

War on Indian Economy

Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi during a visit to Kalahandi in 1985, had stated that for every rupee spent by the government for the welfare of the common man, only 17 paise reached him. This distress statement made by Rajiv Gandhi almost 25 years ago was a serious indictment on the state of affairs in the government's delivery system with respect to its various welfare schemes. But 25 years after Rajiv Gandhi made that candid statement about the serious pitfalls in the government's delivery system, things do not appear to be much different even now. This much was clear from a speech made by Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia while participating in a seminar in Delhi in October , 2010. Montek Singh informed the gathering that a recent Plan panel study on public distribution system (PDS) had shown that only 16 paise out of a rupee was reaching the targeted poor under the various welfare schemes in progress and went on to add that what Rajiv Gandhi said in 1985 about the state of affairs in the country was very much true even today. When the government is fully aware of the magnitude of the pilferage associated with the various welfare schemes in the country, is there any meaning in pumping tens of thousands of crores of rupees into the government's welfare schemes like NREGA, JNNRUM, Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan and the food security scheme?

MGNREGS

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), a pet project of the powerful NGO lobby in the country, was introduced in 200 districts in the country in 2006. It was extended to another 130 districts in India in 2007. The first draft performance audit report of the CAG on the NREGS which was released in January 2008 had described the NREGS as a colossal failure pointing out that the scheme meant to provide employment to one member of each of the below poverty-line families in the rural areas, actually generated on an average only 18 days of employment despite the fact that the full amount allocated for the scheme was spent. There were also many irregularities in the implementation of this scheme as found in some cases where the muster rolls maintained for workers engaged under this scheme contained names of non-existent or dead persons and there were also cases where the payment to workers was shown for work which was never undertaken. After the release of the CAG report about the failure of the scheme many economic experts and analysts had demanded the total abolition of this scheme. Instead, under pressure from the NGO lobby backed by Congress general secretary Rajiv Gandhi, the UPA government not only rejected the demand for its abolition but extended the scheme to the whole of India from August 1, 2008. Former Chief Justice of India, Justice K.G.Balakrishnan while addressing a Regional Conference on the NREGS at Bangalore on 22 November, 2008 had stated that although the NREGS was a progressive welfare measure, its implementation was seriously hindered by factors such as corruption, lack of transparency in payment of wages, falsification of wage records and nexus between contractors and officials. This is exactly the crux of the problem and nothing can be done about it. But still, the UPA government considers it as its flagship programme. The NREGS was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in October, 2009 to make

it more attractive and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh himself announced this change in nomenclature of the scheme on October 3 , 2009.

The Supreme Court on December 16, 2010, came down heavily on Union and state governments for their failure to implement the national rural employment guaranty scheme (NREGS) properly, resulting in the misutilization of funds meant for providing livelihood to millions of poor people living in the rural and tribal areas in the country. Reacting angrily, the court said: "What nonsense is going on? The Centre must take steps to ensure that funds released under NREGS reach the targeted population. We want action in this regard and will not allow any fund to go waste". The Orissa government had stated that it had placed some officers under suspension in connection with the charges of diversion of NREGS funds raised by the NGO 'Centre for Environment and Food Security', on the basis of surveys conducted by it in 100 villages of Orissa. The bench found the action taken by the Orissa government as an admission to diversion of funds and wanted to know as to what steps in this regard were taken by the Centre, which had sanctioned these funds. Describing Orissa government as one of the worst offenders, a Supreme Court Bench has even sought details from it about utilization of funds given under NREGS from 2006 to 2010. Noting the disposal of Rs.33506 crore out of the total available fund of Rs.42529 crore for 2009-10, a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice S.H.Kapadia expressed serious doubts about the money reaching the needy without being diverted or misappropriated. This possibility was further confirmed by additional solicitor general Indira Jaising, who said that NREGS schemes were gasping for breath when it came to implementation because of resistance from states for scrutiny of utilization of funds through the laid down procedure.

The Union government informed the Supreme Court on January 28, 2011, that the Centre had released Rs.1.08 lakh crore to states under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranty Scheme (MGNREGS) since February 2006, but did not carry out account auditing at any level. This goes against the intent of Section 24 of the Act, which states that "the central government may, in consultation with the CAG, make appropriate arrangements for the audits of the accounts of the schemes at all levels." The Centre said that the CAG carried out a sample performance auditing in 68 of the 625 districts covered under the MGNREGS and detected discrepancies and misappropriation of Rs.88 crore. Intimating that criminal proceedings have been initiated against over 4600 officials so far, it said that the Centre is now in the process of framing rules for mandatory auditing of accounts. The Centre agreed with the court's concern and said that unless proper transparency and accountability is ensured, the programme will come under danger.

The Supreme Court on 12th April, 2011 directed the CBI to probe the alleged misuse of the schemes under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 100 villages in six districts of Orissa. A three-judge Bench of Chief Justice S.H.Kapadia, Justices K.S.Radhakrishnan and Swatanter Kumar gave this direction on a petition filed by the 'Centre for Environment and Food Security' pointing out serious lapses and large scale malpractices in the implementation of the schemes under the Act in Orissa and other states. Writing the judgment Justice Swatanter Kumar said that the investigating agency should take into consideration three documents i.e., the survey report prepared by the petitioner, the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) report, dated March 31, 2009 and the National Institute

of Rural Development (NIRD) report. The Bench asked the CBI to file its first report within a period of six months. Taking note of the persistent default on the part of a number of states in fully implementing the provisions of the Act, the Bench directed all the state governments to file affidavits stating whether they have accepted and are duly implementing the operational guidelines issued by the government of India, within six weeks.

The scope of the NREGS, which is meant to generate wage employment in rural areas for a member of each family for 100 days a year is being broadened now to provide white-collar jobs also. According to a new programme devised by the ministry of rural development in October, 2011, panjayats with a population of more than 5000 will have a panjayat development officer (PDO) with a pay of Rs.12000 per month, and a junior engineer (JE) to be paid Rs.10000 a month.

New NAC proposal

On September 14th, 2011, the National Advisory Council (NAC) sent a new proposal to the government for strengthening the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). It wants the scheme to move from its “relief work mode” to one that will blend “natural resources and labour to build productive assets”. The proposal comes in the wake of strong criticism against the gargantuan scheme even from within the government that the MGNREGS has been a drain on the exchequer with vast sums of money spent on unproductive works. Before finalizing the measures for revamping the scheme, the NAC had set up a working group under Deep Joshi (an NAC member) , who conducted a workshop in April, 2011, with representatives from Central and State governments as well as NGOs to suggest ways and means of strengthening the capacity of panjayats to implement the MGNREGS schemes more effectively. The consensus at the workshop was that the MGNREGS annual budget of Rs.40000 could be better utilized by enabling the panchayats engage in better planning, giving them access to technical expertise and encouraging them to increase local consultation.

The key recommendations, approved by the NAC on July 28, 2011, are the need to create a mission structure for intensive support and facilitation, decentralization of planning, creation of technical capacity up to the village level and designing a training and support mechanism with ear-marked funds to train village resource persons. The fundamental principles recommended include that at least two-thirds of all works in financial terms at the block/mandal level should focus on the development of land and water resources and overriding priority should be given to developing the assets of the poor, especially of the BPL, SC and ST house-holds and land allotted under Forest Rights Act.

It is now an accepted fact that the MGNREGS is a total flop as it has resulted in colossal waste of government money and resources. Many economic pundits, senior journalists and even the Supreme Court of India have openly criticized this scheme. However, the UPA government has no intention to abolish this disruptive scheme, as it is a pet project of Sonia Gandhi and her NGO coterie.

Rajiv Awas Yojana

The UPA government has an ambitious dream of making India a slum-free country. The Centre's Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY), the slum-free India scheme, is the result of this dream. According to senior officials of the Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (HUPA) ministry, most of our urban problems stem from the adoption of town planning models borrowed from the UK, which are not suited to Indian context. The RAY scheme which initially set a timeframe of five years has now been extended to 12 years. In the first phase of the scheme spread over two-three years, the government aims to upgrade 1000 slums, construct ten lakh houses for the poor and a biometric survey of slums in the country.

According to the architects of this scheme, the current city plans are not in consonance with income distribution structures of cities and towns. The draft guidelines for RAY formulated by HUPA ministry say that there is need for 'small-lot zoning' in layouts for housing approved for city authorities, creating economically weaker section (EWS) and lower income group (LIG) plots along with MIG and HIG plots. The proponents of this scheme are highly critical of the present policy of state and urban development authorities such as Delhi Development Authority for auctioning limited land at exorbitant prices. The guidelines have advocated pro-poor reforms such as reservation of 20 to 25 percent of developed land in all new housing colonies for EWS/LIG housing and allocation of a part of the occupied land to the slum-dwellers to enable them to have access to housing and basic amenities. The guidelines have also suggested various public-private partnership models to cater to the needs of a large affordable housing segment. The HUPA ministry note further says that the public agencies need to mobilize and earmark resources to meet the affordable housing cost, civil infrastructure and other services for urban poor wherever the private sector participation is not possible.

To tackle the massive shortage of housing for the urban poor in India, the government under this slum-free dream scheme, proposes to provide central assistance of Rs 1.5 lakh to each family living in slums. The necessary funds would be made available through Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNRUM) which is already entrusted with projects worth Rs 50000 crore. The scheme envisages giving Rs 50000 as grant and the balance of Rs 1 lakh as a bank loan at 4 per cent interest rate through an interest subsidy scheme. (Of course, nobody will have to pay back this loan as it will soon be shelved as NPA). The Centre will also bear 25% of the cost in developing infrastructure like roads, sewage and other facilities for affordable housing projects. The Centre further proposes to give financial support to states that are willing to assign property rights to people living in slums. Addressing a joint session of Parliament on June 5, 2009, President Pratibha Patil announced the formal launch of the Rajiv Gandhi Awas Yojana, an ambitious special housing scheme for urban poor and slum dwellers with the avowed objective of making India a slum-free country in five years. It will soon be clear that the said scheme will never help to clear the slums, but it is certain to harm our economy.

Unique Identification Authority of India. (UIDAI)

A national citizen's identity card is an extremely desirable and necessary document as it could be a very useful and effective instrument in checking infiltrators from our neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan. Since 1971, about two crore Bangladeshi nationals are reported to have entered India as illegal migrants and their inflow still continues. As a result of such a mass scale entry of illegal migrants into the country, the demographic complexion of some of the border states like Assam and West Bengal has started changing with many border districts in these states now becoming Muslim majority areas, which will have serious security implications for the future of this country. The Supreme Court of India had issued a number of directives in the past asking the Centre to identify and deport all the illegal Bangladeshi migrants from India. However no action was taken on such directives. Under such a scenario when the UPA government announced a scheme for a Unique Identity Card for all citizens of this country, it was welcomed by all. When Nandan Nilekani of Infosys was appointed chairman of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), it gave further credibility to the proposed scheme. All nationalists in the country thought that with the implementation of the UID scheme, it will be easy to weed out all the illegal migrants in the country and deport them.

But all such hopes have been rendered as pipe dreams with the announcement of the UIDAI authorities that the UID will not bear personal details like religion and place of birth. If the place of birth and state is not mentioned in the card, how can the citizenship of a person be verified? But the government has clarified that the UID is not meant to be a proof of citizenship, but simply a registry of every Indian resident. Then why should we spend so much money and manpower in implementing such a useless scheme? Under this scheme, any one who resides in India whether he is a Bangladeshi immigrant or a Pakistani infiltrator can apply for a UID card and register with the National Population Register, which could eventually be used as a citizenship proof. The UID scheme is another anti-national feather in the cap of the UPA government. The scheme will help all illegal migrants in the country to become Indian citizens and also help to weaken our economy by the huge allocation of funds for this scheme.

The UID Authority of India (UIDAI) aims to provide unique 12-digit identification numbers to over 1.2 billion Indians through the Aadhaar project. It is claimed that the number will be useful for various government schemes, such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and the Rural Health Mission. The UIDAI is headquartered in Delhi and has a technology centre in Bangalore. It also has regional offices at Chandigarh, Delhi, Lucknow, Ranchi, Guwahati, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. Its data base will be in English. All communications between citizens and UIDAI will be in English and the local language. It is also claimed that the Unique Identification Number or Aadhaar will facilitate easier access to government benefits and ensure that the money allotted under various welfare schemes reaches the right people. Unique IDs, according to the authorities, will also help to address the problem of rigging in the elections, embezzlement of subsidies and poverty

alleviation programmes. But the authorities do not explain as to how such claims would be realized.

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) was formally constituted on January 28, 2009 and it has been mandated to lay down policies to implement the scheme besides owning and operating the biometric UID database and update it on continuous basis. The authority recently decided to authenticate an individual to private companies and public sector entities for a small transaction fee. The UIDAI proposes to charge the user companies Rs.5 to verify each address and Rs.10 for every biometrics confirmation. The UIDAI may also explore the option of charging beneficiaries of the cards to offset enrolment costs. It is estimated that it may cost Rs.20 to 25 to enroll each resident. The UIDAI also plans to set aside Rs.100 for every enrolment a vendor makes for opening a savings account with a bank. A similar amount will be provided to the vendor as fee.

In an exclusive interview with TOI in April, 2010, UIDAI chief Nandan Nilekani reportedly said that the biggest challenge facing the country today is of an identity divide and pointed out that a lack of identity has denied the poor and the marginalized a chance to effectively participate in economic growth and widened the rich-poor divide. Removing all apprehensions about the new guidelines for the Census work which includes creation of a National Population Register (NPR) by taking biometric details, like fingerprints, iris scan and photographs, Nilekani said that if the data collected by the Registrar General of India is in compliance with the UIDAI standards and specifications, it can be the basis for issuance of the unique identity number to residents. He said that the unique identity number would come free of cost for the poor, but those who can afford will have to pay a reasonable amount. The 12-digit number would be conveyed to the people through letters. Regarding the public perception that with the UID there will be no need for other documents like birth certificate, etc, he clarified that all such certificates will be needed, but the identity will be taken care of and it can be used for better targeting of subsidies given to poor people. He further informed that the I.T department and the UIDAI have agreed in principle to come together for rolling out PAN cards with the unique 12-digit Aadhar number. The UIC will be issued to all adults. Those above the age of 15 will be included in the NPR.

In fact, the UID project was originally initiated in 1999 by the NDA government in the wake of the Kargil conflict. After the “Kargil Review Committee” submitted its report in 2000, and another report submitted by a Group of Ministers in 2001, the NDA government decided to compulsorily register all citizens into a National Population Register (NPR) and issue a Multi-purpose National Identity Card (MNIC) to each citizen. To ease this process, clauses related to individual privacy in the Citizenship Act of 1955 were weakened through an amendment in 2003. In short, the ground work for a national ID project was completed by 2003 itself. In the NDA scheme, the emphasis was on security. If the NDA scheme of providing a multi-purpose

national identity card to every citizen in India was properly implemented with strict verification procedure, all illegal migrants in India could have been easily identified and deported by now.

Under the present UID scheme, the emphasis is on welfare. The architects behind this scheme claim that putting the advanced technology to use, the ambitious UID project could reach out to the 120 crore citizens of India, the first one of its kind in the whole world. The truth is that no other country in the world is foolish enough to waste a fortune on a futile project like this. It is claimed that the UID scheme is an important work undertaken for security and development purpose. On the contrary, it will severely compromise with our security interests. Under this scheme, all illegal migrants can also apply for Aadhar numbers and thus can get into the National Population Register, which they could later use as a proof for their Indian citizenship.

