happened in US, Germany etc who didn’t have that ‘colonial advantage’ of England, but there (1) the US had to wage war of independence against England, US didn’t remain as colony of England, and the first wave industrialisation in these countries took place *before* the advent of Imperialism, and then in the Imperialist age those countries themselves became Imperialists, (2) in these two countries industrialisation took place in completely two different backdrops. After the arrival of the Imperialist age, the world is divided in roughly two divisions: the imperialist countries and the dependent countries, and it is impossible for the dependent countries to adopt ‘development’, ‘industrialisation’ strategy independently – if that is to be done the said dependent country need to cut off all its ties with imperialism, and to eradicate all pre-capitalist vices that impede social progress. Lot of talks are going on in the corporate controlled media about China, Chinese Model, etc, but they never mention that all that glitters now in present day China are standing on the solid footing of what China did after the second world war – China did its anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution. Then there are ‘examples’ of South Korea, the post-2nd-world-war Japan, etc. Here also the roles of Imperialists are very well known; they contributed and supervised everything from industrial development to land

reform in those countries and the radical 'land reform' in a politically non-radical way, Jünker way, served as a basis of Korea's industrialisation and Japan's further industrialisation. Imperialist powers did so in South Korea or Japan because they were afraid of revolution in these countries. India's land reform or that of West Bengal, in spite of all advertisements of CPIM, will stand as insignificantly small or dwarfish in comparison to what was done within few years in the 1950s in South Korea. Industrialisation happened in such a way, it needed workers in such a number that once in the 1970s there was scarcity of agricultural labourers in the countryside and govt had to intervene!

In the ASEAN countries we see (1) fingerprints of Imperialism, particularly US, Japan, etc and (2) crony capitalists behind their so-called industrial progress. 'Industrialisation' there is so frail and flimsy that a speculative wave for just a week by some FII bosses could make those economies crumble! Significantly, behind the design of the 'industrialisation-development' model(s) of the govt of India and various state governments also one can easily see not only policies framed by some party leaders or leaders of industry, but also imperialist hands acting through World Bank, ADB, Mc Kinsey, etc, etc. Industrialisation in proper sense and development of a strong indigenous economy are not the aims of Imperialism, they always want to make dependent countries subordinate and dependent on them, so they can never venture or allow industrialisation in proper sense in dependent countries. There is a simple way to make dependent countries dependent always – that is by making them dependent in the sphere of what Marxists call Department-1 industries, or in 'production of means of production' in many ways. India faced many such obstructions, even in fields outside of what comes under the term 'industry', e.g., in indigenous research & development in agriculture, and had to abandon indigenous R&D, including, allegedly, retrenching a few of concerned scientists. The imperialists didn't allow research so that India can develop agricultural production bypassing the 'Green Revolution' (or chemical dependent cultivation) designed by imperialists.

But what happens regarding 'development', the word that accompanies the word 'industrialisation'? Industrial development to some extent occurred in some dependent countries, but that did not beget social development or development of society in real

sense. Harry Magdoff once analysed the 'development' of Brazil till perhaps early 1970s in which he showed that industrial development occurred there, some native corporate houses allied with foreign big houses reaped heaps of wealth, but the working people and the marginalised ones, a huge army of unemployed, underemployed persons, suffered terribly. We all know that Brazil developed further after 1970s till today following WB-IMF prescriptions and then the world-encompassing liberalisation-globalisation policy; but inequality, pauperisation, marginalisation all grew. In this issue of UPDATE, we are presenting the Chinese experience of 'super speed' development along capitalist lines, the impact of this 'development' on workers and peasants. In India too we saw 'development' along so-called Nehru-path and then through NEP-path. We have the experiences. Then is it at all believable that this new industrialisation & development policy will be able to usher in industrialisation in real sense and also real social development?

Of course industrialisation in real sense and also real social development can happen but then India will have to sever all ties with imperialism, evict all feudal remnants and also the big capitalists. But that is the question of radically changing *this present social-economic setting*. Toiling peasants will then gain control over land. Levies that go to the Imperialists, the TNC/MNC firms in form of profits, remittances, royalties etc, will stop. Workers control over industries will put an end to inhuman working conditions and low wages that crush the workers. Internal market will develop demanding industrial products for agricultural development and the people at large. The 'consumer base' of the industries will not be a paltry 10-12% of the populace as it is now, at maximum. And, on the top of it, free people, the toilers themselves will decide what industries to set up, where to set up, where from the means of production will come, etc and will not allow any industry that will be ruinous for the nature, and hence for the society. Just for example consider the following: (1) capitalists boast of making perhaps, maximum, a million cars a year in India (in near future) – what will happen when the free Indian society will demand minimum 90-100 million bicycles a year? (2) What will happen when more than a billion strong population will demand a minimum 5-6 meters of textile articles per head per year? Even reopening all the closed textile mills will not be able to meet that demand. (3) What and how much means of production will those bicycle factories and textile mills

need?... We are not lengthening this list, readers can visualise in their mind the scope and possibility of development and industrialisation in the free society of India.

Another question that came up unexpectedly from a corner is regarding 'violence'. In a popular Bengali TV show one person raised the question that in all previous examples of industrialisation in history there were violence associated with it. Can it be avoided here? It is a really interesting question. In history we have seen violence associated with or preceding industrialisation, as for example the famous or notorious example of encirclement drive in England. But if we probe deeply into history we shall see that there were actually *two kinds of violence* in such social transformations from pre-capitalist backward society. As for example, we have seen in England violence of the rulers against the people, and also we have seen in France violence of the people against the ex-rulers. We have seen Jünker path of development of capitalism (and industrialisation) in Germany by the ruling class ruthlessly oppressing the toiling masses, and also we have seen Lincoln's civil war, a people's war against the slave-owner landlords, and subsequent development of capitalism in USA. So the question from history is not of just 'violence in society, associated with or preceding industrialisation', but of 'violence of which class and against which class'. So it is a question of political choice, and **UPDATE** certainly has no authority or expertise to comment on this; but we hope that readers will explore this question with due importance.

– Update

## Genocide in Nandigram: A Dossier

“We will not sit silent in Nandigram. We will hit back if they adopt violent means. We will make life hell for them [protesters]. We will surround Nandigram....”

*[by Binoy Konar, a member of CPI(M) State Secretariat; 06.01.07,  
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> (accessed 08.01.07)]*

They are still digging out dead bodies from under the ground, recovering remains from various far-flung villages. Dead bodies of children, killed at point blank range. Some have been found with their throats slit. Bodies are being still taken out of the area in the cover of darkness and dumped unceremoniously at petty wayside....

*[<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/>, 17.03.07]*

“At least 17 girls were raped inside a deserted house near Bhangabera on 14 March when police opened fire near a bridge. The victims were dragged into the house of Shankar Samanta by CPI-M cadres”.....

*[<http://www.thestatesman.net/>; 21.03.07]*

[What happened in Nandigram starting from January of this year, and particularly on the days of 14-16th March are depicted by the following newspaper reports. — **UPDATE]**

**January 3, 2007:** Nearly 1,200 villagers in East Midnapore’s Nandigram fought a pitched battle with the police on Wednesday refusing to let go of their land which the government proposes to acquire for SEZs. They set on fire a police vehicle, injured five cops, prompting the police to fire several rounds in the air. Villagers claimed four among them were injured. (...)

Matters flared up after a notice, purportedly issued by Haldia Development Authority (...) was sent to the gram panchayats. The notice identifies 27 mouzas of Nandigram-1 block for acquisition. Of these, 14 mouzas are to be completely acquired; the rest partially. The state requires nearly 14,000 acres here and two other mouzas of Khejuri-2 block for the proposed projects. It plans to acquire another 5,000 acres in Mahisadal block for two more SEZs. (*Source: Times of India, 04.01.07*)

**January 6, 2007, CPI-M cadres the new cops in forbidden Nandigram:**  
Want to visit Nandigram in India? Well ask the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-

M) for permission. Two days after a farmers' uprising against land acquisition in this East Midnapore constituency of West Bengal, 'outsiders', including media persons, were prevented from entering the area chosen by the government for a chemical hub and special economic zone (SEZ) with Indonesia's Salim group over 14,000 acres.

Journalists alleged they were stopped at a distance of 9 km from Nandigram, about 150 km from Kolkata, by CPI-M men who 'patrolled' the area as angry residents moved about with swords, staves and other weapons in a free for all. The CPI-M activists have set up 'check posts' at places on way to Nandigram to 'scrutinise' the entry of people even though the administration has not yet imposed Section 144 CrPC. (...)

CPI-M leader in Nandigram Surapati Debnath told a Bengali news channel that faced resistance in the area: 'We had to set up these check points because many outsiders are entering the area and fomenting trouble.'

The villagers meanwhile are guarding the area to prevent entry of policemen. Sensing trouble, the police are showing restraint for the time being. (...) (*Source: www.indiaenews.com/india/; accessed 08.01.07*)

**January 7, 2007:** The land acquisition fracas turned into a bloody gunbattle in East Midnapore's Sonachura on Sunday morning, leaving at least four people dead. Unofficially, the death toll was **six**, with several other injured and missing.

With no police presence in the area, alleged CPM-backed men had a field-day. They fired indiscriminately at demonstrators protesting the "forcible acquisition" of their land for a SEZ to developed by Indonesia's Salim group in Nandigram. (...)

On Saturday evening, the situation took a turn for the worse with sporadic incidents of bombings and gunbattle. The immediate provocation was reports that armed CPM men were camping in these spots hemming Sonachura, bordering Nandigram with Khejuri. Though there was no immediate confirmation of this either from CPM or the police, TOI witnessed a large group of people in a camp, almost all them outsiders. (...) (*Source: Times of India, 08.01.07*)

**January 7, 2007:** Bharat Mandal, a 28-year-old farmer, was shot dead by CPI-M men, locals alleged. They claimed more villagers had been killed and injured in the nightlong violence unleashed allegedly by the ruling party men who raided the village in police uniform. Kolkata TV, a Bengali news channel, showed footage of a bullet-riddled Bharat Mandal, a member of the newly formed *Bhumi Ucched Pratirodh Committee* (Committee to Resist Eviction from Land), lying dead. (...)

The *Bhumi Ucched Pratirodh Committee* was formed to prevent any move to acquire land for a proposed project by the Salim group of Indonesia and the state government even as CPI-M activists flexed their muscles and drew a battle line with the angry farmers and residents. “We will not give any land for industrialisation here at any cost or price. We will teach the government a lesson if they use force,” said a representative of the new body. (...)

On July 31 [2006], the state government signed an agreement with the Salim Group to implement various developmental projects, including a mega chemical industrial estate, to be spread over 10,000 acres in a 50:50 joint venture. Construction of a four-lane road bridge over the Haldi river, from Haldia to Nandigram, has also been planned. The bridge would provide a link between Haldia and the proposed chemicals SEZ in Nandigram. (...) (*Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com>*)

**January 10, 2007:** West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said on Tuesday the Nandigram agitation had been handled badly. “It happened because of our mistake. We must talk to every villager and in every panchayat. The map (of the proposed SEZ) will not be finalised before we get the opinion of the villagers. Of course, I will also go there,” said the chief minister.

Bhattacharjee said acquisition would be kept in abeyance till normalcy and peace returned in Nandigram. He admitted that a notice issued by the Haldia Development Authority (HDA) identifying the mouzas to be acquired had angered the people of Nandigram. “It was a big blunder and the principal cause of the mayhem that followed,” he said, adding that he had asked the district magistrate to scrap the notification.

On Monday, CPI(M) state secretary Biman Bose had said the HDA had issued no such notification. (...) (*Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com>*)

**January 12, 2007:** Even while West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee plans the road ahead, the people of Nandigram continue to live in camps and in fear of displacement. (...)

“We have lost faith in the Police and the administration because we are being attacked by CPI-M cadres in police uniform. It’s for them that so many peasants have lost their lives,” said a resident of the village, Sheikh Farooq Abdullah. Such is the threat perception that a makeshift public announcement system is being set up to warn villagers of a possible police entry. And though the Chief Minister has admitted to an administrative blunder in Nandigram and put land acquisition there on hold, farmers are not yet sure about the government’s intentions. (...) (*Source: <http://www.ibnlive.com/news>*)

**February 7, 2007:** Violence erupted for the second time today since the first outburst on January 3 when people protesting against land acquisition for a proposed SEZ in Bhawanipore near Nandigram murdered a policeman of the district intelligence bureau around noon today. (...)

Today, violence spread to its adjoining area of Ishwardaha-Jalbai under the Bhawanipore police station that is right across Nandigram by the Haldi river. Villagers in this area, traditionally a CPM bastion, had snapped road links when a police party arrived there. (...)

Ever since mob violence erupted at Nandigram on January 3, Nandigram has been out of bounds for the administration and the police, with local people digging up roads or blocking them with tree trunks. Wednesday’s violence followed tension brewing between supporters of the CPM and a newly-formed committee that has vowed to resist the acquisition of farmland for industry. (...)

After a high-level meeting called by Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, State Home Secretary Prasad Ranjan Ray said: “This is the first time that a police personnel has been killed in the state over the issue of land. We are considering sending more policemen to the area.” (...) (*Source: <http://www.indianexpress.com>*)

**February 18, 2007:** Violence again flared up on Sunday at Nandigram, the site of violent protests over the proposed acquisition of land for an SEZ, as bombs were hurled, gunshots fired and people beaten up. Since Saturday night, bombs were being hurled from Khejuri towards Nandigram and gunshots were heard in Kedorabarchak area, a PTI correspondent said.

Sporadic clashes have occurred since Friday night at Nandigram between supporters of the CPI-M and the Bhumi Uchhed Pratirodh Committee [BUPC], which is spearheading the protest against land acquisition for an SEZ to be set up there by Indonesia's Salim Group.

(...) Houses were set ablaze, shops were looted and some people were reported missing from the area on Saturday. The Bhumi Uchhed Pratirodh Committee on Sunday organised a procession in Tekhali Bazar to protest the looting of shops and damage to property on Saturday. (...) BUPC members alleged that a mob of 200 to 300 CPI-M supporters set ablaze four houses, including a bakery at Tekhali Bazar village, where jewellery and garment shops were looted. (Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com>)

**March 11, 2007:** But for the people of Nandigram, who have been singing a different tune, the CM [Buddhadev Bhattacharjee] sent out a different message. "I wanted Nandigram to develop into a buzzing industrial hub like Haldia. But people misunderstood us. If they want to remain underdeveloped, I won't insist on setting up the chemical hub there. But if the Opposition digs up roads, organises rallies to break peace [sic], we won't tolerate that. I told the district magistrate to talk to the Opposition leaders there. They didn't turn up. **Next time if they hold rallies, we will do the same, and hold gatherings whenever they do it,**" Bhattacharjee said.

Earlier, Krishak Sabha state president Benoy Konar **hinted at a tit-for-tat strategy for Nandigram.** "We are waiting for the peasants of Nandigram to stoke the fire of confrontation," Konar said. (...) (Source: *The Times of India*, 12.03.07)

**March 13, 2007:** There are chances that Nandigram in Midnapore East may experience a fresh bout of trouble with the government giving its green signal to police to enter the violence-prone block and the locals, backed by the Bhumi Uchhed Pratirodh

Committee (BUPC) members, determined to resist the entry of officers. The locals are demanding that the men in uniform crush the CPI-M camps in Khejuri first. (...) (*Source: www.thestatesman.net/, 14.03.07*)

**March 13, 2007:** Throughout Tuesday the BUPC held meetings in regular intervals with the women in Nandigram. A deputation was given to the BDO. The agitators said that **to counter the entry of the police in the area mainly women and children will be kept at the frontline.** From Tuesday evening the supporters of BUPC started guarding different parts of Nandigram. On the other hand, the administration had deployed nearly two thousand five hundred police and special task force near Khejuri and Nandigram. (...) (*Source: Anandabazar Patrika, a Bengali daily, 14.03.07*)

**March 14, 2007: Killing Fields:** The quest for FDI acquired a bloody hue on Wednesday as a 5,000-strong police force marched into Nandigram and fired on protesting villagers and activists, leaving at least 12 dead and over 50 injured. The official death count is 11.

The bloodbath drew a stinging reaction from Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi. **“I was filled with cold horror,”** he said, in a statement unprecedented in its severity. **“Was this spilling of human blood not avoidable? What is the purpose served by the use of force we witnessed today,”** he asked. (...)

The stalemate over land acquisition for an SEZ, to be promoted as a chemical hub by Salim group of Indonesia, is now two months old. Wednesday’s clash comes as surprise since chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee has already announced withdrawal of the land acquisition notification and offered to shift the projects elsewhere if the villagers of Nandigram did not want it.

**But the actual notification has not been withdrawn yet.** Apparently fearful of this and scared of police reprisal, protesting villagers blocked off entire areas by digging roads and erecting barricades. **Police, sent to “restore law and order”, came up against a human shield of women and children.**

The cops lobbed tear gas shells and lathicharged. Villagers hit back with stones. Suddenly, the firing started. It continued for half an hour and left 12 dead, including women and children. (...)

During the three-hour-long police 'operation', **hundreds of CPM men trailed the cops and barred everyone** — including the media — from going anywhere near Nandigram. (...)

CPM was struggling to defend the police action, saying the cops opened fire after they were attacked, but not many are buying this. (...) But what he [Biman Bose — Left Front Chairman] did not say was that the situation in Nandigram is different from places like Singur or Garbeta. While in Singur it was a clash between two parties [which is not true as exemplified by facts described in *Update 13*], **CPM in Nandigram is mainly fighting its own men, who have broken ranks** and joined Jami Pratirodh Committee. [The name of the committee is in fact 'Bhumi Uchhed Pratirodh Committee' — **UPDATE**]

Familiar with CPM strategy, they decided not to believe Bhattacharjee till Haldia Development Authority withdrew its land acquisition notice. They knew there would be police action. They have dug up the roads. And finally, when the police marched in, they hoped the worst could be averted if they put up a human shield of women and children. Their calculations went wrong. (...) (*Source: Times of India (Kolkata edition), 15.03.07*)

**March 14, 2007: Fear and Firepower Rule Red Zone:** Police in the inner circle, **CPM supporters guarding the outer**. And the administration nowhere to be seen. The battle plan in Nandigram was planned to perfection. **Thousands of CPM cadres sealed off all access point along a 30-km radius around Nandigram** on Wednesday morning, as police carried out a bloodbath.

It seemed a carefully orchestrated plan. The administration stayed away from Digha Road, the highway from which several roads meander into Nandigram. Instead, CPM supporters took over, setting up 'checkpoints' to weed out reporters and photographers from vehicles headed towards Nandigram.

Journalists were yanked out of vehicles, abused and manhandled. When the TOI team attempted to enter Nandigram through Chandipur; it was stopped by a 100-strong mob of party supporters. “If you value your lives, turn back immediately,” said a local leader.

Banging on the car bonnet, his supporters screamed: “Move back or we’ll tear you to shreds. You have been a mute witness to our humiliation. **Now, it’s time to hit back. We can do that without your help.**”

When we called up SP Anil Srinivas, he said: “We are carrying out operations in Nandigram now. Other matters will be dealt later.” IG (western range) Arun Gupta was more blunt: “I don’t have time for journalists now.”

With the administration turning a blind eye, the TOI team got on a bus to Nandigram. But at Heria, it hit another road checkpoint. Passengers are bundled out and lined up to identify who did not match the area’s rustic profile. Bags were yanked out and searched.

This TOI reporter and cameraman were sitting ducks. Both were spotted in an instant and bundled into the zonal CPM office. “**Why are you acting stupid? We have express orders not to allow any journalists into Nandigram today,**” said Binoy Das, a “committed party worker who followed orders.”

When TOI appraised a government official of the situation, the reply was straight and to the point: “Why have gone there today?” (...)

Ashok Guria, CPM district secretariat member in charge of Nandigram, said as much, “**There are express orders to keep the media out. Please comply,**” he said.

Journalists tried time and again to enter Nandigram but were thwarted. Some were reportedly carried off and beaten by CPM supporters. All the while the bloodbath continued in the fields. (...) “**Nandigram is back in our control. It was a silk smooth operation,**” gloated a CPM supporter. (...) (*Source: Times of India (Kolkata edition), 15.03.07*)

**March 15, 2007:** Bullets leave trail of queries: (...) Were police acting alone or were they prodded by CPM cadres, (...). What is surprising is that the bullets recovered from

the dead bodies were those used by police (standard bore .303) as well as other varieties never used by the forces. Who fired these shots? (...)

The police — going by their code of ethics — cannot fire above the knee. Among the nine victims operated at Tamluk only two had bullets below the knee. One among them has lacerated wounds that couldn't have been caused by bullets or splinters. (...)

The resistance on Wednesday was led by children and women, but only 6% of the police force comprised women. Over 3,000 policemen had been deployed to enter Nandigram in the belief that villages will be scared by the show of strength. But the protesters were ready to take on the police at any cost. (...)

The brutal action could not have been sanctioned either by chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee or by Alimuddin Street. (...) (*Source: Times of India (Kolkata edition), 16.03.07*)

**March 15, 2007: Police were forced to fire — Buddha:** Although Buddhadeb was not categorically sorry, he said the incidence was “most undesired and unfortunate” and the government was compelled to act to bring back administration in the area. “It is an unfortunate incident **but police were forced to fire in self-defence.**”

(...) Chief Minister (...) said that no government could accept **absence of rule of law** in any part of a state. For two and a half months, the administration could not function at Nandigram, he said. (...) (*Source: www.financialexpress.com 15.03.07*)

**March 16, 2007: One bullet for every four:** (...) A preliminary probe carried out by the state police has shown that between 400 and 500 rounds were fired to disperse a group of around 2,000 people assembled at the Bhangabera bridge on Wednesday morning. The cold statistic translates into **one bullet for every four persons**, an “astronomical figure”, according to veteran officers.

