

AQUO presents Eddie Hyde Memorial Open Quiz at Christ The King Parish Hall, Prelims at 3 p.m., today, November 4, 2000. Finals on November 5. Spot registration for 4-member teams at the venue. Sponsored by Jaishree Group.

(B019334)

Art of Living: An evening with His Holiness, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Tuesday, November 7, 2000, 6-30 p.m. at Netaji Indoor Stadium. Entry open for all.

(B019150)

Attention, all CC&FC members! A ladies coffee meet sponsored by Nestle has been scheduled on Sunday, November 5, 2000, commencing 4 p.m. at the ground floor pavilion. Don't miss this treat!

(B019352)

Attention Calcutta Club members! Bijoya Dewali Mela and Utsav today followed by fireworks.

(B019239)

Available room near Mayfair Road to school/college teachers for coaching/tutorials. Rs. 1,600 p.m. (240-3738).

(40377)

Bhandari Automobiles Ltd., 207, Sarat Bose Road, Calcutta-700029, invites application for Sales Executive and Sales Officer for their passenger car division. Apply with biodata immediately, minimum experience 5 years, having driving licence for 2-wheelers/4-wheelers.

(B019384)

Children's (7 — 13 years) German Language Course for the first time in Calcutta. Starting on November 4, 2000. For details, please contact Max Mueller Bhavan, 8, Ballygunge Circular Road, Calcutta-19. Phone: 475-9398.

(B019074)

Crafts Council of Assam, a voluntary organization, invites you to an Exhibition of decorative baskets and bridal paraphernalia, household utility products, wrought iron and bamboo items, wood and cane furniture, eco-friendly bags in silk and cane, cane and bamboo lamps and exquisite weaves, at Calcutta Cricket & Football Club (Centenary Hall), 19/1 Gurusaday Road, Calcutta-700019, from Tuesday, October 31, 2000 onwards, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sponsored by The Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

(39521)

Dr. Anant Joshi, renowned Arthroscopic Surgeon and Sports Medicine Specialist from Mumbai, will be available for consultation at Kothari Medical Centre from November 10 to 12, 2000. Patients interested in consultation / arthroscopic surgery are requested to contact 456-7050-59, Extn. 1134, for preview examination.

(B019158)

Dr. Subimal Mukerjee, Gynaecologist, will not be available for consultation from November 4 to 19.

(39998)

Introducing e-Commerce (HTML, Java Script, Java Applet, Java Application, XML, ASP (Server Side Programming), E-Commerce) — 6 months, fees Rs. 10,000 (instalment). Eligibility: knowledge of DOS, Windows, Internet & any Programming Language, starting from November 28. Nehru Museum, 223-1551/6878.

(39992)

Nicco Park will close at 4-30 p.m. Entry to Park will close at 3.45 p.m. and all rides will close 4 p.m. today (November 4, 2000). Any inconvenience caused is regretted.

(B019243)

Sindhi Panchayat and Holy Mission of Guru Nanak celebrate Sri Guru Nanak's birthday on ground, opposite ITC Centre, on J. L. Nehru Road from November 4, 2000 to November 11, 2000. Arambh Pooja today, from 7 — 8 p.m. Daily Kirtan, morning 5 — 7 a.m. Evening 6 — 8 p.m.

(40277)

Wanted smart, young, well-spoken ladies with good social, corporate and business contacts for marketing & publicity of posh venue. Attractive remuneration, no selling. Call: 280-9520/21 from Monday to Saturday, between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

(B019244)

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(B019362)

Amouthwatering Biryani Festival at Moulin Rouge Restaurant, to pamper your tastebud. Come with your family. 229-8950.

(B019343)

China Bowl: Free home delivery (2 kms.); above Rs. 400. (464-0042). Lucky draw for free dish.