The parliamentary standing committee (PSC) on finance has rejected the National Identification Authority of India Bill, 2010, on the grounds that the project includes residents as opposed to citizens and that it duplicates the work being done by the Union home ministry to compile the National Population Register. Those who argued against the Bill also feared that illegal immigrants would take advantage of the scheme to become Indian citizens. The rejection by the PSC however has not blocked the UIDAI programme.

The National Population Register (NPR) launched by the ministry of home affairs is also a similar scheme which aims to provide an identity card to every adult Indian resident. Nilekani's Aadhar scheme is already halfway through and is expected to be completed by the end of December 2014, while the NPR scheme will take 10 years. There are also serious differences that have cropped up between the Planning commission and UIDAI and home ministry over the UID scheme. The dispute has arisen mainly because of the home ministry's concerns about the authenticity of the UIDAI enrolment procedure and the fear that it could lead illegal residents to claim citizenship. The differences were however thrashed out reportedly at a meeting convened by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on January 25, 2012, wherein a formula was devised to balance the home ministry's concerns with the leadership's anxiety to check pilferage in welfare schemes. As per this formula, the UIDAI and the home ministry-controlled RGI will cover 600 million residents each to give a unique identity to 1.2 billion Indians. The UIDAI will continue the enrolment in 13 states where it has started the process and the RGI will collect the data in other states. As per the press reports, most senior bureaucrats still feel that it is going to be a complete duplication of work. Under the NPR, the MHA has proposed to take a photograph and ten fingerprints of persons above the age of five, send the data base to UIDAI for de-duplication and generate the Aadhar number. Clarifying further on this issue, a release from the MHA had stated that the UIDAI has a limited mandate. Its job is to issue the Aadhar number and not the UID card. So there are now two UID schemes, both involving huge expenditure and are thus poised to make a severe dent on Indian economy. As far as the usefulness of these two schemes are concerned, both the schemes are equally useless in verifying the citizenship of a person. Not

only that, these schemes will help all Bangladeshis and other illegal migrants in the country to apply for an Aadhaar number which will make them eligible for all government welfare schemes, at the cost of genuine Indian citizens.

According to UPA government, the UID will pave the way for “inclusive growth” and facilitate delivery of basic services to the poor and plug leakages in public expenditure. These are tall claims. The problem in India is not the inability to prove the identity of the poor, but the deliberate exclusion of the poor from such services and corruption. When many of the poor in the country can not even make use of their valid ration cards, should we go for such complicated procedures such as finger prints and iris scans? Can we afford to have experts to conduct such scans in 60000 villages in India?

Then, there is also the question of violation of one’s privacy. It is found that the UIDAI authorities have entered into contracts with some private agencies including those with close links with certain foreign intelligence agencies. For instance, two US companies which have been hired for implementation of Biometric Solution for UIDAI are found to have links with Central Intelligence Agency of the USA. One of them is “L1 Identity Solutions” whose website says that the American and foreign military services, defence and intelligence agencies rely on ‘L1 Solutions and Services’ for help to determine ally from enemy. Another US company is “Accenture” which is committed to help the US Department of Homeland Security, and its solutions include developing prevention tactics, streamlining intelligence gathering and maximizing new technologies.

“The national identity card scheme represents the worst of government. It is intrusive and bullying. It is ineffective and expensive. It is an assault on individual liberty and does not promise a great good.” This is what British Home Secretary Theresa May said while announcing the complete dismantling of the UID project in the UK in June, 2010. Several other countries in the world including the USA, Australia, Canada, China and Germany have also scrapped similar projects. Why has the UPA government undertaken such an expensive misadventure like the UID scheme which can only ruin our economy? The shocking silence of the politicians in the country over the diversion of huge sums of money by the UPA government on anti-national ventures like the UID numbers and cards is quite mystifying.

War on Indian Economy (Part-2)

Food Security Bill

The revised National Food Security Bill was cleared by the Union cabinet on March 19, 2013. The proposed Bill promises to give food security to around 67% population in the country. The draft Bill, prepared by an NAC Working Group headed by Harsh Mander and approved by the Union cabinet was first introduced in the Lok Sabha in December, 2011.

As per the proposed Food Security Bill, 800 million people, including 75 per cent of the rural poor and about 50% of the urban poor people living in the urban areas will be eligible to get five kilos of subsidized grain per month. All the eligible beneficiaries would be entitled to get 5 kg of food grains per month with rice at Rs 3, wheat at Rs 2 and coarse grain at Rs 1 per kg. Prices would be revised after three years from the implementation of the Act. (<http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2011/12/19/food-security-bill-good-for-politics-terrible-for-economy/>)

The Bill has provisions for nutritional support to women and children besides provisions for meals to special groups such as destitute and homeless, disaster victims and those living in starvation. Pregnant and lactating women will also be entitled to receive maternity benefit of Rs 1000 per month for six months. In case of non-supply of food grains or meals, the entitled persons would be provided food security allowance by the government.

The Bill proposes to have independent grievance redressal officers at the district level to be recruited by the Union Public Service Commission, for effective resolution of grievances related to the distribution of food grains. They could be from the corporate sector, the media or academic field. Their tenure would be for five years. The Bill also seeks to constitute a food commission in every state for monitoring and review of implementation of this Act. If there is any grievance that cannot be settled at the State-level, it will be referred to the National Commission.

Presently about 52 million tonnes of food grains (rice and wheat) are procured every year for distribution in the country. The government claims, rather immaturely, that only 10 more million tonnes of food grains would be required to cover 75% of the rural population and 50 % of the urban poor under the provisions of the food security bill. But those who make such arguments forget the fact that the food grain procurement had peaked to an average of 50 million tonnes only during the last three years mainly because of reasonably good rainfall and good crop. However, if we take the average of last 7-8 years, the procurement of food grains has been a moderate 35 to 40million tonnes, as the average food production was much lower. So, in case if we have a couple of years of bad monsoon, the average procurement of food grains is certain to fall sharply to 35 or 40 million tonnes which will force us to go for large-scale import of food grains to meet our mandatory distribution obligations. Importing food grains in such vast quantities can create all kinds of problems, including driving up the global prices. Of course, it may also provide golden opportunities for some global speculators to make a kill.

The socio-economic survey for identification of poor in the country is yet to be completed and finalized. There are conflicting claims in this regard by different committees. While the Tendulkar committee estimated that we will require only 49 million tonnes of food grains for distribution, the N.C.Saxena committee puts the figure at 66 million tonnes. As per the estimate of the NAC, we may need 98 million tonnes of food grains to cover 17 crore poor households in the country. Thus the actual quantum of procurement and distribution of food

grains is yet to be worked out. There is also the need for at least 10 million tonnes of food grains as a buffer stock, besides the stock meant for distribution. From the assessments made by various economic pundits and analysts, it can be reasonably assumed that India will need about 75 million tonnes of food grains (including the buffer stock) to cover about 75% of rural population and 50% of urban poor under the scheme. It is a gigantic task to have the requisite infrastructure to procure such a vast quantity of food grains and distribute it to millions of rural and urban poor in the country. Most economists in the country are also worried about the huge expenditure that is likely to be incurred in implementing this scheme. It is estimated that it may cost the nation about 3.5 lakh crore to implement the food security scheme. The subsidy bill for the scheme may cost another Rs 95000 crore. (<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/food-security-bill-tabled-in-lok-sabha/890846/>).

The economists and political analysts are unanimous in their opinion that the proposed bill will be a huge burden on our economy and will thus hinder India's economic progress. However, no political party in the country is willing to condemn the bill openly, as it is projected as a pro-poor measure. Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, who recently announced his retirement from electoral politics, had come out openly against the food security bill stating that we do not have the money to spend on such schemes. What he meant to say is that if we still went ahead with wasting money on such schemes, it will ruin our economy. It may be noted here that he had earlier criticized the national rural employment guarantee scheme, another pet project of Sonia Gandhi, as an impractical and wasteful scheme. Sharad Pawar is not the only minister who feels that the UPA government's welfare schemes like food security bill and MGNREGS would be a drain on Indian economy. There are other ministers and also many senior bureaucrats who have serious reservations against such government welfare schemes which according to them could only ruin our economy. The Indian economy is already under severe strain. The country's economic growth is expected to slow down to less than 6% in the current fiscal. The fiscal deficit for the year is expected to be 5.5% of the gross domestic product, which is above the government's official target of 4.6%. The value of rupee had hit a new low against the dollar. With the growing gap in power generation in meeting our minimum requirement, the country is poised to enter a new era of dark age. But the UPA government seems to be oblivious of such danger signals and remains as unperturbed as ever.

National Right to Homestead Bill, 2013

Latest in the series of destructive schemes designed by the UPA government is the National Right to Homestead Bill, 2013. This bill, is an outcome of a commitment given by Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh to Ekata Parishad, a foreign-funded NGO based in Madhya Pradesh, which had organized a Jan Satyagraha march to Delhi in October, 2011 demanding such a legislation. Under the proposed law, every homeless and landless poor family in the rural areas in the country will get a homestead of not less than 10 cents including a dwelling with adequate facilities. The bill, which is likely to be introduced in the monsoon session of the Parliament, has to be implemented within a specified period of time not exceeding

five years from the enactment of the law. According to the 11th plan document, an estimated 13 to 18 million families are landless and 8 million of them do not have a house of their own. The gram sabhas would be entrusted with the responsibility of identifying the homeless poor families and preparing the priority list.

Fake Currency Racket

The fake currency racket in India, supported, financed and controlled by Pakistan and masterminded by the ISI is not only flourishing, but has taken dangerous proportions. The seizure of fake Indian currency is no more in hundreds or thousands, but it is in crores. We have corroborative evidence to confirm that fake notes are printed in government security presses located in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta in Pakistan. The fake notes are printed in large quantities at these facilities with advanced technologies and specialized papers and materials. India's Ministry of Home Affairs is reported to have learnt that the ISI had managed to get access to the configuration, specifications and other secret codes of the genuine Indian currency notes from six European countries that supply Indian currency papers fitted with security features and another company in Switzerland that supplies the security ink used in printing these currency notes in India. The fake currency is pushed into the country through land, sea and air routes and also through the porous Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Nepal borders. Pakistan is even using its official carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flights to transport fake currency to countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Sea-borne consignments are also sometimes found delivered to Tamil Nadu via Sri Lanka and to Gujarat directly from Pakistan. Diplomatic bags are also used to carry fake currency to Nepal and Bangladesh. Pakistani officials posted in its high commissions in Dhaka and Kathmandu are also found involved in this racket.

Thousands of cases of seizure of fake Indian currency are reported from different parts of the country every year. In 2005, the seizure of fake currency amounted to about Rs 70 million. It rose to about 100 million INR in 2007, 259 million in 2008, 230 million in 2009 and 258 million INR in 2010. In 2010, there were 1850 incidents of seizure of fake currency and 1265 people were arrested. (http://www.southasianoutlook.com/issues/2011/august/india_pakistan_FICN_currency_of_terror.html).

The gravity of the fake currency menace was demonstrated by a BSP member of Rajya Sabha, Brijesh Pathak, in June, 2009, when he produced a fake 500-rupee note in the House claiming that he had got it from an ATM inside the Parliament House complex. Pathak was participating in the debate on the general budget when suddenly he fished out a fake 500-rupee note from his pocket and asked the government as to how the country can make any progress if the government cannot even stop the circulation of fake currency notes in the country.

In view of a substantial increase in the circulation of fake Indian currency notes in India, a Reserve Bank of India panel has recommended a host of measures like installing note-sorting machines at all bank branches and enhancing security features in notes to tackle the menace. It has also proposed that all new ATMs to be installed should be equipped with in-built fake note detectors and the existing ATMs should also be required to have in-built note detectors over a period of time.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has established that the staff of Pakistan's high commission in Dhaka are using diplomatic bags to transport high-quality fake Indian currency from Karachi to Bangladesh. The NIA, using both technical and human intelligence sources, has confirmed that Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) is engaged in printing fine-quality fake Indian currency notes at a high security press at Karachi's Maler Cantonment. This is then air-lifted to Bangladesh via diplomatic bags to bypass any inspection. Some of the consignments are routed through the Pakistani embassy in Kathmandu using similar modus operandi. Once in Bangladesh, the fake currency is smuggled into India through the porous Indo-Bangladesh border, with Malda in West Bengal being a major hub for smuggling and dispatch of fake notes.

The ISI 's fake note printing facility at Maler Cantonment in Karachi is reported to be the most sophisticated, where the currency notes of very good quality are printed with proper security thread and optically variable ink. (<http://www.asianage.com/india/fake-notes-come-pak-diplomatic-bag-975>). On January 10th and 11th, 2012, the NIA conducted nationwide raids and arrested 14 people involved in fake currency racket. The fake currency printed in Pakistan were pushed into the country by ISI agents through the porous Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Nepal borders. (http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/wire-news/fake-currency-note-racket-nia-arrests-14-people_648518.html).

Solaiman @ Majumdar, a Bangladeshi kingpin of Pakistan-based fake Indian currency racket, was recently arrested in Dhaka along with his associate Abdul Mannan. Solaiman hails from Comilla, but resides in Gulshan area of Dhaka. He is in-charge of carrying fake currency consignments from Pakistan to Bangladesh and sending it to India through Nepal. During the interrogation, he admitted that at the behest of ISI he entrusted two Bangladeshi militant outfits namely 'Jamaitul Mujahideen Bangladesh' (JMB) and 'Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami' (HUJI) with smuggling of fake Indian currency notes. Both Solaiman and Mannan had admitted to the police about their involvement in fake currency, drugs and 'hundi' business. Solaiman had also links with LeT Bangladesh chapter chief Moulana Tajuddin, now hiding in Pakistan to evade arrest for his role in grenade attack on Awami League rally on August 21, 2004. He is the brother of BNP leader and former minister Abdus Salam Pintu. Pintu is in jail for his involvement in the recent BDR mutiny. Solaiman is getting fake currency from Mou. Tajuddin. Several others like Mahtab and his brother Aftab of Dhaka are also involved in this racket. Sarfaraz, who was arrested by Kolkata police on December 19, 2008 with Rs.10 lakh worth fake Indian currency is a leader of

this racket. He is a Pakistani national who resides in Dhaka with his Bangladeshi wife. He used to visit Pakistan regularly to bring fake currency. The money earned is used for procurement of weapons and strengthening the militant outfits. Arrested Pakistani nationals have disclosed that fake Indian currency notes are made in Karachi and brought to Bangladesh by air by women couriers also. A Pakistani woman, Rubina, arrested from a posh hotel in Dhaka on December 18, 2009 said that she used to bring Rs.2 crore from Pakistan on her every visit to Dhaka. She had named eight other such women couriers.

Md.Danish, a Pakistani national, who was arrested in Dhaka on the basis of information provided by Rubina was the coordinator of all the fake currency operations in Dhaka. He used to assign different tasks to members of the racket, such as, collection of notes from predetermined places and their onward transmission to some strategic locations from where they are smuggled into India and monitor their activities. A resident of Lahore, Danish married a Bangladeshi woman Fatima and was residing with her in Dhaka. The Bangladesh police arrested Danish on January 18, 2010 with fake INR worth 10 lakh, and another Pakistani national Sabbir. The police arrested one more Pakistani national the next day. It was also found by the Detective Branch that many cloth merchants of Gousia market in Dhaka are engaged in fake Indian currency racket.

Another Pakistani national, Mobasser Shahed, was arrested on January 6, 2010 from Uttara area in Dhaka with a huge consignment of fake INR. He had admitted that he was working for his Pakistani handlers. Further investigation revealed that JMB members are sent in batches to Pakistan to receive training in manufacturing fake Indian currency with meticulous precautions. On completion of the training they are sent back with equipments and accessories and necessary technical knowhow to manufacture the same in Bangladesh. A JMB-controlled fake INR racket has been operating in Meradia and Mirpur area in Dhaka.