“The police guidelines clearly state the purpose of firing is to disperse the crowd and not to kill,” a senior police official said. “The term that we use is ‘controlled firing’ — to deter and disperse the crowd.” (...) (*Source: www.telegraphindia.com/, 17.03.07*)

**March 16, 2007: CBI treads through claim quagmire:** Hundreds of villagers swarmed the 25 sleuths [of CBI] as soon as they reached Sonachura village on Friday to investigate Wednesday's bloodbath. The stories flew in, thick and fast: over a hundred dead, 1,000 missing... children murdered, ripped apart, and buried in sandbags to repair dug-up roads... CPM cadres fought hand-in-hand with police, some even in khaki uniform... bodies dumped in Chuniburi Khal. (...) The team was put in a spot when villagers claimed that several bodies had been buried in the foundation of the repaired Bhangaberia bridge. (...) (*Source: Times of India (Kolkata edition), 17.03.07*)

**March 16, 2007: A long march home:** As funeral processions go, this was a long one — **15-km long to be precise.** And the dead were no celebrities, just two unknown farmers, Supriya Jana and Ratan Das. **As the procession wound its way through Nandigram, the message is clear: bullets had failed to crush the people.** Some thousands [according to *Anandabazar Patrika (17.03.07)*, a Bengali daily, the strength the processions was **25 thousands** — *Update*] from 64 villages followed the bodies as relatives took them away in cycle-vans. More joined in spontaneously. (...) (*Source: Times of India (Kolkata edition), 17.03.07*)

**March 17, 2007: Nandigram's war has just begun:** If you haven't seen gut-wrenching fear on the faces of men in uniform, go to Nandigram. If you haven't seen human dignity raped in civilised India, visit Nandigram. If you thought the crisis has blown over, think again, because Nandigram's "freedom struggle" against the CPI(M) may have just begun.

They are still digging out dead bodies from under the ground, recovering remains from various far-flung villages. Dead bodies of children, killed at point blank range. Some have been found with their throats slit.

Bodies are being still taken out of the area in the cover of darkness and dumped unceremoniously at petty wayside nursing homes along Bombay Road. Those that survive bear a grudge against the police, but it's not the police they blame for Wednesday's carnage. "Lakshman Rekha" you've heard of; not Laxman Bahini. In simple English, Laxman's soldiers — as the undercover armed cadre of CPM MP and strongman from nearby Tamluk, Laxman Seth is called. It is a story that is still unfolding, but as terror

stalks Nandigram and new horrors get revealed, the time-bomb ticks. March 14, 2007 may well have been the day when the clock was set. (...)

**“Have you seen policemen in Hawaii chappals going to action?”** asked a villager. “But a body was found this morning from a place nearby in police uniform and Hawaii’s. He wasn’t a policeman for sure. Some suspect that the highly decomposed body is of a known CPI(M) activist” a shopkeeper just outside Nandigram’s perimeter told ET. (...)

Nandigram claims that a lot of school children in white shirts and blue shorts have gone missing since March 14. As the story goes, a lot of children apparently were in the first few tiers of the thousands who marched to confront the police. (*Source: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/>, 17.03.07*)

**March 18, 2007: Stockpile squad trail heads towards party:** Ten men arrested with arms outside Nandigram **have confessed they were on a CPM mission**, and their cellphone records show the gang was in touch with key party leaders from East Midnapore while holed up in the brick kiln where the CBI found them yesterday.

The Telegraph got access to a copy of their statements recorded by Khejuri police and submitted in the Contai fast-track court of the judicial magistrate, (...).

“We were brought a few days ago by the leaders of a political party to attack the villagers and occupy areas in Nandigram. The leaders provided us arms and ammunition and arranged for our stay in three rooms inside the brick kiln at Sher Khan Chowk,” said the statement of Manoranjan Maity alias Badal, 38, one of the 10 arrested yesterday. While the statements do not name the “political party”, the inspector-general of police (western range), Arun Gupta, said: “They have told us they are CPM activists.”

Along with arms and ammunition, **CPM flags and helmets of the kind worn by police** were seized from the hideout, triggering suspicion that the men had donned uniforms and joined security forces on the day of the firing. Cellphones found on them showed they were in touch with senior CPM leaders, sources said.

A CBI official who was part of the raid team said: “Other than the numbers that we have with us, Naru Maity, the team leader, has also told us that he was in touch with these leaders whose names we cannot reveal for the moment.” (...) [Source: *www.telegraphindia.com/, 19.03.07*]

**March 18, 2007: Murderers had been hired from Pottashpur at the rate of Rs two lakhs per head:** CPM has paid Rs two lakhs in advance to each of the hired goons they had brought from Potashpur to Nandigram. Naru Maity has confessed this standing in the lock-up of Kanthi Judicial Court. Naru Maity is one of those arrested on Saturday from Janani Brick Klin. Others had also been given money to be brought to Nandigram. In the written confession which these arrested men had handed over to the police, they have said that a particular political party had brought them to Nandigram and given the weapons claiming control over Nandigram. The police has also informed the court in writing that an organised political party had used armed men to repress other groups.

(...) Naru Maity (...) said in a straightforward manner that he has paid Rs two lakhs to be brought to Nandigram. Some leaders of CPM, whom he knew by face, but not by name, came to his house. They said to him that he would have to go for claiming control over a territory. (...) After he reached Khejuri, he and his fellowmen were given firearms. Naru’s home is in Ganga village of Potashpur. Of the nine other arrested, eight live in Potashpur (...) (Source: *Dainik Statesman, a Bengali Daily, 19.03.07*)

**March 19, 2007: CBI finds anomalies in police version on Nandigram:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), probing the March 14 violence in Nandigram in West Bengal, has reportedly found anomalies in the police version that 37 rounds were fired when 14 people were killed in police firing and 38 sustained bullet injuries. (...)

A Bengali News channel, which got hold of a part of the footage of the filming by police of the tension on that day, showed thousands of villagers on protest mode but nothing as violent as to warrant opening fire on the people.

**No policeman died in the clash that day despite the police claim of being attacked lethally by the villagers,** according to the news channel. The CBI team

reportedly found that a large number of bullets recovered from the scenes of mayhem did not match the type of ammunition used by the cops. Some of the bullets were those that are used in country made weapons, it said. (...) (Source: [www.indiaenews.com/india/20070320/43953.htm](http://www.indiaenews.com/india/20070320/43953.htm); accessed 21.03.07)

**March 19, 2007:** CBI's Nandigram report nails cops, sees 'outsider' link: (...) The inputs clearly state that the police alone were not responsible for the bloodbath: "outsiders" played a key part. The report corroborates the charge with several pieces of "evidences". Crucial to the finding is the significant number of .303 bore bullets seized from Sonachura and Gokulnagar. Incidentally, CBI also unearthed a significant number of such bullets along with other arms and ammunition from the Ma Janani brick klin on Day 2 of the probe.

According to the CBI sources, these bullets are not used by the police, but are usually fired from country-made revolvers (particularly for those used to hunt animals). If they had been fired — and stockpiled — in such huge quantities, who had used them? The number of bullets seized by CBI from the spot was much more than the firing order given by the IGP (Wester Range) and an executive magistrate. (...)

Moreover, the firing indicated clearly who the targets were. Khejuri, the third place (apart from Sonachura and Gokulnagar) where the bullets were found in believed to be a CPM stronghold and at least five of the 10 persons arrested from this spot on Saturday had reportedly confessed to being members of DYFI, the youth wing of CPM.

The second and most significant portion of the report deals with the nature of injuries sustained by the dead and injured. After studying the injury reports, the CBI team felt these injuries (mostly gunshot wounds) were primarily on the chest, shoulder and hips and other upper parts of the body. The report concludes this could only be a result of "direct" and close-ranging firing, **explaining that the shooters aimed at their victims' bodies directly.** (...) (Source: Times of India, (Kolkata edition), 20.03.07)

March 19, 2007: Karat urges judicial probe into Nandigram: Apparently upset over the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the Nandigram killings, the

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) Monday sought a judicial inquiry into the violence that left 14 people dead.

‘The party would have preferred a judicial inquiry,’ CPI-M general secretary Prakash Karat told reporters here. ‘We are not concerned about self-serving politicians. We would like a judicial inquiry to pinpoint police excesses and take action.’ (...)

Karat’s party colleagues, including politburo members Sitaram Yechury and Brinda Karat, had welcomed the CBI inquiry last week, saying that a transparent probe would bring out the truth. (...) [Source: [www.indiaenews.com/politics/20070319/43823.htm](http://www.indiaenews.com/politics/20070319/43823.htm); accessed on 21.03.07]

**March 19, 2007:** Mother recalls night of horror: Mrs Shankari Das, a 30-year-old who had fled from Nandigram in an injured condition after she saw her 11-year-old daughter, Dipa Das, being molested and then taken away towards Khejuri by CPI-M goons returned to the village after five days today.

But Mrs Das is not the only woman who has witnessed the carnage on March 14 and has come out of her hide out today. With situation in Nandigram coming to normal since Sunday several families who had been hiding in other villages and in the forests of Jellingham had dared come out. At least, 11 patients have been admitted in the Nandigram primary health centre today with injuries, including those inflicted by bullets, since Sunday night. (...)

Crying inconsolably, she said, “At a distance I saw two men were molesting my daughter on the road. When I shouted and tried to rush there to save her they lifted her and fled towards Khejuri. Since then I never saw her.”

Mrs Kamallata Das of Kalicharanpur, who took admission in the health centre had a close shave after a bullet scratched her left arm and hit an old women standing behind her. She died on the spot. She said, “I fell in a pond while I tried to save myself as I had inhaled the tear gas and was unable to see. I somehow managed to escape but not before I was hit at least three times on my shoulder and ribcage by the police.”

The patients who have been admitted in the health centre and had witnesses the atrocities let loose by the CPI-M cadres backed by police complained at least 70 families had been hiding in the jungles of Jellingham since Wednesday.

“In the night we used to cuddle around each other for safety and our men used to guard us. During the day the women used to venture out in search of food in the adjoining villages while the men used to take rest. (...) (Source: *www.thestatesman.net*, 20.03.07)

**March 19, 2007: Nandigram’s land ‘victory’:** The government today notified that it would not acquire land in Nandigram, setting off “**victory**” **celebrations in villages** still coming to terms with Wednesday’s bloodbath. (...) (Source: *www.telegraphindia.com/*, 20.03.07)

**March 21, 2007: Nandigram carnage leaves cops shaken:** How does it feel to be party to a mass-murder masterminded by politicians? Or — precisely — to be branded as “killers-in-uniform” by just about everyone, including one’s own family?

The questions weren’t actually posed to three policemen TOI spoke to. For, these men in khaki who had participated in what they described as the “party-police combine carnage” on March 14, have been going through a lot of self-questioning ever since their return from battlefield Nandigram.

“It feels terrible looking at those TV footage — knowing that we were involved in the bloodbath,” one of the cops said as he recounted the “joint operation” by the police and local CPM. “Four heads had got together and schemed Operation Nandigram. They had outlined how the police would begin dispersing the crowd first and how the hired criminals would take over after that,” claimed one of the three cops TOI spoke to.

The “core team” comprised a CPM MP, a zilla parishad leader and two senior IPS officials. “The IPS officers took their orders from the two CPM leaders. We learnt about the gameplan later, but we hadn’t the slightest clue about it on the morning of March 14,” claimed another policeman. The 2,000-odd heavily-armed policemen who had assembled from forces like the State Armed Police, Eastern Frontier Rifles, India Reserve Battalion from South Bengal, North Bengal and Western zones were, in fact, sketchily briefed (for

barely 30 minutes) about Operation Nandigram. “Very casually we were told to move into Adhikaripara-Tekhali and Bhangaberia.

“As soon the crowd spotted us, missiles started flying from all directions. Stones were pelted from all sides and bombs hurled from treetops,” said another policeman. “We retreated for a while and then tried to control the crowd with rubber bullets and teargas. Nothing worked, so we started firing,” said the cop. **“As men, women and children ran for their lives, they were grabbed by CPM’s hired goondas, a few kilometers from the firing spot. Some men and women were killed instantly. “We also have information about women being raped. The goons (in groups of six to eight) were hiding at strategic points so that they could overpower the fleeing men and women,” said one of the three cops.**

He recounted in horror: “The women cried for help, but no one came forward. Their menfolk retaliated, killing some of the criminals who were later to be projected as missing CPM men.” All the three cops corroborated that “IG (western range) Arun Gupta verbally ordered the firing. Yet, after the carnage, he started shouting: ‘Who gave you the authority to fire?’ The constables told him ‘the IG did’, not knowing that they were actually talking to the IG himself.” (Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>; accessed on 22.03.07)

**March 21, 2007: Nandigram rape: CPM man owns up:** Villagers have been looking for some people who came in on 14 March disguised as policemen to rape and murder women. They chanced upon Sahadev Pramanick (30), **who had raped at least two women.** The CPI-M activist from Gangra, Sonachura, left the village after the first spell of violence in January and sought refuge in a party camp at Khejuri. Last evening, whilst trying to sneak into Sonachura along with four accomplices, he found himself captured. Pramanick admitted to two rapes, including that of a 13-year-old girl. **“At least 17 girls were raped inside a deserted house near Bhangabera on 14 March when police opened fire near a bridge. The victims were dragged into the house of Shankar Samanta by CPI-M cadres,”** Pramanick said. Samanta had been burnt alive by villagers on 7 January and his dwelling since then lay vacant.

CBI officials have visited it, collecting pieces of torn cloth, bangles and undergarments. It was also stained with blood. Villagers had heard women forced into

the house cry out in agony but there were CPI-M goons guarding it. Haldia's sub-divisional police officer, Mr Swapan Saha, said if the CBI wanted Pramanick for interrogation, he would be handed over to it. (*Source: www.thestatesman.net/; 21.03.07*)

**April 4, 2007:** SP admits rape by policemen at Nandigram: West Bengal police have confirmed that two of their men raped a woman protester at Nandigram — an admission that is sure to compound matters for the CPM leadership and the state government already reeling under the disastrous fallout of cop and cadre excesses at the proposed SEZ site last month.

The rape “confession” came from East Midnapore police superintendent Anil Srinivas and is part of a report that chief secretary Amit Kiran Deb has forwarded to the West Bengal Human Rights Commission, which is probing charges of rape and molestation on March 14, when Nandigram witnessed large-scale violence.

According to sources, the police chief of East Midnapore acknowledged that the claim of one of the two women who had accused policemen of raping them is true. “The brief fact of...Nandigram PS case number 44/07 is that on 14.03.07 at about 12 pm, the two police personnel caught Sona and raped her. The complainant fell unconscious and was taken to the Nandigram BPHC for treatment. Later (she was) referred to Purba (East) Midnapore district hospital on 16.03.07 and discharged on 25.03.07 after necessary treatment,” the report states. (*Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>; accessed on 04.04.07*)

[The **Dossier on Nandigram carnage** clearly depicts what actually happened in Nandigram since January of this year to serve the interests of foreign capital. Though Nandigram is reoccupied by the people within 36 hours of the mayhem, the life of Nandigram is shattered. Fear, pain, sense of insecurity pervades over Nandigram now. Rape, humiliation, and barbarity perpetrated is unforgettable. Doctors, lawyers & social activists visiting the area have narrated harrowing experience of the trauma still haunting the villagers. Moreover, whole of the economy of Nandigram is jeopardised as the working people of Nandigram are either out of work for months or many of the earning members of the families are so much frightened that they cannot leave locality in search of work.

Moreover, the **people of Nandigram are anticipating another spate of attacks** from the strongholds of the ruling party or even from the administration. Still, in this state of affairs, the people of Nandigram firmly **hold their spirit of revolts and refused to budge**. Follow the next excerpts. — *UPDATE*]

### **Fear, pain and limitless distrust**

(...) The Octogerian woman continued, ‘police first shot gas and then bullets. Have you seen the little fishes floating up when pond water is poisoned? Men and women were lying in the same manner. **They pulled the women, stripped them, tied them with the trees and looted their modesty. Then they cut away their breasts, tore their flesh and murdered them.**’ While listening I felt nauseous but she continued with her narration. Though her wrinkled cheeks were shaking she shed no tears. ‘A woman fell down when the bullet hit her. A baby was breast-feeding on her boom. When the mother fell the baby also fell on the ground. The baby was picked up and torn down across the middle.’ I understood that the television footage and newspapers failed to provide a clear picture of this brutality. I failed to understand this. It was impossible to understand this without facing this scene. A question arises from the old memories above the din of the old woman’s voice: **Is the name of this state Gujarat 2002?**

‘Don’t you feel afraid?’ In steady voice she replied, ‘fear of what? What has been left? They have taken sons & wives, modesty of women; what’s more there to take? Will they kill me? Let them kill. I will not give any land as long as I live.’ I had asked the same questions to different people: Don’t you feel afraid? I got the answer: ‘everyday after evening and throughout the night they hurl bombs from Khejuri; turning the microphones towards our village they use abusive languages against us; won’t we feel frightened? But we will not give up this land. A peasant about forty years old answered, ‘whenever I close my eyes, I see blood. Both of my hands are shaken up violently in my sleep, in the manner the police tore across the child. They killed so many more children by trampling and tearing.... In just can’t sleep. We have to stay up whole night guarding. But we’ll not give up our fight.’ (...) (Source: by A. Gupta, Anandabazar Patrika, a Bengali Daily, 05.04.07)

## HC lawyers prepare Nandigram horror report

March 14, Kalicharanpur (Nandigram): Kabita Das was raped by a CPM goon while police held her husband and six-month-old child at gunpoint.

Kabita's 12-year-old sister Ganga was followed into the courtyard of her home by the police and raped when she refused to serve them snacks.

The 'true' story of the two sisters and many more such tales of horror are part of a report prepared by a team of lawyers of the Calcutta High Court Bar Association who visited Nandigram on April 6. (...) Senior lawyers Saktinath Mukherjee and Jayanta Mitra said they were dumbfounded by the accounts. (...)

"The scene there was inhuman, deplorable, pathetic and wretched. Quite a few women made their deposition about what happened on the fateful day. Prima facie facts indicate that on March 14 the police opened fire on men, women and children at random without provocation or cause. Men were beaten up, women molested, sexually assaulted, minor girls raped," it [the report] states.

Malati Das, in her late 30s narrated what happened on March 14. "At 10.30 am, the police tried to enter the villages while we are busy with the Gouranga Thakur Puja. We tried to stop them initially and some of us raised slogans. The police burst tear gas shells. **When we started running they hit us on our private parts. Rods were inserted and we were badly molested, she alleged.**

Malati was not alone, Janaki Rani Mandal, Bakul Rani Mandal and Babita Das had similar harrowing experience to share. Babita was a witness to the death of Basanti, who was hit on the head and fell dead. Babita ran for shelter, was followed by the policemen and molested. (*Source: Times of India (Kolkata edition), 11.04.07*)

[From UPDATE: Two eminent **historians** with strong 'leftist' leanings rushed to Nandigram soon after the carnage and expressed their reactions in the following manner:]

## **‘Nandigram was more shocking than Jallianwala Bagh’**

(...) **“Jallianwala massacre happened in colonial India but what happened in Nandigram is shocking since it happened in a Left-ruled government in independent India,”** said Sumit and Tanika Sarkar in an interview.

“Jallianwala Bagh was the outcome of one single man’s action (General Dyer ordered the firing on hundreds of people on April 13, 1919) but here the entire CPI-M (Communist Party of India-Marxist) machinery and the government were involved in the killings,” they said.

“What happened in Gujarat in 2002 did not amaze us as much because it was a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government but in a Left-ruled state this is astounding,” Tanika Sarkar said. The couple returned their Rabindra Puraskars — the highest honorary literary award given in West Bengal — to register their protest over the killings of 14 people in police firing at Nandigram and decided to donate the award money to the Nandigram Relief Fund. “I received Rs.50,000 in 2004 and Sumit received Rs.25,000 in 1998. We are giving away the money to Nandigram Relief Fund,” she said. (...)

“As a lifelong Leftist, I was deeply shocked by recent events in the countryside of West Bengal. (...) **“The West Bengal government seems determined to follow a particular path of development involving major concessions both to big capitalists like the Tatas and multinationals operating in SEZs (special economic zones).** Yet the strange thing is that these, particularly the latter, are things which Left parties and groups as well as many others have been repeatedly and vehemently opposing,” he said.

“Is this SEZ model that implies massive displacement and distress really the only way? If the West Bengal government thinks so, then it also has to accept that the inevitable consequences are going to be a repetition of Nandigram across the state,” Sarkar said. *(Source: 17.03.07, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>; accessed 27.03.07)*

[Tanika Sarkar writes:]

## **Nandigram: terror & rebellion**

After the advent of the peasant rebellion in Nandigram, the Indian state and economic rule, dependent upon transnational capital, has been forced to be halted. (...) The movement has drawn the attention in all corners of India. (...) [T]he peasants of Gurgaon has declared that if they were uprooted in name of industrialisation, they will build up a movement on 'Nandigram model'.

