

# **Proposed Missile Base at Baliapal Assault in the Name of Defence**

A Report to the Nation  
By  
Fact Finding Team

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**A** small strip of land on the east coast of India abreast the Bay of Bengal, 400 sq km in area, has suddenly become a matter of great concern and significance for the entire nation. Though the information is not adequate, it is learnt that this area, belonging to the Balasore district of Orissa and consisting of 126 villages — 99 villages of Baliapal P. S., 4 villages of Basta P. S. and 23 of Bhograi P. S. — has been earmarked for a ballistic missile base, euphemistically called the National Testing Range.

It is also learnt that the cost of this project will be more than Rs 4,000 crore, excluding the cost of compensation. The Defence Ministry of India has surveyed all the coastal areas and made a list of possible sites in different states, specifically Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and West Bengal. A Calcutta newspaper reports that the Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal governments did not agree with the location of this project in their states. Since the Orissa government evidently gave its assent to the location, the Defence Ministry has commissioned the state government to evacuate the nearly 400 sq Km for the proposed installation. Accordingly, the government of Orissa has already issued notification for the requisitioning of the proposed area.

What is the nature of this so-called National Testing Range? On 31st July 1985, the Chief Minister of Orissa, on his return from New Delhi, spoke to the press at Bhubaneswar airport. He stated that a missile

base would be installed at Baliapal from where missiles would be fired that can travel a distance of 1000-5000 km. He was also reported to have said that the missiles would be observed on radar and would be controlled from a ground control station to be built at Niligiri, near Balasore. Though there is apparently no official notification or information from the Defence Ministry, this statement of the Chief Minister can not be dismissed as sheer bravado. It has certainly created panic among the people of Baliapal. The injury this will inflict to one of the most populous regions of Orissa is incalculable. Rumour and speculation regarding this project has gained a free hand throughout Orissa.

### A Positive Menace

Nor is it a question concerning the people of Baliapal alone. For, pieced together, (a) the Chief Minister's statement describing the type of missile base, (b) the strategic dimension and topography of the area involved, and (c) the budgetary allocation of Rs 4,000 crore, all point to a positive menace to the entire east coast of India. They amount to a goodbye to the notion of keeping the Indian Ocean a war-free zone as well as to the posture of non-alignment of the States India, Pakistan, Burma and beyond.

It is obvious that a missile with a range of 1000-5000 km is no toy firework. Expert opinion is categorical that missiles of the range mentioned by the Chief Minister of Orissa, are in the possession of only the USA, USSR, UK, France and China. None of them is considered non-aligned.

## Major Euro-Strategic Nuclear Weapons (Missiles)

| States | Description of Weapons | Year when First Deployed | Maximum Range(Km) | Number Deployed in 1979 |
|--------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| USSR   | SS-                    | 1959                     | 2,000             | 390                     |
|        | SS-5                   | 1961                     | 3,700             | 80                      |
|        | SS-12                  | 1969                     | - 800             | 72                      |
|        | SS-20                  | 1977                     | 4 000             | - 120                   |
|        | SS-N-5                 | 1964                     | - 1,200           | 18                      |
| USA    | Pershing IA            | 1962                     | - 750             | 108                     |
|        | Pershing IA            | 1962                     | - 750             | 72                      |
|        | Pershing II            | (1983)                   | - 1,600           | —                       |
|        | GLCM                   | (1983)                   | 2,500             | —                       |
| UK     | Polaris A-3            | 1967                     | 4,600             | 64                      |
| France | S-2                    | 1971                     | 3,000             | 18                      |
|        | K-20                   | 1977                     | 5,000             | 64                      |

(Source-SIPRI Brochure-1980)

Moreover, ballistic missiles of this range usually carry nuclear warheads. So, if the Chief Minister's remark to the press is to be taken seriously, the Baliapal base may constitute the introduction of sophisticated nuclear weaponry onto India's coast. Our protest against the USA's equipping Pakistan with sophisticated weapons, therefore, becomes once again sheer hypocrisy.

Even as things stand, and as the following table shows, India is already the largest importer of arms among the South Asian nations, not-withstanding our Government's "peace efforts" here and everywhere. During 1980-86 India's dependence on foreign supplies for military hardware has become so extreme that India has purchased items such as the Hermes warship and the Westland helicopter on

extremely unfavourable terms. Such indiscriminate acquisitions from merchants of military hardware by India clearly contradict its stated official position as an anti-imperialist and peace-loving nation.