(40378)

(Continued on opposite page col. 4)

RULE BY MUSCLE

Unruly cadres intensify CPI-M's despair

JYOTI Basu might exude the confidence expected of a chief minister stepping down after an uninterrupted reign of 24 years but he will still find it hard to explain away the state's dismal performance on the industrial front. He didn't require a letter from the chairman of the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation to be convinced that the state was stuck in an industrial graveyard. Ideological resistance to the entry of multinationals except with the approval of Alimuddin Street forms part of the explanation. The other part is evident from the shocking scandal masterminded by Citu with active support from the CPI-M MP in Haldia. A ferry service between Raichak on the Calcutta side to Kukrahati in Haldia has been suspended because cadres aided and abetted by Citu have demanded the right to be employed regardless of whether they are suited for the job or indeed required at all. They have used musclepower to bring services to a halt. The West Bengal Surface Transport Corporation, a West Bengal Government undertaking, borrowed Rs 2.5 crores from Hudco to build the two jetties at Raichak and Kukrahati only to find a CPI-M leader trying to demonstrate his power in the crudest possible form. Where a government undertaking runs into this mess, do private firms have a better chance? Does Jyoti Basu or Alimuddin Street approve of the local mafia calling the shots?

The leaders have no control whatsoever over their cadres. The larger question is what message goes out for prospective investors. Haldia has been projected as a rapidly developing industrial township where a ferry service is essential. Similarly, Raichak has been the focus of attention after the setting up of a five-star hotel, the venue of Destination Bengal, a meeting of big industrialists, and other major conferences. Allowing industrial townships to be controlled by irresponsible MPs and their goons can spell only disaster. Basu could not have forgotten a similar, and equally bitter, experience over getting the trade unions to agree to the handing over of Great Eastern Hotel to a French concern after the green signal was given by Writers' Buildings; an agreement has been struck only after a protracted battle with the unions and the final outcome has to be awaited. Nor can Somnath Chatterjee, who is being persuaded to stay on after Basu's exit, have much confidence that Buddhadev Bhattacharya will succeed in taming cadres where Basu failed. The truth is that these cadres have turned into hungry sharks who have nothing but contempt for the rule of law — and need to be dealt with for what they are. But police remain spectators while the CPI-M sinks further into despair.

Heralding the industrial revival of West Bengal!

CHAIRMAN BASU

Iconography on the Left

BENGALIS have always loved their icons, whether they be Rabindranath Tagore, Amartya Sen, Satyajit Ray, Saurav Ganguly, or Jyoti Basu. Marxists have their own set of icons — Marx, Lenin and Stalin. In the case of Bengali Marxists, it is interesting how the two sets mesh or are placed in tension with each other. Over the years, there has been a slow process of decolonisation and indigenisation — Subhas Chakraborty placed Lenin and Basu on the same pedestal; Tagore moved from being a "bourgeois poet" to someone who cared about peasants' education and had nice things to say about Soviet Russia. Amartya Sen says things which seem vaguely conducive to the left — the importance of primary education and health — and post-Nobel gets feted by the Left Front government during all his "homecomings"; never mind that the Left has done little to disseminate education or health during its quarter of a century or so in power.

Icon power manifested itself during Basu's last Cabinet meeting, where the most pressing issue was what to do with Basu's chair. PWD minister Kshiti Goswami suggested that the chair be preserved as a symbol of "Left democratic rule", which suggests an apprehension that leftist rule in Bengal might soon be a museum piece. Given that the left is now the principal upholder of the status quo in Bengal, the Cabinet's plans for Basu's chair are a microcosm of its strategy for Bengal: preserve it in an advanced state of decay. Comrades fell over each other seconding Goswami's proposal, suggesting that the culture of sycophancy is not a monopoly of Sonia Gandhi's party alone. It was left to the patriarch himself to point out, paraphrasing Robert Burns, that a chair is a chair is a chair. It is not surprising that Basu's last Cabinet meeting captured his long reign in quintessence: it was about symbol rather than substance.

ESMAN

167-350

CPI seeks to end differences with CPI(M)

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 3. The CPI today sought to end war of attrition with the CPI(M) over certain differences. Its general secretary, Mr. A. B. Bardhan, in a letter to CPI(M) general secretary, Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, reiterated the CPI's stand in strengthening the Left unity and commitment to the Third Front in national politics.

Mr. Surjeet was critical of Mr. Bardhan's remarks in an interview on the recent CPI(M) plenary at Thiruvananthapuram.

Expressing surprise over Mr. Surjeet's comments, he preferred not to "get into polemics or indulge in raking up past controversies which would only bring joy to the hearts of the enemies of communists and the Left".