By forcing the turn of events, Nandigram has made a history. **'Amar naam, tomar naam — Nandigram, Nandigram' ('Nandigram is is our identity, Nandigram is our identity')** — this slogan was shouted by many students of Delhi's Jawharlal University at the night of 14th March — repeatedly — garnering all the energy of their body — in tears — with fury — but also with pride. Messages of fervent concern are pouring in from so many various organisations and institutions, large or small, that if they collected together a Mahabharat will be formed. News and reports about Nandigram are frequently being sought at everywhere — Mumbai, Chennai, Kerala, Bangaluru. And in West Bengal, where for a long time, the master's voices are dictated all activities, i.e., processions-demonstrations, seminars and lectures are saturated the atmosphere at the diktat of the ruling party, we are observing a change. Thoughts, opinions, demands and protests — original and independent in nature — are becoming vocal and gaining momentum there. Kolkata, after a quite a long pause, has again regained its character of being a thoroughly political city.

But the price paid by Nandigram for all of these immeasurable. Bloodshed, arson, terrific beatings, rape and sexual harassment — so much as they have already happened — are yet to end. Terror is still going on. (...) In Gokulnagar, the dangerous hooligan Raju Gadu and his associates are continuing their terrorising activities unabated. The locality of Sonachura is deserted — a silence of burning ground pervades there. But not even the peace of a burning ground exists there. From 10 o'clock at night, hailstorms of bombs and bullets rage everyday. Quite a large number of villagers are spending the nights in the forests since January. Lack of sleep is turning them insane.

Continuous threats are being hurled from the CPM camps in Khejuri — "Come to our side. join our ranks if want to stay alive". (...) On 30th March, many people of Nandigram

told me: “They are threatening us to leave this place, otherwise they will cut us into pieces.”

Are all these stories fabricated by Trinamul-SUCI-Naxalites? But I have seen with my own eyes — about the terrible fear imprinted on the faces of the villagers in every houses — or more about their intense helplessness as if they have condemned to death! “Will we survive? How will we survive?” — a woman of Gokulnagar, who has been tortured brutally is murmuring to herself. How will forget this pain?

No relief work is going on. Not even any pretense of providing compensation is there. Nor is there any attempt to placate the nerves. The chief minister is only saying verbally that SEZ won't be built up in Nandigram. But how can the residents of Nandigram rely on his words amidst this atmosphere of terror and torture? Officials are saying different things at different times — there will be no chemical hub; if the villagers don't want it, it won't be built; SEZ will be never built. Which one is the precise truth? **Once the situation cools down, how long will take to call Salim back?** Moreover, the question is not only serving the transnational capital; the more urgent question now is to wrest the control over the region. The peasants in rebellion of Nandigram were, in manor parts, followers of CPM; now the struggle to save the land become their only goal. How can this 'crime' be pardoned? They have disobeyed the orders of the party; disrespected the threats of the party; and even after the Great Party has issued its ultimatum, they have not paid heed it and given greater importance to the so inconsequential thoughts of their own land-life-village-society. Can this crime be pardoned?

The peasants of Nandigram are sure that they will attack again. After the attacks on 6-7 January, they had said the same thing — and they were proved right. And also, the sufferings did not remain confined within the lethal attacks only. I have seen the many faces of terror — the peasants are scared to take to harvested fruits and vegetables to the market to sale; the people of Gokulnagar who used to catch fishes and sale them [at the market] are sitting idle. Hundreds of poor people of labouring class are returning with serious injuries — with eyes, head, limbs, abdomen, back inflicted with wounds. Countless people are wandering about, too much terrorised to return to their homestead. How will they work outside or inside their home after all of these? (...)

The non-obedient people of Nandigram are being strangulated. The one doctor, who was sympathetically looking after the wounded of Nandigram in Tamluk Hospital, have been handed a transfer order. Well before their wounds have healed; their torn hands are rejoined; the patients are being released from the hospital because too many people are getting to see the handiwork of the party-men by coming to hospital.

Where will they go after coming back to the village? What will they do? Quite a large number of beaten and tortured women kept hold my cloths and urged: “Sister, stay with us, please stay with us. The nights are so fearful! How long will we not sleep? Now, in the dark nights we can hide ourselves. But what will happen in the coming full-moon nights?”

In the hospital, so many people who have been severely beaten up, struck by bullets had become oblivious about their own wounds, about their broken bones, about their own fingers torn away by bullets when relating in a mad-like trance how they have been seen by their own eyes children torn into shreds, shot by bullets, thrown into the ponds. In Tamluk Hospital, a woman was saying that whether she was awake or sleeping, she could not erase from her memory of an image **haunting** her. The image was that of a little child, unknown to her, who, threatened by the gas-shells and bullets had sought shelter in her arms. **That child was snatched away from her arms and brutally torn to shreds.** Brinda Karat has gleefully pointed out that these bodies have not yet been traced. But how often do we hear of disappeared people — in Latin America, in Kashmir, in north-eastern states of India; can we disbelieve them completely? “I saw children after being killed, were thrown into ponds. The corpses were afloat on the water like the flowers.”

But all of these could not exhaust the stubbornness of the peasants of Nandigram. “How much terror they inflict on us, we will never cross over to their side. If we have to die, we will die in Nandigram. Whatever the consequences, we will not give our land.” This resolution has a momentum. At the end of January, the Muslim peasant women of Garchakraberia were uttering similar words: “Never will we part with our land — never — never. They can take away our husbands; take away our sons, take away our life. But how many will they kill? We are many more in number than the police.”

These words were not emotional rhetoric; they have told this consciously, after much consideration. From 14th to 16th March — after being devastated by terrible beatings and

terrorising for two days and two nights — **the harassed, persecuted mass of peasants rose again to their feet, accumulated strength and began to stride forward towards Sonachura — and they regained control over Sonachura. Still today, nandigram is independent.** From many ones I heard that the police and cadres, while spraying the unknown but lethal gas in the name of teargas, while beating mercilessly, while raping and torturing sexually, were asking pointedly: “You want land, don’t you? You will take land, will you? Will you not give land? Will you still try to save land?”

Still I have heard from them who have borne this torture saying: “We are not giving away our land, we will not give our land.” “We thought that they would not open fire seeing the women in the front. Yet they fired so much — all dropped down without any resistance. But still we will not give our land.” These are the words in which the classic leftist movement speaks. This is the classic face of the resistance of the poor peasants about which we heard in the history and tradition of leftism — the leftism which has again and again rose in resistance against the drunken power of the ruling classes, of capitalism.

In January, at Garchakraberia, the rebellious women, both Hindu & Muslim, had raised hands as a mark of red salute while sloganeering. **Along with them, a child, in the mother’s lap, also raised his hand in red salute.** The leftism has died away *within the Left Front. But through this clenched fist, leftism will remain immortal. (...)* (Source: by Tanika Sarkar, *Dainik Statesman, a Bengali Daily, 10.04.07*)

[It is clear from the earlier excerpts that the people of Nandigram never trusted the words of CM of Bengal that no land acquisition would be carried on in Nandigram. The protesters anticipated that these sugarcoated words were precursors of further outrages on behalf of the administration as well as the party hooligans. They were correct. Still now, after the formal cancellation of SEZs (of Salims) in Nandigram, the villagers are not prepared to buy the new assurances. They are in constant fear that the state and party goondas will retaliate within few days, or months. The excerpts cited above demonstrated these facts. Actually, the experience of **Singur** where the government of West Bengal forcefully acquired land from the unwilling peasants and bargadars and also the past experiences of adjacent **Haldia & Jellingham** where in the name ‘development’ &

'industrialisation' large stretches of land were snatched away doing almost nothing about providing jobs and/or paying compensation. Follow these experiences of the land losers.  
— **UPDATE]**

## **This is why Nandigram chemistry failed**

For the past 30 years, Bhutnath Jana of Gangra, Nandigram, is awaiting compensation, rehabilitation and employment, promised by the Left Front government when it acquired his 1 acre 30 decimal land for what was to be a massive industrial venture — **“Jellingham project”**.

About 400 acres of land was acquired at Gangra for the project by the Kolkata Port Trust and Burn Standards in 1977. It was implemented by the Kolkata Port Trust in collaboration with the Left Front government, which had newly come to power.

Jana is just one of the 142 such families whose farmlands were taken over. Of them, 19 families had lost the roof over their heads as well. Some were lucky. They received a small compensation for their lost land after knocking on the doors of the Calcutta High Court. Others received nothing.

The ghost of Jellingham continues to haunt Nandigram. So, recently, when the LF was preparing to have a go at the much bigger chemical hub project, the people of Nandigram did not believe it was for true. The CPI(M) suffered a crisis of credibility.

For despite all the sufferings of people like Jana, the project, meant to manufacture rigs for oil exploration in Nandigram-I block, was closed down in 1981 — four years after it was set up with much fanfare. (...)

“We were promised payment for our land, employment for our family members and rehabilitation. Nothing has come. Some got temporary jobs as labourers as work on the project started in 1978. Others got nothing. I am tired and have grown old making rounds of the courts and the KoPT offices for my dues. It has been so many years and the land is lying unused. At present I have only three bighas and 12 mouths to feed. But that too was threatened to be taken away for the chemical hub,” said Jana.

Late Adhir Jana's three sons — Bhanugopal, Subodh and Badal — have had the same fate. They lost 2 acres 75 decimal land for the project. "My father died waiting for the compensation and rehabilitation. We applied to Burns for a job. They called us for interviews after which, we heard nothing from them. We have 14 people to feed," said Bhanugopal (55), who works as an agricultural labourer.

Following the land acquisition in 1977, locals protested and a Beneficiary Committee was set up under the aegis of the CPI(M) and led by the then CPI MLA Shakti Bal. The Committee, however, failed to redress the grievances of the locals. No compensation or rehabilitation materialised for the affected families. (...) (Source: 06.04.07, <http://cities.expressindia.com/>; (Kolkata), accessed on 07.04.07)

### **Land sold, farmers face empty purses**

Struggling to make ends meet, Nagen Das says stealing is the only option he is left with. "*Ekhon churi kora chhara kono upaye nei*," sobbed the 50-year-old.

Eleven years ago, Das was a happy man when he gave away his five-decimal plot (around 4 kathas) for the Mitsubishi Chemicals Corporation factory on the Haldia riverside in East Midnapore district.

The farmer had then thought the Rs 13,000 compensation handed to him would take care of his future. But the rising prices and gradually emptying purses have robbed Das and his fellow farmers of their hope.

From his compensation, Das had paid Rs 2,000 to a local CPM leader for a job in the Mitsubishi factory. "I have a Rs 4,000-a-month contractual job, but it's not enough to make ends meet. (...)

Gopal Chandra Kar had given more land for the project — five acres in the Bhuniyan Roychak mouza — and got a fatter packet of Rs 6 lakh in 1997. Eight years on, he faces the threat of his kitchen fire dying. Kar has used up most of his money to build a house and get his daughters married. He also took a loan to buy a lorry, but couldn't pay the EMIs. Now in debt, Kar works as a daily labourer earning Rs 60. But he can find work only 10 days in a month.

“*Aath bochhore aami kangaal hoye gelum* (In eight years, I’ve become penniless). As a farmer, I never bought anything other than oil and spices. Fish, rice, vegetables and milk – I produced everything I needed. Now, I have to pay even for water,” he said, (...).

“Before acquiring the land, the Haldia Development Authority chairman, Lakshman Seth, had promised jobs to one member of each family. We were also promised stalls in a market...,” Kar trailed off.

Over 250 families were displaced in the Bhuniyan Roychak mouza during land acquisition for the Mitsubishi factory. But **only 32 people got jobs in the company.**

Kenaram Bera, who gave up land for the Haldia Petrochemicals Ltd (HPL) project in Bardhanyaghata, 10 km away, also complains of the Left Front’s broken promises. “In 1980, the then commerce and industry minister, Kanailal Bhattacharya, signed an agreement with our rehabilitation committee promising jobs to one member of every family. That promise was never kept,” he said.

In 1989, Bera and four others moved Calcutta High Court. The case is still pending. (...) “Frankly, most of us are not qualified for those jobs. We only fit the sweeper, porter, helper and repairs category,” he said.

But, he added, “out of the 265 guards in the HPL factory, only seven have been recruited from displaced families. It’s impossible to get into the political and management quotas”.

A job did not come Sitanath’s way and he had no land to till. “My five-member family lives off the Rs 1.8 lakh I received in 1990. Now, I have only Rs 50,000 left,” he said.

Sadananda Giri, a local physician, however, said most of the farmers displaced by HPL had got alternative plots. “But 30 per cent sold them off to run their kitchens,” he added. (*Source: 13.01.07, www.telegraphindia.com; accessed 16.01.07*)

## 27 yrs on, CAG bursts the Haldia bubble

(...) The HDA [Haldia Development Authority], according to the CAG, has never been good at putting to use land acquired from farmers, even though the port town of Haldia is home to some of the biggest industrial projects in the state and a 12,500-acre multiproduct special economic zone (SEZ) scheduled to come up.

(...) [F]armers had told Newsline that the HDA had acquired plenty of land but not paid compensation. (...) The CAG, a statutory body, has now corroborated the statements of the Nandigram's farmers. The CAG notes that, to begin with, the HDA began everything 20 years late. Formed in 1980, it managed to draw up and notify the Land Use & Development Control Plan for the 80,782 acres covering 258 mouzas under its command only in 2000.

The government then included 1,07,325 acres under the HDA in 2004, but it had not prepared the land use plan till May 2006.

“Of the 4,259 acres of land acquired by it, 1,384 acres (32 per cent) remained unutilised as of March 2006,” the CAG report notes.

More damning comments follow.

Although the land acquisition collector allotted 370 acres as requisitioned by the HDA during 2001-06, “possession of 185 acres was not taken due to non-payment of compensation” by the HDA. According to the CAG, the authority's chief executive officer attributed this to “paucity of funds”. (...) (*Source: 04.04.07, <http://cities.expressindia.com/Kolkata>; accessed 08.04.07*)

[How many people got jobs in the Haldia which was projected as the icon of 'industrialisation' in Bengal? Follow a report:

State Assembly Committee for Industry & Commerce Report for this year — a 18 page report, in which pages 8-9 dealt with Haldia Petrochem. The 10-member committee was chaired by Sudip Bandopadhyay of Congress and included Haldia MLA (CPIM) Nityananda Bera. Haldia Petrochem started production in 1997. Total downstream industries set up till now: 584, including 81 big and 85 medium units. **Haldia**

**Petrochem could employ (in last 10 years) only 670 persons, each of whose salary/wage is more than Rs 200,000 per annum. Besides, there are 1200 contract workers with daily wage of Rs 120 only.** Before Haldia Petrochem was set up, it was widely publicized by CPIM that there would be massive employment generation there, even **probable figures like 150,000 employments** was also in the air. (*Bartaman, a Bengali daily, 08.04.07*)

It has been propagated intentionally from several quarters that the spontaneous outburst of the people of Nandigram and the consequent struggle continued by the villagers till date were nothing but the conspiratorial handiwork of opposition political parties such as Trinamul Congress (TMC), SUCI and Naxals along with a religious organisation like Jamat Ulema-i-Hind. But this theory is totally baseless. The vastness of the spontaneous upsurge of the villagers of Nandigram including the massive participation of the women, children, and youths (who are at the forefront of the struggle on many occasions) cannot be explained by any ‘conspiratorial handiwork’ of opposition parties. What actually happened that **thousands of people coming out of the clutches of CPMs & CPIs built their own organisation** (*Bhumi Ucched Pratirodh Committee or BUMC*); selected leaders from themselves who are able, committed and must not betray as the old ‘left’ leadership. It is a common phenomenon that in these types of mass-movements brewing from below **the opposition parliamentary parties of all hues used to jump into the fray to reap their narrow electoral benefits.** These had been observed in **Singur** where the **movement of the people was hijacked and usurped by the TMC and others; it is also observed in Raigad of Maharashtra, Amritsar & Barnala of Punjab, Dadri in Uttar Pradesh, Jhajjar in Haryana,** etc etc. But the struggle of Nandigram has some **difference** to this phenomenon as the **leadership of their movement are still in hands of the people** though parties like TMCs, SUCI & others are **trying to fish in troubled water.** Hence the struggle of Nandigram is pointing to the growing up of sense of independence, to a certain extent, from the parliamentary parties. In fact, the ruling classes of India are suffering from **“Nandigram Syndrome” not only for its vastness, but also for its efforts of maintaining some independence from the parliamentary parties.** Now follow the next report. — **UPDATE]**

## **Nandigram decides to keep politicians at bay**

Determined not to let Nandigram become yet another political battlefield, villagers who stand to lose their land to make way for the proposed, special economic zone (SEZ) have decided at a meeting on Saturday that they would unite and not let go of even an inch of farmland. The move is in response to the meeting that local leaders of most Opposition parties have had with the state administration on Friday afternoon.

The villagers fear that the state government is keen on breaking the unity of the people and are thus trying to get politicians of diverse political parties involved in the issue. Singur, for instance, they point out, is a case in point. What started off as a fight for land by the villagers there was hijacked by the Trinamool Congress that made it easier for the Left Front government to tackle the problem.

The villagers are angry at politicians for yet another reason. Soon after the meeting with the district administration officials, leaders of the Trinamool, the Congress and the SUCI went round the troubled villages telling the people to stay clam. Yet, when armed suspected cadres of the CPI(M) attacked the village of Sonachura on Saturday night, no politician had come forward to defend them.

**So, it's a decision to fight their own battle themselves.** On Saturday, the villagers gathered at Garchakraberia to voice their concerns. Organised by the newly-formed Bhumi Uchhed Pratirodh Committee, an alliance of local apolitical outfits, most villagers spoke out against the politicisation of what is essentially a fight for livelihood, the presence of the Jamat-E-Ulema-Hind in the committee has made some villagers angry and a new platform is likely to take shape in the coming days. (...) (Source: 06.01.07, [www.hindustantimes.com/](http://www.hindustantimes.com/), accessed 07.01.07)

## “Nandigram Syndrome” pervades India

“We are ready to make a Nandigram right here in Maharashtra,” Mhatre said after receiving a notice from the Maharashtra government making it mandatory for farmers to hand over land and accept the compensation offered by India’s largest private company.

[[www.business-standard.com/](http://www.business-standard.com/), 16.04.07]

It could be Nandigram all over again. Tension gripped the three panchayats near Paradip in Orissa today as the state government sought to quell the villagers agitating against acquisition of land for South Korean steel maker Posco’s mega steel plant.

[[www.business-standard.com/](http://www.business-standard.com/), 12.04.07]

[The massacre in **Nandigram** on 14-16th March 2007 shook the whole of India. Due to the modern connectivity through internet and news-channels, harrowing news and television footage of the Nandigram carnage and the **subsequent resistances** of the people spread all over India, even in the countryside of many states within few days. The **fight-back** of the people of Nandigram not only disturbed the ruling classes of India, but also it gave an impetus to the struggles going on in several parts of the country against the draconian measures of land acquisitions in the name of the SEZs. In fact, it is mentioned in the introductory comments from **Update** that this “**syndrome**” of **Nandigram** was in effect from the month of January 2007. Since then the business houses of the country in collaboration with the foreign experts were seeking a “just policy” for the SEZs which would create minimum “ripples” among the land losers. Assocham, FICCI & CII represented their “well-thought” proposals to the GoI. Even the **Pricewaterhouse Coopers, a US firm**, lectured to the GoI how to involve the land-lost people giving away at least **2% share** in the developed SEZs (<http://www.rediff.com/money/2007/jan/24debate.htm>) More suggestions were pouring in from several state governments and ministries of GoI to salvage the mammoth projects of SEZs. **The Reliance Group**, which was slated to build a “world-class” township-SEZs with multipurpose facilities in **Raigad** district of Maharashtra, decided to purchase land directly from peasants offering “hefty prices” unheard before anywhere in the country. The offers were so lucrative that a business daily wrote an editorial supporting the move captioned as “**Kaun Banega Crorepati? A new slogan for land acquisition**” (*Economic Times*, 21.02.07). It’s ‘sad’ for the Reliance Group that these offers of buying out the peasants promising them to make crorepatis have ended in a

fiasco. *Economic Times (14.03.07)* reports that the “RIL compensation package for SEZ land losers gets **cold response**” from the people of Raigad.

Now came the assembly elections in several states which made the SEZs an electoral issue creating much discomfort for the UPA government led by the Congress Party. Though the NDA government formed by the parties like BJP, Shiv Sena, BJD, JD(U), TMC etc were pioneer in bringing the policies of SEZs in 2000, these parties now jumped to fish in troubled water with various sugarcoated promises. In Punjab, the people agitating against the **Amritsar** SEZ which is slated to acquire thousands of acres of super-fertile land demanded clear explanations from the contesting parties. Akali Dal, a constituent of NDA, promising the scrapping of Amritsar and several SEZs involving land-disputes won the elections. In fact, alarmed by the events of protests going all over India, the Congress Party made a ‘confidential report’ (known as ‘Moily report’) which hinted at the poll-debacle for Congress.

But the pressure was mounting on the GoI on behalf of the foreign as well as the domestic investors. It is observed that even the Nandigram carnage, though cast an initial shadow on the SEZs policies, could not halt it. **On 5th April 5, 2007** the GoI came forward with some policy changes to lift the freezes on the SEZs (which have no land-disputes) much to the delight of domestic & foreign capital.

