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## **POSCO war zone - Anti and pro POSCO factions reiterate stands**

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Since inking a deal with Odisha Government in 2005, POSCO has not been able to make much tangible progress for the project till date but in a recent development despite stiff resistance from the anti project brigade, South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak has shown interest to visit proposed site and lay the foundation stone of the much talked about INR 52000 crore steel venture in Kujang near Paradip in January 2010.

After coming to know of the development the anti and pro project supporters living in surrounding project sites have awakened and come up with a new set of grievances and reiterating old demands while project opponents have signaled a complete no for the project. However, the supporters have inclined supporting the project if their few basic demands are met.

Local outfit POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti which is spearheading the anti POSCO agitation since four years has expressed strong displeasure over the South Korean President's proposed visit to the project site and decided to oppose the bid vehemently.

Meanwhile, seven gates have been erected at different entry points connecting the villages to proposed project site and round the clock vigil has been started from November 15 to prohibit the entry of any administrative, police officials and company people including outsiders to village. About 40 to 50 anti project villagers including women are guarding the gates.

In another major development about 1,135 acre of forest lands located inside the project site the anti project people have distributed about 500 acres among themselves taking one acre each and decided to undertake similar distribution in coming days. But the incident is being treated seriously as these lands were proposed to be delivered to the company and land conversion cases are still pending in Supreme Court. The apex court has earlier given green signal for the forest land conversion for the project on certain conditions.

On the part of pro project supporters and the joint action committee leaders had recently met Rajya Sabha member Pyari Mohan Mohapatra while he visited Paradip during Kalinga Baliyatra and apprised him the crisis dogging POSCO project in recent times and demanded the return of 52 people living in POSCO transit camp in Balitutha since two years back to their villages in Patana and Govindapur. Mohapatra had assured that the State Government would take appropriate steps.

(Sourced from Odisha Diary)

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