Mr. Bardhan said he was "amazed" that Mr. Surjeet had blamed the CPI for disrupting Left unity and reminded that a CPI-led Government in Kerala had resigned in 1979 to pave the way for Left and Democratic unity in the State.

Disagreeing with Mr. Surjeet's charge that the CPI was placating the Congress in the past, he said "in recent days the CPI and the CPI(M) have fought separately and even against each other in elections in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Should it be said that either of us was thereby disrupting Left unity?". There were several facts which gave a different picture and ruled out collaborating with the Congress when it stood committed for the Third Front.

Referring to his interview, Mr. Bardhan said the remark on 'Communist unification on a principled basis' presupposed more or less common position on programme, political tactics and also organisational principles and practices which did not find mention in the report. Both the parties should work together for Left unity, he said.

Mr. Bardhan said both sides must exercise restraint and have a 'dignified' discussion among themselves and within Communist forum "in a spirit of accommodation and understanding".

Russian PM revives proposed axis with India, China

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, NOV. 3. Russia would welcome establishment of a Moscow-Delhi-Beijing "axis", provided the other two partners show interest, the Russian Prime Minister, Mr. Mikhail Kaspa

'Mamata can't fool Muslims'

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, November 16

MUSLIMS ARE no fools. They might have packed Netaji Indoor Stadium to hear a speech, but they didn't believe a word of what Trinamool leaders said on 50 per cent reservation for the community, Jyoti Basu said today.

The former Chief Minister, launching a broadside against Mamata Banerjee, said it seems there's no morality left in politicians. They would say anything to garner some votes. "Doesn't she know it's impossible to reserve 50 per cent of seats for Muslims without a constitutional amendment?"

"It's sad the NDA Government is doing everything to divide people on religious lines. The Constitution doesn't permit that. Even preachers of Hinduism, such as the communal BJP Government, should know that no Hindu guru ever said a true faithful must raze a Muslim place of worship or attack Christians," Basu said. He was speaking at a felicitation ceremony organised in the city on behalf of the CMDA.

The A B Vajpayee Government, he said, was giving in to every diktat of the Americans. "Our economy is under threat, but look at how China has raced ahead. The Americans don't dare ignore them. Rather, they have been given the most-favoured nation status."

"Let not our self-respect to be sacrificed at America's altar. Not only must we hold on to our Bengal base, but we also need to team up with such forces as the Janata Dal, AIADMK, Samajwadi Party and RJD to give the country an alternative Government. All these forces have their areas of influences. We must unite them," Basu said.

He praised the CMDA for its excellent work in executing development projects in



Jyoti Basu accepts a bouquet at a felicitation ceremony organised by the CMDA on Thursday. Photo: HT

housing, road construction, water supply and slum management. Municipalities under the CMDA jurisdiction should work together to improve lives. "Unless we give money to the civic bodies and the panchayats, they can't undertake development work. The CMDA has done very well in the last 22 years that I

have been its chairman. It must continue with the good work," he said.

"People's expectations have risen. This is natural. But we have also to explain to them that for certain projects such as Megacity, we are dependent on the Centre. Unless we get central funds this project can't be com-

pleted. And the Centre has always been a stumbling block. This has affected our industrialisation. But in our State, we make no such discrimination. Panchayats and municipalities where the Opposition is in power we have never held back the funds," Basu claimed.

Subhas-mentor Basu backs Buddhadeb

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, November 21

BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE'S collective leadership concept today got support from Subhas Chakrabarty's leader, Jyoti Basu. "Marxists have traditionally believed in this. The individual has always striven to implement decisions taken collectively by the party leadership," the patriarch said at the CPI(M)'s Alimuddin Street headquarters.

"As Chief Minister I tried my best to implement policies collectively decided on by the party and the

Left Front. I never took decisions on my own. We run the Government on the basis of a common minimum programme. But now that Buddha is Chief Minister his individual responsibility is greater," the former Chief Minister said.

On the Buddha-Subhas culture debate, Basu said everyone was entitled to his view. "Let a thousand flowers bloom." And, as such, he saw nothing wrong with the Hrithik Roshan show.