Interestingly, the GoI was under so much pressure from the investors that still they cannot prepare the new policies of Rehabilitation & Resettlement (R&R) and compensation for the land losers. In fact, the changed policy only helped to lift the embargo on the SEZs on the waiting list expressing the determination of the ruling classes to move ahead with the SEZ policies. But the problem still remains. The “**Syndrome of Nandigram**” cannot be blown away by these cosmetic changes. More protests and agitations are building up in many states demanding the cancellation of the norms of land acquisition completely. A newspaper laments:

Government’s new measures on SEZ are seen as reflecting recognition that the steps announced by the Empowered Group of Ministers **may not have sufficed to calm down the agrarian passion over SEZs which are perceived as a concession to the industry. Protests against SEZs have continued in Haryana and**

**Maharashtra, besides the renewed flare-up in Orissa.** Sensing the defiant mood, government did not even wait to route the fresh proposals through EGoM, and let commerce ministry do the honours....

Post-Nandigram, even commerce ministry the prime driver of the SEZ policy is conscious of the perils of going overboard with the experiment, especially when public mood is not favourable. (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>; 14.03.07)

The comments made above by a frontline newspaper of ruling classes project the “**Nandigram Syndrome**” in its true perspective. We are now presenting here some excerpts of protests and resistances taking a cue from Nandigram, Kalinganagar etc.

We are initiating the discussion with the recent protests in Jagatsinghpur of Orissa where the people are revolting against the projects of POSCO involving biggest amount of FDI. In February of this year, the **Posco** officials expressed their tensions on the problems regarding the acquisition of land. — **UPDATE]**

### **India project ‘stuck’ by land purchases: Posco**

South Korean steel maker POSCO Co. Ltd. said on Tuesday it was unlikely to secure enough land for a planned \$12 billion complex in eastern India until September, five months after it had hoped to begin work. **The firm faces stiff opposition from villagers, who have erected barricades and refuse to allow company and state government officials to visit the site.**

“We propose to accomplish land acquisition by September this year and begin land preparation for the ... steel plant subsequently,” Soo Jung Kim, a spokeswoman for the firm’s Indian unit, said in an e-mail reply to written questions.

The steel complex proposed for eastern Orissa state would be India’s largest single foreign investment and would be built on land held by both the state administration and local people. (...)

Company officials told Reuters in October they had been able to acquire only 1,135 acres due to the protests. (...)

At times violent protests over land purchases have also recently dogged Indian attempts to build a Special Economic Zone and a major car plant in neighbouring West Bengal state.

In October police arrested 70 people as they protested POSCO's plans in Orissa, saying the proposed plant **would displace 20,000 villagers from their homes and farms.** (...) (*Source: www.financialexpress.com, 13.02.07*)

[UPDATE: After the carnage in Nandigram, the imbroglio deepens:]

### **Land battles hit POSCO's \$12bn India project**

(...) Opponents of the project have **taken heart from events in neighbouring West Bengal**, where plans to seize farmland for a chemicals complex were shelved after police killed 14 protesters. "This has had **a very good effect on the people struggling against the POSCO project**," said protest leader Abhay Sahu. "**This is an opportune time for us to move forward.**" (...)

Supporters [the supporters are crafted by the BJD government like its **'left' counterparts** in neighbouring West Bengal — **UPDATE**] of the project were already frustrated that the government in the eastern state of Orissa had done little to back it, apparently scared of provoking trouble after protests over another steel plant cost 13 lives last year. Clashes between supporters and opponents of the POSCO project injured 50 people this month, and angry farmers have erected a bamboo gate at the entrance to the village of Dhinkia to keep outsiders away. (...)

**"POSCO are pretty serious but they can't wait indefinitely,"** he [a senior government official] said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "The risk for us is that if we don't get it right, no big-ticket FDI will look easily towards Orissa in particular or generally towards India." (...)

**POSCO hired 230 villagers** to carry out a socio-economic survey to help draft a rehabilitation package. But police advised them not to enter the villages after the latest violence. "The government has not taken a single step to solve the problem," said Tamil

Pradhan, leader of the pro-POSCO movement. “Anti-POSCO people have been beating our people and setting fire to our betel plants.”

The problem is that most of the families living in the project site don’t own their land, but grow vines — whose leaves are used to wrap the paan which many Indians chew — on what is officially government land. Many have been here for generations, but have no idea what compensation they will get. “There are **20 million displaced people in India** and they are in real trouble,” said 48-year-old Sudhir Dalei. “We will be displaced and who will take care of us?”

“We don’t want compensation, we just don’t want to leave,” said 48-year Dhir Pradhan. “If we leave our land, it will be over our dead bodies.” (...) (Source: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/>, 19.03.07)

[A day after, the Posco officials threatened to shift their projects to Vietnam exerting tremendous pressure on the state as well as on the GoI. – UPDATE]

## **Posco may shift project to Vietnam**

With too many problems dogging the Posco project in the state, the South Korean steel major is reportedly planning to shift its focus to Vietnam, where it has proposed a steel plant at Ba Ria-Vung Tau. (...) “Posco is impatient. It may not wait too long”, said a senior official citing company’s mood. He said both the Centre and state governments have been **desperately trying to push the Posco case**. “But the situation is getting murkier. No matter what the state government says the ground reality in the face of **protracted resistance** has been completely different,” he said.

“The government is not able to enter the area though some portion of the estimated 4,000 acre required for the project has since been technically acquired and handed over,” the official pointed out. He said the **Kalinganagar** incident in Orissa and **Nandigram and Singur** episodes in West Bengal have only aggravated the problem. (...) (Source: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/>, 20.03.07)

[Unnerved by these developments the GoI rushed to appease Posco. – UPDATE]

## Centre rushes in to keep Posco back

The government has swung into action to hold back South Korean steel company Posco in India. Posco has made it clear that it would be forced to withdraw its Rs 52,000-crore steel project in Orissa if issues over land allocation and mine leases are not sorted out soon.

(...) According to sources, the Posco chief told the minister [Mr Kamal Nath, the commerce minister of GoI] the government **has to sort out the problems in the next 3-4 months** which would prove to be crucial for the future of the project. “While Mr Lee did not actually say they would pull out, one just has to read between the lines,” an official said. An alternative destination for Posco’s investment could be booming Vietnam, which has a big market for steel. (...) (Source: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/>, 24.03.04)

[Sensing the mood of the foreign investors, the Orissa government along with the support of the GoI **mobilised huge police to break the barricade made by the protesters**. The police is said to be deployed on the pretext of holding panchayat elections though the real aim is understandably different. – UPDATE]

## Tension at Posco site as villagers up the ante

**It could be Nandigram all over again.** Tension gripped the three panchayats near Paradip in Orissa today as the state government sought to quell the villagers agitating against acquisition of land for South Korean steel maker Posco’s mega steel plant.

The Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti, spearheading the agitation, has formed a Banar Sena brigade, made up of children below 14 years, who will be the first to face the armed policemen deployed by the state government. Women and senior citizens will be the next in line.

Wary, the forces are stationed at Kujanga and Paradip, about 10-12 km from the Posco site. The tension has increased in the last 24 hours following the deployment of **12 platoons of police** for ensuring law and order in the area for the conduct of the postponed panchayat elections. (...) **For nearly two years**, the opponents of Posco

plant in Dhinkia, Gada Kujanga and Nuagaon panchayats, **have had barricades at eight locations around the Posco site, blocking the entry of government and company's officials.** (...)

Posco (...) has reportedly given a three-month deadline to the government to make available the land. Meanwhile, the urgency to hold postponed panchayat elections has provided a reason to the government to deploy forces in the area and attempt to remove the barricades. (...)

“We are trying to persuade the villagers to remove the barricades. **The lawlessness can not be tolerated in the name to agitation**”, says YK Jethwa, superintendent of police, Jagatsinghpur. However, according to Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti chairman Abhaya Sahoo, “The Barricades will not be removed at any cost.” (*Source: www.business-standard.com/, 12.04.07*)

[Note the comments of the SP of Jagatsinghpur which **echoes** the voices of **Buddhadev Bhattacharjee**, the CM of Bengal, giving his excuse for the mayhem in Nandigram. Follow more. – UPDATE]

## **Will Posco site turn into Nandigram?**

(...) The writ of the Orissa government did not cut much ice in Dhinkia where villagers are not allowing any outsiders to enter their area without verifying the identities. Road blockades have come up at the entry and exit points of Dhinkia and adjoining villages where villagers are keeping vigil round the clock.

Abhaya Sahu, chairman of Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS), who convened a meeting at Dhinkia village on Tuesday to discuss the future course of the agitation, said: **“We are prepared for the longest struggle** against the biggest FDI in Indian history. There is no scope for any compromise as our positions are poles apart. We will not allow anyone to enter our area to dispossess us and **we are not going to accept any rehabilitation package.** We have finalised a blueprint on how to face any police action. First, the police have to face the **Sishu Sangram Vahini**, which comprises **children** of our area between the **age group of 5 and 15.** We have created a **women volunteer force** who will resist the police.” (...) (*Source: www.hindustantimes.com/, 11.04.07*)

[It is further reported by *Reuters* that:

“The children are our greatest strength,” Abhay Sahu, of a local body formed to protest against the project, said. “We have already started putting them near the barricades. **About 70 children guard the nine gates in the morning.** We will put them in the front if police come. They would be backed by women and youths.” (<http://in.today.reuters.com/news/>, 15.04.07)

Alarming at the resistances put forward by the villager’s different opposition parties, including the parties like CPIM(!), have sent SOS to the GoI with a request: **“Please intervene and prevent another mayhem in Orissa”**. ([www.financialexpress.com/](http://www.financialexpress.com/), 17.04.07) On 18th April 2007, **“Hundreds of children** opposed to the 12 million-tonne steel plant by South Korean steelmaker Posco... **marched** through the dirt tracks of the villages at the proposed steel plant site” reports [www.telegraphindia.com/](http://www.telegraphindia.com/) (19.04.07). On 19th April, the Prime Minister discussed with the CM of Orissa to find a way “to expedite land allotment” to Posco and suggested to “negotiate directly” with the villagers. But still now (as this issue is going to the press): “The authorities, however, made little effort to hold talks with the villagers directly to find a solution to the crisis” ([www.kalingatimes.com/](http://www.kalingatimes.com/), 20.04.07).

Let us not forget the resistances of the tribals of **Kalinganagar** after the killings of 14 tribals by the state terror perpetrated to serve the interests of Tata on 2nd January 2006. Since then, the tribals of Kalinganagar put on blockade of Paradeep road for 13 month’s period which was lifted on 8th March under the order of the High Court. But still the people of Kalinganagar do not budge an inch of the land. – UPDATE]

## **Nandigram effect: Orissa scraps SEZ**

The West Bengal government’s decision to scrap the proposed special economic zone (SEZ) at Nandigram has forced the Naveen Patnaik government to “drop” one such proposed tax-free zone in order to avoid any violence over land acquisition, official sources said here on Thursday.

The state government will scrap one SEZ proposed by the Orissa Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (Idco) at Kalinga Nagar. The state-owned Idco

had proposed to establish “a sector specific metallurgical-based engineering and downstream industry” (stainless steel) over 250 acres at Kalinga Nagar Industrial Complex. The Centre had also given “in principle” approval to it, industries minister B B Harichandan informed the Assembly through a written reply to a query. **“It has been decided to drop this project for the time being,”** he stated. (...) (Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>, 30.03.07)

[In **Raigad district of Maharashtra**, the peasants, fishermen and small businesspersons were on the **warpath** against the biggest land-acquisition drive for proposed SEZs since last year (dealt in **UPDATE 13**). The Parliamentary panel on SEZs headed by Kashiram Rana, a BJP MP, visited Raigad for a public hearing on the proposed land-acquisition and faced tremendous protests at the hearings. Follow the report. – UPDATE]

## **India’s largest private city hits roadblock**

(..) [A]s the parliamentary panel appointed to hear villagers in Raigad district affected by special economic zones (SEZs) assembled at Khalapur panchayat samiti, a young man walked up to panel chairman Kashiram Rana and snatched the hearings file from the table. “It’s mine,” shouted Rana. “I know,” replied the youngster, returning the file. “This is exactly how all of us feel about our land. **The government is snatching it away without giving us a say.**”

Prasad Bagwe (25), a farmer, had dramatically echoed the sentiments of over 500 project-affected villagers present at the jam-packed hall.

Four SEZs (exclusive industrial zones with their own administrative norms) are planned for Raigad district — the Ranjankhar Industrial Zone, Shahapur Industrial Zone, the Uran/Panvel/Pen SEZ and Khalapur Industrial Zone — that will together cover **84 villages (13,711 hectares)**. The SEZs virtually adjoin each other to form India’s largest conglomeration of such industrial zones. **They would displace several lakh villagers, taking away their agricultural lands in return for money they don’t want.** (...)

Most villagers at the meeting were **protesting against the Maha Mumbai SEZ** promoted by **Reliance Industries**. Spread over **30,000 acres, displacing 45**

**villages**, it is equivalent to one-third the size of Mumbai and is India's largest private city. (...)

Land in Panvel, Pen and Uran is being acquired for the SEZ that will be close to the Mumbai-Pune Expressway. (...) "Things are not being done right; the government is acquiring land forcibly," Patil said. Added a farmer: "Snatching away our land will not only displace us, it will destroy our traditions and culture. **Like in Vidarbha, farmers here will commit suicide if such a thing happens.**"

Forced to listen, the parliamentary panel recorded statements and accepted the petitions of the affected farmers. (...) (*Source: www.hindustantimes.com/, 16.02.07*)

[After the eventful hearings, Mr Rana, the head of the panel:

"[A]cknowledged that 'there was a unanimous sentiment among farmers against the SEZs and land acquisition.... He also conceded that another impression that persists among farmers is that government officials associated with implementation of the SEZ policy are 'hand-in-glove' with developers.... 'Fishermen, 40,000-50,000 of them, are against parting their land on the ground that no industry can be developed in the coastal zone,' he added" (*Economic Times, 16.02.07*)

It is shown in **UPDATE 13** that the policies on SEZs is framed in such a way that it may lead to **massive speculation of land & real estate that would have resulting in large scandals and scam**. The above words of Mr Rana is pointing to this fact. A strong nexus between the developers/promoters and the top officials at the government level (probably involving some of the ministers as reported by some newspapers) are active behind this land-scam. The CM of Maharashtra declared 'verbally' (aping the CM of Bengal) that land-acquisition will not be done. But at the lower level the bureaucrats along with the developers are still in action of land-grab. This deliberate willy-nilly from the part of the government makes the situation in Raigad is so volatile that a committee set up by the Maharashtra Congress rang alarm bell in the following manner. – UPDATE]

## **Reliance Mahamumbai SEZ could flair up like Nandigram, warns Congress panel**

A committee set up by Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) has **warned of a “Nandigram-like flare-up” by farmers**, who are opposing land acquisition for the Reliance-promoted Mahamumbai Special Economic Zone (SEZ) **“The situation is getting serious day by day. The farmers’ resentment is increasing,”** MPCC spokesperson and a member of the committee, Sanjay Nirupam said. (...)

“The Government has already declared that it would not acquire land for the project. The fertile land will not be acquired. **Despite this, revenue officials are issuing notices to farmers,**” Nirupam said. *(Source: [www.dailyindia.com/show/129707.php/](http://www.dailyindia.com/show/129707.php/), 30.03.07)*

[Even after the fire-fighting mode of the Maharashtra Congress, they could not avoid the indignation of the protesters of Raigad. – UPDATE]

### **‘Go back SEZ touts’**

A group of women was waiting when Congress leaders Sanjay Nirupam, Ramsheth Thakure (both former MPs) and Sanjay Patil, a former MLA, entered Umroli village in Pen tehsil of Raigad district on Wednesday. But they didn’t welcome them with garlands. Instead, they angrily chanted, **“Go back. Go back, you touts of SEZ and Ambani.”** Nirupam, Thakur and Patil had to clarify to the villagers that they were not “Ambani’s touts”, but leaders of Congress who had come to listen to their woes. It pacified the women, and they stopped shouting slogans.

The on-the-spot scrutiny made a shocking revelation — **the state government was clearly cheating residents of the 44 villages**, which were likely to be affected by the proposed SEZ.

Despite the Centre having already clarified that state governments would not acquire land for SEZs, and Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh announcing in the state legislature that his government would stop land acquisition, **the process was very**

**much on in all the 44 villages.** Pushed to the brink, angry villagers have **warned the government of “bloodshed” if forcible land acquisition continued.**

**“Till the last drop of our blood is shed, we will fight against the land acquisition** for the proposed SEZ, which is meant only for the financial benefit of the Mukesh Ambani’s Reliance group,” said Anant Patil, president of 24 Gao Shetkari Sangharsh Sanghatan, an action group of villagers. The villagers accused that CM Deshmukh was cheating them. “On one hand, he announces that land will not be acquired by the state, and on the other he sends his men for acquisition,” said Lahanu Mahale. (...) (Source: [www.dnaindia.com/](http://www.dnaindia.com/), 12.04.07; accessed on 14.04.07)

[Protests are brewing up in Punjab and Haryana also where large tracts of land are earmarked to be acquired for the SEZs. – UPDATE]

### **Land row: Farmers, police clash in Punjab**

At least 15 farmers were injured on Wednesday when police used force on demonstrators who were protesting the acquisition of fertile land for an industrial project near Barnala town in Punjab. The farmers said **they wanted to dismantle the boundary wall erected by the Trident group, a private industrial establishment**, in their area near the district headquarter town, 200 km from here. Scores of police personnel used force — firing several rounds of teargas shells and even fired in the air to disperse a 4,000-strong crowd of farmers. The farmers too pelted stones at the police team. Police, however, did not allow them to damage the wall of the Trident group project. (...)

In **Amritsar district also**, farmers protested against the state government’s policy to acquire fertile land for setting up of a special economic zone (SEZ) near the Sikh holy city. They blocked the Amritsar-Delhi railway line and delayed several trains, including the Shatabdi Express. In neighbouring Haryana, farmers held protests against land acquisition for SEZ in Karnal district. (...) (Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>, 31.01.07; accessed 03.02.07)

[It is published in a recent report that the new government of Punjab are considering the withdrawal of Amritsar SEZs after the Nandigram incidents:

**Nandigram could end up taking a toll on Punjab.** It is likely to jeopardise one of the state's biggest SEZs, planned in Amritsar. TOI has learnt that the Punjab cabinet is preparing **to withdraw its land acquisition notification** for the DLF special economic zone project in **Amritsar**. (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>, 12.04.07)

Nandigram resistance boosts the fighting morale of the people of **Jharkhand & Chhattishgarh** also where large tracts of land are earmarked for acquisition. Just after the killings in Nandigram:

The Jharkhand government has put a brake on acquisition of land for industrial use in the aftermath of the killings at Nandigram in West Bengal due to protest against land acquisition for a similar purpose... 'We will soon come out with a rehabilitation policy to acquire land. If we can assure the tribal people of their future, then land acquisition will not be a problem,' Deputy Chief Minister Stephen Marandi told IANS. ([http://news.monstersandcritics.com/india/news/article\\_1279101.php](http://news.monstersandcritics.com/india/news/article_1279101.php), 18.03.07)

In fact, the protests in Singur & Nandigram influenced the protesters in Jharkhand from January of this year. – UPDATE]

## **Jharkhand: projects stuck in land muddle**

The recent Singur and Nandigram incident in Bengal seems to have shaken the villagers of Jharkhand. After **taking** a senior officer of **Jindal Steel hostage** at Asanboni, residents in Seraikela-Kharsawan have **declared 23 villages as no-entry areas**. The **Tatas** have proposed to set up a steel project there. Similarly, **officials of Essar Steel** were **taken hostage** in Chaibasa, where they had gone to hold a medical camp.

The JSW project at Chandil is facing **similar resistance** from the people of Vishthapit Mukti Vahini. The members, significantly, have chalked out a plan to launch an agitation to the mushrooming growth of sponge iron projects in Chandil.

These incidents might appear sporadic, but a strong public movement is brewing across the state, particularly in East and West Singhbhum districts, where a slew of steel plants are coming up. (...)

Bagi said the argument that the new units will ensure jobs has proved to be a false. Those who got jobs in these industries were outsiders. They converted Jharkhand into their colony, he fumed. (...) (Source: [www.telegraphindia.com](http://www.telegraphindia.com), 20.01.07)

[Identical sense or revolt is brewing up in **Chhattishgarh** where the villagers/tribals are felt betrayed by the sugarcoated promises of the BJP government. A website reports:

India's SEZ dream is fast turning out to be a nightmare. After West Bengal's Nandigram and Singur became flashpoints of violent farmer protests, it seems Chhattisgarh is also blipping on the radar. While it was Tata Motors that ran into trouble in Singur, it's a proposed Tata Steel plant that's the source of the rising discontent in the Chhattisgarh polity. (<http://www.ibnlive.com/news/india/>, 19.03.07)

The projects of infamous Tata are now facing grinding halt. – UPDATE]

## **Chhattisgarh farmers refuse to hand over land to Tatas**

The farmers of **10 villages** in Lohandiguda block have now refused to hand over their land for Tata's proposed 5 mtpa steel plant until their 13-point demands are addressed by the administration.

The villagers, led by the Left parties [sic!], have taken a U-turn from their earlier resolution that was passed in the Gram Sabha held on July 20, 2006 and August 3, 2006. As a result, the Chhattisgarh government today refused to reorganise the Gram Sabha in Lohandiguda block of Bastar district that had earlier passed a resolution giving nod to the transfer of land. (...) (Source: [www.business-standard.com](http://www.business-standard.com), 18.03.07)

[The resistances in Nandigram have a deep impact on the struggles going on in **various parts of West Bengal** also.]

## **Another Nandigram is in the making**

“Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee should drop a nuclear bomb on us if he wants to stop our movement. As long as we live, there will be no nuclear power plant in Haripur,” said Lakshmi Panda, a fisherwoman spearheading the resistance against the proposed plant in coastal Midnapore.