The JMB has been associated with this racket for a long time. Rafiq Islam @ Zobaer, a Shura member (highest policy making body) was arrested on October 24, 2008 from Chapai Nawabganj. His interrogation led to the arrest of two more JMB activists and recovery of huge consignments of fake INR. They disclosed that many JMB activists are assigned with the task of marketing the fake INR in India. Out of the money earned from this racket, TK 50000 are deposited in the JMB account every month. They have also expressed the view that money earned by inflicting damage on the enemy should be utilized for noble deeds like promoting jihad and Taliban-like Islamic revolution in Bangladesh and there is nothing wrong in that.<http://intellibriefs.blogspot.com/2011/09/fake-indian-currency-note-racket-in.html>.)

The Gujarat ATS arrested one Ashghar Ali Abdul Hussain Abuli from Shah Alam locality on 12th. August 2009 and recovered fake currency notes of Rs.1000 and Rs.500 denominations with a face value of Rs.1.35 lakh and also fake Bangladeshi and Indian passports from him. His interrogation revealed that he had migrated to Pakistan at a young age with his family in 1977. Ali, who grew up in Pakistan was jailed in 1994 following his involvement in a fake bearer cheque case. While in jail, Ali was reportedly influenced by Pakistani intelligence

agencies to work against India. As per the instructions of the ISI, he returned to Godra with his family in 1998 to conduct fake currency operations in the country.

Vikki, son of Majid Manihar, an ISI mastermind in Nepal was arrested by the UP police in August ,2009 while he was trying to enter India to strike a deal with his contacts in Bahraich. The police had recovered fake Indian currency notes and telephone numbers of ISI operatives and members of Dawood Ibrahim gang from him. During the interrogation, Vikki revealed that the fake notes were printed in Lahore and Karachi from where it is sent to Nepal by cargo and then to India. The entire operation is managed by the ISI through its Nepal-based agent Manihar, Vikki's father.

The Delhi police arrested three cadres of the terror outfit Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, including one communication expert, from Khan Market area of New Delhi on March 7, 2011. The police also recovered fake currency worth INR 1 million from them. In another incident on April 17, 2011, a scrap dealer identified as Zubair Alam was arrested in Delhi with fake currency worth INR 110000.

On April 24,2011, the police arrested five persons from Ariif Ke village under Mallanwala police station in Punjab and seized fake currency worth 954000 from them. The police also seized fake currency worth 200000 from a goods train that had arrived at Attari railway station from Pakistan. It is also reported that following a raid on an ISI cell in Delhi in 2011, the arrested operatives had revealed that the Thar Express running between Munnabao in Pakistan and Jodhpur in Rajasthan was being used by the ISI to smuggle fake currency into India.

The police arrested a nine-member Nigerian gang with fake currency worth several lakhs of rupees at the domestic airport in Mumbai in October, 2011. The accused were produced before the court on October 14 and remanded in police custody. The police had arrested one of the Nigerian gang members a few days earlier while he was trying to travel to Bangalore. His interrogation revealed that he was part of a gang operating from Mumbai and led to the arrest of other eight gang members.

Two Turkish nationals and an Indian were arrested by the DRI officials from UP on June 14, 2011, following recovery of fake Indian currency worth Rs.1.54 crore concealed in a Mercedes bus that they were driving. The two Turkish nationals, namely Mehmood,41, and Hussain, 43, reportedly started from Turkey in April, passed through Iran and Pakistan before entering India with valid travel documents. Then they went to Bangladesh, apparently to pick up the consignment, and on their way back they were detected by the Indian agencies.

The Bangladesh police arrested four Pakistani nationals and 12 Bangladeshi nationals on March 30, 2013 and seized Rs 12.9 million in fake Indian currency and also 8 crude bombs from them.

It is also an acknowledged fact that the ISI had been using fake currency in a big way to finance terrorism in India. The police had established the role of fake currency in aiding the Hyderabad bombings of August, 2007, the attack on Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore in 2005 and the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai. Immediately after the Hyderabad blasts, the police had arrested a 4-member gang, including a Dubai national, and seized fake currency worth INR 26.6 million from them, which was brought from Pakistan via Dubai. The Indian security agencies had also found that INR 3 million out of INR 5 million spent on attack on Indian Institute of science, Bangalore in December, 2005, was obtained through fake currency racket. In May, 2011, in the second charge sheet filed in the 26/11 case, the US government had named a serving ISI officer, Major Iqbal, as a key conspirator charged with providing funds to Pakistani American Laskahar-e-Taiba (LeT) operative David Coleman Headley. Major Iqbal, posted in Lahore during 2007-08 period was handling Headley on behalf of the ISI. He provided \$25000 and also fake Indian currency to Headley to meet his expenses during the surveillance operations in India.

The International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 2011 of the US State Department had also highlighted the threat posed by the increasing inflow of fake Indian currency printed in Pakistan to finance terrorism in India.

A Reserve Bank of India team had found an estimated Rs.3 crore of counterfeit notes in the currency chest of SBI's Dumariaganj branch in UP during a checking conducted in the first week of August, 2008. The racket was busted with the arrest of one Abid of Sidharth Nagar in UP, after Rs.5 lakh worth fake Indian currency notes were recovered from him. He had named Sudhakar Tripathi, a cashier of SBI's Dumariaganj branch, as his associate. Abid was reportedly in touch with his contacts in Nepal and Hong Kong. This was considered as the biggest fake currency seizure in India. But the biggest haul of fake currency was yet to come.

The Special Cell of Delhi police seized fake currency of the face value of Rs 2.24 crore from a godown in Debri, South-West Delhi on January, 2012. The notes were concealed in 33 cloth bundles and loaded in two tempos, parked outside a godown. Two people by name Mohammad Hassan Ali and Abdullah were arrested in connection with the racket. It is reported that the fake notes were printed in Pakistan and the vehicles carrying the consignments entered India through the Indo-Nepal border. In the FIR filed before the Delhi Metropolitan Magistrate in this connection, it was alleged that the fake currency consignment was sent by the Pakistan's ISI and Laskar-e-Taiba (LeT) from Pakistan with the aim of destabilizing Indian economy.

The fake currency racket in India is a state-sponsored project of Pakistan, masterminded by the ISI. The circulation of the fake currency is carried out with the help of Dawood Ibrahim and his vast network of gangsters and smugglers around the world. Initially Dawood was using only the gangsters and smugglers based in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka for

this operation. Now he has expanded his network to include gangsters from Gulf countries, Turkey and Nigeria. The recent arrest of some gangsters from Nigeria, Turkey and Gulf countries in connection with fake currency racket in India amply demonstrates the globalization of this operation. Babu Gaithan, Aftab Bakti and Iqbal Qana are the three prominent associates of Dawood in this racket.

Thus, it has been conclusively proved that fake Indian currency notes printed in various government security presses in Pakistan are sent to India daily by tempos, trucks, buses and airline flights. Tens of thousands of people and hundreds criminal gangs are involved in this operation. Pakistani government officials posted in its high commission offices in our neighbouring countries are also involved in this racket. Pakistan is getting necessary currency paper, optically variable ink, etc, far in excess of their actual requirement, from some European countries, probably with the connivance of the concerned authorities. Thus, it is an open war against India. But we do not even acknowledge it as a major threat and refuse to face the challenge head on. Our response so far to this level of provocation from our neighbor has been the great mantra of 'Aman Ki Asha'. With the kind of rulers we have, can we survive as a nation?

Extra inputs

The Mahe police have seized fake Indian currency notes in denominations of 1000 and 500, valued at over Rs.1.81 lakh, from Thajudeen of Kannur district in Kerala, during the first week of June, 2012. His interrogation revealed that he received the sum from Inam, a Pakistani national working in Oman, for buying property. Thajudeen befriended Inam while working in Oman. Apart from Thajudeen, four more people have been arrested by the police in this connection.

War on Indian Economy (Part-3)

Story of the proposed neutrino lab in India

According to 'Hindustan Times' (dated January 7, 2012) and other newspapers, the work on the proposed India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO), the biggest basic science facility in the country, is set to begin soon. But, the bitter and shocking fact is that this prestigious science observatory, should have become operational by this year itself (2012), if it was built as per its original schedule. But then, what caused this inordinate delay? Please read on to find out the factors responsible for this unpardonable delay.

The scientists have been trying to revive the neutrino science in the country by building an underground physics laboratory in India since last few years. Indian scientists had already built up a reputation as pioneers in neutrino experiments, as indicated by the fact that one of the earliest underground labs in the world to detect neutrinos was located in an underground facility at more than 2000 m deep in the Kolar Gold Field (KGF) mines in India. The neutrinos,

produced by cosmic ray interactions in the earth's atmosphere, were first detected in 1965 by a joint Indian–British–Japanese team while conducting an experiment at the Kolar Gold Field (KGF) in Karnataka. But this facility at KGF was abandoned in 1992 following the closure of the mine that housed it.

The traditional idea that protons, neutrons and electrons are the smallest and most fundamental particles in the universe had undergone a radical change over the last few years. It is known now that there are a host of even smaller particles, neutrinos being more prominent among them. The neutrinos are believed to be the fundamental particles that were first formed in the universe even before the atoms. They are also being continually produced in the nuclear reactions of all stars and planets. They have no charge, almost no mass, and are so tiny that they can pass through absolutely every thing, including the earth. The whole universe is filled with neutrinos. They permeate every inch of space all around us. Billions of neutrinos pass through our bodies every second. But still, there is not much known about these elusive particles. They have undetermined mass and travel at near the speed of light. They generally do not interact with matter and pass through everything unhindered. However, on the rare occasion of their interaction with the matter through collision with the nucleus of an atom, they interact with the nucleus, get absorbed, and produce another harmless particle called a muon. It is this interaction that will be subjected to study and research by the INO team. The India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) at Singara was proposed to be housed in a man-made cave about 2 kilometres beneath the tallest peak of the Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu, 250 kilometres south of Bangalore .

Realising the significance of the study of neutrinos, scientists had started exploring the possibilities of setting up a full-fledged underground neutrino observatory in India since 1989 itself. On the initiative of DAE, and based on the discussions held in this regard at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, a Neutrino Collaboration Group (NCG) was also later formed to coordinate the moves to set up a new India-based neutrino observatory in the country for conducting decisive experiments in neutrino physics utilizing this unique underground facility.

The Site Selection Committee (SSC) of the INO collaboration had initially identified two potential sites and conducted feasibility study of the two sites at Rammam in Darjeeling, West Bengal and the Singara site in Nilgiri hills, Tamil Nadu for the location of the project. Both the sites had enough rock cover that would shield the laboratory from cosmic radiation. After evaluation of various criteria like availability of water, power, cost factors, risk and safety issues, depth, accessibility, time to install, etc. the SSC opted for the Singara site in Tamil Nadu which was found more suitable for the project. Singara falls within the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR). The NBR is a large tract of over 5,500 square kilometres of contiguous forest spread across three states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. The INO project is aimed at reviving the pioneering spirit of neutrino research in the country which had to be abruptly

terminated after the closure of the Kolar Gold Field in Karnataka. There are only a handful of such observatories in the world, and this Rs.950 crore India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) was slated to be the most advanced among them. Reportedly the said project was expected to put India at the forefront of neutrino physics. It is also reported that the proposed laboratory was a dream project of former President APJ Abdul Kalam.

Scientists believe that the study of the neutrinos will help us understand the universe and its origin better. It could also have vast applications in the field of astrophysics. As the neutrinos pass through matter almost undisturbed, the observatory has to be built deep underground, ensuring that all other particles and rays are naturally filtered out. For this, the detector has to have a rock cover of at least one kilometre on all sides and the INO scientists planned to drill 2.38 kilometres into the Singara hill to house the 100 kilo tonne iron detector. Neutrinos are produced in all stars and planets, including the earth, when cosmic rays smash into the upper atmosphere. According to senior scientists at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai, physicists are keen to improve their understanding of the properties of the three different types of neutrinos — electron, muon and tau neutrinos. The INO had planned to use a 50,000-tonne magnetized iron calorimeter to detect particles called muons that are produced on the rare occasions when neutrinos interact with matter. As the detector can distinguish between muons with a positive and a negative charge, it will help researchers to work out the respective masses of the three types of neutrino. The INO could also verify results obtained by physicists at Japan's Super-Kamiokande detector suggesting that neutrinos have mass and can oscillate. The plan to investigate these elusive subatomic particles has been going on in the country since 2001. The project report for the INO was submitted in 2002. The approval for the project came in 2007. Subsequently the Planning Commission also approved its funding and allocated a sum of Rs.950 crores for the project, earmarking Rs.315 crore for disbursement during the 11th Plan. The Ministry of Environment and Forest also gave its clearance in 2008.

The INO collaboration included at least 100 scientists from 25 Indian institutions and the University of Hawaii. Institutions collaborating with the INO project included prestigious institutions like Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, IIT Mumbai and Institute of Mathematical Science, Chennai. The INO was also looking for collaboration with researchers in Italy and Japan. Scientists in India believed that the INO project would bring about a resurgence of the expertise in particle astrophysics in India. A 100-strong team of physicists had started fabricating detector components at Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) in Mumbai and at other collaborating institutions. However, there was a hitch in getting the necessary clearance from Tamil Nadu's forest department.

Opposition to the project.

While the scientific community in India was thrilled about the proposed INO project, some NGO and environmental activists and action groups in the country had been trying to stall this project by resorting to a malicious campaign against the project both at national and international level. The organisations which were in the forefront of this campaign included

The Nilgiris Wild-life and Environmental Association (NWEA), The Tamil Nadu Green Movement, The Shola Trust, The Nilgiri Ecological and Animal Protection Samhiti (NEAPS), C.P.Ramaswami Iyer Foundation, Chennai, The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), WWF-India and some Christian action groups based in Nilgiri hills.

Prominent activists who led the anti-INO campaign included N.Mohan Raj (Coordinator for WWF-India in Nilgiris), Geetha Srinivasan (Vice President of Nilgiri Wild-life and Environment Association and District President of INTACH, Nilgiris), Ajai Desai (a wild life specialist), A. Arumugam (a biologist working with WWF), Maj.Gen.S.G.Vombatkare (an environmental activist) and Christian activists like Stan Thekkekara, his wife Mari Marcel Thekkekara, his son Tarsh Thekkekara and Mathew John of Keyston Foundation.

These activists opposed this prestigious project raking up issues like environmental pollution and destruction of wild life habitat. They expressed their concern about the possible population explosion that happens after the establishment of every major development project. To highlight the environmental damage, they dished out frightening figures to show that the project will create 6,30,000 tons of muck and debris and bring in construction material weighing 1,47,000 tons and pointed out that for the transportation of that much debris and material, 78000 trucks will have to make 156000 trips creating 4.68 lack hours of disturbances. They claimed that the project will require 342,000 litres of water and 3 mega watts of electricity every day and will thus lead to further deterioration in the water and power shortage in the area. They described the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report on the project as completely inadequate and superficial with no hard data or assessment on environmental damage. They also criticised the EIA for being silent on the impact of the project on the 15 endangered species in the area due to the blasting, vibrations, human presence etc. They further alleged that the project will not benefit local people as employment opportunities would go mostly to highly skilled workers from outside. From the data cooked up by these activists in support of their venomous campaign against the neutrino project, it was obvious that the lobby supporting them had some vested interest in stalling this project and they will go to any length to achieve their objective. The INO authorities however dismissed all these allegations as baseless and irrational. Commenting on the alleged possibility of population explosion, they pointed out that the laboratory will be located deep underground and could be accessed only by a 2 km-long tunnel.