At Writers' Buildings, Bhattacharjee cried a halt to the culture debate, saying he had had enough of it, but insisted he stood by everything he had said on collective leadership. "I didn't refer to it for nothing. It is of immense importance."

The Chief Minister, in no mood to take Chakrabarty's outburst seriously, said there was no reason to perceive the Transport Minister's tirade as a challenge to his Government. "It's a non-issue. Why give so much importance to it? That you would play this up, I

couldn't imagine."

Chakrabarty, on his part, left Writers' Buildings early and was not available for comments. He is learnt to have met State CPI(M) secretary Anil Biswas at Alimuddin Street this morning.

However much the Chief Minister might underplay the row, it has left his colleagues in the ministry puzzled. Public Works Department Minister Kshiti Goswami, who once took lathi blows on his head while agitating against Usha Uthup performing at Mahajati Sadan, admitted he didn't really know what to make of the

spat. "These multinationals are eating into our markets and our minds. They sell dreams—with music, props and lights. Aren't such things damaging," Goswami asked.

"Healthy culture", he insisted, was the need of the hour. "The Indian People's Theatre (IPTA) had once fulfilled this need. Sadly, both effort and spirit are missing these days. The present IPTA hasn't been able to cope up with change. I can't

blame people who throng Hrithik Roshan shows. Personally, I don't like such shows. But, to tell the truth, I can't ignore them, either. Still, popular culture doesn't always stand for a better culture, I am convinced," the PWD Minister said. Goswami did not agree with the Chief Minister that the Sports Department had promoted the programme. "As far as I know the Sports Department didn't sponsor the programme. The Transport Minister attended it in his individual capacity."

● On Page 3: Boos for Buddha from culture celebs



Saifuddin craze worries CPM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Nov. 23. — "Why are you committing this blunder by floating a new party? Why are you doing this? Why?" the veteran CPI-M leader and the party's central committee member, Mr Benoy Konar, asked Mr Saifuddin Choudhury imploringly. Both were present at a convention on application of modern technology and unemployment in Tollyganj on 19 November. Apart from Congress's Mr Saugata Roy and BJP's Mr Sabyasachi Bagchi, both Mr Konar and Mr Choudhury were invited to address the convention.

Mr Choudhury was hardly prepared for this. He had gone to Mr Konar to pay his respect and inquire about his health. It was hardly the occasion where Mr Choudhury could respond to Mr Konar's query. So he excused himself by merely saying, "I will tell you later".

Mr Konar's anxiety was natural as Mr Choudhury was the star attraction there and his well-reasoned address drew vast applause. His speech was bereft of party cliches while conveying his strategy to fight problems of unemployment, growing communalism and stagnating land reforms. The crowd gave him a standing ovation when he finished.

Mr Konar's questions articulate his party's worries about Mr Choudhury's growing popularity both in Left and non-

Left circles.

Leaders of SFI and DYFI of different city colleges have been inviting him to address on issues like job opportunities for the young and what future holds for Bengal's youths. But Mr Choudhury is being politely told not to refer to the 1996 'historic blunder' and 'who and what prevented Jyoti Basu from becoming the Prime Minister'. He is told that 'our sole concern is our future and not party politics. Knowing more about 1996 controversy won't get us jobs. We are not interested in that crap'.

Since his 'honourable separation' from the CPI-M, the ruling Marxists have been trying hard without success to dissuade young partymen and sympathisers from attending Mr Choudhury's public and closed door meetings. For this major campaigns had been carried out initially. But when the response was not encouraging, they have been holding regular street meetings in the city asking people to shun his meetings. But large attendance at his meetings in Sealdah, Shyambazar and Gariahat and the rapport that he has been able to strike with the large crowds has made the party nervous.

"Daily I have been getting numerous complaints from CPI-M leaders and workers, threatening our boys and tearing up posters for our tomorrow's convention. But this intolerance will not pay. The

Congress had adopted the same tactics in the sixties but could not halt the onward march of the CPI-M. Unfortunately the Marxists have learnt nothing from history. The more they resist the greater will be our resolve and success in floating the new party," Mr Choudhury said.

He has made an impact by highlighting the failures of 24 years of Marxist rule without any rancour. Their attacks have been against the policies and not the leaders of the party. He points out the failure to take follow up measures in land reforms for which agricultural production is suffering. He also talked of adopting appropriate technology, discarding obsolete production methods, rationalising work force and building a social safety net to take care of redundancies.