There may be no evidence of resistance on the surface but Haripur is seething. Police action in Nandigram, 45 km away, has made residents here hostile. Tension mounted over rumours of a visit by a CID team on Friday, volunteers of the Haripur Paramanu Bidyut Prakalpa Pratirodh Andolan, an organisation campaigning against the nuclear plant, have **barricaded** the fishing harbour of Junput, the gateway to Haripur. Every vehicle is being searched and media persons are allowed only if they are cleared by local resistance leaders.

**The protests have become stronger after the March 14 firing at Nandigram.** Local residents are now ready to stake everything to ensure the Nuclear Power Corporation of India does set up its proposed plant. *(Source: www.hindustantimes.com/, 23.03.07)*

### **‘Kawakhali could be another Nandigram’**

**Kawakhali** and its adjacent mouzas **near Siliguri** may well turn out to be **another Nandigram** if the state government does not backtrack on its plan to acquire land from the villagers for the establishment of a residential township. A threat to this effect was issued by the Bhoomi Raksha Committee last Friday.

A handsome compensation package by the Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority (SJDA), a state government body, has failed to move the villagers from their standpoint of not allowing the government to “grab” their lands. (...)

**“We do not want any compensation. We are going to save our lands at any cost.** If the government still tries to acquire our land, it will face strong opposition and the **bloody scenes of Nandigram will be repeated** at Kawakhali, Purajhar and Tikulikatha,” said a villager from Kawakhali, who is also the member of the Bhoomi Raksha Committee, on condition of anonymity. (...) *(Source: http://cities.expressindia.com/; (Kolkata), 26.03.07)*

## Changes in SEZ Acts: 'One step backward, two steps forward'

"The cap on size of SEZ does not exist in any other country. This is one of the vital issues that would be taken up with the government," Anand Jain, who heads Reliance's SEZ Group and is Chairman of Mumbai SEZ, said.

[*www.financialexpress.com/, 18.04.07*]

[The '**Nandigram syndrome**' halted the marches of the ruling classes for a certain time. They were trying to recover from this syndrome and brought some cosmetic changes in the SEZ Acts on **5th April 2007**. The changes made are:

The size cannot exceed 5,000 hectares (12,500 acres) — there was only a lower limit of 1,000 hectares for multi-product SEZs, state governments can impose lower ceilings if they so choose.

At least 50% of the area has to be earmarked for processing for all SEZs — earlier, the norm was 35% for multi-product SEZs and 50% for sector-specific SEZs.

A state government cannot acquire land for a SEZ on behalf of private developers; nor can state governments form joint ventures (JVs) with private developers if they do not already land in possession to offer the project. States can acquire land to develop SEZs on their own provided they stick to the new relief and rehabilitation package to be announced soon.

SEZs will have tougher export obligations to meet — instead of being net foreign exchange earners, they will also have to have export earnings at least equivalent to their purchases from the domestic tariff area.... (*Economic Times, 06.04.07*)

Soon after the declaration, the business barons acted quickly **pointing out 'big anomalies' in the changed policy**. **Two** of the changed policies could not satisfy them at all: **firstly**, the caps on size of land (maximum 5,000 hectares) & **secondly**, ban on the state governments in acquiring land for the developers of the SEZs. Initially it was 'found' that **only 6 SEZs** (including the Maha-Mumbai, Navi-Mumbai, DLF in Jhajjar, etc) would be stuck by the caps. But it was also 'found' that these 6 SEZs are 'backbone' of the SEZ policies of India, and millions of dollars (including foreign investments) were

involved in these massive projects. Hence the business barons like **Benugopal Dhoot (Assocham chief)** became deeply concerned:

“We are planning to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to tell him **how difficult it would be for us to deal with thousands of landowners directly**. It will delay all SEZ development plans.” ...Dhoot said corporate India is **ready to pay the market price of land to its owners provided it is acquired by the state... Dhoot, who is in touch with other SEZ developers**, says the mood among the Indian businessmen is gloomy. “We are ready to double compensation or job offers, but let’s not stop the development of the country,” he said. ([www.business-standard.com/](http://www.business-standard.com/), 10.04.07)

Within a day of this press report the **Prime Minister hinted** that: “SEZ is now a fact of life **but any changes could be considered**” ([www.financialexpress.com/](http://www.financialexpress.com/), 11.04.07). But the **commerce minister** was more categorical:

“We have a broad parameter. If there are any specific or area-specific issues, which do not have any controversy, **of course we will look at it (the ceiling) in certain conditions,... This is not the Gita or the Bible. No?**,” Nath said when asked whether the government would have a re-look into the land ceiling policy for setting up SEZs. ([www.financialexpress.com/](http://www.financialexpress.com/), 17.04.07)

A day after, thundered a spokesperson of **Reliance Industries**: “The cap on size of SEZ does not exist in any other country. This is one of the vital issues that would be taken up with the government” ([www.financialexpress.com/](http://www.financialexpress.com/), 18.04.07). Our commerce minister quickly assured saying that: “**In future should a proposal come that looks at an area that may be larger, we are willing to look at it...**” (<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/>, 18.04.07). Thus the line of action of the GoI is almost clear. In fact, they are waiting for moment when the present resistances and resentments will subside. They have understood that this imbroglio cannot be solved hurriedly.

**Another point:** the maximum processing area of **50%** (from 35% in multi-product SEZs) stipulated by the GoI will not ‘suffer’ much the interests of the developers if the caps on the land-ceiling is lifted. Moreover, still they have 50% of area in other SEZs

where they can make huge bucks from real estate business. Their class-interests behind the SEZs will be verified in the next discussions.

Though discussed in details in *UPDATE 13*, three of these class-interests must draw particular attention: 1. The tax-rebates; 2. Flexible and/or absence of any labour law; 3. Real estate business.

It is clear that the capitalist classes, particularly the foreign investors want more concessions/subsidies from the GoI to maintain or increase their level of profits. These subsidies are slated to be given as huge rebates in taxes (see *UPDATE 13* for details). A business weekly reports in February 2007:

Special economic zones are expected to facilitate exports worth Rs 3,40,352 crore by 2009-10. But even if the target is met, it will cost **Rs 22,913 crore in direct taxes foregone** in the year, according to the revenue department... The loss on direct taxes will grow from Rs 4,156 crore in 2006-07 to Rs 22,913 crore in 2009-10. (The profit margin on exports has been assumed at 20 per cent.) **On the indirect side**, the government will incur a **tax loss of Rs 8,147 crore** by 2009-10....

These estimates have been worked out taking into account **only 70 SEZs**. “After this, about **230 more SEZs** have been granted approval. So you can imagine the volume of revenue foregone,” says a finance ministry source. **Total revenue loss has been estimated at Rs 1,02,621 crore for the period 2006-07 till 2009-10** — Customs concessions will amount to Rs 29,700 crore, excise Rs 10,368 crore and service tax Rs 8,813 crore. The **total projected investment** lined up to the first board of approval meeting is around **Rs 1,75,000 crore**, based on which the finance ministry has made these calculations. (*www.businessworld.in/issue/news02.asp; accessed 10.02.07*)

Barring from reservations of finance ministry and IMFs, now the **ADB** rang the alarm bell on tax-forego. It is noticeable that these tax-breaks are nothing but subsidies given to the capitalist houses, both foreign and domestic. The gaps which will be created in the government resources will surely be met by either further taxation imposed on the common people or by slashing the funds earmarked for the expenditure in social sector and/or productive sectors. Latest estimates of the GoI projects a **tax-loss of Rs 1 lakh crore!** (*http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/, 28.03.07*) **The changes made on 5th April 2007 in the SEZ Acts did not break this trend.**

It is also crystal-clear that the capitalist classes of India are striving to emulate the **'CHINA MODEL of SEZs'** where **labour standards** are one of the **worst** in the world. For several reasons the ruling classes cannot change and/or abrogate the existing labour laws of the country. Though in the existing EPZs (those are transformed into SEZs in 2000), the units/industries are under the measures of **'public utility services'** (where formation of union & right to strike is prohibited — even in the 'left'-ruled West Bengal!), these are not enough for the capitalists — domestic and foreign — **as the existing laws denying them of the 'right' of hire-and-fire, hiring contract workers in permanent nature of works under any conditions and/or standard** (like China, Mexico or Bangladesh). Hence they are in dire need of an **alternative facility like SEZs where no labour laws will be effective** (though some sort of it may allowed to be present in papers). These interests of the domestic & foreign investors are bluntly exposed by a report presented by *Financial Times* of London. — UPDATE]

### **India to bypass strict labour laws in a drive to attract faster inflow of foreign investment**

The Indian government is planning to allow the country's 29 states to bypass the country's strict labour laws through the creation of Chinese-style special economic zones, says Kamal Nath, minister for trade and commerce. Under the proposed legislation, which Mr Nath says will be enacted by May, the government risks being seen by critics as circumventing its pledge to political allies not to dilute inflexible labour regulations.

The creation of SEZs, a concept pioneered in China more than two decades ago, is a central plank of the New Delhi government's plans to encourage faster inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) and boost employment. (...)

If pushed through, the measure would prove popular with foreign companies, many of which say they are deterred by labour laws from investing in the country. To lay off workers under existing laws, companies with more than 100 employees need the permission of the state governments. They are also prevented from employing contract workers for extended periods without offering permanent employment. (Source:

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/282c6328-942e-11d9-9d6e-00000e2511c8.html>, 14.05.2005; accessed 29.03.07)

[Thus the commerce minister of GoI, a seasoned politician serving the interest of big capitalists and TNCs (incidentally himself is an industrialist) conceded that the policy of SEZs was framed to **“bypass the country’s strict labour laws through the creation of Chinese-style special economic zones”**. Thus the Special Economic Zones are going to be **Special ‘Exploitation’ Zones** as happened in **CHINA**. **The new changes made on 5th April in the SEZ Acts are completely silent on this context.**

Let us come to the third factor behind the aggressive campaign for SEZs in India. In **UPDATE 13** we quoted the excerpts of a hard-core ‘reformist’ of a renowned business daily (*pp 92-93*) who observed that **the SEZs in India are nothing but a “real estate bubble” and will “burst” with an “large explosion”**. During the last three months more news is pouring in pointing out the role of mammoth real estate players — domestic, and particularly the foreign — behind the fracas of SEZs. It must be noted that the imperialist finance capital selected the global **real estate sector** as their favourite destinations for the last two decades. Different global financial giants including **speculating companies** are busy in making quick bucks from this lucrative sector. Apart from the developed world (where symptoms of glut is prominent) the finance capital rushed to east and south-east Asian countries. But, the real estate market also had stagnated there for nearly a decade. Hence these finance capital (in the form of speculative finance) are rushing into the neo-markets of China, Vietnam and lately India with a vengeance. Following facts may reveal how these SEZs of India are acting like real estate magnets for the developers/realtors of both foreign and domestic origin.

Earlier in this issue, it was mentioned that the Maha-Mumbai & Navi-Mumbai SEZs slated to be developed in Maharashtra are becoming a huge scam on land & real estate property. – UPDATE]

## **I-T Secy [said] SEZ is just landgrab**

(...) Maharashtra's IT secretary Arvind Kumar today slammed the very concept of SEZs, calling it “**a land grab scheme through the back door...** SEZs are nothing but tools for the elite to grab more property and should cease to exist.” (...) “Such land grabbing practices do not augur well for this country and should be stopped immediately... Do we require SEZs at all?”

(...) Prima facie, SEZs appear like a land grab scheme through the back door. Under the law, no individual can own more than 52 acres. How have we arrived at a formula that enables individuals to own more than 100,000 hectares?” he argued. (...) (*Source: www.indianexpress.com/, 31.01.07*)

[Ten days before this statement made by a government official, another topmost official of the GoI (Chairman of the SEZ Board of Approvals) observed that **as many as 80 developers** of SEZs “**are holding on to the land for gaining better prices** from the industrial units that would come up and set up shop in the zone” **without any work started on it.** (*www.business-standard.com/, 21.01.07*) Thus, from the very beginning, speculation on land & property is gaining momentum. In many cases, the **state governments are acting as middleman and/or promoter** gaining bucks through acquiring land and selling it to the big houses. A commentator asked:

Why should any state government acquire land from farmers at a very low rate and then sell it to a developer with a huge premium? In **Kalinganagar, Orissa**, for instance, the Industrial Development Corporation of Orissa paid **Rs 30,000 per acre to farmers** for their land, and **transferred the same land to Tata Steel at Rs 3,35,000 per acre.** (*http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/, 28.02.07*)

One cannot forget the case of land-grab in **Singur** by the WB government acting as an agent of the Tata Motors offering ‘mouth-salivating’ discounts (see **Box**). Though this case is not related with SEZ, but the case clearly shows the gravity of **land-scam** operating in the name of ‘industrialisation’. Moreover, the GoI have decided to involve promoters and/or developers from the lowest rung offering them tax-rebates. The overall policies are crafted in giving dividends to many realtors/property-holders as some “**land-bankers**” are developed across states buying land from the peasants — holding it —

clubbing it — then selling to the big houses of domestic and foreign origin. Follow the next. – UPDATE]

## **Local landbankers rule real world**

(...) Most players indulging in the business are local landlords, who do not match the expertise of national players in real estate development. However, they have an inherent advantage in connecting with the locals to make land acquisition less cumbersome. Rather than taking the onus of developing projects, these 'landbankers' just buy all available residential and commercial land in a catchment area. **This land-buying exercise is mostly driven by speculation.** “So much so, these landbankers are deciding which developer enters a particular village or an area,” say sources familiar with land acquisition.

According to experts, it's a win-win situation for all involved parties, even developers. Says HS Bharana, chairman, Era group, “Buying land directly from farmers is the most difficult task that a developer has to undertake.” No wonder, **landbankers get a fat premium** for handling the cumbersome land transfer.

Gradually, the **landbanking business** is also **seeing an influx of organised and structured companies.** Says Rumneek Bawa, head of real estate and infrastructure, Zoom Developers, “Land procurement, holding and banking are extremely critical areas far as the real estate business is concerned. The business is likely to increasingly get organised in times to come.” Prominent landbankers in north India include Baderwals, who own 600 acres in Haryana and Rajasthan, with tie-ups for another 1,500 acres; Deepjaivijai promoters with close to 400 acres in MP; and AK Constructions with 1,200 acres in UP. (Source: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/>, 20.01.07)

[**Assocham** made a survey on the growth of real estate business including the prospects in SEZs. Follow the next. – UPDATE]

## **Cashing in on the Indian property boom**

(...) According to “Future of Real Estate Investment in India”, a study published by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), the real-estate market will grow to US\$60 billion by 2010 from the present \$16 billion. Foreign direct investment **(FDI) is expected to provide \$25 billion to \$28 billion.**

FDI’s share of the Indian property market will expand by at least 10% by March, says the ASSOCHAM study, primarily because of global real-estate players hugely interested in the Indian market, with particular demand for office space for the information-technology and business-process-outsourcing sectors. (...)

The boom was fueled by the Indian government’s **decision to allow 100% FDI in the construction business** from March 2005. Earlier, only nonresident Indians and persons of Indian origin were allowed to invest in the housing and real-estate sectors. (...)

**George Soros**, the world’s wealthiest speculator, is also heading for India this month, and is scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh next Friday. Significantly, real estate is among the top items on his investment menu. (...)

The ASSOCHAM study says **foreign investors will also be interested** in shopping malls and the controversial “**special economic zones**” (...). The study notes that FDI inflow in 2003-04 was \$2.7 billion, of which only 4.5% was in real estate. FDI increased to \$3.75 billion in 2004-05, with the real-estate share being 10.6%. In 2006-07, FDI is expected to be \$8 billion, with the real-estate **share of the cake** estimated to be about **26.5%**. (...) (Source: Asia Times Online, 09.12.06; accessed 31.01.07)

[The changes made on **5th April 2007 in the SEZ Acts** said that the state governments cannot acquire the land for the business houses. It is nothing but a eye-wash treatment by the GoI to save the skins of the parliamentary and ruling parties of the states. **In fact, the changes made will only consolidate the trend of speculation on land & property by the private companies.** Even before the inking of the Salim projects in West Bengal, the land-sharks jumped into the business. – UPDATE]

## **Salim effect: Land sharks eye fringes**

Call this the Salim effect if you must. Land rates have shot through the roof in the city fringes such as **Baruipur**. Land sharks, smelling profit, are trying to buy up large tracts.

True the investments are **speculative**. But they are based on the premise that the government — dead serious about Salim project — is in dire need of land. In Baruipur, they're out in force baiting farmers to sell. The trigger: the announcement that the proposed mega project may move to the South 24-Parganas headquarters.

The idea is **to make a fast buck, either from the real estate or get a lumpsum from the government or the Salim group**, if they want to go for their holdings. Such is the rush to acquire plots that a local promoter has made part payment to tillers for more than 800 bighas near the proposed district administrative headquarters. Consequence: Land prices in Baruipur have zoomed (...).

The scene is similar in **Mograhat, Canning and Bhangar**. These areas too would be included in the Salim dream project. Plots in these parts on either side of the 75-km expressway are precious now. **This when the government is yet to even identify the project site.** (...) (Source: Times of India, 21.09.2005)

[In the definition of SEZs it is stated that it is “**An SEZ... is like a foreign territory within a country**”. One hard-core “reformist”, Mr. S.A.A. Aiyar was not satisfied at these measures. He argued in his column that **only big SEZs** like Maha-Mumbai, Navi-Mumbai (of Reliance), Mundra (of Adani Group) could deliver the required opportunities like the giant SEZs (Shenzhen) of China covering 20,000 hectares of land. – UPDATE]

## **Tehsils as Special Economic Zones**

(...) A sensible policy would aim at creating SEZs the size of an entire tehsil or district, as in China, each with its own port and airport. **Shenzhen**, the first and perhaps most famous SEZ, **covers four small districts.** (...) Two SEZs are now coming up in Navi Mumbai and Maha Mumbai, built by Reliance and the state government, covering **14,000 hectares in all.**

**That's a fair size**, but these will depend on Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, which suffers from chronic congestion. That sounds bad. **Gujarat seems best placed for world-class SEZs**. Since 1995 it has been developing 10 new ports in public-private partnerships.

These are far away from big cities, so land is easily available for SEZs, airports and mega-power plants. (...) The Adanis are building a 30,000-acre SEZ at Mundra port, with an airport and ultra mega-power station. Reliance plans similar facilities at its 25,000-acre SEZ at Jamnagar, where Chevron is a partner. In Kutch, private developers can buy thousands of acres directly from farmers, avoiding government acquisition that displaces thousands and causes riots (as in Orissa). New ports are coming up at Positra, Dahej, Hazira and Dholera. These aim to be highly mechanised, with the fastest loading rates in India. The deep water of the Gulf of Kutch will enable the biggest tankers, bulk carriers and container ships to dock.

(...) The chief minister says he wants Gujarat to become the SEZ capital of India. For that, he needs a much bigger vision. Why not convert, in stages, every coastal tehsil in the Gulf of Kutch into an SEZ? Then maybe Gujarat will outdo even China. *(Source: by S.A.A. Aiyar, Times of India, 07.05.2006)*

[Taking a cue from his vision, the officials of Gujarat government (under the aegis of Narendra Modi, the recent messiah of the Indian corporates) **proposed to make whole of state of Gujarat an SEZ!** – UPDATE]

## **Make entire Gujarat an SEZ, requests official**

One of the leading industrialised states in the country, **Gujarat, wants the entire state to be declared as a special economic zone (SEZ)** so that it can attract more investment.

This request was put up by a senior Gujarat Government official to the Standing Committee on Commerce looking into the SEZ issue on Wednesday. The **committee**, for the first time, had **invited political parties and organisations, state governments and corporate houses, like the Tata Group, Infosys and**

**Mahindra and Mahindra**, to give their views and share their experiences on SEZs. (...)  
(Source: *www.hindustantimes.com*, 24.01.07)

[Even before the GoI have given any formal announcements on this **novel project to make a province of the country a ‘colony’**, the CM of Gujarat along with his capitalist cohorts is scheduled to rush to Japan to make their dreams come true. Follow the next. – UPDATE]

### **Country-specific SEZ [‘Colony’] may come up in Gujarat**

Move over product-specific SEZs. You may soon see country-specific special economic zones in Gujarat. **Even as Nandigram continues to boil** a high level of business delegation from Gujarat comprising leading industrial houses and government officials is **flying to Japan** next month to discuss a proposal to set up a country-specific SEZ. A month later, another business delegation from the state **will visit South Korea for the same**. Such a SEZ will have companies from a particular country — the zones will have schools, cultural centres, religious spaces and even food exclusive to the country.

The 30-member delegation led by the chief minister Narendra Modi, is likely to have industrialists such as Adani Group’s Goutam Adani, Torrent’s Sudhir Mehta, Zyduz Cadila’s Pankaj Patel along with representatives from Reliance, Essar and several other companies, said government sources. Chief secretary Sudhir Mankad and industries secretary D Rajagopalan too will accompany the delegation which will camp in Japan from April 15-21. **“The idea is to have a zone preferably an SEZ dedicated to a country.** (...) We want Japanese companies to come and set shops in SEZs,” said a senior governmental official.

He added, as per the preliminary plan, the zone **will have Japanese restaurants, religious places, schools among other things which will make them fill at home.** “The delegation will also try and attract investments in various sectors **including ports and SEZs,**” he noted.