Researchers will be located at the main INO research and development centre in Mysore, about 100 km away from the INO site. Except during the construction phase, the number of scientists and engineers manning the laboratory will not be more than 30 people. They asserted that the INO project will not cause any notable increase in the 12550-strong population of Masinagudi village, where the project will be located. They pointed out that the Singara site was chosen over Rammam in West Bengal on the basis of a geotechnical analysis that considered physics requirements, safety, and long-term stability of the laboratory. About 13 km of tunnels had been constructed over the past decade in the vicinity of the proposed INO site to locate a large underground hydroelectric power station whose access portal is within a few hundred metres of the proposed INO tunnel portal. Due to the proximity of this hydroelectric power station, the INO authorities would not have to build any new roads, thereby causing minimum damage to the environment. Regarding the removal of waste material, they pointed out that about 608,000 tons of debris (mainly granite) that will be excavated will be stored onsite for a long time. The construction and detector material required for the project would be brought to the site over a period of 7 years. The heavy-vehicle traffic required to do so will be no more than six round trips per day which is negligible compared with the existing traffic. The water requirement is 342,000 litres of water per day, which is only 0.2% of the availability of water at Singara. The INO officials had been engaged in talks with the local people to clarify these issues, and the local village administration had also passed a resolution welcoming the INO project. The INO authorities had further clarified that the project is a pure science laboratory and not an industry and that they would build and run the underground laboratory only to study and explore the working of nature, without causing any harm to the local ecology and environment.

But the activist groups refused to accept any of these clarifications and they were bent upon scuttling the project. They wanted the project to be shifted to any other suitable site. The state forest officials also appeared to be taking the side of the activist groups. They were of the view that the physicists had not made a convincing case. The state forest department's clearance for the project was pending since 2006. The World Wide Fund for Nature-India also opposed the facility, arguing that Nilgiri is already under pressure, and INO will lead to permanent detrimental impact on the wildlife. How can an underground physics laboratory, not an industrial unit, located beneath one of the hills in the Nilgiris pose any threat to the environment or to the elephant population or any other animal species in the area?

Keystone Foundation

The Keystone Foundation, which was opposed to the neutrino project, is an NGO functioning among the indigenous people in the Nilgiri hills in Tamil Nadu. It was founded by Mathew John, a Christian Action Group activist, in 1992 with the avowed objective of enhancing the quality of life of the local people by helping them in tackling their problems of livelihood, conservation and enterprise development. The main office of the organization is located at Kotagiri in Nilgiri hills. The organization also runs six resource centres in the area. The Foundation helps the local tribals in marketing their products like honey, spices, coffee, beeswax, etc. through its shops in the region. The Keystone Foundation has partnership with international organizations like People and Plants International, Bees for Development, Monmouth, UK and Austroproject of Vienna. The Keystone project is also supported by several donor agencies based in the US, UK, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, since 1993.

ACCORD, AMS AND ASHWINI

Stan Thekaekara, a Christian Action Group activist, has worked with various NGOs in different parts of the country since last four decades. He is a trustee of Oxfam GB and he has also worked as an adviser to Oxfam on its UK Poverty Programme. Stan along with his wife Mari Marcel Thekkekara came to Nilgiris in the mid-eighties to work among the Adivasis in the area. They together founded the NGO called ACCORD in November, 1985.

ACCORD

The Action for Community Organisation, Rehabilitation and Development (ACCORD) founded by Stan and Mari was aimed to bring about an awareness among the Adivasis of Gudalur valley about their fundamental rights, land and citizenship rights and empower them to fight against all kinds of injustice and exploitation and help them to lead a life with dignity, pride and self-esteem. They taught them about their rights to the forest land and the need to assert their rights to retrieve their ancestral land which was taken away from them by the authorities by force or deceit. They helped the local Adivasis to set up village-level sangams to resist against all kinds of injustice and discrimination and to start a land rights campaign for restoration of their ancestral land. These Village Sangams eventually led to the formation of Adivasi Munnetra Sangam (AMS) in 1988. A protest demonstration conducted under the aegis of Adivasi Munnetra Sangam (AMS) as part of its land rights campaign at Gudalur on December 5, 1988 was attended by about 10000 Adivasis. The AMS now claims to have a membership of 15000 Adivasis spread over 200 villages in Gudalur and Pandalur talukas of Nilgiri district. The ACCORD now functions primarily as a resource centre providing training and expertise and mobilizing the required resources for the Adivasi activists and village Sangams.

In 1987, Dr.Devadasan and Dr.Roopa joined Stan Thekkekara in starting a community health welfare programme, specifically for the Adivasi women in the Gudalur valley. They founded an organization called ASHWINI (Association for Health Welfare in the Nilgiris) in 1990 which was registered as a charitable society. In the same year, a 20-bed hospital was also

set up in Gudalur as part of the ASHWINI project. The Gudalur Adivasi Hospital also has eight sub-centres in the valley to coordinate the community health programmes in the villages and to provide first aid and other medical needs of the villagers. The ASHWINI project is financed by Action Aid of UK, CEBEMO (CORD AID) of Holland and also under various state and central government rural development schemes.

Other welfare projects started by the AMS for the Adivasis in the area include Just Change, an organization launched in 1994, which aims to establish an alternative trading mechanism that links poor Adivasi communities together and encourages them to trade among themselves, Vidyodaya school started in 1995 and the Adivasi Tea Leaf Marketing Society which was established in February 1999 to promote tea cultivation among the Adivasis in the area.

Stan Thekkekara and his wife Mari Marcel and their son Tarsh Thekkekara were in the forefront in opposing the neutrino project and educating the local Adivasis about the danger posed to the wildlife and eco-system in the area from the proposed neutrino observatory at Singara. Tarsh teaches tribal children in a local school. Mary Marcel Thekkekara and her son Tarsh, who also work as freelance journalists, had carried out an extensive media campaign against the proposed neutrino project.

C.P.Ramaswami Iyer Foundation, Chennai

C.P.Ramaswami Iyer Foundation, Chennai and the C.P.R.Foundation's Environmental Education Centre at Ooty were also actively aligned with the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR)Alliance in opposing the neutrino project. Late C.P.Ramaswami Iyer was a great statesman, academic and administrator who had also served as the Diwan of erstwhile Travancore-Cochin state. It is ironical that an institution like the C.P.R. Foundation set up as a memorial for him should engage in activities prejudicial to the country's economic and technological progress. The C.P.R.Foundation was probably dragged into this controversy because of Ms. Geetha Srinivasan, an environmental activist and a staunch opponent of the neutrino project, who happens to be the grand daughter of late C.P.Ramaswami Iyer. She was the chairperson of the World Wide Fund for Nature in Mumbai during the late eighties and presently she is the Vice President of the Nilgiri Wildlife and Environment Association. She is also the district convener of Indian National Trust for Art, culture and heritage (INTACH). Her husband M.R.Srinivasan was a former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. It may be relevant to note in this regard that M.R. Srinivasan was one of the most vocal supporters of the India-US nuclear deal from the very beginning.

Neutrino Project at Singara Rejected

The Union ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) in November, 2009 finally rejected the proposal for setting up an underground neutrino observatory at Singara in Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris district as the project site falls in an elephant corridor and tiger reserve area. In a letter to the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) on 20th. November, 2009, Union Minister of State for Environment and Forest Jairam Ramesh said that in the light of the adverse report submitted by Dr.Rajesh Gopal, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Member-Secretary of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (MS-NTCA), his ministry was not in a position to give the necessary go-ahead to the Singara project.

The minister had earlier instructed Dr.Gopal and other senior forest officials to visit the project site and submit a report. After visiting the project site on October 31, Dr.Gopal said in his report that the project site falls in a buffer zone of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and is in close proximity to the core/critical tiger habitats of Bandipur and Mudumalai Tiger reserves. It is also an elephant corridor, facilitating elephant movement from the Western Ghats to the Eastern Ghats and vice-versa. The report further says that the area is already disturbed on account of severe biotic pressure due to human settlements and resorts and the construction phase of the project would involve transport of building materials through the highways passing through the core area of the Bandipur/Mudumalai Tiger Reserves.

While rejecting the Singara site for the neutrino project, the Ministry of Environment and Forests had also suggested that the neutrino project, proposed by the Department of Atomic Energy, be shifted to a site near the Suruliar falls in Theni district of Tamil Nadu. Suruliar was one of the several sites considered by the scientists earlier, but was rejected by the INO team as being inferior, compared to Singara.

Though the scientists inspected Suruliyar and Thevaram sites in Theni district, they finally selected the Bodi West Hills (BWH) near Pudukkotai village in Pottipuram Panchayat for the project. The BWH lies west of the Cumbum valley, close to the Tamil Nadu-Kerala border. The actual site is two km from Pudukkotai, 14 km from Bodi and 110 km from Madurai. A serious shortcoming of the new site is lack of water and electricity. Power has to be sourced from Rasingapuram, which is 10 km away. A feasibility study for sourcing water through pipelines is in progress. The proposed massive neutrino detector will be built in a cavern set in a massive charnockite rock. The cavern will be excavated by drilling a tunnel of 1.9 km in length under the peak designated as 1589, so that there is vertical overburden of about 1300 m. For a good neutrino detection facility, a vertical cover of at least 1000 m is required, so that the observed neutrino events are not contaminated by unwanted particles that will be absorbed by the overburden.

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) on October 18, 2010, accorded both environment and forest clearance for locating the project in the Bodi West Hills (BWH) in

Theni district, Tamil Nadu. The approval is subject to the conditions that there will be no cutting of trees and damage to the forest cover, that measures will be taken to minimize the effect of tunneling and disposal of rock debris and that the environmental management plan prepared by the Coimbatore-based Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) will be fully implemented. The total cost of the project is pegged at about Rs.1200 crore, which will include Rs.950 crore for the facility itself and the cost of building infrastructural facilities like laying roads, electrical and water lines. The project is jointly funded by the Department of Atomic Energy and the Department of Science and Technology. The INO team includes nearly 100 scientists from 25 prestigious institutions, with the Tata Institute for Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai, being the nodal institution.

Comments.

The NGO and environmental activists and groups who opposed the neutrino project at Singara in Nilgiri hills are part of the same anti-development lobby which has been trying to stall all mega development projects in India as part of a wider conspiracy by certain western intelligence and funding agencies to stall the economic progress of the country. It was also aimed to strengthen the ongoing proselytisation drive by Christian missionaries in the remote and tribal areas in the country. The Christian NGO activists like Stan Thekkekara, his wife Mari Marcel Thekkekara and son Tarsh Thekkekara of ACCORD and Mathew John of Keystone Foundation who work among the Adivasi inhabitants of the Nilgiri hills with the avowed objective of their socio-economic upliftment are in reality prompted and motivated by their prime objective of promoting Christianity in the area. These activists do not want any developmental activities in the area as it will improve the employment prospects and general well-being of the people in the area. They want the local Adivasis to remain poor and backward and depend upon the Christian NGOs in the area for any financial or material help which alone will help the Christian activists to fulfill their mission. This explains their total opposition and stiff resistance to all development projects in the area. The environmental activists and international organisations like WWF are all linked to this wider conspiracy. It may be noted that the WWF-India had played a key role in organizing anti-project agitations both within India and outside in opposing and thwarting a mega port project in Dahanu (Maharashtra) in 1989.

The decision of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to deny permission to the INO project at Singara in Nilgiri hills had shocked and disheartened all the scientists associated with the project. The INO scientists along with the Geological Survey of India had identified Singara as the best available and most suitable site to locate the INO, based on various factors like safety, seismicity and year-round accessibility. A dedicated team of scientists had tirelessly worked for six years and had completed all the necessary spade work for locating the most prestigious science lab in the country at Singara. But all their efforts, dedication, patriotic spirit and their enthusiasm for neutrino research have all gone in vain. The Singara site for the neutrino lab been rejected for the silliest excuse of it being a tiger reserve and an elephant corridor. There are any number of tiger reserves and elephant corridors in the country. Where as,

the Singara site was the place best-suited for the proposed science lab. The Singara region was declared as a tiger reserve only in 2008, whereas the forest clearance for the neutrino lab was pending since 2006. It looks, as if, the area was declared as a tiger reserve only to help and strengthen the lobby campaigning for scuttling the neutrino project at Singara. The prestigious Neutrino Observatory (INO), the country's biggest-ever research facility for basic sciences, which was scheduled to be commissioned in 2012 will now be considerably delayed.

Who sabotaged the Singara project and Why?

Former president Dr. Abdul Kalam and many top nuclear scientists in the country, including former Atomic Energy Commission Chairman late P.K. Iyengar, had shown a keen interest in early completion of the neutrino project at Singara. In August, 2009, eleven leading physicists, including Nobel laureates Sheldon Glashow and Masatoshi Koshihara, had written to India's prime minister Manmohan Singh urging him to intervene to push forward the project. They wrote that "The INO will bring more big science to India and enhance India's role as an important player in front-line science". (NATURE / Vol 461/24 September 2009). But despite efforts by such veterans, the Singara project was scuttled on the ground that the site fell in the buffer zone of a tiger reserve area which was also an elephant corridor. Obviously there were people more powerful than the prime minister who were bent upon sabotaging the project.

It is a well-known fact that the foreign-funded NGOs, environmental and human rights activists are opposed to all mega development projects in India in their bid to block or delay the economic and technological progress of India. The delayed, blocked or abandoned mega development projects in India include Narmada dam project (M.P. and Gujarat), POSCO steel project in Orissa, Vedanta mines in Orissa, Dahanu port project in Maharashtra (abandoned), nuclear power projects at Haripur in West Bengal, Jaitapur in Maharashtra and Koodankulam in Tamil Nadu. Now the prime minister himself has come out against the role of foreign-funded NGOs in stirring up opposition to the Koodankulam nuclear power project in Tamil Nadu. But, the proposed neutrino laboratory is not a mega development project. Why should there be such a fierce opposition to a basic science laboratory planned to be built beneath a hill in the jungles of Tamil Nadu?

Importance of neutrino research

The neutrino science is not just a new science, but it is the science of the future. The whole universe is filled with neutrinos. Trillions of neutrinos pass through our bodies every minute, unhindered. And yet, the scientists know very little about these elusive mystery particles. Thousands of scientists all over the world are engaged in unveiling the hidden mysteries of these elusive particles. The experiments being carried out by the European Organization for Nuclear research (CERN) at its research lab in Geneva are also linked with the neutrino research. The proton-colliding experiments at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at Geneva with tentative evidence for the existence of Higgs boson (the God particle) has already created a sensation among the scientific community in the world. The CERN lab in Geneva had shocked the world

in September, 2011, with its findings that the sub-atomic particles called neutrinos could travel marginally faster than light, which contradicted Albert Einstein's 1905 Special Theory of Relativity. Einstein's theory said that nothing can travel faster than light, and that doing so would be like travelling back in time. The faster-than light finding was recorded when 15000 neutrino beams were pumped over three years from CERN to an underground Italian laboratory at Gran Sasso near Rome in 2011. After shocking the world with such a sensational finding, the scientists at CERN themselves have now expressed doubts about the accuracy of the neutrino timing measurements recorded during their experiment, called OPERA, and further experiments are being carried out to reconfirm their claim. If found correct, this finding could overturn one of the fundamental principles of modern physics. Scientists may not succeed in disproving Einstein's Theory of Relativity. But the neutrino research is certain to open the floodgate of new revelations that could shock the mankind. We will now come to know more about the black hole, antimatter, dark matter and dark energy. The neutrino research is expected to change the complexion of the universe as it is perceived today. The exciting possibilities of neutrino research may prove the science fiction events shown in "Star Trek" as insignificant. However, the neutrino technology, just as the nuclear energy, will also have its use in military application. It is possible that those who master the neutrino technology will rule the earth in future. Imagine a situation where we can tap the dark energy and send an invisible dark energy beam to destroy an enemy country. Yes, it is a possible "Star Trek" like future scenario. Is it not clear now why the West sabotaged the Singara project? The West will not allow us to develop any crucial technology on our own. We always have to contend with being a borrower. Because there are any number of traitors in the country who are ready to collaborate with the Western agencies, and sabotage crucial projects like the one at Singara. Just as the black hole, the antimatter, dark matter and dark energy are all real. In fact, it is reported that the universe is made of mostly dark matter and dark energy. The neutrino research will help to shed more light on all such hidden secrets and mysteries.

