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PCFS People's Coalition on
Food Sovereignty

PAN AP Pesticide Action Network
Asia and the Pacific

SPECIAL EDITION

DOING THE “RIGHT” THING: INDUSTRIAL POLICY OF LEFT GOVERNMENT OVERRIDES RIGHTS OF PEASANTS IN WEST BENGAL

By Ms. Ujjaini Halim

Neo-liberal industrial policy: A Paradigm Shift of the Left

In the spree for industrialisation and to woo foreign investments to the State, the Chief Minister of West Bengal (India), Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharya signed several agreements with multinational companies (MNCs) and various national corporate giants last year, soon after retaining his office for a consecutive second term, which in fact is 7th consecutive term of Left rule in the State.

The Chief Minister, citing China as a role model for development has announced that West Bengal would soon become a cheap labour magnet for international capital. He said “I am trying to work accepting the present reality... we are practical, we know it is wise to be capitalist at the moment when the whole world is wooing capitalism” (Prakash 2006)

The mad rush for industrialisation in line with the neo-liberal policy of the central government has instigated serious conflicts all over the State on issues related to access and ownership of lands. The mass protests against land grabbing by the State have been brutally repressed by the government and the battles over lands in West Bengal have claimed more than 10 lives so far.



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This publication of PAN AP and PCFS aims to provide in-depth stories from communities asserting their food sovereignty. It is a tool for marginalised communities to speak out on issues that affect their lives and livelihood. It hopes to raise awareness and seek solidarity actions from the readers. If you have comments or have taken solidarity actions as a result of this publication, please share them to us at panap@panap.net or to secretariat@foodsov.org.

Industrialisation vs. Livelihoods in West Bengal

The battle over access to land is not new in West Bengal. Today's ruling Left parties in West Bengal came into power in mid 70s by highlighting the issue of access to land and by mobilising the poor to claim and attain their land rights. The declared commitment of the Left parties towards land reform has enabled them to retain their political power in the State for last 30 years. However, the agenda of the ruling left in the State has undergone sea changes in the last 15 years as they have decided to emphasise mainly on industrialisation instead of land reform and other social reform measures.

That is why the question related to the virtual ownership of land in the State has once again rediscovered its relevance in the new context. The answer to this question provided by Leftists for last 20 years i.e. land belongs to the tillers, has become irrelevant to them in their pursuit of industrialisation today. The new industrial policy of the State government is based on the motto: land belongs to the big investors and this policy is leading to large scale land alienation of poor peasants and other rural actors in West Bengal.

Ignoring the rules of the open market, the state government is willingly playing the role of a mediator in land deals between farmers and business houses, to pump wealth from the poor to the big investors and is using its repressive powers for this purpose. To win investments the government is acquiring fertile agricultural lands in the name of public purposes, with the help of colonial Land Acquisition Act of 1894 to award the same to the corporate houses at a throw away price. All these are being done in the name of 'development' when nobody is really sure about the facet of development and there is no clarity on the question: development for whom?

In its new industrial policy the state government highly welcomes foreign technology and investment: "*While the State Government considers the Government and Public Sector as an important vehicle for ensuring social justice and balance growth, it recognise the importance and key role of the Private Sector in providing accelerated growth*" (Industrial policy, Government of West Bengal year 2000). Moreover, this industrial policy has clearly emphasized on privatization of sick/closed public sector industries. As per the new policy the State government has taken initiative to develop Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and Export Processing Zones (EPZ) in West Bengal.

The Central Commerce Ministry's web site described the SEZs as "*designated duty free enclaves to be treated as foreign territory for trade operations and duties and tariffs*". These are zones reserved especially for all types of export processing units and industries, where industries would enjoy special benefits and tax relaxation. The State will provide land, develop infrastructure and render other support services at a subsidised rate to these industries in SEZ. Till date the government of West Bengal has announced to develop 24 SEZ in the State and so far six (6) SEZs have been approved for West Bengal which would be developed in four (4) districts. This would lead to alienation of around 25,000 hectares of land of the rural poor. The nature of the industries to be developed in these SEZs are not clear from the government documents as majority of these industries are mentioned as '*multi product industry*' and a few are IT (information technology), car manufacturing industry and refineries .