Six months back, a Japanese delegation led by ambassador Yasukuni Enoki had visited Gujarat to explore business opportunities in SEZs, ports and even IT. (...) Japanese

auto companies such as Nissan, Mitsubishi and Suzuki had visited Gujarat to explore locations for setting up a terminal. (...) (Source: *Economic Times*, 26.03.07)

### **Box: SEZs – Sky-kissing Promises**

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| No. of notified SEZs (a):  | 63                               |
| No. of formal approvals pending notification (b):                      | 171                              |
| No. of valid formal approvals (a+b):                                   | 234                              |
| No. of in-principle approvals (c):                                     | 162                              |
| Total (a+b+c):   | 396                              |
| No. of Applications submitted till 5th April 2007:                     | 765                              |
| <b>Land requirement:</b>   |                                  |
| SEZs notified:   | 67 sq km                         |
| SEZs formally approved:  | 350 sq km                        |
| In-principle approvals:  | 1400 sq km                       |
| Total area for proposed SEZs (FA+IP):                                  | 1750 sq km                       |
| Investment made in 63 notified SEZs:                                   | Rs 13,435 crore                  |
| Employment created in 63 notified SEZs:                                | <b>18,457</b> people             |
| <b>Expected investment and employment from SEZs (by December 2009)</b> |                                  |
| <b>By the 63 notified SEZs</b>   |                                  |
| Investment:  | Rs <b>53,561</b> crore           |
| Employment:  | <b>15,75,452</b>                 |
| <b>If 234 formal approvals become operational</b>                      |                                  |
| Investment:  | Rs <b>3,00,000</b> crore         |
| Employment:  | <b>4 million</b> additional jobs |

(Source: *www.business-standard.com/*, 16.04.07 & *Times of India*, 14.04.07)

[Thus a ‘colony’ of Japan is under making on the soil of India. Facts reveal that this type of ‘colony’ are already under processing in Rajasthan. – UPDATE]

### **Rajasthan’s ‘Little Japan’**

(...) The 1,170-acre **Neemrana Phase III industrial estate** will not only offer big tax breaks, but also **an exclusive zone to Japanese investors**. Or, more specifically, auto component makers from that country. Rajasthan has further sweetened the deal by offering to slash the 4 per cent sales tax to 0.25 per cent for these companies.

In response to the proposal submitted by Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro), the Rajasthan Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (Riico) has offered to give customised plots to Japanese investors. (...) If things go according to Jetro’s plans, **it will be a self-sufficient industrial cluster run almost entirely by the Japanese**. (Source: *www.businessworld.in/issue/news18.asp*; accessed 16.09.06)

## Mirage of 'China Model'

[H]e (steel baron Lakshmi Mittal's scion Aditya Mittal) recalled his visit to a plant site in China. A party secretary had accorded him the "red-carpet treatment", even giving Mittal's car exclusive access to a highway that hadn't yet been inaugurated. "Then I get to the plant site, but I don't see any land. I see houses, lots of houses — a village. And I say, 'Where's the land?' And the party secretary says, 'Right here. In 90 days, everyone will be gone.'"

[[www.dnaindia.com/](http://www.dnaindia.com/), 03.02.07; accessed 22.02.07]

...Most of the year, the Shenzhen sky is thick with choking smoke, while the crime rate is almost nine-fold higher than Shanghai. The working class earns US\$ 80 every month in the sweatshops and the turnover rate is 10 percent — many turn to prostitution after being laid off. Further, real-estate sharks have stockpiled houses which have caused prices to spiral and have created a new generation of people French calls "mortgage slaves"...

[[www.indiatogether.org/2007/feb/opi-sezschina.htm](http://www.indiatogether.org/2007/feb/opi-sezschina.htm), 09.02.07; accessed 20.02.07]

[It is mentioned earlier that the ruling classes of India are trying to emulate the "spectacular success of '**CHINA MODEL**' of growth". On many occasions the business houses like CII, Assocham, FICCI, etc argued to follow the SEZ-success of China. In fact, when the policies of SEZs were incepted in India in 2000, the NDA government led by BJP projected the SEZs of China as **role model** (*Business Line*, 07.05.01). The parties like CPIM also pleaded repeatedly to ape the 'growth story' of Chinese SEZs. Even after the Nandigram genocide perpetrated to acquire land for an Indonesian SEZ, "Sitaram Yechury" of CPIM "has pushed the Chinese model for such projects (SEZs)" (<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/>, 20.03.07) But, the 'growth story' of Chinese SEZs and 'industrialisation & 'urbanisation' along '**CHINA MODEL**' had taken a **path of harrowing experiences of land-grab at gunpoint, tremendous bloodshed, and huge exploitation of cheap labour reminding the Dickensian age** of the nineteenth century of Europe.

In this section two subjects regarding the '**CHINA MODEL**' will be discussed: a) Labour standard in Chinese SEZs; b) Violent land-grab in China. — **UPDATE**]

## Labour Standards in Chinese SEZs

These workers labor six days per week (seven during peak season), 13 hours per day, for as little as 35 cents per hour. They do not have pensions or Social Security; they do not have unemployment or medical insurance. By the time they reach age 40, they start having difficulty keeping up with the heavy workload. Soon, they are left with nothing.

[<http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/>, 04.09.05]

We had come to follow up a story about a young woman called Li Chun Mei. Apparently the 19-year-old had collapsed and died last November at the end of a 16-hour shift. Like many of the staff, she often had to work past midnight, especially in the run-up to Christmas.

[BBC, 20.07.02]

[At the eleventh party congress of China, it was decided to go along the capitalist path following the 'open market' policy. At this juncture of history, the concepts of SEZs were advocated to lure foreign direct investment (FDI). Following excerpt briefly narrates this story. — *UPDATE*]

## Special Economic Zones in China

(...) Based on the decision adopted at the 11th Communist party meeting in 1978 to implement economic reform and open policy led by Deng, the SEZs were created as an integral part of this policy: four SEZs were set up in 1980, three of them — **Shenzhen (near Hong Kong), Zhuhai (near Macao), Shantou (a major home of overseas Chinese) — located in Guangdong Province and one at Xiamen (across Taiwan) in Fujian Province. Fifth SEZ was installed in Hainan Island in 1988** (...). These SEZs were all located along the coast which had easy access to sea transport over centuries.

(...) [I]n 1984 that the experiments of the SEZs would be extended to larger areas inside the country and fourteen coastal open port cities would be opened with special investment incentives for foreign joint ventures. Economic and technical zones were installed in these coastal cities with a view to developing emerging businesses and technology-intensive industries. In February 1985, three coastal areas (Pearl River Delta, Southern Fujian Delta, Yangze River Delta) were designated as Open Economic Zones (OEZs) endowed with similar preferential incentives to promote export production and

inflow of foreign capital. Shanghai and its surrounding areas were thus incorporated in the open policy program.

(...) The fundamental object of the SEZs and open cities was to invite foreign investment in various industries with preferential measures and incentives such as preferential tax status to foreign investors, lower tariffs, better infrastructure, more flexible labor markets, and less bureaucratic control. (...) (*Source: Tatsuyuki Otai, Tokyo University, Tokyo, Japan, www.iae.univ-poitiers.fr; accessed on 25.01.07*)

[These SEZs and open zones are established emulating the Economic Processing Zones (EPZs) developed in the eastern and south-eastern countries of Asia though with a larger volume. It is noted in the above excerpt that these SEZs were set up to attract huge amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). It is also mentioned that certain factors were there behind the flow of FDI in these free zones of China. In fact, the history of EPZs in different countries pointed out that the one of the most important magnet of FDI was **cheap labour and flexible labour conditions**. Above author writes further:

...Major industries in the EPZs were confined to the following two footloose industries in the earlier stage; textile/clothes industry and electronics industry. The products in these industries were **low skilled and labor-intensive**. The MNCs had invested in the EPZs in many cases **to exploit cheap labor and generous incentives offered which were, in the main, the sources of international competitiveness....**

The wage increase gradually began to erode their competitive edge which had stemmed from **low-cost labor**. An impending option for Hong Kong and South Korea or Taiwan, for example, was **to relocate existing production based on low-cost labor to countries where cheaper labor were available** and non-binding quotas were imposed. As economic development advanced in these countries, an emphasis had shifted from labor-intensive, low value-added to high-tech, high value-added technology industry in the selection of inward FDI, forcing their industries of comparative disadvantage to relocate **in the less developed, lower wage countries/regions including the SEZs....** (*Ibid*)

In fact, the countries like Mexico (with its notorious *maquiladora* — zones like EPZs/SEZs), Thailand, etc were offering cheaper labour to draw FDI. But within decades, the labour became costly in these countries in comparison to China. Hence, the foreign

capital rushed to China which was ready to provide **labour at cheaper rate under flexible labour conditions**. Note the following excerpt:

...Employment in the *maquiladora* industry in 2003 was down nearly 20% from its 2000 peak of 1.4 million.... (One of its) explanation, is that growing numbers of *maquiladora* producers are **shifting their production to China**. Among other things, they are in search of even cheaper wages: **An assembly-line workers in Guadalajara (of Mexico) earns \$2.50 to \$3.50 an hour; his counterpart in Guangdong makes 50 cents to 80 cents....** (*China & Socialism, by Martin Hart-Landsberg & Paul Burkett, Monthly Review, July-August 2004*)

Thus, **the cheaper labour and flexible labour conditions** are the **chief factors** in luring FDI to Chinese SEZs. These factors are firmly established by the above authors in following terms:

...The Chinese government implemented a number of policies to attract FDI, including opening up new geographic areas and industries to this investment. As desired by the government, **most FDI — approximately 90% between 1986 and 1999 — has so far been in the coastal areas [i.e., in the ‘open zones’]**. The initial foreign investment came largely from overseas Chinese; but starting in the early 1990s, US, European and Japanese investors have greatly increased their share.... Of course, **US firms are well known to hire low-wage firms on a contract basis to produce goods for exports.** (*ibid*)

In the following discussions the conclusions of the authors will be verified. In fact, the difference of wages in different countries for manufacturing jobs are horrendous. A study reports: **“Per hour compensation in manufacturing (in \$) — USA: 21.3, Canada: 18, Mexico: 2.1, Philippines: 0.7, China: 0.4** (*Beyond cheap labour: lessons for developing countries, McKinsey Quarterly, 2005, No. 1*). Hence India has a ‘comparative advantage’ than China in luring FDI on **wage-factor** (sic). And India is rushing for it.

In this way (i.e. attracting FDI in low wage-jobs and offering flexible labour conditions — that we will observe in the following discussions), China captured big market of the world (both exports and domestic markets). China is regarded now as the **“world’s production line”** as **top 400 of the world’s top 500 enterprises have**

**built plants in China** — both in mainland & in SEZs (*www.chinadaily.com.cn/27.04.04*). In this process **China became a virtual hunting place of imperialist capital. At present, 50% of the Chinese exports are produced by the “foreign-funded enterprises”** (*Monthly Review, ibid*). Hence, “as a result of this development, **China’s economic growth is now becoming increasingly dependent on the export activities of foreign transnational corporations”** (*ibid*). The ruling classes of India (under the ‘innocent’ advice of CPIM) are rushing along this horrible path of growth.

Let us observe now the labour conditions of Chinese SEZs which are projected as engine of so-called growth of China. — **UPDATE]**

### **Toy Industry Tinderbox**

(...) China’s official workers’ paper commented recently that “many people say the foreign-invested economy is China’s burgeoning new heaven. But sometimes, heaven is only a step away from hell.”

The statement rings especially true for 84 former colleagues of Tao Chun Lan, a 20-year-old woman from Zhongyuan, a poor village in Sichuan province in central China. Last year, Tao and many village friends migrated to **Shenzhen, the “Special Economic Zone,” which borders Hong Kong and exemplifies China’s rush to open its doors to foreign business.**

Tao and her friends found work in the Zhili Handicrafts factory, **making stuffed toys**. They earned poverty wages, **about \$46 a month**. On the night of November 19, 1993, an **electrical fault sparked a fire** that ripped through Zhili’s dual factory-dormitory building. The workers were locked inside — only one of four exits was open. **In all, 84 workers were suffocated, burnt or trampled to death. Most of the victims were women**, and many were Tao’s friends from Zhongyuan village.

Tao was lucky. She survived, although she crushed both ankles jumping to safety from a second-floor window. Hospitalized for four months, **she received no compensation from the company or the local government**. “They don’t care if I’m crippled for life,” she told the local press. International toy makers and distributors refuse to

acknowledge any responsibility for preventing such industrial disasters. When presented with a suggestion to adopt a toy industry code to prevent future fires like the one at Zhili, Dennis Ting, head of the Hong Kong Toy Council, which represents major investors in China, called the idea “ridiculous,” and fumed, “someone is out of their minds.”

Ting and others are eager to maintain business as usual. **The \$40 billion per year international toy industry is increasingly centered on China.** The country houses the world’s biggest toy manufacturing industry, which continues to expand. **The Southeast China province of Guangdong, where Shenzhen and many other special economic zones are located, is the industry’s heartland, where at least one-third of the world’s toys are made.** Neighboring Hong Kong is China’s toy export gateway, shipping toys worth \$8 billion in 1993, making it the world’s leading toy exporter.

Despite the economic promise of this scenario, toy industry boosters are finding it increasingly difficult to use such statistics to hide the plight of Tao and her fellow Chinese workers. A realistic picture of the Chinese toy industry is emerging — highlighted through profiles of several Asian multinational companies’ Chinese operations — revealing that **many of the toys that delight children around the world are the product of rock-bottom wages, horrendous working conditions, appalling health and safety risks and a de facto ban on free labor organizing.**

(...) The toy industry’s **famous brands** — Fisher-Price, Hasbro, Tyco and Mattel from the United States and Europe, Bandai and Tomy from Japan — **rarely appear on the name-plates of Chinese factories.** These corporate giants rely mainly on original equipment manufacturing agreements with manufacturers, which then have exclusive rights to produce toys according to the specifications set by the brand-name buyers. Some of these **local contractors** — **many of which are also multinationals**, with Asia-wide operations — also sell toys under their own brandnames.

Offering labor unorganized by free unions (explicitly banned in China) at as little as **12 cents an hour**, China has come to dominate major segments of the international toy trade. (...)

Harbour Ring, with major investments in southern China, is typical of such Hong Kong-based companies. Combined, these firms employ at least **120,000 workers across the border**. Harbour Ring, which made 1993 profits of \$30.1 million, started out with factories in Hong Kong, then shifted north in the early 1980s **in search of cheaper labor**. A family-run business incorporated in Bermuda — for tax purposes and to avoid uncertainty over Hong Kong’s handover to China in 1997 — its **subsidiaries and contractors operate six factories in Guangdong**, employing 10,000 to 18,000 seasonal production workers. They make 300 toy lines, mainly on contract for brand-name toy companies. (...)

His workers, however, will not be customers. Harbour Ring workers earn on average only \$46 to \$58 a month, and, as migrants, most send part of this back to their villages, keeping only enough for subsistence needs. (...) Working hours are long, overtime and weekend work are common and job security is low. Most of Harbour Ring’s Chinese workers are unskilled — they get less than half-a-day’s training. In the summer, Harbour Ring works at maximum production and employment levels in order to stock toy store shelves for Christmas. Each winter, it sheds about half its workforce until they need to gear up again the following summer. (...) *(by Huge Williamson, [http://multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1994/09/mm0994\\_10.html](http://multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1994/09/mm0994_10.html); accessed 10.04.06)*

[Even in the high-tech manufacturing SEZs, the stories are no different. – UPDATE]

## **Cheap products’ human cost**

Pan Qing Mei hoists a soldering gun and briskly fastens chips and wires to motherboards streaming past on a conveyor belt. Fumes from the lead solder rise past her face toward a ventilating fan high above the floor of the spotless factory.

Pan, a 23-year-old migrant worker, said the fumes made her lightheaded when she first arrived from a distant farm village three years ago. Now she’s used to them — **just as she’s used to the marathon shifts, sometimes 18 hours a day.**

Hundreds of thousands of young Chinese like Pan have flocked to the **Pearl River Delta** to work in electronics factories that assemble computers and other products for the

world's major tech companies. These hard-driving, highly efficient component factories, many of them owned by **Taiwanese** companies, are essential to the personal computer industry as competition drives down prices.

What has escaped notice is one secret to their success: They take advantage of a workforce willing to work extraordinary amounts of overtime, often in violation of China's national labor law.

Workers like Pan come from impoverished villages for a few years to live in company dormitories, eat in company cafeterias and routinely work minimum 12-hour shifts, six days a week.

Pan's base wage of 30 cents an hour is roughly China's minimum wage. Working at least 130 hours of overtime a month, at up to 50 cents an hour, she earns about \$150 a month. Much of that she sends home to support her parents, who are subsistence farmers, and what is left she spends on her room and board, and she saves for medical emergencies.

With its estimated 100 million migrant workers and its **notoriety for low wages and lax enforcement of labor and environmental laws**, China is fast becoming the world's premier electronic workshop, analysts say. Contract manufacturers that make components for leading **PC companies are moving operations here from Taiwan, Malaysia and Mexico, and bringing their subcontractors with them.** (...)

"The problem is that overtime abuse is just as bad in the high-tech industry as it is in the garment industry, and the hazardous-materials issue is even worse," said S. Prakash Sethi, a professor at Baruch College's Zicklin School of Business in New York. **"It's false to say workers love overtime. They do it because they cannot afford to live without it."** (...)

Most contract manufacturers in China like Wistron, experts say, run their factories **on two 12-hour shifts**, enabling them to **lower costs by hiring fewer workers**. That means managers expect Pan and her co-workers to put in at least 72 hours during a six-day workweek. **The central government's law restricts a laborer's monthly hours including overtime to 249; Pan typically works a minimum of 312**

**hours a month.** (...) (Source: by Karl Shoenberger, 24.11.02; retrieved from [www.mindfully.org/WTO/China-PC-Success24nov02.htm](http://www.mindfully.org/WTO/China-PC-Success24nov02.htm) on 10.04.06)

[Following excerpt is collected from an investigation (including a diary of a worker) carried in industrial zone where TNC giants like McDonalds, Disney, Hesbro, Warner, Paramount, etc are contracting and/or subcontracting their products. – UPDATE]

## **Merton Company Limited**

(...) Workers have to work **70 days** before getting the full pay for the first month. (...) **Workers needs to pay \$5 deposit before entering the factory.** They can not get the last month pay and the deposit back if they quit. In order to deal with the inspections by the authorities, the factory **signs fake contracts** with workers. But the contracts are kept by the factory, but not given to the workers. (...)

### **Working Hours and Holidays**

In the colouring section, the normal working hours are 7:30am-12noon, 1-6pm, and then 7:30-10:30pm (overtime work), adding up to **12.5 hours a day**. Even though they work for 9.5 hours before dinner, but the **extra 1.5 hours are not counted as overtime work**; only the three-hour night shift is counted as overtime work.

Workers in the **painting section** have the **longest working day**: 7-11am; 12noon-17pm, and then 18:30-23:30 (overtime), **a total of 14 hours**. Again, only the night shift is counted as overtime work. workers have **one day off each month if there is no production deadline**. Normally, **they have to work overtime every night except Sundays**. But there is some production deadline, they have to work overtime on Sundays as well and **no holidays whatsoever, even on May Day** (1999) which is a statutory holiday-not even the National Day on October 1 (1999). Taken as a whole, in the second half of 1999, workers in the colouring department have taken the following rest days:

**June:** none; **July:** one day off due to electricity failure and repair; **August:** one day off; **September:** one day off for the Mid-Autumn Festival in calculating the wages in relations to the piece rate. (...) **October:** one day off on National Day; **November:** none; **December:** none (from October 2 to December 31, workers have to work overtime on

two Sundays) And then, one day off on the New Year Day (2000). And 5 days' holidays during the Chinese New Year in February.

### **Leave and Punishment**

(...) Some workers cannot stand the workload, and can't wait for the approval — they simply don't go to work, and pay a fine of Rmb 25 plus having their “bonus” cancelled plus one day's wages taken off. Moreover, those not working overtime are considered as absent from work, and will be fined Rmb40 on each occasion. In December 1999, one women worker from the spraying department refused to work overtime and was finally counted as absent from work. In January 2000, another worker (Mr. X), also from the spraying department, did the same and received the same treatment. This is sort of the “normal” mode at this factory.

### **Wages**

Wages are paid on a monthly basis, but the wages of the first 40 days are held up as deposits. There is no Provision for resignation at the factory. If the workers find the workload unbearable and quit (or quitting for some other reasons), they cannot get back the 40 days' wages. There are marked differences in piece-rate wages, ranging from Bmb1, 000 to Rmb300 a month. If the workers do not work enough (below Rmb300 a month), they will be fired. However, management has set a ceiling on the piece-rate wages at Rmb1200 a month. If a worker earn beyond the limit, management simply reduces the piece rate claiming that the piece rate is too high. (...)

### **Deductions**

Various expenses are **deducted** from their monthly wages. These include living expenses (Rmb55), water and electricity bills (Rmb26), miscellaneous fees (Rmb24) (nobody has any idea what “miscellaneous' fees mean, and from March 1999, the fees are scaled up to Rmb30 a month). Even when a worker **is absent from work and will not be issued any meal coupon, the living expenses will still be deducted.** (...)

## **Accommodation and Daily Life**

**Dormitories:** There are dormitories, each with 7 floors and 20 rooms on each floor. The rooms measure 20 sq.m in size, **housing at least 17 workers in one room**, crammed onto 7 steel double-bunkers (starting with 6 double-bunkers but squeezes one more when they recruit more workers). In some rooms, they simply put two workers on the lower bunk.