His emphasis on vocational training and the use of appropriate technology for creating jobs in the middle and small-scale sectors has endeared him to the youth. At the Sealdah meeting, unemployed Marxist youths from suburbs requested him to visit the districts.

At party meetings, activists pour their heart out. The general tenor of their complaint is that there is no democracy in the party. Members are afraid to say anything fearing reprisals.

And even when grievances have been aired local leaders manage to suppress them.

THE STATESMAN

24 NOV 2000

BJP wants Mamata to be CM: Venkaiah

Arindam Sarkar
Calcutta, October 16

THE BJP will do everything in its power to ensure that Mamata Banerjee becomes the next Chief Minister of Bengal, Venkaiah Naidu, Minister of Rural Development, said here today. "She has stood by us in good and bad times and this is how we want to repay her."

"Our single-point agenda in Bengal is to see the end of the Left Front Government. We want to breach the Red fort in 2001 and install Mamata as Chief Minister. Together we will break the Left stranglehold over the administration, which it uses with such devastating effect to rig elections. The Centre would intervene at the right time," Naidu told *The Hindustan Times* in an interview at the Raj Bhavan.

"For 24 years, the State has had a weak-kneed Opposition and the Left Front got away with unleashing its cadres and pliant State officials on voters. Things are different now. The BJP has the infrastructure and the Trinamool a dynamic leader in Mamata Banerjee.

"The BJP-Trinamool alliance here has become the rallying point for anti-Left forces. We agree on the situation here and want Article

356 to be imposed. But the Centre can't afford to rush into a situation. Fortunately, now NDA partners, the Telugu Desam especially, are veering around to the view that Central intervention is needed in Bengal," the Union minister claimed.

The Centre - to counter Marxist oppression - was considering corrective measures some months before the polls, he said. "We are working on a blueprint of action, that includes declaring six districts disturbed. The BJP, TDP and the other allies have been discussing how free and fair polls could be held in Bengal. People here want change and we will help them," Naidu said.



Before coming to the city, Naidu met Mamata and assured her that the Centre had taken a serious view of the floods and was trying hard to assist the State. On the demand for a roll back of the hike in prices of petroleum products, the Centre would keep "Mamata's prestige" in mind before taking a decision, he added. "I want to put at rest all rumours on Mamata's resignation. We don't want to lose her. The BJP knows that some political forces (read Congress) are trying to break the BJP-Trinamool alliance. That will never happen," he said.

More reports on Pages 3 and 4

Saifuddin gets set for polls with new outfit

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, October 16

EXPELLED CPI(M) leader Saifuddin Chowdhury today formally announced the launch of a political platform later this month. This would eventually take the shape of a Leftist party that would contest the 2001 Assembly elections.

"We will hold our first political convention on October 22, where we will formulate policies and decide on our course of action. We have nothing to do with the CPI(M) anymore. Those who believe in our philosophy and programmes are welcome onboard," Chowdhury said.

Rebel CPI(M) leaders Tapash Basu and Subir Chowdhury shared the dais with Saifuddin Chowdhury. During the day, the party asked Tapas Basu, Calcutta district committee member, to clarify comments he made to the media over party policies and functioning.

The 'show-cause' on Tapas Basu follows his defiance of the party's "orthodox line". Party secretary Raghunath Kushari, however, refused to call the notice a show cause. "We can't take disciplinary steps against a member based on media reports. So we have asked for his version of the report," Kushari said.

