

# Guest blogger: The dirty side of shiny new India

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**In the latest POLIS guest blog, journalist Akash Soni reports from India where he's been working on a [BBC Roadshow](#) touring the lesser known parts of this booming nation.**

"India. The Bombay stock exchange indicator – the Sensex crossing the 14,000 mark, touching an all time high. Shining India? India, the toast of every major diplomatic party at Capitol Hill. That's what we see and hear from the world capitals from London to Dubai, Moscow to Cape Town. Oh! What a pleasure to be an Indian in this brave new world! But working on the recent [BBC Roadshow](#) from Banaras to Ranchi via the interiors of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand was more than an eye opener to me. In the hinterland of India our team heard how aluminium plants, chemical companies and illegal cement units are polluting the environment. In one village we saw purple water coming in water taps. People told us how the local pond has become the repository of industrial effluents resulting in the death of the pond's fish. drinking water looked more like dishwater. The leaves of many trees were covered with thick coats of cement dust. It was difficult to breathe near the illegal cement units. People living not far off from chemical plants even complained that their children were born with deformities.

On the other hand, the industries themselves are citadels insulated from these "commoners," the rural folk. It was difficult even for us as journalists to enter these high security industrial zones. Yet when we finally managed to talk to the senior officials of these industries, they more than enough documents and certificates to prove how their industries were non-polluting and safe.

It was difficult to understand how in an India of the information revolution, no one talks about the plight of these poor villagers. The deal seems – the companies give jobs, boost economy so the officials turn a blind eye to the polluting industries. It's the ugly, hidden face of industrial India.

And yet we met social workers, grassroots political workers working with people to increase pressure on the industries, bureaucrats and politicians. It was in some ways democracy hitting back at trying to make the industry sector more responsible.

India, I felt, is a nation in transition. A people where a few have a lifestyle which would make the rich British go green with envy, a big aspirational lower middle class trying to get into the middle class and teeming millions who do not count

in rising corporate India. So we have the luxury of shining India for a few, the hope of rising India for millions but a life of continued drudgery outside these two groups for the majority.

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