**Shower Rooms:** There are **4 shower rooms** on each floor, which can accommodate **50 persons**.

**Toilets:** Two squatting-style toilets on each floor, each with 12 fixtures. In winter, they have enough hot water for shower. Normally workers finish their work at 22:30pm but for those who are off shift at 23:30pm or later, they can't take a shower any more as there is no more hot water. (...)

## **Management**

Workers have to pay a deposit of 40 yuan (Bmb) upon recruitment. They are loosely fined, or even fired, for various "misconduct." If they are fired can't take back the deposits, and some are even fined couple of hundred yuan. Actually, **workers are hired and fired according to the production season**.

The workers **sign a contract** with the boss, **but only the boss has the copy**. **They don't even know what is in the contract**; they are only asked to put their signature. Some who have read it reveal that the contract mentions nothing about their pay and other protection (of the legal rights entitled to workers); it is all about factory rules and discipline. The workers think that this is just some gesture to get around the local labor department. The labor department is well a ware of what the contract is all about, but they just don't bother. (...)

## **Health, Safety and Welfare**

There is a shabby clinic. The workers can go there for treatment but the medical expenses are deducted from their wages. They are **not on any medical insurance policy nor pension scheme**. (...)

Workers at the spraying department complain among themselves that the **fume is too strong**, and that they are never explained the safety hazards with paints. They are sure they will have some kind of chronic diseases — there is some kind of **abnormal yellowish colour in their urine**. Moreover, the factory **does not provide any gloves**, and their hands are “**burned**” (corroded) by the thinner. The factory **does not provide masks** either, and it doesn’t care whether workers wear any masks at all. But during inspection by the labor department or the customer, everyone has to put on one; otherwise they will be fined. (...) (Source: by Li Qiang, November 2001, [www.chinalaborwatch.org/en/web/article.php?article\\_id=50008](http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/en/web/article.php?article_id=50008); accessed 10.04.06)

[Most of these SEZ-workers labouring under sub-human conditions in China are **migrant workers** coming from the countryside. These migrant workers are mostly ousted from the old communes because of the “**decollectivisation of the agricultural production**” (*Monthly Review, July-August 2004*). They have to congregate at the cities, coastal ‘free zones’ & the SEZs in search of work under any conditions. Note the next excerpt. – UPDATE]

## **Migrant labour: The armies of the night**

(...) More than **200 million *mingong* [migrant labours]** are roaming China. At least **25% don’t get paid** by their employers, or their lump payment — before the Chinese Lunar New Year — is delayed. According to Zeng Peiyan, a member of China’s State Council, the equivalent of more than \$13 billion has not yet been paid to *mingong*; in some cases **debts are more than 10 years old**. **Sixty percent** of *mingong* have to work more than **10 hours a day**. **And 97% have no medical benefits** whatsoever. Shanghai urban professionals insist that technically, at least for now, no Chinese peasant can dream of having formal employment.

You can spot a *mingong* from miles away. Their work clothes, blue or brown, are shabby and covered in dust; they are **thinner** than most Chinese; and they are also **shorter**, which leads to widespread discrimination because of their height. Whatever their perceived shortcomings, they are the unknown, heroic protagonists of China’s spectacular economic miracle. In the big cities there are now more floating *mingong* than urban workers.

Their armies can be seen in countless construction sites in Shanghai and Beijing, living in shelters more crowded than prison cells, the more skilled among them earning 70 yuan a day for a 12-hour workday, with a 30-minute break, the new arrivals making only 30 yuan a day. They must register with the big city government every two months and have practically no health and education rights. There are more than 3 million in Shanghai alone, erecting at least one office tower a week. If all unregistered *mingong* are taken into account, Shanghai's population may be exceeding 20 million by now. In this Beijing winter, late at night, they can be seen working in the streets under freezing temperatures and merciless winds from the Gobi Desert. (...) (Source: by Pepe Escobar, 22.01.05; Asia Times Online)

[These migrant workers are backbone of the China SEZs. Most of them are underpaid, underfed, deunionised and forced to work & live in sub-human conditions.]

### **Poor working conditions plague Guangdong**

(...) [T]he government's hands were too full trying to administer the migrant rush into Guangdong — with numbers jumping from **5 million** registered workers in **1995** to **10 million** in **2001** and nearly **20 million last year** — to concentrate solely on labor issues.

Only registered workers who have had jobs for at least six months are included in the figures, with another 10 million unregistered workers also estimated to have met the six-month working criteria. A further 10 million could be looking for work, Wang said.

This gives Guangdong by far the largest share of China's officially estimated 140 million migrant workers. Another around 6 million are in Shanghai and 5 million in Beijing.

Most of the workers in Guangdong are under 35, **more than half are women** and they largely come from impoverished inland provinces like Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Anhui, Guangxi and Guizhou. Many are engaged in light industrial manufacturing, including electronics, as well as cheap Chinese textiles like plastics, shoes, clothes, toys and furniture that are mainstays in markets worldwide. (...) (Source: *The Taipei Times*, 05.02.05; retrieved from [www.chinalaborwatch.org/](http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/) 10.04.06)

[**More than half** of the migrants are women workers who are used to be exploited massively. – UPDATE]

## **Hope[!] for China's migrant women workers**

(...) [T]hese **women migrants face poorer working conditions than their male counterparts**. Though statistics show that the migrant labor male-to-female ratio nationwide is 2:1, in the **Pearl River delta** the ratio is reversed. Job segregation in the delta **pushes women into the unskilled, labor-intensive, and lower-paid** apparel, footwear, and toy industries. The average monthly salary for a woman migrant worker in Guangdong is RMB300-RMB500 (\$37-\$62), according to a 2000 report by the Institute of Sociology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. In contrast, male migrant workers generally earn RMB500 or more a month. Salary levels have stagnated since the early 1990s. Given inflation and increases in the cost of living, salaries have fallen in real terms.

China's Labor Law guarantees women workers maternity leave and protection for their reproductive health. Yet the country's vast pool of cheap labor makes it easy for employers to refuse to pay maternity leave or simply to fire women workers when they become pregnant. In many factories, the working conditions and environment are harmful to women's health, particularly in the footwear and garment factories. The chemical fumes, unbearable heat, and long hours of standing not only affect women's general physical health but are also detrimental to their reproductive health. (*Source: by Zhang Ye, The China Business Review, 26.04.02; retrieved from [www.chinalaborwatch.org/](http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/) 10.04.06*)

[The official '*Xinhua News Agency*' of the government of China admitted that:

They are farmers-turned-workers, or migrant workers, a group now estimated to number **210 million**. They come from the country's poor rural areas and make a living working on assembly lines or construction sites. Now they are dubbed the newly-emerging working class. But unlike older workers, who have trade unions to ensure their voices are heard, **most migrant workers have no such organization**. Many of them are illiterate, and have a poor awareness of how to protect or advance their rights through an organization. And many of the enterprises they work for, mostly private firms, **do not**

**have trade unions....** (*Xinhua News Agency, 04.04.05; retrieved from www.china-labour.org.hk/ on 10.04.06*)

In the infamous **Reebok** factories located in Guangdong, the conditions of the **women workers** are harrowing. — UPDATE]

## **[Women] workers' working conditions**

(...) The pressures of [the] work environment create situation where some of female workers get various kinds of mental disturbances, adopt alcohol problems and **even commit suicide.**

Factories manufacturing for **Reebok do not recruit male workers.** Managements in those factories think that it's **much easier for them to manage female workers than male workers.**

China's huge unemployment population today enabled factories to do so. As a result, in those factories, the **ratio between female and male workers reached about 10:1** and male workers can hardly find a job in those factories. **Female workers, therefore, have to do male workers' job such as lifting.** Many female workers reported to our activists that they **experienced sexual harassment** from supervisors, but they have **to keep silent for fear of losing their jobs.**

Things are not easy for those who did manage to get married. Because husbands can hardly find jobs in those factories, **they have to live separately from their wives.** And wives have to shoulder most of financial responsibilities, and they usually have to work excessive hours to make ends meet.

Male workers find it very difficult to find a job in those factories. Another consequence of this policy is that many of the female workers working in those factories **remain single for a long time.** In China, the normal marriage age for women is about 21, especially for women who receive little education. But in the factories we investigated, a great number of women workers **who are over 25 years old are still single.**

Our statistics indicates that in the six factories, there are more than 2,500 couples living separately. Those couples won't have family life for more than ten days in a whole

year. More than 1,500 couples have to leave their children in their hometown hundreds or thousands of miles away from the factories. Some mothers last saw their kids three years ago. When they visit home, their children usually cannot recognize them. (*Source: www.chinalaborwatch.org/, January '02; accessed 10.04.06*)

[The SEZ workers of China are confined within dormitories adjacent to factories to “control” their “non-working life”. – UPDATE]

## **The precarious [conditions] of women workers in Shenzhen SEZ**

(...) The notorious working conditions in the special economic zones and industrial towns in China can be attributed to the *dormitory labor regime*. With accommodation tied to employment, **the employer has control over the non-working life of the worker**. With extended working, the employer can inhibit the job search time for workers. And the *dormitory labour regime* relies on young workers who can be easily controlled.

Dormitories are predominantly owned by local authorities and rented to factory owners. Increasingly however, foreign-invested firms are building their own dorms to suit their own particular needs and typically, these facilities are within compounds flanking the factory. In these settings, the spatial integration between working and non-working life is tighter, and companies, rather than the state, play a more commanding role in controlling workers' lives. (...)

Nearly all the workforce in China Wonder were rural migrant workers from the provinces of Guangdong, Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Anhui and Sichuan. (...)

The dormitory building of three stories was just adjacent to the production building, which required only two minutes walk to the shop floor, thus easily facilitating a **'just-in-time' labour system**. Each dormitory room housed 12-16 workers and was very crowded, lacking ventilation, adequate lighting, and absolutely no private or individual space. Workers on each floor share common toilets and bathrooms at the end of the corridor. The management admitted the living conditions were very poor, but blamed the local government for not providing enough space for adequate dormitory facilities. The

dormitory building was built to accommodate 500 workers only, but in China Wonder, it always had more than 600 workers. (...) (*Source: by Pun Ngai, 2004; www.cwwn.org/download/; accessed 04.04.07*)

[SEZs of China are notorious with respect to the industrial health and hazards within the factory premises. On many occasions the workers have **died due to overwork**. Industrial accidents are also common. -- UPDATE]

## **Inside China's sweatshops: Guangdong**

(...) We had come to follow up a story about a young woman called Li Chun Mei. Apparently the 19-year-old had **collapsed and died** last November at the end of a 16-hour shift. Like many of the staff, she often had to work past midnight, especially in the run-up to Christmas.

The girls who shared her dormitory found her lying on the bathroom floor with blood pouring from her nose and mouth.

The bosses, who were Korean, did not deny that Li had died on their premises. They blamed the death not on overwork but on earlier injuries Li suffered when she was hit by a motorcycle. In any case, at the end of last year she was working for a subcontractor.

That, they told us, absolved them of any responsibility. They produced a document — the contract of Li's employer — signed with inky red thumbprints. (...)

Zhou Shien Pin came from a remote corner of the Sichuan province. He got a job in a paint factory and was hoping to save enough to build his family a house. But then he **touched a high-voltage wire**.

The accident has **scarred his face and chest and his toes have melted away like wax, leaving just his ankles and heels**. "My mother cried for two months after it happened", he told me. The boss paid £2,500 (\$4,000) compensation, but that money was quickly used up in medical fees and by relatives who had to travel down south to look after him. He's fighting for more compensation but has little chance. Workers are dispensable in a place where **there are four or five applicants for every job**. (...) (*Source: by Lucy Ash, BBC, 20.07.02*)

## Death from Overwork in China

A new phenomenon – death from overwork (guolaosi) – has become increasingly common in China since the turn of the century and has attracted widespread publicity and comment in the Chinese media in recent months. (...) The following are some typical case reports of this disturbing new trend:

On 7 July 2006, the country's major news websites all carried the story of Liu Yunfang, a textile worker at the Changlong Textile Plant in Fujian, who had **suddenly died** on the job from heatstroke brought on by sheer overwork.

On 28 May, Hu Xinyu, an engineer at the Huawei Company in Shenzhen died from exhaustion after working excessive overtime hours for nearly one month.

Last year, on 28 October, He Chunmei, a 30-year-old woman employed at the Huaxin Arts and Handicrafts Company Ltd. in Guangzhou, collapsed on the road outside the factory just after finishing her third overtime shift in 72 hours. She reportedly had slept a total of only six hours during that period. She never regained consciousness.

Late at night on 30 May 2005, Gan Hongying, 35, died in her rented room in the Haizhu District of Guangzhou right after **completing a four-day stretch of working 14 hours per day**. The doctor's certificate read simply: "sudden death" (cu si).

In June 2004, Yao Fangmei, a 23-year-old woman, and Zhou Zhiyong, a 19-year-old man, both employed at the Taiwan-invested Nangang Shoe Factory, a subsidiary of the Nanhai Zhaoxin Enterprise Holding Company, both **died from overwork** within a five-day period. The two shoe workers had regularly worked 14 or 15-hour days at the factory over a two-month period, before finally **collapsing on the production line**. Both workers died in hospital a few days later.

At 6.00 am on 21 October 2003, a worker named Jin Wenchao died on the way home from his factory **after working for 35 hours over a two-day period**. He had been employed as a packer in the Baolian Manufacturing Company in Jiangling Village, in the Longgang District of Shenzhen. (...)

Most disturbing of all: in **July 2006**, the journal Liaowang Eastern Weekly (Liaowang Dongfang Zhoukan) revealed that according to statistics published by the China Association for the Promotion of Physical Health, **at least one million people in China currently die from overwork each year**. This is a staggeringly high figure. (...) (Source: <http://www.china-labour.org.hk/public/contents/article?revision%5fid=39040&item%5fid=39035>; accessed 18.03.07)

[An official declaration admitted that:]

### **‘Crushed’: Pearl River Delta**

This summer, the Chinese State Administration of Work Safety revealed that **15,000 people die annually** in the PRC **due to industrial accidents**. (...) By all accounts, the rate and seriousness of occupational injuries has reached critical levels, poisoning the economic prosperity and threatening the stability China has achieved over the past two decades. In the Pearl River Delta alone, the fastest-growing industrial region in China and home to millions of migrant workers, **at least 30,000 work-related injuries occur every year**. (Source: [www.chinalaborwatch.org/](http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/), 26.09.05; accessed 10.04.06)

[When incepted, the China government declared that **one of the goals** of the gigantic policies of the **SEZs are job-creation**. In fact, certain amount of new sweatshop-like-jobs was created. But, it could not solve the **unemployment problem** in China which was **increasing by leaps and bounds** due to the “decollectivisation of agricultural production” in the countryside and massive restructuring of the old state-run units/industries in urban areas along the path of “free market’ leading to privatisation and closure of these units. Moreover, huge amount of new labour is being entered the job-markets each year. As a ‘solution’ of this burgeoning problem of unemployment, the government of China (just like the GoI) set up more SEZs and other ‘free zones’ even in the interior of the country. Interestingly, **“thousands of SEZs were established by local governments... though most of them had failed”** (Tatsuyuki Otai, Tokyo University, Tokyo, Japan, [www.iae.univ-poitiers.fr](http://www.iae.univ-poitiers.fr)). Are the ruling classes of India and their cronies listening? **Even the ‘successful’ SEZs of China could not wipe out this problem of unemployment**. An official source of the China government states:

China's booming economy will provide millions of new jobs in 2006, but growth will be insufficient to absorb all new entrants and laid-off workers, yielding **a gap of 14 million unemployed, one million more than in 2005**, according to official estimates presented at a recent conference in Beijing. (*China Economic Net, 14.02.06; retrieved from www.china-labour.org.hk/ on 18.03.07*)

Another source, slightly older, states that:

The minister (Labor and Social Security Minister Zheng Silin) said as many as **24 million urban Chinese enter the jobs market every year**, eight million of them unemployed, six million laid-off by state-owned or other enterprises and a 10 million first-time entrants, mostly students and ex-soldiers. Another problem is the **150 million surplus laborers in the countryside, 93 million of whom are in cities**, said Zheng. (*www.chinalaborwatch.org/, 10.03.04*)

This is the actual state of “job-creation” carried through the Chinese SEZs! Moreover, in the Chinese society **rate of inequality** is surging so rapidly that it already **overtakes even India!** One of above sources states that:

Employment creation effects generated by a rapid economic growth triggered by an enhanced large inflow of FDI in the SEZs were quite substantial, though **accompanied by inflation, i.e. a skyrocketing hike in land price, rents and price of commodities**. Per capita income in the SEZs also rose at a considerably higher rate than the national average. As a result, **a serious regional income disparity** was produced between the provinces with SEZs and national China. At the same time, an **increasing number of social and economic crimes such as corruption, illegitimate trading, smuggling, environmental contamination, labor strikes (!)**, etc. had also taken place leading to a controversy concerning the justifiable role of the SEZs. (*Tatsuyuki Otai, Tokyo University, Tokyo, Japan, www.iae.univ-poitiers.fr*)

*Monthly Review (July-August 2004)* states that the **income inequality in China “surpasses the degree of inequality in Thailand, India (!), and Indonesia”** and is increasing further. Though out of context of this issue of Update, it must be noted that in the SEZs & in the mainland China the workers have taken the path of struggle and revolts in the last few years. Moreover, in these struggles some signs **“LEFTISM”**

(rejecting the brand of CPIM-CPIs) are observed (see 'Conditions of the Working Classes in China', Monthly Review, June 2006) — UPDATE]

## Violent Land-grabs in China

More than 66 million Chinese farmers have lost their land in the past 10 years. It is a land grab which has fattened the wallets of government officials and left tens of thousands of people homeless.

*[<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4728025.stm>, 02.08.05]*

According to Dongzhou residents, as many as 20 people were killed when police opened fire on a crowd of thousands protesting inadequate land compensation. Villagers said many of the protesters were unarmed and that dozens of people are still missing. They also said they heard sporadic gunfire through the night, lasting for about 12 hours.

*[<http://mediachannel.org/blog/node/2409>, 19.12.05]*

[It is often reported in the media that land-grabbing is occurring in China in a violent manner. **Hundreds of hundreds protests and resistances** are common feature in present-day China which are being repressed with violent state-terror, bloodshed & killings. It is reported by a website:

**Last year (2005)**, the Chinese reported **87,000 “mass incidents,”** of unrest, or about **240 per day**. This is up from 58,000 incidents in 2003; 40,000 in 2000; 24,500 in 1998; and 8,700 1993. “This is not something [China’s government is] dealing with occasionally, but on a constant daily basis,” says Joshua Muldavin, professor of Asian studies at Sarah Lawrence College. (*[www.manufacturingnews.com/news/06/0515/art1.html](http://www.manufacturingnews.com/news/06/0515/art1.html)*, accessed 17.03.07)

[It is often reported in the media that land-grabbing is occurring in China in a violent manner. **Hundreds of hundreds protests and resistances** are common feature in present-day China which are being repressed with violent state-terror, bloodshed & killings. It is reported by a website:

**Last year (2005)**, the Chinese reported **87,000 “mass incidents,”** of unrest, or about **240 per day**. This is up from 58,000 incidents in 2003; 40,000 in 2000; 24,500 in 1998; and 8,700 1993. “This is not something [China’s government is] dealing with occasionally, but on a constant daily basis,” says Joshua Muldavin, professor of Asian studies at Sarah Lawrence College. (*[www.manufacturingnews.com/news/06/0515/art1.html](http://www.manufacturingnews.com/news/06/0515/art1.html)*, accessed 17.03.07)

In the “mass incidents” occurring in China there are workers strikes and protests also. Hence, it can be estimated conservatively that **more than ten thousand “mass incidents”** in China occurring in **2005 were involved with land grab**. Most of the cases of land-grab were perpetrated by the local governments, officials, party bureaucracies and village chiefs with the help of armies, police and even by hired thugs. Massive amount of **land was being acquired for the stated purpose of setting up industrial zones (including SEZs and ‘free zones’), cities, housing projects & offices, expressways, hotels, amusement centres, golf courses** etc. (Note the similarity of the Chinese ruling classes with that of India!)

The land-ownership of China is quite different in China (where **people’s democratic revolution was completed in 1949**) with respect to India. Above-mentioned authors of *Monthly Review (July-August 2004)* write:

In September 1980, the (China) government... ordered the decollectivisation of agricultural production. The decollectivisation process involved a series of steps in which the commune-based system was replaced by a family-based household production system...While in theory the land was still public property, in reality, it had become the private property of those families that had contracted for its use.... By the end of 1980s, those in possession of contracted land had full rights to rent it, sell it, or pass it to their heirs.