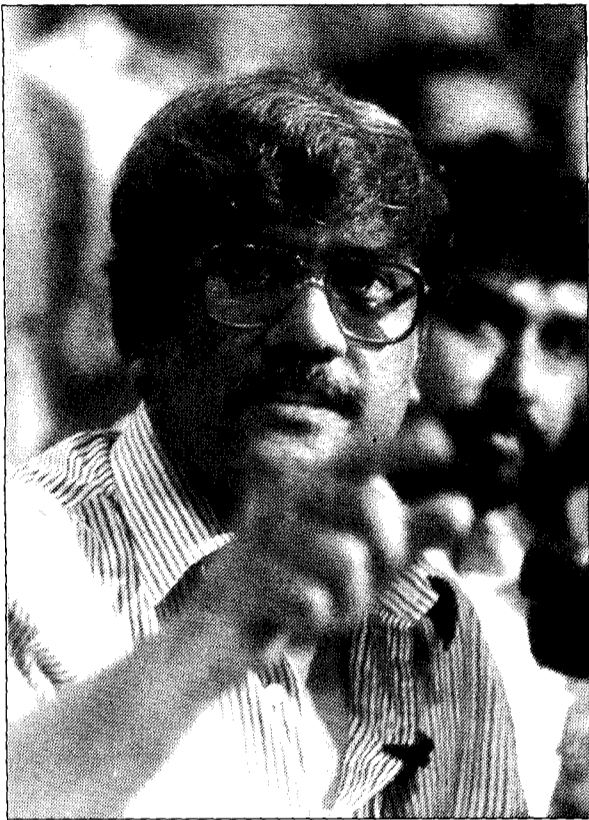
Tapas Basu, however, appeared unflustered. "I resigned from all party posts. The show-cause is insignificant now," he said.

Detailed report on Page 7

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

97 OCT 2000

Saifuddin hints at keeping Mamata at arm's length



Mr Saifuddin Choudhury at Monday's press conference.
— The Statesman

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Oct. 16. — Mr Saifuddin Choudhury today announced he would try to form a new party soon and contest the 2001 Assembly elections, but hinted he isn't considering joining hands with Miss Mamata Banerjee.

Mr Choudhury had just told a crowded press conference that would launch a platform of like-minded people at a convention on 22 October in Calcutta. The manch (platform) will be named that day and will be later be converted into a full-fledged political party.

Reporters asked him whether he might invite Miss Banerjee to join his forum if she dissociates herself from the BJP.

Mr Choudhury replied: "She is already in power; why would she leave them? My purpose is to build up a strong secular and democratic organisation, and not to join hands with those who had come to power at the Centre sacrificing their secular ideology."

"We are trying to form a good secular, democratic party based on scientific socialism," Mr Choudhury said.

He told the reporters he isn't aiming to bring in members from the CPI-M or the Congress by splitting them. "We are not going to break any party and force individuals to join us, but anyone who wants to work within a democratic atmosphere are free to join the forum." It will be open "to like-minded people in the Congress and even the CPI-M".

Without naming the state transport minister, Mr Subhas Chakraborty, whose association with him had irked the CPI-M leadership, Mr Choudhury said: "I can't discuss my plans with him (Mr Subhas Chakraborty), as he is a CPI-M leader."

Two SFI state leaders and CPI-M members, Mr Tapas

Basu and Mr Subir Choudhury, were with Mr Saifuddin Choudhury at the press conference. They said they were tendering their resignations to the party. Mr Subir Choudhury said it was no longer possible to function in a democratic manner within the CPI-M.

Mr Saifuddin Choudhury, dropped from the CPI-M's primary membership at last month's central committee meeting in Delhi for defying party rules and airing grievances to the media, has been demanding more transparency and democratic functioning in the party.

To a question, Mr Saifuddin Choudhury said that the CPI-M leadership might have seriously considered his removal from the party "so that I can find no chance to raise the demand for more democracy and transparency in the party at the special conference scheduled to be held in Thiruvananthapuram from 20 October".

He said the new platform would have a secular, democratic and people-oriented outlook committed to the welfare of the masses with a progressive vision.

"Although the Left Front may not formally recognise our party, it will necessarily be a Leftist organisation," he said.

Regarding the termination of his membership from the CPI-M, Mr Saifuddin Choudhury said he wanted an honourable separation, and had got it.

"Just because the party didn't want me to continue as a member, there should not be any enmity between us," he said. He preferred not to go into a confrontation with the CPI-M leadership. "I may not be in the CPI-M; but I can still work for the people." He said he was punished because he wanted to know why he had been dropped from central committee membership.

He said the decision to drop him from the party was "ill-timed", in the sense the the leadership "thought it wise to accord priority to the issue than flood relief".

Ouster not too soon: Anil

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Oct. 16. — "If a leader acts against the party's interests during the floods, do you expect us to take action against him in the next drought?"

