

Left Front urges West Bengal government to be flexible on Singur land

The state committee of West Bengal's ruling Left Front Sunday urged the state government to be more flexible and try to find more land, if needed, to resolve the vexed Tata Motors' Nano issue.

'Earlier, the state government had told us that there was excess land of 30 acres within the project site in Singur and 50 acres outside it for giving a package to those who have lost their land. But on Saturday we found that the opposition is not agreeable to the idea,' Communist Party of India (CPI) state secretary Manju Kumar Majumdar said.

'They want more land than the 80 acres,' Majumdar, who was present at the meeting, told IANS.

'The Front today (Sunday) requested the government to be a bit flexible and see whether more land can be identified for bringing about a permanent solution to the problem. We need the Tata Motors plant,' he said.

The government and the Trinamool Congress led farmers body Krishijami Jiban Jibika Raksha Committee (KJJRC), which has been agitating for the return of 400 acres of land 'forcibly taken' from 'unwilling farmers' for the Tata Motor's project, held two rounds of meetings chaired by Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi Friday and Saturday.

The state government, which had earlier ruled out returning land already allotted to the project, Saturday agreed in principle to give alternative land to those who lost their land.

Some of the land was within the 997.11 acres of the project area, some 40 km from here, and the rest in nearby plots, a leader present at Saturday's talks said.

'The main issue now remains the quantum of land. We want more than what the government has agreed to so far,' he said, giving an idea of the battle of nerves that marked the meeting.

The government had Friday presented a package, including provision for shopping malls, for those who had given their land on a plot adjacent to the Nano plant.

Trinamool Congress-backed farmers have been holding protests since Aug 24 close to the Nano project site.

After the protests intensified, and its officers and workers were threatened and manhandled, the Tata group last week suspended work at the factory site saying it will not put its employees at risk.

The factory currently employs some 800 people, including engineers from South Korea and Singapore.

The company also threatened to relocate the project to some other state if the protests continued.

On Wednesday, a farmer who had sold his land willingly to the Tatas for the project, committed suicide. His three sons were employed in the company as guards and they stood to lose their jobs if the project were to be shifted elsewhere.

The suicide came as a jolt to the movement against land acquisition and many have started coming out in the open to support the project that aims to build the Nano, whose dealer price will be Rs.100,000 (less than \$2,500).

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