

## West Bengal government urges opposition to discuss Singur issue

A day after Tata Motors' expressed its unhappiness over the continuing trouble at its Singur small car factory site, the West Bengal government Thursday offered to discuss the issue with the opposition again.

'We are willing to sit with the opposition for discussion without any pre-condition, except for the fact that land cannot be given back to the farmers as the law of the land does not support it,' state Industries Minister Nirupam Sen told reporters here.

Sen's comments came a day after Tata Motors' managing director Ravi Kant said: 'We are continuing (in Singur) as long as our patience lasts.'

Tata Motors' plans to come out with its dream small car Nano by October. It is expected to be the world's cheapest car at less than \$2,500 (Rs.100,000).

Sen said that majority of people in the state were in favour of the project, and expressed the hope that the factory would be completed in time.

Asked about the government providing such heavy security for a single industrial project, Sen said: 'It's unfortunate that we have to give so much security for construction work. In India, every day a large number of construction activities take place for which no security is needed.'

He said the state government did not want any wrong message to go to other states regarding the ongoing turmoil, which might adversely affect West Bengal in the long run.

Tension is brewing in Singur with a section of farmers led by the opposition Trinamool Congress stepping up agitation against the project demanding that the government and the Tata Group return 400 acres taken from unwilling farmers.

On Sunday, the Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee (Singur Save Farmland Committee) ordered outsiders working at the factory not to report for duty. A day later, some employees at work in the factory were threatened.

Things took a turn for the worse when an engineer of the construction firm, Shapoorji Pallonji, was roughed up by women protestors Tuesday night.

Fewer number of workers reported for duty at the factory Thursday, even as the Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee convenor Becharam Manna denied that his organisation had tried to terrorise workers.

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