War on Indian Economy (Concluding part)

During the first year of the Gregorian calendar, the world economy was dominated by China and India, both together commanding about 57 % of the world's GDP. At this time, the Western Europe accounted for only 14 % of the world's GDP. By A.D.1500-1700 period, Europe's GDP was able to catch up with that of China and India. The Second Industrial Revolution of the 19th century allowed the Western Europe's GDP grow even higher and also brought about the rapid rise of the US as an important economic power. By 1950, the Western Europe and the US together, driven by the technological advancement, commanded about 54% of the world's GDP. But this combined percentage has now fallen to about 40% of the world's GDP. Japan was the only country in the east which matched the western economic advancement in the post-World War II period up to seventies. But China's rise as a new economic super power since 1970s is the most notable feature of the last two-three decades. The early years of the third millennium also saw the emergence of India as a major economic power. Some of the smaller

countries that have also registered rapid and impressive economic growth in the recent past include South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. (Lloyd's Investment Blog, November 2006).

From the present trend, it is clear that China and India which once ruled the world economy are destined to win back their preeminent position in the world economy soon. It is almost certain now that China, with its large population (1.3 billion people) and a fast-growing economy (around 10% per annum), is likely to emerge as the largest economy in the world in terms of GDP within a decade. India with a population that is projected to overtake China around 1930 and with a moderately growing economy is also likely to emerge as major economic power soon. Thus both China and India are poised to dominate the world economy once again, a position which was temporarily usurped by the western powers on the strength of their technological advancement.

According to a recent forecast made by global property firm Knight Frank and City Private Bank, India will outpace China to become the world's largest economy by 2050, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$86 trillion. The same report says that China will overtake the US to become the world's largest economy by 2020, which in turn will be overtaken by India in 2050. The Indian economy will reach a size of \$85.97 trillion in terms of purchasing power parity by 2050 while Chinese GDP would be around \$80.02 trillion by then. The report further says that the US, currently the world's largest economy, is expected to have a GDP of only \$39.07 trillion by 2050. The nationalist Indians who may get carried away by such reports are advised to exercise some caution. These are motivated reports cooked up at the behest of certain western agencies to mislead the Indian public and put them in a state of complacency. The bitter truth is that the US, which is presently dominating the world with its economic and military might, is not expected to give up its super power status to any other country that easily. The US will go to any length to stop any other country from overtaking it to become a greater economic and military power. Such a stance may appear to be guided by an unethical and unjustified principle and a destructive philosophy. But the US may justify its action as tactics necessitated by its own survival and self-preservation. The US goal for continued world domination has the total support of its NATO allies and the church.

The US think tanks know that it is the size and population of countries like China and India that has helped them to become powerful nations and aspire for super power status. Hence, the main agenda for the US and its allies for the coming years will be to ensure the difficult task of breaking up India and China. The western strategic experts are aware of the extremely difficult task ahead in breaking up China, which has already emerged as a major economic and military power, ruled by a communist dictatorial regime. Despite the difficulties involved, the western powers are determined to use all their skills and resources to weaken and break up China. It is in tune with this strategy that the western block is doing everything possible to whip

up separatist tendencies in most vulnerable regions of China ie Tibet and Xinjiang, by using civil rights groups and Muslim fundamentalist forces. The growing intensity of the struggle for independence by the Lamas in Tibet by way of self-immolations, etc, and the violent insurgency and terrorism in the Xinjiang province of China are amply aided and encouraged by the western intelligence agencies. The western strategists believe that the increasing awareness of liberty and freedom of thought being brought about in the minds of youngsters in China by dissemination of information through internet's various social networking sites will ultimately propel the Chinese people to seek for more political rights and reforms and bring about an end to the present one-party political rule in China and also pave the way for separation of restive Tibetan and Xinjiang regions.

As far as the super power ambitions of India are concerned, the western powers are least worried. The western intelligence agencies have already built up a very strong and powerful network of agents in India covering every section of Indian society, including senior politicians, bureaucrats, armed forces personnel, judges, academics, journalists, environmentalists and civil rights activists, who are prepared to do anything to serve the interests of the US. Some of the western agents inducted into certain key political positions have also helped to build up such a strong and powerful network of agents in India, by offering them with lucrative positions of power. The western strategists are confident that these agents, who work as a fifth column, would ensure the break up of India in the not too distant future. This assessment of the western think tanks cannot be dismissed lightly in view of what is happening in India presently. The signs are very clear. India is slowly, but steadily, drifting towards chaos and disintegration.

Anti-development lobby

There is a very powerful anti-development lobby built up by the fifth columnists in India, which is engaged in opposing all developmental activities in the country as part of its efforts to paralyse the Indian economy. These lobbyists, mainly consisting of environmentalists NGO and human rights activists, supported, financed and controlled by certain western intelligence agencies are opposed to the emergence of India as an economic super power. They are bent upon blocking all our big development projects in the country and stalling India's economic progress. Earlier, only some of the mega development projects in the country were opposed by the anti-development lobby, where as today every development project in India is opposed by this lobby raking up environmental, livelihood and displacement issues. The anti-development lobby has been particularly harsh in targeting certain vital industrial projects like uranium mining, nuclear and thermal power plants, cement and steel plants and new dams and ports. The aim of this lobby appears to be to stall all new major industrial projects in the country or at least to cause maximum delay in implementation of every such project so as to cause maximum damage to the country's economy. In accordance with this strategy, the work on all major development projects in the country is either stalled or delayed now because of the environmental or other issues raked by the antidevelopment activists. Some of the vital industrial projects in the country that have

been stalled or delayed by this lobby include the POSCO steel plant in Orissa, Koodankulam nuclear power project in Tamil nadu, Jaitapur nuclear power project in Maharashtra, Neutrino research laboratory in Tamil Nadu and Vedanta project in Orissa.

There is a common strategy and pattern in organizing resistance movements against various development projects in the country. As soon as the location of a mega project is announced, the state level leaders of the NGO-environmental lobby visit the location and conduct a thorough study of the area and population and also meet some of the influential leaders of the local tribal/ Dalit villagers and manage to win over their confidence and support with their money power. The NGO activists then put the village elders under constant brainwashing sessions to poison their minds about the possible ill-effects of the project on their health and livelihood because of the air and water pollution, loss of livelihood and displacement of the people. Together, they soon start a massive campaign among the local villagers against the project informing them about the disastrous consequences that they will have to face if the said project is allowed to come up in their area. They also help and encourage the villagers to set up taluka and village level action committees to coordinate a people's resistance movement against the project. After mobilizing a sizable section of the local villagers against the proposed project, the NGO activists also approach the local political parties, especially the left parties, for their support for the anti-project agitation and manage to win their backing by luring them with an opportunity to make political capital out of the simmering discontent among the local villagers against the project. All such resistance movements against various development projects in the country also enjoy the total support of different Naxal groups including the CPI (Maoist), the most dominant Naxal group in the country. Given below please find a brief report on some of the vital industrial projects that have been stalled, delayed or abandoned by the destructive tactics of the antidevelopment activists in the country.

Haripur Nuclear power project in West Bengal

The Government of India had decided to set up a 10000 MW nuclear power project at Haripur in East Midnapur district in West Bengal in 2005 in collaboration with a Russian firm. The villagers in the area under the guidance of National Fish Workers Forum led by Fr. Thomas Kochery and some other NGO activists have been opposing this project since September, 2006 citing displacement of people and loss of livelihood. Thousands of villagers had gathered at Haripur in November, 2006 to block the entry of a 12-member site selection panel from the Department of Atomic Energy, who were scheduled to visit Haripur. The Government of India had finally awarded the contract to build the power station to the Russian state-owned firm Atomstroyexport on October 16, 2009. The Andolan leaders however are in no mood to allow the authorities to go ahead with the project. Faced with the continued opposition from local villagers, the Russian firm has already intimated its unwillingness to undertake the project at the given site and has sought an alternate site outside West Bengal. After the initial hesitation, the Union government is reported to have acceded to the Russian request and is now looking for a new site for the project outside West Bengal. Thus a project, which is already delayed by six

years, will have to go through the whole process again, right from the site selection exercise. Status : Indefinitely delayed. Government is now looking for a new site.

Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant

As part of India's ambitious programme of expanding its nuclear power production capacity, the Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) had proposed to build two nuclear power plants of 1650-MW each at Jaitapur in Ratnagiri district, about 300 km south of Mumbai with further expansion programme of converting the project into a nuclear power park with a production capacity of 10000 MW. This is the first site chosen to build nuclear power plants with foreign collaboration. The NPCIL had already contracted Areva of France for the reactors, each estimated to cost around \$7 billion, after France became the first country to sign an agreement on civil nuclear cooperation with India in September 2008 following the lifting of international restrictions by the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

The Maharashtra government had given the nod for the project in 2006 and had started the land acquisition drive in the five villages in Ratnagiri district. The project needs 968 hectares of land in the five villages with a population of 4000. Of the 938 hectares of land that will house six imported light water reactors from France, 94 per cent of land is non-agricultural and privately owned. The land acquisition process was however running behind schedule because of the anti-project campaign undertaken by some NGO activists who conducted exhibitions, street rallies and door to door campaigns to warn the people about the immense damage that the nuclear plants could cause to the people and environment. They have created a scare among the local villagers that the proposed project posed a definite threat of radiation-related health hazards and also will hit the livelihood of the people and may lead to disastrous consequences in case of an accident or natural calamities like earth quakes. The activists through a PIL had managed to obtain a stay from the Mumbai High Court against the last acquisition for the project in the last week of June, 2009. But the state government was able to get it vacated within a few weeks, and subsequently the PIL was quashed by the court. On 22d. January 2010, the state government completed the land acquisition process for the proposed Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant (JNPP) despite opposition from the local villagers and the required 938 hectares of land was handed over to Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL).

In April, 2010 the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report prepared by the Nagpur office of the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute had given a green clearance to the project. At a public hearing held by the collector at Madban village on May 16, 2010, a section of the villagers controlled by the activists voiced their protest against the failure of the concerned authorities in making available copies of the EIA report to the gram panchayats of four of the five affected villages. They also submitted written objections in this regard. On June 9, 2010 a delegation of local leaders and activists representing organizations like Konkan Bahao Samiti, Janhit Seva Samiti, Lok Vidnyan Samiti and the Indian School of Social Sciences met Environment and Forests minister Jairam Ramesh in New Delhi and explained to him about the strong opposition to the proposed nuclear power plant at Jaitapur and also the thermal power plants coming up in the area from the local villagers. They described the EIA report prepared by the Nagpur office of NEERI on Jaitapur as unscientific and criticized the entire exercise beginning with the site selection, radiological tests as well as issues relating to reactor designs and storage of spent fuel as shoddy and sought the minister's intervention to stall the project

They had also raised serious concerns over the short-term and long-term hazards of the nuclear waste generated by the Jaitapur project. The minister assured them that the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa would conduct a thorough study on all aspects of the Jaitapur nuclear power project and the other eight thermal power plants in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts and all their objections and concerns over the controversial projects would be addressed scientifically by an expert appraisal committee of the ministry, before giving the clearance. These plants together are expected to generate about 31000 MW of power.

The protest campaign against the Jaitapur project is led by retired Supreme Court judge P.B.Sawant, Former Admiral L.Ramdas, retired high court judge B.G.Kolse-Patil, RTI activist G.R.Vora, Naxalite leader Arun Vilaskar and NGO activists Medha Patkar and Vaishali Patil. Present status; Project is indefinitely delayed.

Koodankulam nuclear power project

Tamil Nadu is going through a serious power crisis. The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) on February 25, 2012 announced power holiday for industrial units across the state from March 1. The TANGEDCO has divided the state into six regions and on the day mentioned for each region, the industrial units located in the region concerned will not be able to draw supply. As regards the domestic category, the consumers in the state will have to bear with four hours of load shedding every day. Such a situation has arrived as while the electricity demand in the state ranges from 11500 MW to 12500 MW, the total availability from internal generation, Central Generating Station and other sources is only 8500 MW. More over there has not been any major capacity addition in recent years due to delay in completion of some of the ongoing projects. The first phase (1000 MW) of the Kudankulam nuclear power project was to be commissioned in December, 2011 and the second phase (another 1000 MW plant) six months later. But even the commissioning of the first phase has now been withheld due to opposition to the project from some sections of activists and villagers, backed by some foreign-funded NGOs and Tamil militant groups.

Within days of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's assertion in an interview in the latest issue of Science that some of the US-funded NGOs were behind the agitation against the Koodankulam nuclear power project in Tamil Nadu, the government on February 28 booked four NGOs for alleged violation of the Foreign Contributions Regulations Act (FCRA) and deported one German national, namely, Sonnteg Reiner Hermann, for his role in stirring up anti-Koodankulam protests. The four non-governmental organizations (NGOs) being probed for links with Koodankulam protests had received not less than Rs.36.37 crore as foreign donations from 2006 to 2011. According to home ministry officials, the four NGOs which have been stopped from receiving foreign contributions are the Tuticorin Diocesan Association, Rural Uplift Center, Good Vision Charitable Trust and Trust for Rural Uplift and Education. The chief functionaries of these NGOs have been identified as Father Yvon Ambrose, Maria James, Manoj Thangaraj and J. Napoleon, respectively. The ministry found that the Tuticorin Association received Rs.20.1 crore while the Rural Uplift Center received Rs.13.4 crore as foreign contributions from

2006 to 2011. V. Narayanasami, Minister In-Charge of PMO, said on February 27 at Chennai that permission to collect funds by two organizations run by Tuticorin Roman Catholic Bishop Yvon Ambroise and the South Asian Community Centre for Education and Research run by S.P.Udayakumar, who is leading the anti-Koodankulam protests, had been stopped and they had been asked to explain their conduct. MOS for home Mullappally Ramachandran had stated in Rajya Sabha on March 14, 2012 that more than Rs 31000 crore of foreign contribution was received by different NGOs in the country between 2007 and 2010.

Rally in Chennai

Tamil nationalist groups, Dalit outfits and human rights organizations were in the forefront in organizing a seminar and rally in Chennai on February 26, 2012 to express their solidarity with the People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy (PMANE) in its campaign against Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNKP). Most vociferous among those who opposed the government's nuclear policy included Viduthalai Chiruthaikal Katchi (VCK) leader and MP Thol Thirumavalavan, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) president V,Suresh, Sundararajan of Poovulagin Nanbargal, Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam leader Kolathur Mani and Nam Tamizhar Iyakkar leader Seeman.

Cost escalation

As per the original plan, the first unit of the Koodankulam project was to be completed in December 2007 which was subsequently revised to mid-2010. This was further revised to September 2011 when the anti-nuclear protests broke out in Kudankulam.