The land acquisition processes for SEZs have been causing widespread discontent among the farmers and common people in the State. The discontent is further fuelled by the fact that there is no comprehensive information available on probable socio-economic and cultural impacts of such large-scale land alienation on rural communities. The State is not concerned about the immi-

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ment loss of livelihoods of poor and there is no participatory planning done on how to adequately compensate the victims and/or rehabilitate them economically, socially and culturally. The State government has chosen to ignore objections of peasants, as if these were nonexistent.

Development: A Peoples Perspective

The socio-economic data of West Bengal clearly indicates its dependency on agrarian economy with 58.4 % workers in rural areas is engaged in agriculture (census 2001) and the sector is contributing 32 % to State GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Despite much propaganda of the State government that West Bengal is self reliant in food production, National Sample Survey data shows that 15% of the State's population can avail only less than 70% of required daily calorie intake (2700 Cal per day) and 64% of them gets less than the required amount (NSS Report No.471). Around 27 % people live below poverty line and 78% children are recorded as anaemic (malnourished) in West Bengal as per West Bengal Human Development Report 2004 (WBHDR).

Unemployment is rocketing in the State with an estimated unemployment of 24.9 % in rural and 17.% in urban areas (WBHDR 2004). The fate of small & cottage industries and public sector enterprises are grim with closure of approximately 66,000 sick industries in last 25 years in the State and thousands of small and cottage industries are in the verge of collapse (WBHDR 2004).

Therefore, it is totally unjustified to impose such a policy of industrialisation which does not take into account the inherent crisis of the agrarian sector in the State. An evaluation of much propagated achievements in land reform measures in the State, reveals that out of the 10 lakh acres of land acquired for distribution, only 2.5 lakh acres of land has actually been distributed during the entire 25-year period and out of 30 lakh bargadars, only 15 lakh got registered in the early days of Operation Barga (Liberation 2002 June). Still 41% households in rural Bengal remain landless (WBHDR 2004). Around 13.23% Pattadars have lost possession of lands and around 14.37% Bargadars have been evicted (WBHDR 2004). And above all the gender aspect is highly neglected in the whole land reform policy and its implementation process. Only lately the State government has initiated a joint Patta/land title system to include peasant women in the process. However, so far only 9.7% women have received joint land titles (WBHDR 2004). The WBHDR 2004 has further blamed the State for its failure to provide support services to poor peasants and suggested that *"Declines in institutional credits and agricultural extension services have adversely affected small peasants in rural West Bengal"* (WBHDR 2004)

As per the constitution of India and as per the international human rights obligations of the nation State, the government of West Bengal should give highest priority to genuine agrarian reform programmes, as this is the only way to ensure food security and all round development. At the same time emphasis should be given on developing such industries which would contribute to the nation building and creation of employment at large. This is only possible when the government has genuine political will and it creates conducive climate for the rural actors, enabling them to take effective part in grassroots decision making process.

Resistance for Survival: Singur to Nandigram & Beyond

But what is happening today in West Bengal in the name of development and industrialisation is just the reverse. This reverse process is manifested in different steps taken by the State government i.e. imposing a neo-liberal industrial policy without consulting local self

governments, forcibly acquiring fertile agricultural lands for construction of industries and for real estate business, amending land ceiling act to allow MNCs to own large quantity of lands for corporate production in agriculture, pushing down the land reform agenda, ignoring the larger impacts of land alienation on food security and so on.

These acts altogether have violated economic, social cultural rights of the rural poor time and again, often leading to violation of civil and political rights as well, which could be well observed in the incidents of Singur and Nandigram. The victims of neo-liberal industrial policy of the State are those poor actors, who despite being majority in terms of absolute numbers, fail to assert their control on productive resources or become unable to take effective part in decision makings related to development, due to age-old social and economic exclusion. They include Dalits, religious and ethnic minorities, economically backward communities and women.

Battle of Singur: Peasants fight for Food Sovereignty

The battle of Singur (<http://www.foodsov.org/html/takeaction05.htm>) over ownership of fertile agricultural lands has initiated a new era in people's movement in India. The peasants in Singur have created precedence by raising their voices against the move of the State to snatch away their lands, which is synonymous to destruction of their livelihoods.

