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## Mumbai Volcano

The untiring efforts of the corporate sector and the financial authorities to make Mumbai an international financial centre could go waste if the Maharashtra government continues to ignore the seething current of discontent amongst the lakhs of people who are being excluded from the tsunami of development taking place in the city. This discontent is no longer confined to the subterranean level, but has been erupting almost spontaneously and with disturbing regularity. The excluded are no longer prepared to accept their plight as fate for what they might have done in their last lives. In the span of less than a month, retail traders and *mathadi* workers whose livelihood is being threatened by giants like Reliance Fresh have led violent demonstrations; ten lakh commuters from Virar to Mira Road have boycotted the railways in protest against the inadequate number of trains; 150,000 people from ten villages in Gorai, Utan, Manori and the surrounding coastal areas who would be deprived of their livelihood of fishing and agriculture to make way for a tourism and entertainment SEZ, have sent 20,000 objections to this proposal and are organising protests; and thousands of others in and around the Sahar airport area are raising a storm over their impending displacement for the expansion of the airport. The middle and upper middle classes are also coming out in support of people protesting against the government trying to gift away fast vanishing open spaces and gardens to private "caretakers." People in large numbers are being excluded from services like housing, transport, and even water as efforts are being made to privatise water distribution under World Bank pressure. The plight of the construction workers is horrendous, despite the huge construction activities in the state, as the government, under pressure from the builders' lobby, has not implemented the Central Act which provides insurance and protection to the workers. They and the *safai* workers (sweepers etc.) are planning huge protests in January. Then there are the minorities for whom justice has been pending from 1993. So far, they have been holding massive peaceful demonstrations. The list of the "excluded discontents" is endless, as the government has no structured policy for rehabilitation with a human face. Mumbai could be sitting on a volcano.