

'Singur turmoil could have been avoided by more compensation'

The West Bengal government could have averted the Singur crisis, caused by opposition to the Tata Motors' Nano plant by farmers and the Trinamool Congress, by offering more attractive compensation packages in lieu of farmland acquired for the factory, union commerce secretary G.K. Pillai said here.

'It is the lack of adequate total package that is the main problem. One should give a compensation package that is attractive enough to people whose land is compulsorily acquired,' Pillai said on the sidelines of a press meet by Shellac and Forest Products Export Promotion Council Wednesday night.

The government had acquired 997.11 acres of farmland in Singur, about 40 kilometres from here, and given it to the Tatas for establishment of the Nano plant. However, from the very onset of the project, it has faced resistance from various political parties over the issue of 'illegal' acquisition of the land.

From Aug 24, the state's principal opposition party Trinamool Congress has laid siege to the area surrounding the factory, demanding return of 400 acres. As a result, Tata Motors Tuesday suspended work at Nano factory for an indefinite period and signalled its readiness to pull out of the state.

'The Tatas took so long to take the decision. Once having made the investment, you have to solve the problem because if your neighbours are unhappy you run into a situation like the one the Tatas are in. They and the West Bengal government should have been more proactive in solving this problem and not let it come to this stage,' Pillai said.

Talking to reporters in [New Delhi](#) earlier Wednesday, Pillai said the Singur turmoil 'will have some adverse impact on the state, but it is not something that can be generalised. It was not just about the land acquisition or the compensation, but also politics'.

Drawing examples from land acquisition for special economic zones (SEZ), he said: 'There is a total 62,000 hectares under the SEZ plan. There was no compulsory acquisition. The landowners were provided very attractive packages whereby they get not only compensation but also training, rehabilitation and so on and this is why we have no problems.'

'In some cases, compensation plus rehabilitation as well as shares in the company are given besides building social infrastructure like wells, roads and power supply.'

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