Singur which belongs to Hooghly district is famous for its age-old flourishing agricultural economy and for its well developed infrastructure related to agriculture. The Government of West Bengal however, has chosen Singur for developing an automobile manufacturing unit of Tata's, the biggest Indian multi-national company. About 27% of the five mouzas (out of 16) of the Block has been finally selected 'acquired' and fenced off with a massive police action for the purpose. The lands acquired by the State are multi-cropping agricultural lands with a cropping density of 220% and with well established system of irrigation. The process of selection of the site is quite controversial and marked with blatant violations of human rights. The land grabbing in Singur has taken place despite unwillingness of the majority of land-owners to give up lands and this land alienation has affected livelihoods of around 30,000 poor peasants, share croppers (recorded & unrecorded) agricultural labourers, and other rural actors, who depend on these lands directly and indirectly for earning their living.

It is particularly offensive that the State government has given Singur to Tata's when several other appropriate sites are available for the project which would have minimised destruction of livelihoods. In a press statement, Tata makes it clear that only 800-2000 employments may be generated in Singur most of which would require technical expertise. Therefore, it becomes clear that around 30,000 people, who would be ousted from their livelihoods would not be accommodated in this new industry ever.

Teen aged activist Tapashi Mallik is brutally assassinated in Singur

In the early morning of December 18, a teen aged activist girl, Tapasi Malik, was found burning inside the fenced-in area in Singur. There are reports that she had been dragged from her home, raped, strangled to death and finally set ablaze by unidentified men. Tapasi, a peasant daughter, had been active to defend the peasants of Singur against the threat of forced eviction. Being forced by the opposition parties Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee ordered a CID & later on a CBI inquiry. Police are yet to arrest anyone in this connection. (*courtesy The Statesman*)

Tapasi's father, Mr Manoranjan Malik who is an agricultural labourer, said that Tapasi was an active participant in the movement against land acquisition in Bajemalia, Singur. He said "She attended all the rallies that took place under the banner of the Singur Krishi Jomi Raksha Committee. Local CPI-M cadres had asked us to stay off the movement". Mr Shankar Jana, convenor of the Singur Krishi Jomi Raksha Committee, said: "Tapasi was beaten up twice by the police: first at Singur block office on 25 September night when farmers lay siege and on 2 December afternoon when police resorted to a lathicharge."

Tapashi's killing has intensified the peasants movement in Singur further.

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The agreement between Tata and the State government has not been disclosed to the civil society, despite several attempts by organisations and individuals to seek information under Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005 . On the contrary the government is fabricating wrong information and furnishing the same in its website in a desperate effort to build public opinion in favour of the project.

The silence of the State government regarding agreement with Tatas and incentives offered to Tatas ridicule all principles of transparency and the Left Fronts commitment to *'do everything by informing people beforehand and with their concurrence.'*

People of Singur could not take it as lying down. Krishi Jami Raksha Committee has been formed to resist land acquisition. The government, in response, unleashed a series of policing, terrorizing, raiding, ransacking and assault on the villagers for over a period of seven months. Houses have been burnt down, children and women ruthlessly beaten up, arrested and murdered and the place was turned into an inferno.

Legal Battles will continue in Singur along with grassroots resistance

DudhKumar, an elected member of the local self government and peasant leader of Singur has informed us that the people in Singur have not given up their struggle and they are ready to fight a long battle. The movement in Nandigram has inspired them further. Tatas would not be allowed to carry-out their activities in forcibly acquired agricultural lands.

Peasant women in Singur have vowed to fight back the invasion of Tatas and would be in the forefront of the anti-eviction movements.

The leaders of the movements are considering going for further legal battles as well to challenge the validity of the land acquisition process and to expose the anti-people nexus between Tatas and the State government.