The first inter-governmental Agreement for setting up two 1000 MW light water reactors was signed between India and erstwhile USSR in 1988. A supplement to the agreement was signed with the Russian Federation in 1998. The ground breaking for the Koodankulam project was done in September 2001. The NPCIL and Russia's Atomstroy Export formally inked a deal for building two more civil nuclear reactors of 1000 MW each at Koodankulam in 2011. India has plan to build a total of 12 nuclear reactors of which six would be built between 2012 and 2017.

The first of the two units of the 2000 MW Koodankulam nuclear power project which was to be commissioned in December 2011 has now been put off indefinitely. Earlier, the deadline was pushed back by three months to March 2012 and then to May 2012 by the state-owned Nuclear Power Corporation Limited (NPCIL). The estimated project cost was originally pegged at Rs.13,171 crore. The cost is now expected to be Rs.15,824 crore, which indicates a cost escalation of Rs.2,653 crore, because of the delay in commissioning the project as a result of the organized protests. The first unit, which deploys a Russian "VVER-1000" series reactor, is 99.2 percent complete, while the second unit is 94.6 percent complete.

<http://www.b-s.co.in/india/news/kudankulam-plant-delay-costs-pegged-at-rs-2653-cr/152327/on>

Changing agenda

Chairman and Managing Director of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited S.K.Jain and Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Srikumar Banerji said on February 27, 2012 that even after all the queries on safety, quality, health and all other aspects were answered by experts, some people were still asking questions about reprocessing of fuel which had nothing to do with the Koodankulam plant. They were talking to journalists on the sidelines of an international conference on “Characterisation and Quality Control of Nuclear Fuels” in Hyderabad. The work on Koodankulam project had been going on smoothly since March 31, 2002. After the Fukushima incident, the experts in the field had made detailed submissions removing all fears and doubts in the minds of the local people. From September, 2011, the activists intensified the agitation not only against the safety of the nuclear power plant, but the nuclear power itself. They are now raising questions about reprocessing of spent fuel and production of plutonium for Fast Breeder Reactor, etc, which is quite irrelevant to the safety of Koodankulam project. Clearly some outside forces, lobbyists and international green activists with the help of some local activists are trying to block India’s progress in nuclear technology.

India has plans to augment nuclear power by pushing up the nuclear power generation to 63000 MW by 2032 with about 35000 to 40000 MW of power coming from the imported reactors. According to Dr. Jain, 20 new nuclear power reactors would be established in the country within the next five years at a cost of Rs.3 lakh crore.

Role of church in stirring up anti-nuclear plant agitation

The church, especially the catholic church, had always played an important role in inciting the local people, mainly the fishermen, in opposing the Kudankulam nuclear power plant raising issues like the displacement of people, loss of livelihood and safety of the people after the Fukushima accident. It is an open secret that most of the NGOs and environmental groups opposed to the Koodankulam nuclear power plant are funded by Christian NGOs. It is also worth noting that on March 8, 2012, the Tamil Nadu bishop Council, representing the Roman Catholic Centre, had accused the UPA government of targeting Christians for backing villagers opposed to the Koodankulam nuclear power plant. The Council charged that the cases initiated against NGOs, most of them backed by Christian institutions, for alleged violations of Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act were meant to harass the Christian community.

Addressing a news conference in Chennai , S.A. Bhardwage, director-technical at NPCIL claimed on march 8,2012, that the delay caused by the Kundalam agitation in commissioning the project was causing a revenue loss of Rs.5 crore per day to NPCIL. Fishing in the troubled waters,German physicist and Nobel Peace Laureate Hans Peter Duerr, who is also the Director Emeritus of Max-Planck Institute for Physics, Germany, said in Chennai on March 8, 2012, that

nuclear energy could never be safe or sustainable option for the mankind and any claims to the contrary were nonsensical.

The long stand off between the centre and Tamil Nadu government over the Koodankulam nuclear power plant finally ended on march 19, with the Tamil Nadu cabinet giving approval for the early commissioning of the plant. The decision was followed by a crackdown on anti-nuclear protesters who had held up the plant's commissioning for last six months. Earlier an expert panel led by M.R.Srinivasan, former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, had given a clean chit to the plant. The first reactor is now expected to become operational within next 4 to 6 months.

Power Sector

There are 13 commissioned hydro electric power plants in the Himalayan valleys spread across Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh run by the National Hydro Power Corporation Ltd.(NHPCL). The NHPCL should have generated more than 34000 MW of power by 2007 as per the target set under the country's 10th Five-Year Plan. Where as currently, the output from these plants is only about 7000 MW. According to NHPCL authorities this has happened because of the delay in getting various departmental clearances. At the present pace, the NHPCL can produce only 12000 MW by 2012. The NHPCL authorities had earlier claimed that it could produce up to 50280 MW of hydropower by 2012, 80280 MW by 2017 and 1.47 lakh MW by 2027 through its various projects if all the bureaucratic and other hurdles plaguing their projects are removed by the concerned agencies on time. The NHPCL also has 11 hydropower projects under construction which can produce 4622 MW of power by 2016. But the progress of these projects is also slow. There are 20 other new projects presently under survey which can generate 14000 MW of power. But this can happen only if necessary clearances are given on time.

Taipaimukh Irrigation and Power Project

The Taipaimukh irrigation and power project with 1500 MW power generation capacity in Manipur, conceived about more than 15 years ago, is still held on hold due to opposition from NGO and environmental lobby. The dam, estimated to cost over 4000 crore, would generate 1500 MW of power, control recurring floods in the Barak valley in Assam, irrigate vast areas resulting in a saving of Rs.150 crore annually to Assam and provide 12 per cent of power free of charge to Manipur. But the project is indefinitely delayed because of opposition from the NGO lobby, ULFA and other militant groups in Assam and Manipur.

Hanakon Thermal Power Plant

The Ind-Bharath Thermal Power Company is setting up a 500 MW thermal power plant at Honakon in Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka at an estimated cost of Rs.1800 crore. However a section of the local villagers backed by some environmental activists have been opposing the project alleging that the fly-ash from the power plant will pollute the area and environment and cause serious health hazards to the people. The environmental clearance for the project was given by the Centre in June, 2009. With the support and guidance of the activists, the Honakon Gram Panchayat soon adopted a resolution criticizing the construction activities of the project at the plant site without the consent of the Gram Panchayat and asking the project

authorities to remove all the structures illegally built at the site immediately. When it was ignored by the project authorities, the Gram Panchayat issued a notice to the project site-officer asking him to demolish the said structures by 29th.July,2009. Though the site officer had agreed to remove all the structures by the stipulated date, no action was taken to demolish the structures. On 30th.July a violent mob of villagers who tried to storm the project premises clashed with the police and a number of villagers and some police personnel were injured in the incident. About 50 villagers were arrested by the police in this connection. As per the call given by the NGO activists, a one-day bandh was observed at Honakon on 2nd. August,2009 in protest against the alleged police brutalities against the villagers. The agitation against the power plant will now be further intensified and the project will be scrapped. Because no project can be set up in any village in India without the consent of the Gram Panchayat. That is what the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) says.

Alibaug Thermal Power Plants.

The Tata Power and Reliance Group had signed MOUs with the government of Maharashtra on April 4th.2005 for setting up thermal power plants of 2400 MW and 4000 MW capacity respectively in Alibaug taluka of Raigad district. The ISPAT and Patni Groups have also later decided to set up two power plants with 2000 and 500 MW capacity respectively in the same region. About 8500 acres of land would be required for setting up these coal-based power plants. However some villagers in the area have been resisting land acquisition for these projects since last four years on the ground of environmental pollution. The villagers under the guidance of some Greenpeace India activists are asking the government to scrap these coal-based power plants and instead to look for cleaner renewable energy sources. The villagers held a demonstration at Khidki village in Raigad on 30th. July,2009 in protest against the proposal for thermal power plants. Admiral (Rtd.) L.Ramdas and Greenpeace activists Lalita Ramdas (wife of Admiral Ramdas) and Maitree Dasgupta are in the forefront of the agitation against these thermal power plants.

Gondia Thermal Power Plant

The principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) has rejected the proposal of Adani Powers for operating a captive coal mine in the vicinity of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) for its 1000 MW power plant in Gondia. Additional Chief Secretary (revenue and forest) confirmed on 10th. August,2009 about the receipt of the PCCF's report disallowing the allotment of the 1750-hectare coal block to the Adani Powers.

JSW's Jaigarh Thermal Power Project

JSW Energy Ltd, a subsidiary of OP Jindal Group, is setting up a 1200 MW thermal power project at Jaigad in Ratnagiri district. However some villagers influenced by some NGO activists are opposing the project on the ground of environmental pollution and health hazards. They have also formed an anti-project front called 'Ratnagiri Zilla Jagruk Manch' to coordinate their protest programmes. The JSW Energy Ltd. had signed a MOU with the Maharashtra government in 2005 to set up the proposed power project and a port at an estimated cost of 4800 crores. Ratnagiri-based Balachandra Nalwade, an opponent of the project, had filed a PIL before the Delhi HC against an order passed by the National Environment Appellate Authority on September 12, 2008 and the clearance given by the environment ministry for JSW's Jaigarh power project, describing the said order as illegal as it was based on unconfirmed data and

assumptions. The Delhi High Court has now asked the expert appraisal committee to reexamine the approval already granted by the Ministry of Environment and Forest and complete the exercise within three months and it has also restrained the JSW Energy from operating the 1200 MW thermal power plant at Jaigarh and integrating it with the power grid until the expert appraisal committee grants its specific approval.

East Coast Energy Ptd. Ltd. Thermal Power Plant at Kakarapalli

The East Coast Energy Private Ltd. (ECEPL) is setting up a 2640 MW thermal power plant at Kakarapalli in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh at a cost of about Rs.12000 crore. But some local villagers, mainly farmers and fishermen, influenced by some NGO leaders have been opposing this power plant raising the issues of loss of livelihood and ecological damage. The project work was stopped in 2010 due to violent agitation by the villagers. The work was however resumed later amid protests by the local villagers. On February 28, 2011, a violent mob of villagers attacked the police with stones, sticks and iron pipes. A police jeep was also burnt. The police had to open fire to disperse the crowd, resulting in the killing of two people. The work on the project has again been stalled following the mob violence and police firing. The first two units of the plant are scheduled to be commissioned by mid-2013.

Nagarjuna Thermal Power Plant at Gollagandi

The Nagarjuna Construction Company had undertaken the task of constructing a 2640 MW thermal power plant at Gollagandi in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh since last 3/4 years. It is a Rs.10000 crore project and the company had obtained all the clearances. However some of the local villagers influenced by some NGO activists were opposed to the power plant on the ground of loss of livelihood and environmental pollution. On July 14, 2010, the police had to open fire to disperse an unruly mob and restore order. Two people were killed in the incident and several others were injured. On July 15, 2010, the government withdrew the clearance given to the Nagarjuna Company for the power plant stating that most of the land allotted to the project was found to be wetland.

D.B.Power Plant at Dhabra in Janjgir-Champa district in Chattisgarh.

Sariya coal block at Dharmjaigarhat in Raigarh district, Chattisgarh has been allotted to the D.B.Power Ltd. for its captive mining to supply coal to the company's proposed 1320 MW thermal power plant at Dhabra in adjoining Janjgir-Champa district. The D.B.Power Ltd. is a subsidiary of D.B.Corp Ltd., the media conglomerate owned by Dainik Bhaskar group of companies. The Sariya coal block has an estimated reserve of about 91 million coal spread over six villages. Some sections of the villagers in the area, influenced by a powerful NGO lobby, however are opposed to both the coal mining and the power plant raising issues such as loss of livelihood of people and environmental pollution. On February 23, 2011, the D.B.Power's office at Dharmjaigarh was vandalized by some protesters. The villagers, misguided by some anti-national NGO activists from outside, are hell bent on scuttling this project.

Chamalapura Thermal Power Project, near Mysore, Karnataka.

The Karnataka government had initiated a move to set up a 1000 MW thermal power plant at Chamalapura, 20 km southwest of Mysore in August, 2007. The project, estimated to cost about Rs.5500 crore, will require about 3000 acres of land. However some local NGOs and environmentalists are opposing this project raking up environmental issues displacement of people.

Lower Subansiri hydelproject, Lakhimpur, Assam

Villagers of Lakhimpur, prompted by some NGOs like Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti and Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva-chatra Parishad, have been opposing the proposed 2000 MW Lower Subansiri Hydel Project by the NHPC near Assam-Arunachal border over environment and displacement issues. The protestors had enforced a blockade on NH-52 since November 29, 2011 to prevent the movement of vehicles transporting machinery and other equipments for the Subansiri project. The police resorted to a lathicharge on December 26 to disperse a crowd of protestors who were blocking the NH-52 in Lakhimpur. On December 27, the police had to open fire in the air and also resort to a lathicharge to disperse the protestors in Lakhimpur.

Hydropower project at Loharinag-Pala in Uttarakhand

The Centre on August 20, 2010 had withdrawn permission for the 600-MW hydropower project coming up at Loharinag-Pala in Uttarakhand following environmental concerns raised by some NGOs and locals. The Rs.2262-crore project which was sanctioned on February 8, 2005 was coming up on the river Bhagirathi. The state-run firm had already spent Rs.700 crore and made financial commitment worth crores of rupees. The NTPC had taken environmental clearance for the project before starting the work. As part of the construction work, tunnels and shafts have been dug through the mountains. The Centre will now have to pay Rs.600 crore to the promoters as compensation.

The other two minor projects, 480 MW Pala Maneri hydro project and 381 MW Bhaironghati hydro project coming up on the same river were already scrapped by the Centre earlier due to opposition from local groups who alleged that the plant will reduce the flow of the river venerated in the Hindu mythology.

Armed with a report by the Ganga River Basin Authority study, the NTPC has sought a review of the government's decision to shut down its Loharinag Pala hydel project in Uttarakhand. Status: Sanctioned in February,2005, all the three projects were scrapped midway in 2010.

Agitation against ports and dams

Narmada Valley project

The Narmada Valley project was first conceived in 1960s.The work was first started in 1978. The project, involving the construction of 31 major dams and 135 medium dams and 3000 minor dams, will be the largest irrigation dam in the world when completed. In 1985 Medha

Patkar came to the Narmada valley to study about the rehabilitation problems of the project-affected people and founded the Narmada Bachao Andolan to fight for their cause. She was supported in her campaign by many international NGOs and environmentalist groups. With the help of some international NGOs, she was able to get a Japanese government loan sanctioned to the Narmada project cancelled in 1990. She also managed to get another loan for the project sanctioned by the World Bank cancelled in 1993. Full-page advertisements opposing the Narmada project with endorsement by NGOs from 37 countries were also placed in major news papers of the world like the London Financial Times, The Washington Post and New York Times by Ms Patkar and her foreign NGO friends. The anti-dam activists had resorted to violence on many occasions in the past to stall the construction work of this project. The project, which faced a prolonged court battle and regular disruptions by anti-dam activists, is finally set to be completed by the end of 2012.

Vadhavan port in district Thane, Maharashtra.

An MOU was signed between the government of Maharashtra and Peninsular and Oriental (P&O) company of Australia in February, 1997 for construction of a 32-birth mega deep-sea port near Dahanu. But because of stiff opposition from some anti-development NGOs, the state government was forced to back out from the project in 1998. The networking NGOs led by Pradeep Prabhu had conducted protest campaigns against this project at local, state, central and international level. The protest campaign was also supported by international agencies like the WWF for Nature and Rufford Foundation. Leaders of many international NGOs and four British MPs belonging to Labour Party had also participated in a protest demonstration against this project held in front of the Indian High Commissioner's office in London in 1997.

Present status : Project was abandoned in 1998.