**Arms Supplies to Countries in the Indian Sub-Continent**

| Recipient Countries | Per Cent of Region's Total | Largest Supplier to Each Country |
|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| India               | 52                         | USSR                             |
| Pakistan            | 18                         | France                           |
| Afghanistan         | 13                         | USSR                             |
| Bangladesh          | 3                          | China                            |
| Nepal               | 0.3                        | France                           |
| Srilanka            | 0.2                        | France                           |

Suppliers to the Indian Sub-continent in Order of Importance: 1. USSR 2. France 3. UK 4. China  
(Source: SIPRI Brochure, 1980)

Incidentally, the present location covers both banks of the river Subarnarekha at its confluence with the Bay of Bengal—and this strategic site may allure one of the super-powers to set up a sea-based missile station here. (See table on distribution of ICBMs and SLBMs for each super power.)

**Current Strategic Nuclear Arsenals of the USA and USSR**

| States | Per Cent of Total Number of Warheads Carried on Various Delivery Vehicles |    | Per Cent of Total Megatonnage Carried on Various Delivery Vehicles |
|--------|---|----|--|
| USA    | ICBMs   | 21 | 41   |
|        | SLBMs   | 54 | 9  |
|        | Bombers   | 25 | 50   |
| USSR   | ICBMs   | 79 | 83   |
|        | SLBMs   | 21 | 17   |

(Source: SIPRI Brochure-1980)

Though, only a missile testing centre has initially been announced to allay public opinion, the inevitable next step as part of the arms race is a missile launching centre; This has its attendant—and greatly enhanced—dangers to people in all the surrounding areas.

### The People's Movement

In the period between the statement of Chief Minister of Orissa on 31 st July 1985 and the notification for evacuation published in the press in the first week of February 1986, the natural reaction of the people in Baliapal was one of uncertainty and turmoil. Statements and counter-statements of various political parties, groups, and the government ensued. Government and opposition have a point in common: *viz.* that the missile project should be taken up. Their dispute is over its location. The opposition argues that the present location is unacceptable as it will dislocate lakhs of people and destroy a fertile landscape with its self-sufficient economy.

When the notification came, the people of that area refused to accept the notice. They resisted the construction of approach roads and the installation of telephone lines. The movement thus began to take an organised shape. The people's reaction was the innocent one—that of people from a highly prosperous and productive area in an otherwise poverty-stricken Orissa state.

Unlike Pokhran in Rajasthan, which is semi-desert and was the site of the first nuclear explosion by India, Baliapal is the fertile centre of a densely populated area, with much trade and commerce. Its fertile land produces all sorts of crops in plenty. People here take pride in their land

and in what it can produce with their labour. Moreover, the state government's past attitude to rehabilitation of refugees created by projects has consistently been ill-motivated. For example, in a flash-flood of the Subarnarekha in October 1985, the entire village Badakhanpur was washed away; its few survivors have not yet been rehabilitated. The miseries and bitterness of the evacuees of the Hirakud and Rengalle dam sites are widely known. Similarly, the government has been extremely callous and incompetent in responding to the problems of the repeatedly famine-stricken Kalahandi district. The people of this district sell their children, leave their hearth and home in search of food and jobs, and starve to death. In such an overall situation in the state, the creation of fresh refugees from one of the most stable, productive, and self-reliant areas of Orissa, is perverse. And it becomes a matter of concern for all patriotic and democratic people in Orissa.

In the circumstances, the Ganatantrik Adhikar Suraksha Sangathan (G. A. S. S.) Orissa, affiliated to the All-India Federation of Organisations For Democratic Rights (AIFOFR) deemed it its duty to send a team of persons on a fact-finding mission to Baliapal and to submit a report to the nation, highlighting the problem of the democratic rights of the people of Baliapal. The team included a scientist, an economist, a journalist, and writers. Team members Professor G. M. Mahapatra, Manmohan Misra, Prof Jayakrishna Misra, Binod Mohanty, Brajnath Rath, and others visited the area in early March 1986. The terms of reference were: to assess the human problem, to weigh the pros and cons of the proposed defence base (the material losses and



argued benefits) and to gauge the psychological problems of the uprooted humanity of that area for generations to come.

### A Gamble with People's Lives

The committee visiting the area found the area had assumed the appearance of a besieged fortress. A sort of people's curfew had been established throughout the 126 villages; there were warning signals about the approach of friends or foes, and a round-the-clock vigil with properly codified signals. In spite of the desperate determination of the people not to allow an inch of their land to be surrendered, however, their own normal activity of life—such as raising of crops, marriages of the young, and other social commitments—have been hampered by the threat of impending evacuation and likely separations.

This Baliapal and its environ is one of the most fertile and productive regions of Orissa:

The total material loss at a conservative estimate prepared by the Kshepanastra Ghatti Pratirodh Committee would be about Rs 412 crore, exclusive of poultry, domestic animals, and so on, whose number and value are difficult to assess.