An International Fact Finding Mission was organised in Singur at the initiative of Institute for Motivating Self-Employment and in collaboration with People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS) and Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific between September 4 and 6 2006. The delegates, comprising representatives of peasants' organisation from Nepal, prominent CSOs from Bangladesh, PCFS from Malaysia and prominent civil society actors from other parts of India, visited Singur and listened to the villagers, State representatives and other stakeholders. The team concluded that eviction of peasants would be gross violation of ECOSOC (Economic and Socio Cultural Rights) and State should refrain from destruction of livelihoods of 30,000 people in Singur. Their recommendations included immediate restoration of agricultural activities in Singur and shifting the car manufacturing unit to

non- agricultural lands. More than 2000 individuals and organisations from all over the world expressed their solidarity to the peasants in Singur by signing an online petition www.foodsov.org; they have further urged Chief Minister of West Bengal to refrain from destroying livelihoods of 30,000 peasants in Singur.

The spontaneous opposition to the land grabbing move of the State in Singur and its rapid spread show that the government is mistaken in assuming people's acquiescence for granted. The peasants in other parts of the State have been inspired by the Singur resistance and protest movements are gaining strength all over West Bengal.

Nandigram: The Fierce Resistance against SEZ

The burning example of growing peasant unrest on the question of land acquisition is also exemplified in Nandigram. At least eight farmers from Nandigram area in East Midnapore district died on January 06, 2007, due to attacks unleashed by the police-goon combine to crush the people's movements against a proposed SEZ in Nandigram. Police remained silent

spectators and the villagers alleged that in some cases police connived with the attackers of the ruling party. The agitation of the villagers was led by an organisation called Gana Unnayan O Jana Adhikar Raksha Samity (Committee for Mass Development and Protection of People's Rights). As of this writing, the State government has failed to arrest the culprits in Nandigram.

The crux of the controversy relates to the acquisition of nearly 20,000 acres of land in one compact block in this district for the 4.2 billion dollars mega SEZ project of Salim group of companies of Indonesia to implement various 'developmental' projects, including the setting up of a mega chemical industrial estate at Nandigram. This project will result into eviction of more than 100,000 people from their homes and hearths in Nandigram.

An estimate shows that 27 mouzas of Nandigram Block 1 and 2 mouzas from Khejuri 2 block would be affected as approximately 20,000 acres of lands would be acquired for this SEZ. The land acquisition will include 142 temples, 45 mosques and 4 high schools. The State further plans to acquire another 5,000 acres in Mahisadal block for two more SEZs. Villagers, who would be evicted, belong to small and marginal farmers, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers.

Approximately 80% of the population of Nandigram belongs to Scheduled caste and religious minorities, who lack access to adequate productive resources, education, health and other social facilities. Majority of the people in Nandigram would be unable to find alternative livelihood opportunities, if evicted from their villages, as they are only skilled farmers and have never practiced any other occupation.

A Single Spark Starts a Prairie Fire

Singur and Nandigram are burning examples of the outcomes of mindless industrial policies of the state which completely ignores concerns of peasants and human rights principles. This is however; just the beginning of people's resistances and incidents like Singur and Nandigram would repeat themselves in new pockets, if the state government continues to acquire agricultural lands without consent of the people. Movements have already been spread out in Bhangar, Barjara, Haripur, Baruipur, Barasat Purulia, Kulpi and so on. Villagers have formed resistance committees to counter the disastrous land acquisition efforts of the State.

Deconstructions of Myths

The whole episode of land grabbing by the State in the name of development gives rise to some well-grounded questions related to the industrial policy of the State and its implementations. The State government has claimed that present industrialisation move would reduce the burden of unemployment. However, experiences related to SEZ in India and abroad show and the natures of proposed industries in SEZ in West Bengal confirm that SEZs do not have large-scale employment creation potentiality, particularly to absorb unskilled rural labour.