Umbargaon port in Gujarat

In September, 1998, the government of Gujarat had awarded a contract for the construction of a Rs.1200 crore port at Maroli in Umbargaon taluka in the state to an Indo-US consortium comprising of an American company Unocal and the Mumbai-based National Telecom firm. The action group NGOs led by Pradeep Prabhu, Thomas Kocheri and Medha Patkar organized a massive resistance campaign against the Maroli port. The protesters did not allow any survey work even in the deep sea. In April, 2000, a local NGO leader, Lt.Col.(Rtd.) Pratap Save, who got injured in a police lathi charge later died following a brain surgery. With the intensification of the agitation following the death of Pratap Save and deterioration in the law and order situation, the Unocal withdrew from the contract in 2000 and the project has since been abandoned.

New dam project in Dahanu

The government of Maharashtra has taken up a new drinking water project to provide drinking water to the people of Vasai-Virar area in Thane district. The project envisages the

construction of a dam on the River Susari at Ramshet in Dahanu at a cost of Rs.390 crores. But the so called environmental activists have already chalked out an agitational plan to stop the construction of this dam. Participating in a seminar on land issues held at St Andrew's College, Bandra on January 22, 2012, tribal activist Brian Lobo of Kashtakari Sanghatana opposed the very concept of construction of dam that paved the way for submergence of land. He announced the formation of Susari Dharan Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti by local residents and members of different political parties to oppose the dam. He was of the view that alternate methods of development could be explored to resolve the drinking water shortage in semi-urban areas like Vasai-Virar.

Agitation against steel, cement and other projects

POSCO steel plant in Orissa

The South Korean steel major POSCO is setting up a mega steel plant at Jagatsinghpur in Orissa at an estimated cost of Rs.52000 crores. The MOU for the project was signed in June, 2005. This will be the biggest ever single- project foreign investment in India. This project will give employment to about 13000 people and indirect employment to 35000 people. But some local NGOs guided by national level leaders like Medha Patkar and B.D.Sharma are opposing the project raking up environmental and livelihood issues. There had been many clashes in the past between the supporters and opponents of the project. The first phase of the project was scheduled to be completed in 2010. But the work on the project has not even started because of the confrontationist attitude of a section of the people backed by some NGO activists. The POSCO-India chairman Dong-He Lee had announced in 2009 that the company planned to start work at the site in early 2010. Reacting to this statement, Abhay Sanu, a local NGO activist and president of POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS) had warned the state government of a serious law and order situation in the area if the POSCO officials forced their entry into the project site.

On November 2, 2010, the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) recommended withdrawal of the forest clearance to the 52000 crore integrated steel plant project after it affirmed, like the two committees earlier, that the plant was going to come up in violation of the Forest Rights Act. The FRA requires that the rights of tribals and other traditional forest dwellers on forests be settled before the land is given to any private or public project. It is essential to secure concurrence of the affected gram sabhas for such diversions of forests where the villagers had traditional rights. The Orissa government was unable to secure the village council approvals and complete the legal process before starting the land acquisition process.

In 2011, the ministry of environment and forests gave an environmental clearance to the project with 28 additional conditions over and above what was stipulated in the original environmental clearance of July 2007. However, creating further hurdles against the project, the National Green Tribunal (TGT) on March 30, 2012 suspended the final 2011 environmental

order of the MoEF given in favour of the POSCO plant. The NGT did not cancel the original environmental clearance of 2007, but prepared the ground for imposing tough new conditions on the project after a detailed and stringent fresh review. The suspension of the 2011 order has again shrouded the project in doubt.

Present status: Work remains indefinitely suspended.

Kalinganagar steel plant in Orissa.

The Tata Steel is setting up a 6-million tonne steel plant at Kalinganagar in Orissa with an investment of Rs.16400 crore. The MOU for the same was signed in November,2004. But a section of the villagers under the banner of a local NGO, guided by national level NGO leaders like Medha Patkar and B.D.Sharma are opposing the project. On January 2, 2006, 13 local tribals were killed in police firing when a violent mob tried to attack the workers engaged in the construction of a boundary wall at the site. Since then the project work remains suspended as opponents of the project have intensified their agitation. The first phase of the project was to be completed in 2008, where as even the preliminary work on the project is yet to begin.

Status: Indefinitely delayed since January, 2006.

Arcelor Mittal Steel Plant in Jharkhand

World's largest steel maker Arcelor Mittal is setting up a 12 million ton per annum mega steel plant in Jharkhand at an estimated cost of 8.2 billion dollars. About 11000 acres of land would be required for the proposed plant. However some local villagers under the guidance of some NGO activists are opposing the proposed project raising the issue of loss of livelihood and displacement of people. Thousands of villagers armed with sickles and bows and arrows had held a protest rally in Jharkhand on 20th. October, 2008 opposing the proposed steel plant in the state. Thousands of pamphlets were also distributed by local NGO activists in the affected villages asking the villagers not to part with their land.

Status: Work on the project yet to start, because of local opposition.

Arcelor Mittal Steel Plant in Orissa

Arcelor Mittal is learnt to have started relocating its staff based in Orissa to other places generating speculation that the move might be a precursor to shelving of the Rs.50000 crore steel project in Orissa that is haunted by delays. Earlier in the year, Chairman and CEO of the company L.N.Mittal had criticized the Indian system of governance and had expressed his displeasure over the delays and other problems faced by the company in Orissa and Jharkhand. The MOU for the Orissa project was signed in December 2006.

Status: Indefinitely delayed.

Utkal Alumina Project in Orissa.

The Utkal Alumina International Ltd. was formed in 1992 as a joint venture by INDAL, Alcan, a Canadian firm and Hydro Aluminium of Norway, for setting up a bauxite mining plant and an alumina refinery at Kashipur in Rayagada district of Orissa at an initial estimated cost of Rs.4500 crore. The environmental clearance for the project was given in September, 1995. However a section of local villagers and some environmental and NGO activists have been opposing this project from the very beginning. The anti-project agitation by the villagers took a violent turn on December 16, 2000 leading to police firing in which 3 people were killed. Following this incident, the Norway firm withdrew from the project in 2001. In July, 2007 Alcan, the second partner, also sold its stake in the project to INDAL because of the continued uncertainty over the project. Thus the project started in 1995 is yet to be completed.

Status : Indefinitely delayed since December, 2000..

Titanium Project in South Tamil Nadu

The Tata Steel's Rs.2500 crore titanium dioxide project which was scheduled to come up at Sathankulam in Thirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu is still in limbo as the steel major was not able to acquire the required land i.e. about 10000 acres for the project. The project was first initiated by Rattan Tata in 2002 with the signing of a MOU with the state government led by DMK for a feasibility study. But in the subsequent assembly elections in 2002 when the rival political outfit AIADMK came to power, the project was put in cold storage. However with the DMK coming back to power in 2006, the Tata Steel could renew the agreement through a fresh MOU signed with the state government in June 2007. The MOU allows the company to mine ilmenite in Sathankulam in Tamil Nadu. The ilmenite when processed yields titanium metal and titanium dioxide (TiO₂), both valuable products. India's ilmenite resources are estimated at more than 21 percent of global deposits, but much of it has not been tapped. Instead, the country is importing most of its annual consumption of 70000 tons of TiO₂ and titanium metal needed by us for use in defence and space research. Global demand for this metal is rising and other major industrialized countries like the US and Russia have already stockpiled large quantities of this strategic metal

The project complex will include a mineral processing plant to produce titanium dioxide pigment and a coal-fired thermal power plant at Sathankulam and a seawater desalination plant at Kulasekharapattinam, a seaside fishing hamlet located about 12 miles away from the mining site. The project would have created job opportunities for thousands of local people. However the local villagers misguided by some NGO activists have been opposing this project pointing out that ilmenite mining operations and loss of land will destroy their traditional way of life, pollute the environment and deprive the villagers of their subsistence on palmira tree farming. Though 90 per cent of the land sought to be acquired is barren and unfit for agricultural use, a section of the villagers influenced by an NGO lobby continues to oppose the land acquisition for the project.

Status: Project in deep freeze. Likely to be abandoned due to continued opposition to land acquisition by the villagers.

Nandigram SEZ

The West Bengal government had signed a deal with Indonesia's Salim group in 2006 to set up a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at Nandigram in East Midnapur. This SEZ would have become the biggest petro-chemical hub in West Bengal, with an investment of more than Rs. 10000 crore. But it was abandoned in 2007 because of a violent agitation by Trinamul Congress, supported by the NGO lobby and Maoists, opposing the land acquisition for the project.

Status : Abandoned in 2007.

Nayachal SEZ

The chemical hub originally planned to set up at Nandigram by the government of West Bengal and Salim group of Indonesia has now been shifted to Nayachal in East Midnapur district, West Bengal. The Central government has already cleared the project. But there also the project is facing stiff opposition from the Bhoomi Uchhed Pratirodh Committee of Trinamul Congress, Maoists and NGO lobby, who have raked up the issue of environmental and water pollution.

Status: Work yet to start.

Tata Small Car Project at Singur

The Tata small car project at Singur, West Bengal involving an investment of about Rs.15000 crore was also abandoned in 2008 due to violent agitation by Trinamul Congress and NGO lobby and Maoists, who were opposed to the land acquisition for the project.

Status : Abandoned in 2008, the project was shifted to Sanand in Gujarat.

Navi Mumbai Airport

The CIDCO had got the in-principal approval from the ICAO for the proposed new airport at Navi Mumbai in 2006. However the Environment and Forest Ministry has been delaying this project since then, raising various questions and objections over CRZ violations and destruction of mangroves. Of the 1140 hectares earmarked for the airport, one-fourth of the land falls under CRZ. Final clearance from the Environment and Forest ministry was at last given in November, 2010.

Status : Work on the project has started in 2011, after an initial delay of five years.

Lafarge cement plant in Himachal Pradesh

The Indian government on September 13, 2010 has overturned the environmental approval given to the French industrial giant Lafarge to build a \$200 million cement plant in Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh, 100 km north of Shimla. The National Environment Appellate Authority has ruled against the proposed plant citing local economy and wildlife. The panel said that the project would create dispossession, impoverishment and trauma to locals. The

HP cabinet had given approval to Lafarge for its proposed cement plant with annual capacity of three million tones. Output from the plant was expected to feed nearby dam projects. Himachal has extensive limestone quarries, a key ingredient in cement production.

Lafarge plant in Meghalaya

Acting on a petition moved by Shella Action Committee (SAC), the Supreme Court on February 5, 2010 had stayed mining of limestone in Nongtraï village within Shella Confederacy in Meghalaya, thereby stopping supply of raw material to Lafarge Surma's \$225 million cement plant at Chhatak in Bangladesh's Sunamgang. Now the tribals in Nongtraï village in Meghalaya have come out in support of Lafarge Umium and requested the Supreme Court to allow it to resume mining of limestone. The environment ministry, after conducting a rapid assessment had given clearance to the project in April, 2010, under the Forest Conservation Act asking Lafarge Umium to pay over Rs.100 crore towards afforestation and environmental conservation. However the matter was not seriously followed up by the apex court given the strong opposition from the SAC and amicus curiae to resumption of mining without proper environmental management plan.

A recent affidavit filed by Nongtraï Village Darbar (DVD), Shella Confederacy, had asserted that Lafarge mining area clearly fell within the limits of Nongtraï village and accused the SAC of misleading the court by informing that Nongtraï village had nothing to do with the Lafarge project. The NVD in its affidavit pointed out that the revenue given to the Durbar by Lafarge Umium had brought prosperity to the tribal village. It said that till December 2009, the village had received about Rs.3.15 crore and this amount was distributed equally among all families with the result each household receiving about Rs.1.40 lakh. The affidavit further stated that the lease rent amount and the employment avenues being generated by the project will bring further prosperity to the village and surrounding areas and will improve the living standard of the local villagers.

Comments

Given above is only a sample list of development projects stalled, delayed or abandoned by the relentless efforts of the anti development lobby in India, supported and financed by an international lobby of NGO, human rights and environmental activists with the aim of stalling the country's economic growth. There are thousands of similar projects stalled or delayed all over the country. The anti development lobby is active in India since seventies. But it is only after the installation of the UPA regime, this lobby has started getting the patronage of the ruling class itself.

Coal crisis

It has been widely reported by the media that most of the thermal power plants in the country are presently faced with an impending disaster because of fast-depleting coal-stock positions. The power generation losses could reach paralysing proportions if Coal India Limited (CIL) continues to miss the supply target. For instance, in April-November period in 2011, the CIL supplied 192.5 million tonnes of coal as against a target of 221 MT. During the same period, coal-based power generation has been 370.8 billion units as against the targeted 375.1 BUs. This situation could lead to defaults in power supply by units as per their power purchase agreements and defaults in debt repayments due to capacity non-recovery, when loss-making power utilities were already rushing to banks for restructuring loans. With the coal as a nationalized mineral, the

CIL has a monopoly on coal and those who depend on it. The import of coal has been steadily rising because of the inefficiencies of the CIL. In another development, Fitch Ratings has warned that rising costs of imported coal and a declining rupee could push some power utilities to defaults on debts. Fitch estimated that the average cost of generation could rise to Rs.4.41 per kilowatt hour for projects relying entirely on imported coal, from the current average of Rs.2.29, if the current trends continue.

The Coal India Limited on December 26, 2011, expressed concern over the coal crisis in the country and warned that the country may face paucity of 1000 million tons of coal within the next five years if the government did not address its production constraints. It said that the coal reserves in the country have become non-mineable because of the government's tardy system of green clearance. Talking to The Indian Express, CIL Chairman Nirmal Chandra Jha said on December 26 that though the MoEF has agreed to discard the "no-go" system, it has now imposed a host of conditionalities which makes the coal mining an impossible task. He pointed out that there were presently 178 projects awaiting green clearances which amounted to denying the country 200 MT of coal production per year. He added that the coal production growth has come to a virtual standstill in 2011-12 as against 8 percent growth in 2008-09. The CIL is also now asked to ensure compliance to various provisions of the Forest Rights Act and secure Forestry Clearance before the Environment Clearance.

No and no-go zones

In March, 2010, MoEF Jairam Ramesh declared several blocks of coalfields in the country as 'no go zones' for coal mining. There were 222 coal blocks from all across the country prohibited thus for coal mining, accounting for 48% of the coalfields. Jairam Ramesh's coal mining had created some differences within the cabinet. Union Coal Minister Sriprakash Jaiswal had reportedly sought the cabinet's nod for 203 coal blocks that were denied permission as they fell under the 'no-go' zones declared by Jairam Ramesh's Ministry of Environment and Forests. Jaiswal had pointed out that these blocks would help to produce an additional 1.3 lakh mw of power and wanted the cabinet's intervention to resolve the issue. The number of 'no-go' coal blocks was finally brought down an year later to 153, following negotiations. Despite the removal of many coal blocks from the no-go list, sizable area of coalfields in the country still remained as prohibited for coal mining, which has resulted in the present coal crisis in the country. Clearly, Jairam Ramesh, who always showed extra ordinary sympathy for the anti-development lobby, had a vested interest in declaring vast stretch of coalfields as 'no-go' zone and blocking coal mining operations in the country.

