

Singur burns Nano replica as car is unveiled before world

As Tata Motors unveiled its people's car in a blaze of glory and publicity in [New Delhi](#) Thursday, those who had lost their land to the automobile project in West Bengal's Singur torched a yellow replica of the Rs.100,000 Nano amid lusty chants of 'Vandemataram'.

'A promise is a promise,' said Tata Motors chairperson Ratan Tata in New Delhi. Singur, located 40 km from [Kolkata](#) in Hooghly district, also kept its date with protests as hundreds of villagers, spearheaded by the Trinamool Congress-led Singur Krishjami Raksha Committee (Save Singur Farmland Committee), hollered: 'Jaliye Dao, Puriye Dao!' (Burn it, burn it).

So while Tata unveiled a 33-horsepower, 624-cc Nano amid razzmatazz at the Auto Expo 2008, peasant leader Becharam Manna lit a cardboard model as his supporters beat the burning model with sticks and indignation.

There was also unrest at the car plant itself. The West Bengal government has acquired about 935 acres for the plant, triggering violent protests that eventually galvanised people of Nandigram in East Midnapore district to lead a near uprising against a proposed chemical hub and special economic zone (SEZ).

'They named the car Nano meaning something that cannot be seen through ordinary eyes. We hope the people of India would not want to see it at all. The peasants are protesting in New Delhi also and Ratan Tata had no guts to unveil the car, made in Pune, in West Bengal,' Manna told IANS as he led a procession to lodge a symbolic protest against the car's unveiling.

'This is a car of despair and pain. Tatas could not bring out the car from Singur plant also. So many farmers committed suicide for the car, so many families were destroyed and now they have also thrown out about 350 temporary workers guarding the plant. These people also included land losers,' said Manna.

On Wednesday, temporary workers retrenched from the plant led an agitation and reportedly fought with the police forcing suspension of work in the morning.

'We don't have any official statement... In the morning there were some disruptions but work resumed soon after around 12 noon,' said a spokesperson of a PR firm that represents the Tatas.

P. Bakshi, officer in charge of the Singur police station, added: 'There was no clash between cops and workers.'

According to reports, over 3,500 people are racing against time in Singur to meet two deadlines: chisel the car plant into shape by June and prime it for production by the year-end.

Around 1,500 men in uniform are guarding the 935-acre plot.

'Work is going on in full steam. I cannot say what percentage of work is complete but a lot of work has taken place,' said a Tata Motors spokesperson.

In Kolkata, West Bengal's Industry Minister Nirupam Sen said the car would roll out in due time.

While journalists are still barred entry in the area, a villager of Singur said: 'We can see the shed coming up but we are not sure if any car would ever roll out.'

The protest over the Singur plant in West Bengal heralded the birth of a civil society movement in the state. No farmer was ever killed in Singur despite several incidents of violence and clashes.

But the December 2006 rape and murder of Tapasi Malik, a farmer's daughter, inside the fenced off area prompted a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe and led to the arrest of a ruling Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) local leader and a party supporter.

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