It's a battle of life and death in Nandigram

Sekh Sufian of Nandigram is a peasant and member of Krishi Jami Ucched Pratirodh Committee. He is directly associated with the anti eviction movement in Nandigram. According to him, *"We are struggling for our land and we will continue fighting until and unless CM abandons the SEZ project of Salim"*

He further explains that: *"The battle in Nandigram is not for any narrow political gain. It is a matter of life and death for the peasants. Villagers cutting across all political affiliations and religious barriers have joined hands to fight back state led land grabbing process and state sponsored terrorism in Nandigram. The peasant movement will continue peacefully"*

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The second claim of the State government is that industrialization is not possible in this State without using agricultural land. However, as per the latest edition (2004) of the Statistical Hand book of the Government of West Bengal total land area of the State excluding Kolkata Metropolitan District: 8687521 Hectares. Area not available for Cultivation 1636038 Hectares, Net Sown Area 5427672 Hectares, Current fallows 333372 Hectares, Other Uncultivable land excluding Current fallows 119146 Hectares & Forest Area 1171293 Hectares. Moreover according to an estimate lands belong to 500 closed industries alone are more than 40,000 acres (SUCI 2006) . This makes it clear that expansion of industries could easily be done in the State without compromising the interests of peasants or in other words without acquiring fertile and productive agricultural lands.

The third argument of the so called Left rulers in the State is that West Bengal has already achieved food security and conversion of agricultural lands would not contribute to hunger and starvations in any way. As per the latest figures available from the Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics of the West Bengal Government, the availability of food grains (considering both the domestic production and imports) is 177 kg per head per year for the period year 2001-05. This means the State faces a shortage of approx 16 million tonnes of food grains .

Salim's debt: a burden to millions of Indonesians

The Salim Group is one of the biggest conglomerates in Indonesia; and while the group is now run by Anthony Salim - the heir apparent, Mr. Soedono Salim - the founder of the group - remains one of the richest men in the world, according to Fortune and Forbes.

During the 1998 Asian financial crisis, the group's bank, Bank Central Asia (BCA) - the country's largest private bank - experienced a dire liquidity crunch, when it came under severe bank run; while a substantial portion of its loans became non-performing almost overnight. This prompted Bank Indonesia to intervene by lending almost Rp52 trillion (approximately US\$6.1 billion in today's exchange rate) in liquidity assistance. In exchange, the group surrendered a significant portion of its assets, including its majority ownership in BCA, to the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency (IBRA) - the government agency subsequently formed to bail-out the country's collapsed banking system. This bail-out emerged as part of Indonesia's recovery programme with the International Monetary Fund. The group's direct stake in the bank has now declined to a mere 1.77 percent.

Having signed the Master Settlement and Acquisition Agreement (MSAA), the owners of the recapitalised banks should have given their stake to the government via IBRA. The owners would also have to hand over their entire commercial assets as guarantee for the loan. Indeed, the Salim group handed over hundreds of assets, which were consolidated under the control of a holding company called PT Holdiko Perkasa. Holdiko was established as the result of a settlement between the Salim Group and IBRA. Holdiko owns and supervises all of the assets of 107 companies formerly under the control of the Salim Group. The shareholders of Holdiko are two companies (PT Gemahripah Pertiwi and PT Cakrasubur Nirmala), both owned by Salim.

In year 2000, from the sale of 12 of Salim's most valuable assets, the Indonesian government had intended to generate at least Rp52.0 trillion (US\$577 million). However, Salim appeared to be struggling to achieve such target. The former Minister of Economics Finance and Industry Kwik Kian Gie, claimed that the value of Salim's asset had declined dramatically since being placed under IBRA's supervision. Kwik estimated that the total value of the assets controlled by Holdiko amounted to only Rp20 trillion. This means that the government will have to cover a discrepancy of Rp32 trillion from the state budget.

The total fund that the Indonesian government lent for the liquidity assistance reached almost Rp144 trillion or US\$16 billion (in today's exchange rate). But according to the official report of the national auditor agency, about Rp138 trillion or 95.7 percent of the total loan is potentially lost, (potentially due to the marked-up values of assets at the time of their surrender to the government). Clearly, none of the debtors had any intention to fully cover the shortfall and the Salim group is no exception. Despite such loss, the Indonesian government has still to

This crisis would worsen by a further 10% if in the next 5 years another 100,000 acres of farm-lands are converted for non farm use. This will particularly hamper food security of the people of lower income groups and the incidents of starvation deaths like in Amlasole, North Bengal, Jalangi and elsewhere would be further increased. It should be kept in mind that sufficient production of food grains alone does not ensure household food security (as experienced in India earlier) and further alienation of food producing resources like lands would weaken rural households ability to access food.