Coal import trap

Two of India's largest thermal power projects are coming up in the Kutch region of Gujarat. First of the two new projects, Adani Power's Mundra Thermal Power Project, synchronized its fifth unit in the second week of March, 2012 taking its total capacity to 4,620 MW to emerge as the largest single-location, coal-fired thermal power station in India. Next to Adani project is

Tata's Mundra UMPP, where two 800 MW units are being installed and another three are to come up, which would take the project size up to 4000 MW. Though the work on these projects is making steady progress, the developers are presently faced with an acute economic crisis because of the steep hike in the price of imported coal. Both the developers were banking on imported coal and had tied up with overseas fuel suppliers, mainly Indonesia and Australia. But the international coal prices which earlier stood around \$35 a tonne have now shot up to over \$100, with the possibility of the same going up further. This sudden spurt in the prices of coal in the international market, which has caused huge losses to Indian power projects, is suspected to have been caused by a CIA plot aimed to prevent regular supply of coal to needy countries like India. Australian coal tycoon, Clive Palmer, stunned the green activists in his country on March 20, 2012 by making the sensational revelation that the anti-coal movement in Australia was supported and financed by the CIA. Quoting from the CoalSwarm and Graeme Wood Foundation report, he accused the CIA of conspiring with the Rockefeller Foundation to fund the "Stopping the Australian Coal Boom" campaign. The strategy advocated by the report to stop the key infrastructure projects and most of the mega mines is as follows.

- 1) Disrupt and delay key coal infrastructure developments such as ports and rail and mega coal mines.
- 2) Exclude mining from key areas such as farm-land, nature refuges, aquifers and near homes.
- 3) Create uncertainty and heightened perception of risk over coal investments.
- 4) Increase the cost of mining coal to help speed along a long term strategy to phase out the coal industry.
- 5) Withdraw the social licenses of the coal industry.
- 6) Build a powerful movement.

<http://www.mineweb.com/mineweb/view/mineweb/en/page72068?oid=147696&sn=Detail>

The hike in price and a supply volatility in coal have upset the calculations of the power developers who had entered into low-tariff power purchase agreements earlier. They are now trying to get their PPAs reopened and revisited for an upward revision of the low tariffs they quoted earlier. Otherwise the companies are certain to bleed. In the quarter ending with December, 2011, Adani Power registered a loss of Rs 358 crore, mainly because of higher prices of imported coal. The Tatas have also delayed the commissioning of their first 800 MW unit for the same reason. Reliance Power shelved work in June last year on its 4000 MW Krishanapatnam project, because of higher coal costs. JSW Energy's 2000 MW expansion of the Ratnagiri project has been reportedly delayed for the same reason.

Eco-terrorism

Former environment and forest minister Jairam Ramesh had declared that various development projects would not get environment and forest clearance unless a comprehensive impact assessment is done and was welcomed by NGO and environmental activists. But, this environment impact assessment exercise, in effect, was delaying all infrastructure development

projects in India. In 2009, road transport minister Kamal Nath, power minister Sushil Kumar Shinde and water resources minister Pawan Bansal had reportedly complained to the Prime Minister against the environment ministry headed by Jairam Ramesh for deliberately delaying various developmental projects by withholding environmental clearances. The prime minister had then asked the Planning Commission to come up with a process that will give faster clearance to infrastructure projects. Subsequently, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Planning Commission's deputy chairman, had also promised some positive steps to expedite the environmental clearance process. But, despite the prime minister's intervention, no concrete steps were taken to expedite the environmental clearance process. Because, the anti-development lobby, backed by Jairam Ramesh and National Advisory Council, had the whole-hearted support of Sonia Gandhi.

PESA and Forest Rights Act.

In 2005, Chattisgarh State Electricity Board and Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative (IFFCO) signed a memorandum of understanding to set up a 1320 MW thermal power plant on about 850 hectares of land in Premnagar and six adjoining villages in Surguja district of Chattisgarh. However the Premnagar gram sabha, influenced by some NGO activists, passed three resolutions during 2005-06 period opposing the power plant project. The village elders also sent a series of representations to the office of the Governor of Chattisgarh and the President of India expressing their strong opposition to the project. The proposed power plant was finally shifted to an adjacent cluster of villages, as without the consent of the gram sabha, no project could be started in a 'Schedule -V area' like Premnagar, which is governed by a special law called the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996.

With the provisions of the Forests Rights Act (FRA) requiring consent from the gram sabha or the village council concerned and settling of all traditional rights before development projects take over the forest land, the FRA has become the biggest stumbling block against all developmental projects, as happened in the case of POSCO, where the Orissa government has been unable to acquire these certificates. The FRA, coupled with an August 2009 order ensuring compliance of this Act by the ministry of environment and forests (MoEF), disallows the ministry from giving forest clearance to a project before the rights of forest-dwellers are settled and the gram sabha gives the go-ahead to the acquisition of forest land. In the POSCO case, two separate committees of the Centre have found that the Orissa government has been unable to fulfill the requirements of the FRA and the ministry is yet to get the village council resolutions approving the acquisition of the forests which the villagers have laid claim to as traditional forest users. In fact, the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996 and the Forest Rights Act of 2006 were enacted by the Union government under the influence of the strong anti-development lobby in India as part of a sinister international conspiracy to block all developmental activities in India and thus to stall India's economic progress.

Green Panel

The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) of the environment ministry has recommended that mining and industrial growth be banned in over 80 revenue blocks falling under 45 districts across five states in the region, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the whole of Goa. The panel, which was set up in 2011, has also suggested that mining be regulated in another 75-odd revenue blocks or talukas. The WGEEP has further recommended that the entire Western Ghats area be declared as “Ecologically Sensitive Area” (ESA), with varying degrees of restrictions on economic activity across the identified talukas. It has also recommended that development in the region should be regulated by a super body-Western Ghats Ecology Authority-under the Environment Protection Act, with regional sub-authorities of similar nature. All such expert committees formed to suggest measures for environmental protection are only meant to create further hurdles against India’s onward march to economic progress and prosperity.

War on Indian economy.

It appears that the UPA government has declared a war on India’s economy. What else can explain the logic and meaning of the disastrous policies of the UPA government? Take for instance, the loan waiver scheme, one of the earliest misdeeds of the UPA government. The loan-waiver scheme for the farmers announced by the Finance Minister did not make any sense. This waiver, originally amounting to about Rs. 60000 crore was announced as a populist measure to please the farming community and to create a vote-bank among them. But it was done without any proper study about the problems of the farmers or about the real reasons for the increasing incidents of suicide by the farmers. According to one survey report, in about 40% of the cases the loans are taken from the money lenders. It is the poorest section of farmers who are forced to approach the money lenders for loans. This is because of the extra-cautious approach of the bank officials who are reluctant to grant loans to the poor farmers as they did not want to add on to the non-performing assets of the banks. If the prospects of loan recovery are not very certain, the banks will tactfully make the procedure so cumbersome that the poor and harassed farmers would voluntarily opt to go to the money lenders. While it is necessary to address the genuine grievances of the farmers, resorting to unethical and undesirable solutions like the loan-waiver scheme would set a bad precedent for the country. The very concept of loan-waiver is highly regressive and objectionable. It makes the honest farmers who have paid back their loans look like fools while the dishonest ones are rewarded. Despite strong criticism against this scheme from leading economists in the country, the UPA government raised the allocation for this scheme from Rs.60000 crore to Rs. 71680 crore. The loan-waiver scheme has not stopped farmers' suicide in the country, but it has caused considerable damage to the country's economy.

As already explained, UPA government’s so-called flagship programmes like MGNREGS, UID card scheme, free housing for the poor and the proposed food security scheme would further ensure the destruction of Indian economy. Meanwhile Pakistan has given a new dimension to the war on Indian economy by bulk-printing of fake Indian currency in the

government facilities in Pakistan and circulating the same in various Indian cities with the help of Dawood Ibrahim and his gang. The anti-development lobby in India which is engaged in blocking all developmental activities in the country, on the other hand, is supported and financed by various western and church agencies. The government of India is very well aware of the activities and intentions of the western agencies involved in such disruptive activities in India. But, what is lacking is a will to act. A few weeks before, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh spoke out against some US and Scandinavian NGOs involved in abetting agitation against Koodankulam nuclear power project. This emboldened Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha to act against those who were inciting the local villagers against the Koodankulam project, paving the way for resumption of work at the project. The work on POSCO project can also resume in 24 hours, if the prime minister so desires. But will he act? Or rather, will he be allowed to act?

Extra inputs

Green tribunal sets aside clearance granted to Jindal

The national Green Tribunal (NGT) on April 20, 2012 set aside the Environmental Clearance granted to the 4 MPTA Coal Mining Projects of Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) and 4 MPTA Coal Washery at Gare in Raigarh on grounds of faulty public hearing. The company had been given environmental clearance in May 2009. The judgment delivered by Justice C.V.Ramulu and Prof.R.Nagendran held that the entire public hearing was a farce and makes a mockery of the public hearing process. The tribunal directed that the public hearing may be conducted again but not under the same Additional District Magistrate.

Oil, gas blocks fall victim to UPA policy

The failure of the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), the Department of Space and the ministries of Defence and Environment and Forests to grant clearances has held up 80 oil and gas blocks with an investment of \$13.5 billion for many years. This has happened despite the fact that the Prime Minister's office and the PM's Principal Secretary had held several rounds of talks and had given directions to the concerned Departments to sort out the matter at the earliest. The domestic and international investors who have pumped in huge amounts into these blocks are upset and annoyed. The clearances in some cases have been held up for the past eight to nine years. For the blocks where the initial clearances are secured, clearances were subsequently denied, either at the seismic survey stage or at the drilling stage, with general observations that those areas are required for operations by the defence ministry forces. The companies impacted by this policy flip-flop include the state-run Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), Oil India Limited (OIL), GAIL India, HPCL-Mittal, ENI of Italy, FOCUS Energy, BHP Billiton, GVK, Santos, Cairn India and Geo Global Resources. Reportedly, 80 exploration blocks are awaiting clearance from Navy, the DRDO, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Department of Space and the Air Force.

Dams on Ganga tributaries

A report commissioned by the UPA government has recommended that 34 dams on the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi rivers, the two main tributaries of the Ganga should not be allowed to come up as they will cause irrevocable harm to biodiversity in Uttarakhand. Prepared by the Wildlife Institute of India, the report seeks to stop 34 hydroelectric projects that add up to 2600 MW and account for about a tenth of all small and big dams on the anvil in the state.

Vedanta mining project nixed yet again

Environment and Forest minister Jayanti Natarajan has ordered on May 17th 2012 that the preliminary nod given by her ministry to the expansion of Vedanta's aluminium refinery in Niyamagiri in Odisha be put on hold. Rahul Gandhi had stood up against this project and subsequently the environment ministry had cancelled forest clearance to Vedanta for mining in Niyamagiri hills for violation of green norms. Vedanta had moved the Supreme Court against the ban on mining.

Capaign against key hydel projects in Uttarakhand.

A study by the National Environmental Engineering Institute (NEERI) claiming that the water in the Ganga has unique anti-bacterial properties has apparently come as handy for those who have been protesting against some of the important hydel projects coming up on the Alaknanda in Uttarakhand. The NEERI study report, commissioned by the Tehri Hydel Development Corporation and submitted in November 2011 is being used by the anti-project protestors in support of their cause. The protestors are led by environmentalist and former IIT professor G.D.Agrawal @ Swamy Gyanswaroop Sanand of the Ganga Sewa Abhiyanam, who claims that the river will lose these properties if hydel projects come up on its upper reaches.

In the last meeting of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) held in April, 2012, the Prime Minister had announced that the government would form a mechanism under an expert to study the two main government-commissioned cumulative impact assessment reports on the subject, one by the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, and the other by the IIT-Roorkee, for the committee to assess. The IIT Roorkee report had advocated the need for ensuring the environmental flow requirement for each project after carrying out detailed study on the measurements of discharge and impact on biotic life as a result of reduced discharge and the need for consultation with the local community. The Wildlife Institute of India had also stressed the need for minimum flow required to sustain riverine ecology. Under pressure from the environmental lobby, backed by the National Advisory Council, the government, as promised by the PM, has now formed a high level expert committee under Planning Commission Member B.K.Chadurvedi to look into the technical reports on the subject and come out with its findings in three months. The multi-disciplinary committee will make a detailed study on the environmental impact of hydel projects in the Ganga basin and the technicalities spelled out in various reports of scientific institutes. The formation of the committee, including the selection of its head, was reportedly prompted by the direct intervention of the PMO. If the government concedes the

demands of the protestors, several hydel projects that are coming up on Ganga and its tributaries, including the 330 MW Srinagar hydel project being built by GVK which is 90% complete, the World Bank-assisted project in Vishnugad Pipalkoti, where the rehabilitation plan is complete and the Singoli-Bhatwari project, will have to be abandoned, as desired and designed by the anti-development lobby

POSCO settlement

Reportedly, an agreement is likely to be reached between the POSCO and the Odisha government over the vexed question of setting up a 12-million tonne capacity iron and steel plant in Odisha with the POSCO agreeing to do away with the captive port component of the project.

Subarnarekha Multi-purpose Project in Jharkhand

The multi-purpose project on river Subarnarekha in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district is expected to be completed in a couple of months after a delay of almost 40 years. With a dam at Chandil and several other reservoirs, barrages and canals leading into Orissa and West Bengal, this joint venture irrigation project is aimed to cover 2.6 hectares of land in Jharkhand, 90000 hectares of land in Orissa and 5000 hectares in West Bengal. The project will also generate around 500 MW of hydel power.

Conceived in 1972, the project had triggered a sustained campaign by anti-development activists who mobilized the local Adivasis and organized protest morchas, dharnas and demonstrations opposing the project raking up issues like environmental pollution and displacement of people. About 10000 tribals, many of them armed with bows and arrows had participated in a demonstration at the project site which led to police firing and four deaths on January 6, 1979. The land acquisition and construction work, however continued despite frequent holdups and interruptions. The Forest Conservation Act of 1980 created fresh problems for the project as the clearance of the Ministry of Environment and forests was required for the diversion of 1800 hectares of forest land for the project. In 1990, the World Bank withdrew a loan of \$127 million that it had sanctioned for the project, because of the continued agitation by the local activists, bringing the work to a halt. The work on the project resumed in 1998 with a NABARD loan of Rs 118 crore. The work on the project was again held up for a long time because of a renewed agitation over some corruption charges leveled against the project by the CAG report of 1999. In 2011, following a fresh plea from the Jharkhand government, the MoEF gave the final forest clearance to the project and the Centre took over the project under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme. The cost of the project which was initially pegged at Rs 128.99 crore in 1972, however has now jumped to Rs 6613.74 crore.

Tharangambadi Thermal Power Plant in Tamil Nadu

The National Green Tribunal on May 30, 2012 ordered the suspension of the environmental clearance (EC) given to the Chettinadu Power Corporation for its 1200 MW power project in Tharangambadi taluk of Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu, and directed the

Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to commission a Cumulative Impact Assessment Study of all proposed thermal power plants along the district coastline within one year. Disposing of an appeal against the Environmental Clearance given for the 1200 MW thermal power plant, the Tribunal censured MoEF and its Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) for blatant oversights during the grant of the EC. The Bench criticized the terrestrial ecology study that denied the existence of Olive Ridley turtles in the area as opposed to the data given by the Forest Department and two other study reports. The Bench's order came on an appeal filed by Ossie Fernandes of the NGO 'Coastal Action Network' and some other NGOs in the area.

Green Tribunal suspends work on Maheshwar dam project

Acting on a petition filed by two project-affected villagers, the National Green Tribunal on May 3, 2012 suspended the trial run of the dam by filling up it with water up to 154 metres. The 400 MW Maheshwar project is one of the bigger dams planned across the Narmada river. Though the work on the project started in 1978, the project is yet to be completed due to frequent disruptions caused by legal hurdles and prolonged agitation by anti-dam protestors backed the NGO Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA). The latest hurdle that has come in the form of the National Green Tribunal order suspending the work on the project was also stage-managed by the NBA.