The committee found that the proposal for this base is ill-concieved. It is in line with the general policy of expanding security forces in this country. While our government talks of Panchasheela, non-alignment, and above all peace here and everywhere, it has been expanding its police, paramilitary and military forces. We are already saddled with non-productive services such as state police, home guards, state military police, central reserved police, industrial security force, railway protection force, and above all the all-pervading military with their innumerable wings. The more we recruit to these services, the less we have in productive occu-

pations such as farming and industry. One more policeman or soldier or defence scientist means one less worker engaged in generating wealth in terms of food, clothing and shelter. While the former consume more than what is available to the average Indian, they also do not contribute to the quantum of national income. That partly explains why, in spite of three decades of 'planning' and 'economic development', we have more below the poverty line than there were at any time in the past. It is universally accepted that levels of living can be raised faster if, among other things, the budgetary resources put to non-developmental uses are drastically cut down. The movement to allocate a lower fraction of GNP to defence is therefore quite strong today in many developed and affluent countries.

Most of the wars fought after 1945 have been in the territories of poor and developing nations. The rich produce arms for the poor to fight and die. Wars since 1945 have not been fought on North American, Australian or European soil; but we have had countless wars in Korea, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran and many countries on the African and Latin American continents.

Who encourages us to fight border wars and destroy our man-power and wealth? It is the affluent who produce and supply the weapons and military hardware for use ('testing') on the people of the poor nations. If nuclear warheads were used to kill people, that too was on Asian soil. Similarly, who does not know how the US Patton tank's killing power and general efficacy was employed on this continent? The use of chemical killers in Iran-Iraq war is another instance of how poor people become gun-fodder. So why go in for another 'testing', when the logic is that only we would die, not the makers of the missiles?

Should we not learn anything from the experience regarding U.S military bases on Philippine soil? To protect American bases, Marcos was allowed to kill innumerable Filipinos. The poor people there have suffered under his despotism for 20 long years. Is it not an insult to an under-developed nation? In the name of

greater economic aid, employment and what-have-you, poor nations are pushed into such positions. Filipinos are told that they can not close the bases, there is apprehension about the immediate collapse of the country's economy. Various types of vested interests develop, from which it is extremely difficult to extricate oneself. Orissa is a poor state in a developing nation in Asia. Can we imagine the miseries to be brought upon us later if we succumb now? Investment of Rs 4000 crore at Baliapal has been advertised as a big bait, but who can quantify the sufferings and death of a hundred thousand people in the decades to come.

The committee, therefore, strongly suggests that an in-depth study be conducted to appraise the benefits, if any, of the proposed missile base before any decision is made and implemented by brute force and State terror. Elsewhere, we have posed the nature of sacrifice and losses to be suffered by the people of Baliapal; but knowhere have we got an authentic view of the benefits to be derived. A comprehensive project appraisal is essential in any democratic State. This is needed not only for Baliapal in Orissa but for any other such site in this peace-loving country.

### The Human problem

The fact finding mission were in Baliapal on 3rd and 4th March 1986. They visited 25 populous villages and met about 35,000 people — men, women and children— in small gatherings and in mammoth congregations. The typical 'Janata curfew' was responsible for bringing out all and sundry, young men and women from the fields, weeping old ladies, children with anxious faces, and determined people trying to grapple with the situation. Thus the widest cross-section of people with different vocations and from different social classes could be met and consulted. Prior to this tour, village-survey parties combed the area in advance made an inventory of productive and valuable things, and broughtout a comprehensive and detailed report,

## A Picture Of the Inhabitation of the Proposed Missile Base Area:

1. Area affected : 400 sq Km
2. Number of villages : 126 (Baliapal -99; Bhograi-23, Bastra-4)
3. Number of families- 11,950 (as per 1981 Census)
4. Population, 1,05,700 (as per 1981 Census)
5. Number of betel-vines: 30,000
6. Number of coconut trees: 150,000
7. Number of educational institutions 134; collages 1; H.E schools 13; M.E Schools 32; Primary Schools 55; Non-Formal Schools 30; Basic Schools 1; and Sanskrit Schools 2.)
8. Other Government Institutions: Primary Health Centres 1; Livestock Centres 3; Ayurvedic Dispensaries 1; Sub post Offices 1; Branch Post Offices 16; G.P Offices 8; V.L.W. Centres 12; R. I. Offices 3; State Bank Branches 1; Gramya Bank Branches 4; Public Call Offices 1.
9. Places of worship : 120