The State government claims that all the decisions regarding industrialisation have taken in a participatory way. In reality the Gram Panchayats' or local self governments have not been consulted. It is obvious that Panchayats would oppose SEZ, as these industrial enclaves will encroach upon the rights of the local self governments and would violate the 73rd Constitutional Amendment .

Finally according to the State government the present move for industrialisation is the prerequisite for development. However, no clear definition of development is given, which would be appropriate and beneficial for all. From the steps taken by the government it seems that steady growth in State's GDP, urbanisation and consumerism have become synonymous to development.

fulfill its obligation to pay the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank - two Bretton Woods' institutions from which the Indonesian government borrowed to fund the liquidity assistance.

Mr. Salim remains one of the most influential capitalists in Indonesia; and his relationship with Indonesian politicians continues until now. During the 2004 presidential election, Mr. Salim was one of the big donors to finance the campaign of Megawati Soekarnoputri. He also allegedly financed President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono campaigns. Because of political connections, Mr. Salim may have gotten away with his crimes, as he was able to reconsolidate his previous assets in Indonesia.

After retaking the top position in the Indofood Sukses Makmur, Salim's family, as the owner of the Salim Group, is thought to have secretly retaken BCA through their firm from Mauritius, Farindo Investment, which currently has 51% stake of the bank. Furthermore, through Para Group (headed by Mr. Chaerul Tanjung and owner of Trans TV), Salim Group was reported to have spread their wings by investing a chunk in Bank Mega as well as TV7 from the Kompas Gramedia Group owned by Jacob Utama.

Gunawan Yusuf, the boss of Garuda Panca Arta Ltd, recently accused Salim Group to have covered-up the Sugar Group Assets, one of the former Salim's assets that had been handed over to the IBRA. Yusuf, the buyer of Sugar Group claimed that Salim had made an obstruction of the Master Settlement and Acquisition Agreement (MSAA). Because of this, the Indonesian police put Anthony Salim as the criminal suspect.

While consolidating its assets, Salim is yet to cover the shortfall of US\$6 billion liquidity assistance to the Indonesian government, which the latter borrowed from the IMF. Meanwhile, the Indonesian people are forced to pay debts on behalf of Salim through the Structural Adjustment Programme of the IMF.

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1. See J. Sudrajad Djiwandono. "Permasalahan BLBI" access from http://www.pacific.net.id/pakar/sj/permasalahan_blbi2.html

2. See Budi Putranto. From IbonWeb.com, <http://articles.ibonweb.com/magarticle.asp?num=312>

3. Ibid.

4. See the Press Release of Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan on the result of the Investigative Audit on the Distribution and Allocation of the Liquidity Assistance of the Bank of Indonesia. Date Agustus 4, 2000. The release was accessed from <http://www.hamline.edu/apakabar/basisdata/2000/08/11/0010.html>

5. See "Farindo Siapa Punya" in Tempo Magazine NO. No. 37/XXXI/11 - 17 Nopember 2002. Accessed from <http://www.tempo.co.id/majalah/html/2002/21/Ekonomi%20dan%20Bisnis/Eko-2.html>

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The emerging people's movements in West Bengal are yet to strongly question the model of development as foreseen by the state government. Social movements all over the world are increasingly demanding for a viable alternative path of development. Voices have been raised by social movements for such an alternative development paradigm which would allow people to define their priorities and needs in pursuit of development. Such an alternative paradigm would be based on principles of right to food and feed oneself, gender equity, sustainability and cultural diversity and will lead the world to food sovereignty both at household level and at the level of nation state. Thus 'one size fits for all' prescription would not be imposed on poor for achieving 'development' which is the case in present day West Bengal. The alternative development discourse would set the people free from the neo-colonisation process and would also ensure people centric development.