Thus a semi-private ownership on land was created, whereas in “theory” the land is still belonged to the state. Using this peculiar characteristics of land-ownership, the local governments of China are acquiring the land at their whims throwing some meagre compensations to the peasants. Millions of peasants were dispossessed of the right to till the land due to “decollectivisation” before. **Now millions are being evicted for the sake of ‘industrialisation’ & ‘development’ mantra of globalisation.**

Interestingly, the ruling elites of China have some supporters behind this path of ‘development’ (like the CPIM of West Bengal) who (Albert Keidel, a senior associate of the ‘notorious’ *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, a ‘renowned’ imperialist think-tank) preaches:

...that it's a "major error to think that the future of the vast majority of China's rural persons is in rural China in farming.... Their future has to be urbanizing (read: 'industrialisation'). It has to be taking non-farm jobs or they will be desperately poor for the rest of their lives." ([www.manufacturingnews.com/news/06/0515/art1.html](http://www.manufacturingnews.com/news/06/0515/art1.html))

In response to this argument Joshua Muldavin, professor of *Asian studies at Sarah Lawrence College* says:

There are "fundamental flaws" in the notion that China "will follow a similar linear path in development as Western Europe, the United States and Japan," Muldavin replies. "Eight-hundred million peasant Chinese cannot become urban workers." (*ibid*)

Under this context, the land-grab in China will have to be judged. It is mentioned in the earlier section that China had built number of SEZs and 'free zones' in the coastal areas and in the delta like Pearl River, etc. It is often argued in the Indian media that these zones were created without evicting a single person from the farmland. Following discussions will prove this wrong. — UPDATE]

## **Rural China: Too little, too late**

(...) The top Chinese leadership is clearly alarmed by an upsurge in peasant protests unprecedented in China's post-1949 history. (...) Remote towns such as Huaxi, Taishi and Shanwei broke into the news and became symbols of China's "new rebellious countryside". (...)

Indeed, many taxes levied in rural areas are technically illegal, but then many local governments are bankrupt. This is a legacy of the decentralization of local-government finances in the 1980s under Deng Xiaoping's pro-capitalist reforms. This helps explain the rapacious seizure of farmland by local officials in collusion with property speculators, the single biggest trigger of peasant protests. Land sales are now the primary source of income for **many local governments** as well as a lucrative sideline for **mafia-type local party bosses**. **Every year 200,000 hectares of farmland is turned into roads, factories, shopping malls and residential areas.**

More than **50 million farmers** have been displaced by such land grabs with little or no compensation, according to a study by the United Nations Development Program.

These landless peasants have been pushed on to the bottom rung of China's poverty ladder. **Many are among the nearly 200 million rural migrants who have fled to coastal cities to join the "sweatshop proletariat" working under inhuman conditions mostly for the benefit of foreign capitalists.**

When land is seized, peasants are compensated for its agricultural value, which according to some Chinese scholar's averages about **one-tenth of its market value**. Village administrations take a cut, so the amount received by the peasants is often far less. By contrast, in the cities the privatization of housing since the late 1990s has created a middle class that is using its property as collateral to borrow. **Trading property has become a big source of urban wealth. Of China's 50 richest people, about half owe their fortunes in large part to property deals**, according to Rupert Hoogewerf, the author of China's first rich list. (...) (*Source: by Swati Lodh Kundu, www.atimes.com/atimes/China\_Business/HG19Cb01.html, 19.07.06; accessed 17.03.07*)

[Thus, the massive land-grab under the collusion of the party-"mafia" & corrupt officials made the peasants 'migrant' labour whose conditions have been discussed earlier. Follow the next. – UPDATE]

## **The Great Chinese Land Grab is on**

(...) Over the past **seven years, China has lost 66,670 square kilometers in arable land**, according to the Ministry of Land Resources, an estimate that many experts consider grotesquely below the actual figure and not reflecting desertification, poor management and unbridled illegal land grabs. While China is a vast country, the amount of arable land for a population of 1.3 billion, more than 800 million of them farmers, is relatively small and intensely cultivated. The situation is getting worse; China is now planning to lease cropland from Vietnam to help feed the Chinese people. (...)

### **'Totally out of control'**

A former communist cadre, who gave his name as Chen and spoke on condition of anonymity, gave vent to his indignation: "Totally out of control! All of the land

appropriation of 13,000 mu [865 hectares] over the past decade was illegal. The land was once fertile farmland and robbed from the local peasants.” (...)

The **situation in Dainan, also under Taizhou** administration, is similar, if not worse. A small town with a population of 92,000, it nonetheless has set up eight industrial zones and a new economic development zone. According to an informed source, also speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, the land for industrial use already tops 998 hectares, some of which has been expropriated from local farmers without due legal process. Authorization from the town’s party chief is required to bypass all the required legal procedures and that authorization was acquired. (...)

The rush to grab land, whether by expropriation or forced “purchase” at unfair below-market prices, has reached virtual hysteria proportions in **Zhangguo**. Some enterprises, quite upbeat because of the likely appreciation in land prices, have bought more land than they need for actual plant construction, at about 15,000-30,000 yuan per hectare. Those who had earlier purchased at only 4,500 yuan can make a killing now. *(Source: By Xia Yunfan, [www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FG17Ad03.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FG17Ad03.html), 17.07.04; accessed 17.03.07)*

[The protests and resistances developing against these forced land-acquisitions have been repressed with state-terror including the hooliganism of the hired thugs. Note the following excerpts. – UPDATE]

## **Massive Protest by Sichuan Farmers Squashed by Police**

Last Thursday, tens of thousands of people in **Hanyuan County, Sichuan Province** protested the government’s forced relocation: relocation made possible by tearing down their homes under orders issued by corrupt officials. **Thousands lined the Pubugou Power Station on Dadu River to stop operation there. In response, police injured several dozen people and beat one man to death.** In the areas surrounding Hanyuan County, police clashed with farmers and local students. After the police contained the situation, all lines of communication, including Internet, were cut off and traffic was tightly controlled.

According to reports from Hong Kong and Taiwan, the origin of the conflict was the Hanyuan's county government's forced relocation of a hundred thousand residents to build Pubugou Power Station, a hydroelectric power plant.

According to sources, local government officials and developers collaborated by reducing the compensation of property. They did so by downgrading its productive fertile farm land — claiming that it was arid, dry land near the mountains — and paying out type-five compensation that was in place 14 years ago. Those who refused to move in advance were arrested by police and public security guards.

Farmers had believed that they could still retain their fertile farmland. However, they were forced to give up the land and move to land on the hillside where only corn could be grown. Farmers were only compensated half the value of their home while corrupted officials at different levels of the government filled their pockets with the other half. (...)

The Apple Daily reported on October 31st that Li, a farmer living in Qingfu Town, Hanyuan County, said, “**50,000 to 60,000 villagers** in towns such as Qingfu Town, Dashu Town, Shunhe Town, who are affected by the project at Pubugou Power Station, **protested** outside the station Wednesday night. Villagers held banners such as “Overthrow corrupt officials!” Hoping to delay the operation of the dam, protesters braved the cold weather for two nights as temperatures dropped to 35 degrees. “At that time, a lot of armed police and public security guards arrived. A man started to argue with police after they assaulted a seventy-year-old woman. He was struck with a brick by the police which caused his **death**,” said Li.

On the following two days, October 28 and 29th, nearly 100,000 farmers and students marched to the county administration building and damaged the government facility, causing the government offices to shut down. Authorities urgently mobilized over 10,000 armed police to Hanyuan County. In the conflict that ensued, at least seven armed police were injured (...).

(...) Government officials warned that the instigators of the protest would be seriously punished for stopping the operation of the national dam project. It is believed that Pubugou Power Station, located in Hanyuan County, is the largest power station on the

Dadu River. The State Council officially authorized the dam's project on December 25, 2002. It is projected that when the dam is completed, the entire Hanyuan County and many nearby towns — a total of 44,000 mu (7,216 acres) — will be submerged. More than 90,000 people have already had to relocate. (Source: <http://en.epochtimes.com/news/4-11-10/24272.html>, 10.11.04; accessed 14.04.07)

[The mayhem continued with bloodshed and massacre.]

## **17 Farmers Shot Dead By Hanyuan Police**

More than 700 armed policemen fired into a large crowd of protesting farmers during a bloody confrontation in Hanyuan, a village in Sichuan Province **on November 6**. Seventeen farmers were killed and forty wounded, a rights activist in Beijing told *The Epoch Times*.

The farmers were protesting their forced relocation by the government to build a power station in Sichuan.

The activist, who was on a phone call with the farmers during the shooting, reported that police began rounding up the farmers around 6 p.m. and **started to shoot into the crowd** around 10 p.m. that night.

“Right from the beginning of the call up until about 10 p.m., we heard gun shots and their crying. Our hearts were broken,” said the activist. The scene was described as “bloody” and “gruesome.”

Earlier in the day, state media reported that Luo Gan, the security chief from the central government, had flown in, raising hopes among the farmers that the government would listen to their grievances. It turned out that Luo was likely **overseeing the crackdown on the farmers**. (...) (Source: <http://en.epochtimes.com/news/4-11-12/24322.html>, 12.11.04; accessed 14.04.07)

[A ‘Nandigram’ was happened in China in 2005.]

## **Chinese Peasants Attacked in Land Dispute**

Hundreds of men armed with shotguns, clubs and pipes on Saturday attacked a group of farmers who were resisting official demands to surrender land to a state-owned power plant, witnesses said. Six farmers were killed and as many as 100 others were seriously injured in one of China's deadliest incidents of rural unrest in years.

The farmers, who had pitched tents and dug foxholes and trenches on the disputed land to prevent the authorities from seizing it, said they suspected the assailants were hired by corrupt local officials. They said scores of villagers were beaten or stabbed and several were shot in the back while fleeing.

Reached by telephone, a spokesman for the provincial government said he could not confirm or discuss the incident. "So far, we've been ordered not to issue any information about it," he said.

Large contingents of police have been posted around **Shengyou**, about 100 miles southwest of Beijing, but bruised and bandaged residents smuggled a reporter into the village Monday and led him to a vast field littered with abandoned weapons, spent shell casings and bloody rags. They also provided footage of the melee made with a digital video camera.

Despite the attack, the farmers remained defiant and in control of the disputed land. They also occupied the local headquarters of the ruling Communist Party, where they placed the bodies of six of their slain compatriots. A crowd of emotional mourners filled the courtyard outside; hanging over the front gate was a white flag with a word scrawled in black ink: "Injustice." Residents said party officials abandoned the building and fled town, apparently because they feared they would be blamed for the killings.

(...) The incident in **Shengyou**, a wheat- and peanut-farming village in central **Hebei** province, was unusual because the men sent to suppress the peasants appeared to be **hired thugs rather than police**, and because the conflict resulted in so many casualties.

Residents said the men arrived in six white buses before dawn, most of them wearing hard hats and combat fatigues, and they struck without warning, **repeatedly shouting “Kill!” and “Attack!”** Police failed to respond to calls for help until nearly six hours later, residents said, long after the assailants had departed.

Access to firearms is strictly regulated in China, but villagers said the **men fired on them with hunting shotguns and flare guns.** They also wielded metal pipes fitted with sharp hooks on the end. Because of the preparation, residents suggested the men might have ties to organized crime groups working with local officials.

The attack was first reported Monday in the Beijing News, a state-run tabloid known for testing party censors. The paper said one of the assailants died in the clash, and reported that authorities have already dismissed the party chief and mayor of the nearby city of Dingzhou, which governs Shengyou.

Officials in Dingzhou declined to answer questions, and managers of the Hebei Guohua Dingzhou Power Plant did not return phone calls.

**Villagers said they began camping on the disputed land in the fall of 2003, after the plant announced that it would build a facility there for storing coal ash.** (...) The plant agreed to pay them about \$1,800 per acre, but residents said the offer did not meet national guidelines. They also accused local officials of stealing some of the money and demanded a full accounting.

Instead, Dingzhou police began harassing the village, detaining its leaders and once going so far as to surround the town in what residents said was an attempt to cut off food and water shipments. The farmers responded by digging in to block construction and keeping a 24-hour watch on the land, even through the winter. (...)

Two months ago, **a group of 20 young toughs** attempted to chase the farmers off the land, but the **villagers fought back**, captured one of the men and refused orders from party officials to hand him over to local police, residents said. Instead, they kept him in a pit.

During Saturday's attack, some of the assailants appeared to be searching for the man, witnesses said. Farmers later moved him to a shed in the party headquarters and allowed a reporter to speak to him.

The man, Zhu Xiaorui, 23, appeared frightened but healthy, although his ankles were shackled. He said he had been recruited by a man he met at the Beijing nightclub where he worked. He said he was taken to the village, given a metal pipe and told to "teach a lesson" to the farmers, and was promised \$12 for the job.

"The villagers have treated me kindly," Zhu said, tears in his eyes. He added that he did not want to be turned over to Dingzhou police because he was afraid they would kill him for confessing to the farmers.

(...) Niu Tongyin, 62, one of the leaders of the farmers' movement, bled to death from a stab wound. His body lay in the Party Members' Activity Room, under portraits of Mao, Stalin, Lenin, Marx and Engels. (Source: by Philip P. Pan, [www.washingtonpost.com/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/), 15.06.05; accessed 17.03.07)

## **China: army fires on peasant protesters**

Soldiers in southern China's **Guangdong** province have **killed four people after firing** on more than 1000 villagers protesting against the construction of a power plant.

The clash happened on Tuesday evening in **Dongzhou village in Shanwei** city when hundreds of officers from the People's Armed Police — a unit of the People's Liberation Army — were sent in to disperse the villagers, residents said on Wednesday. (...)

"Two died in a local hospital and two were taken to a hospital in Shanwei's urban centre, but they died, too," [a resident] said before his phone appeared to be cut off. (...)

Tensions have escalated for many months and came to a climax on Tuesday, according to villagers and protesters quoted by Radio Free Asia. "**They were firing shots. But they were afraid to move in. We had blocked the roads with water pipes, gasoline and detonators,**" a villager who called RFA late on Tuesday said.

Another villager Radio Free Asia quoted said “many” villagers had **suffered shotgun wounds**.

“I don’t know what kind of guns. I just know they were using real bullets on us. No policemen were wounded,” the villager added. (...)

The power plant will be a coal-fired operation that occupies a large amount of land and prohibits villagers from using a nearby lake for raising fishery products and collecting other aquatic products.

“They didn’t get the villagers’ permission to take the land. They didn’t compensate villagers enough. That was the main reason for the dispute,” the villager said. “Now we can’t even use the lake. We have very little land. We depend on raising fishery products to make a living.” *(Source: by Bill Weinberg, www.ww4report.com/node/1387, 12.10.05; accessed 17.03.07)*

## **Dozens Injured as Police and Farmers Clash in China**

About 2,000 disgruntled farmers have clashed with hundreds of policemen in China’s northern region of Inner Mongolia in a land dispute that injured dozens in fighting one government official described as “anarchy”. The July 21 clash in **Qianjin village, a part of Tongliao city** about 725 km (450 miles) northeast of Beijing, was one of a growing number of protests across China, most of which go unreported in the tightly controlled state media.

“We were caught by surprise. Police punched and kicked villagers even as they lay on the ground,” one farmer said requesting anonymity.

“We’re ready to risk everything. If one government official comes, we’ll take on one. If several come, we’ll fight it out with several,” the farmer told Reuters. Some policemen were armed with guns, but did not open fire, another farmer said.

The incident lasted about six hours, the second farmer said, adding that police were eventually outnumbered and fled after other villagers rushed to the rescue of those beaten up. Dozens of injured villagers were taken to nearby hospitals, the farmers said.

Farmers seized bulldozers and other construction equipment intended for use in building a highway across the farmers' land, which had been reclaimed by the government, the second said. (...)

Last week, farmers in the northern province of Hebei won a battle over land rights after months of protests culminated in a violent clash, one of the bloodiest in a wave of rural riots.

Some 300 toughs with rifles, clubs and sharpened pipes descended on Shengyou village in Hebei last month and clashed with the farmers, who were angry over a lack of compensation and staged a sit-in on land slated for a new lime plant.

**Six villagers were killed and scores injured in the clash that highlighted growing disputes over land rights in China**, where rapid development is encroaching on rural property and where the government places an overriding emphasis on the need for social stability. (...) *(Source: by Benjamin Kang Lim, <http://en.epochtimes.com/news/5-7-27/30659.html>, 27.07.05; accessed 14.04.07)*

## **More peasant unrest in China**

(...) The residents of the village, **Panlong, in Guangdong Province**, said that as many as 60 people were wounded and that at least one person, a 13-year-old girl, was **killed** by security forces. The police denied any responsibility, saying the girl died of a heart attack.

Villagers said that the police had chased and beaten protesters and bystanders alike, and that villagers had retaliated by smashing police cars and throwing rocks at security forces in hit-and-run attacks.

Residents said Monday that the village had been sealed off, with the police monitoring roads into the area to check identification and bar access to outsiders. News of the violence appears to have been blocked in China.

The residents of Panlong said their anger had been set off by a government **land acquisition program** that they had been led to believe in 2003 was part of a construction project **to build a superhighway** connecting the nearby city of Zhuhai

with Beijing. **Later, the villagers learned the land was in fact being resold to developers to set up special chemical and garment industrial zones in the area.**

The clash in Panlong was the second time in just over a month in which large numbers of Chinese security forces, including paramilitary troops, were deployed to put down a local demonstration. (...)

In Panlong on Saturday, the sixth day of protests, “the police arrived at 8 p.m., and then started beating people from 9 p.m., trying to disperse the crowd,” said a schoolteacher who spoke from the village by telephone, giving her name only as Yang. “When this happened, the crowd got very angry and lots of people picked up stones on the ground and threw them at the policemen. After being attacked, policemen were furious. They just beat up everyone, using their batons.”

Villagers said the demonstrations had begun as silent sit-ins but grew more boisterous by the day, as more people joined in. Eventually, they said, **as many as 10,000 police officers were deployed, roughly twice the number of protesters at the peak of the demonstrations**, according to some estimates.

**In December, in the protest in Dongzhou**, residents say **as many as 30 people were killed when security forces opened fire on crowds of villagers demonstrating against the construction of a coal-fired power plant in their midst**. The provincial authorities have acknowledged three deaths, but blamed the villagers for attacking the police. Meanwhile, Chinese authorities have restricted access to the village and have apparently ordered news organizations to sharply limit their coverage of the incident.

Unlike the events at Dongzhou, an out-of-the-way fishing village, the latest confrontation was in a rural enclave in the midst of some of China’s biggest and fastest-growing industrial cities.

The region that immediately surrounds Panlong is among the most heavily industrialized anywhere. It was the laboratory and launching pad for the economic reforms put in place by the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, which are credited with

reviving China and turning it into a global economic powerhouse in the space of a generation.

Panlong is a short drive from Shenzhen, Dongguan and Zhuhai — all large and booming cities virtually created from scratch during China's economic takeoff, which began in so-called **special economic zones** as part of the country's sweeping economic changes. (...)

“We have many special zones in this area, and each of them attracts investment,” said a man who lives in a village adjacent to Panlong who was interviewed by telephone and gave his name as Hou. “The economic deals set in the past were not favorable, and many zones here have had smaller protests before, but the people were not united.”

“Now,” he continued, “there are uprisings everywhere.” (Source: by Bill Weinberg, [www.ww4report.com/node/1502](http://www.ww4report.com/node/1502), 16.01.06; accessed 17.03.07)

## **From Riches to Rags**

A group of angry and desperate villagers in the tiny village of **Aoshi near Guangdong province's Yunfu city** lead a reporter to fields littered with broken granite and other construction debris. It was dumped deliberately to ruin the land and make it impossible for villagers to farm there again. The villagers complain the local authorities, in a deal with developers, seized the land, leaving farmers with nowhere to grow crops to sustain their families. They find themselves impoverished in the country's richest province, even as China's economy booms.

A 51-year-old man says he had to borrow money to live. “Before the government took our land, our life was very good,” he says. “My wife was growing vegetables, raising pigs and growing rice. We did not have to buy anything. Now, we have to buy everything. Now, we have to borrow money to get by. We do some odd jobs, if there are any.” (...)

Video footage secretly taken the day authorities seized the land shows bulldozers plowing through crops as helpless villagers looked on. Security agents shown in the video were heavily armed. It was clear the police anticipated violence.

This 60-year-old villager says agents far outnumbered villagers. She says no one could stand up to them.

“The police knocked on the doors of all the villagers. They brought handcuffs and guns with them to threaten us,” she says. “I was so scared that I did not dare to go outside to use the communal toilet. They said that if we left our houses, they would arrest us.”

Many villagers refused the compensation local officials offered, saying their land is not for sale and especially not for the low price of about \$3500 that the developer offered for each plot.

The farmers say the former village chief who made the deal with developers for the land has retaliated by sending thugs to threaten — and in some cases — beat those who protested the seizure. (...)

Not being able to meet family obligations has caused some to despair. The man speaks of a friend who was driven to suicide.

“He had no income and could not afford to pay the school fees of his two children,” he says. “He climbed up to touch some power lines and electrocuted himself.”

In the days following the land seizures, the 60-year-old woman petitioned local officials and threatened to take her case to Beijing. The officials threw her in jail for 12 days.

“When I was in jail, the officers asked me: ‘now, do you still want to go to Beijing? I said, ‘even if I do not go, others will.’ We have nothing but anger and hatred toward the local government,” she says.

As in other cases of unrest in China, local authorities in Aoshi resorted to two tactics to put down uprisings: overwhelming force and propaganda.

Villagers at Aoshi village complain their land was taken not for the public good, but for the good of a few, well-connected officials and business owners. One man points to a bright new auto dealership sitting on his old field. For him, it is a cruel reminder of the new prosperity of which he has no part.

“Wherever you go, people say life in Guangdong is great. But the fact is our area is a place that has been forgotten by others in Guangdong,” he says. “Our life is very hard. If you can’t find a job, all you can do is wait for death.” (...)

The province has seen some of the most violent uprisings reported in the country over the past year. In some, government agents opened fire and killed demonstrators. Villagers at Aoshi know this has happened at other places and say they remain committed to finding a peaceful solution. (...) (Source: by Luis Ramirez, [www.voanews.com/english/archive/2006-05/2006-05-08-voa13.cfm](http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2006-05/2006-05-08-voa13.cfm), 08.05.06; accessed 19.03.07)