## Annual Income from various Sources:

|                                      | (Rs:crore) |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Pady crops : 30,000 tonnes        | 3.25       |
| 2. Betel vines : 30,000 vines        | 30.00      |
| 3. Coconut and other fruit           | 5.00       |
| 4. Inland fishing                    | 2.00       |
| 5. Ground nut, oil seeds & cashewnut | 5.00       |
| 6. Sea fishing                       | 32.00      |
| 7. Wood and bamboo                   | 18.00      |
| 8. Bamboo baskets, mats & mattresses | 2.00       |

| Annual Income from Small and cottage Industries;                         | (Rs :crore) |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Coir rope industry  | 0.25        |
| 2. Salt factories  | 1.00        |
| 3. Fish depots   | 0.25        |
| 4. Hauliers and oil mills  | 1.00        |
| 5. Fishing boats, nets and trawlers                                      | 5.00        |
| 6. Lose of labour due to closure of fishing, agriculture and betel vines | 10.000      |

Note: The Total loss of immovable properties such as land and houses and other construction would be about Rs 300 crore. The loss of income and sources of employment would be about Rs 150 crore per annum. This figure would be much higher if the production and distribution system is taken into account.

The mission was shocked at the brutal callousness of the authorities towards the difficulties and anxious questions of the people. First, the people were not told where they will be settled after they are uprooted. Secondly; there was no census of the various livelihoods on which the people depend. The day before the tour, the Collector of Balasore district had gone to the area for a routine matter. Tens of thousands of people-men, women and children- had anxiously enquired of him what their fate was to be in case of evacuation. They were told that the Collector had no answer to give, as he has no instructions from the Government. The people who are to leave their hearth and home for good, surely

have a right to such information in advance. It is shameful that the people are currently victim to wild gossip and speculation.

It will be well-nigh impossible to rehabilitate the inhabitants of the 126 villages, with their widely divergent livelihoods and various trades peculiar to this area. This area has no agricultural labourers but agricultural labourers from neighbouring districts come here for work. The 30,000 fishermen on the sea-coast here are not only from Baliapal but from the adjacent areas too. They will be a "problem" to any administration for generations to come.

Moreover, should there be a war, and India get dragged into it through super power rivalry, this area would be on the front-line of attack and all of Orissa will be in danger as a possible target. And even if there is no war with its attendant destruction (since the peace-loving people of the world are uniting against such wars) the displacement of such vast multitude of people (as of Baliapal) from comparative comfort into destitution, can only constitute the gravest crime. The question remains of their health, education, and other democratic rights-especially the right to live in peace.

Of course, the setting up of the missile testing centre at Baliapal will also disturb the ecological balance in the region and create a source of pollution. Useful birds and insects which are necessary for the plant kingdom will leave places near the testing centre. Agricultural yield may also decrease. And, if Baliapal is indeed turned into a nuclear missile base. (inferring from the Chief Minister's pronouncements) negligence there would create a most dangerous radioactive zone,

## The National significance

To agree to sacrifice such an affluent, densely populated, and highly productive zone, people must be able to weigh the corresponding benefits in the balance. Will the proposed sophisticated weaponry really be conducive to the security and safety of the Indian coast, and ultimately to the Government of India's avowed aim of keeping the Indian Ocean a war-free zone? Will we also be the country that will manufacture the fuels needed for such operations? Would it be consistent with our much-touted leadership status in the "non-aligned world"?

In the course of our investigation it was revealed that at a short distance from Baliapal and 20Km as the crow flies, an abandoned air base at Rasgovindpur, used during World War II, is being renovated with substantial budgetary allocation. There are, together with this, the following installations in the immediate vicinity: a radar station at Niligiri, the Proof and Establishment at Chandipur, the Charbatia Air Force base in Cuttack district, the naval base and training centre at Chilika Lake, the Gopalpur naval base; the Sunabeda M I G assembling plant in Koraput district, the ammunition industry at Saintala in Bolangir district, the rocket assembling plant in nearby Madhya Pradesh, and the Kalaikunda Air Force base in West Bengal. All of these forebode that the entire quadrangle will be converted into a militarised zone. If there is war, the entire state will be converted into a graveyard.

The government cannot dismiss all these questions and demands for definite information as beyond reply

because they concern the prohibited area of 'defence'. In our opinion, it is highly improper to keep people in the dark, for it is they who suffer the consequences.

At this moment when in Europe a vast human wall of resistance is being built around the missile bases, it will be unfortunate if the people of this country silently suffer an autocratic decision of the Government. It is a matter of shame that the Government is sponsoring such a project, while claiming to be sworn champion of nuclear disarmament and world peace.

We call upon the peace-loving working people, intellectuals, scientists, men of goodwill, and all patriotic and democratic forces to raise their voices with the people of Baliapal and of such other places as are potential militarised zones- in the interests of peace and prosperity of entire mankind.