Lefts Dilemma: Parties are in Credibility Crisis

It is necessary to say a few words about the contradictions in Left parties in India around the question of neo-liberal policies. These contradictions have become open and have been reflected in their two faced opportunist approaches to deal with globalisation process. On the one hand the Left parties are critical of the neo-liberal policies of the central government and are opposing privatisation at national level and on the other hand the left ruled state like West Bengal is pursuing an investor's friendly policy even at the cost of livelihoods of millions of poor. The CPI (M)'s opposition is particularly empty given its role in providing the Congress-led government with crucial parliamentary support in the centre and given its determining support in passing the SEZ legislation in May 2005. At the all-India level, the Left Front is also playing a vital role in assisting the Central government in imposing its neo-liberal program of tax exemptions, privatisation, deregulation, denial of worker rights and reduction of subsidies for agriculture etc. while keeping the opposition to the neo-liberal policies within the confines of mere parliamentary protests .

The battles of Singur and Nandigram have however, exposed the policy of opportunism of Left parties across the nation. The peoples resistance against imposition of neo-liberal policies are gaining strength and cutting across barriers of nations, social movements from all over the world have expressed their solidarity to the movements of peasants in West Bengal. The radical leftists and intellectuals have also come forward to support the peoples movements in West Bengal. Therefore, time has come for the state government to understand the larger socio-political implications of land grabbing moves and to realise that the growing peasant unrest would endanger the very existence of the so called left parties in the state in near future.

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Endnotes

1. Ajay Prakash August 25, 2006: World Socialist Website, West Bengal Stalinists sign deal with firm tied to ex-Indonesian dictator
2. India has planned to develop 127 SEZ. In the first phase 67 SEZ would be developed covering a area of 134,000 hectares
3. As per information available from the proposal submitted to the central government dated October 6, 2006
4. Report to the Power Finance Commission, Januray 2003
5. One lakh is equivalent to 100,000
6. One hectare is equivalent to 2.47 acres
7. Pattadras are those who have received Land title through land reform measures
8. Recorded share croppers
9. Amitadyuti Kumar, 28 December 2006, World Socialist Website : Singur: A Report
10. Right To Information Act 2005 allows all citizens to access any information related to government or government sponsored activities.
11. Amitadyuti Kumar, 28 December 2006, World Socialist Website: Singur: A Report
12. IMSE is a social governmental organization committed to the cause of poverty alleviation and promoting human rights and social justice
13. The People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty is a growing network of various grassroots groups of small food producers particularly of peasant-farmer organizations and their support NGOs, working towards a People's Convention on Food Sovereignty.
14. PAN AP has situated itself in the grassroots movements of Asia and as such has gained strength from these linkages
15. Construction of a four-lane road bridge over the Haldi River, from Haldia to Nandigram, has also been planned. The agreement envisions the setting up of several urban development projects as well
16. Shri Prabhas Ghosh, General secretary West Bengal State Committee, October 02, 2006: Pamphlet of Socialist Unity Centre of India
17. Assuming the state population to be around 100,000,000 and according to the Planning Commission an adult requires an intake of 193 kg of food grains for subsistence
18. 73 rd Constitutional amendment recognises three tier Panchayati Raj Institutions as governments responsible for grassroots development
19. Ajay Prakash 25 August 2006 World Socialist Website: West Bengal Stalinists sign deal with firm tied to ex-Indonesian dictator

People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS) is a growing network of various grassroots groups of small food producers particularly of peasant-farmer organizations and their support NGOs, working towards a People's Convention on Food Sovereignty.

Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PAN AP) is one of five regional centres of PAN, a global network working to eliminate the human and environmental harm caused by pesticides, and to promote biodiversity-based ecological agriculture.

“Our vision is a society that is truly democratic, equal, just, culturally diverse, and based on food sovereignty, gender justice and environmental sustainability”. Thus PAN AP asserts people's food sovereignty based on the right to food for all, founded on the right to land and productive resources and the right of communities to decide on our own food and agriculture policies. We are committed to protect the safety and health of people and the environment from pesticide use, and genetic engineering in food and agriculture. We strive to protect and promote the rights, equality and dignity of women. We will promote and protect biodiversity based ecological agriculture. Our goal is to strengthen people's movements to eliminate hunger and achieve food sovereignty. We endeavour to achieve these goals by empowering people within effective networks at the Asia and the Pacific, and global levels.

Based in Penang, Malaysia, Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific is linked to more than 150 groups in 18 countries in the Asia Pacific region.



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