That's how the CPI-M state secretary today sought to answer Mr Saifuddin Choudhury's criticism that the party's decision to scrap his membership was "ill-timed".

Brushing aside Mr Choudhury's demand that the CPI-M should function in a more democratic manner, Mr Anil Biswas said the party gave its members "the maximum demo-

cratic rights".

Mr Biswas said it's up to the party's Calcutta District Committee to punish its two members who have decided to join hands with Mr Choudhury.

Mr Biswas told reporters that the party has received a resignation letter from Mr Tapas Basu but was yet to hear from Mr Subir Choudhury.

On their demand for a separation from the party, he said: "There is nothing called separation in our party". He was confident that a few resignations would in no way hurt the CPI-M, for it isn't a small party. "If a few members leave, many more would join us."

City LF post for Sur: Mr Prasanta Sur, the former state minister has been appointed the convener of the Calcutta district Left Front Committee following the resignation of Mr Raghunath Kusari from the post. He was elected unopposed.

Former mayor, Mr Prasanta Chatterjee has been included in the district Left Front Committee.

The decision was taken in a meeting held yesterday, which was presided over by Mr Kusari. The members decided to launch several agitational programmes to protest against the price hike of petroleum products.

Basu sees worldwide trend in Saif stand

CALCUTTA, Oct. 16. — Mr Saifuddin Choudhury's stand reflects a worldwide rethink among Communists, Mr Jyoti Basu said today.

"The move represents a general debate on the world Communist movement," the chief minister said, explaining that of the 212 Communist parties in the world, 182 have changed party programmes to incorporate greater democracy.

Mr Basu, rather surprisingly, today released an audio cassette of a film directed by the rebel CPI-M leader, Mr Nepaldeb Bhattacharya. Asked about this, Mr Basu said in his characteristic way: "I don't know who is a rebel and who is not. Nepaldeb had certain misunderstandings with the party and the latter also took some action. We will look into this."

When told about Mr Basu's reaction, Mr Bhattacharya said: "The CPI-M is like a family. If someone has any reservations against me, it's not unnatural."

THE STATESMAN

17 OCT 2001

No polemics as Saifuddin parts ways with CPI-M

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Oct. 18. — When pro-democracy elements of CPI-M, led by Mr Saifuddin Choudhury, launch their new organisation, Janachetana Mancha, here next Monday it will be the first time that Marxists will be splitting the party on the issue of democracy, greater transparency and accountability in organisational functioning.

Unlike 1964 and 1969, when CPI-M and CPI-ML were founded by splitting the undivided CPI and CPI-M on the basis of ideology, there are no Marxian polemical issues involved in the third major split that the Indian Communist movement is going to see soon.

The timing of the convention will be politically significant. It will be held on the concluding day of the four-day plenum of the CPI-M called specially to deliberate on party programme at Thiruvananthapuram. The timing of Monday's convention is meant to drive home the point that the pro-democracy Marxists have been harp-

ing that the four-day party jamboree will not be able to make any meaningful change to reorient the CPI-M's programmes and policies with changing times.

"The outcome of the plenum will be a big disappointment to pro-democracy and pro-changers in the party as nothing much is going to happen there. The aftermath of the plenum will be an interesting time to watch," says Mr Saifuddin Choudhury, the pro-democracy leader spearheading the breakaway group of democratic-minded leaders in CPI-M.

He says "regimented thinking" is a thing of the past. There must be democracy, openness, accountability and humanism in the words and deeds of all political parties. "The old mindset must change or else the Left movement in India is doomed. All those who want to join our platform will have full freedom to express their views. There will be no centralism as is practised in the communist parties. There will be no bar to expressing views. Nothing will be imposed from above. There will be

55-A 19/10 9.50

PARTY LAUNCH PUT OFF FOR A DAY

CALCUTTA, Oct. 18. — Mr Saifuddin Choudhury and his supporters have deferred the launch of their new outfit by a day following "overwhelming" response by "like-minded" people to their political programme.

Mr Choudhury announced last week that he and his followers, mostly former CPI-M leaders and activists, would float a new party on October 22 to fight for "truly democratic, secular and socialist" causes.

The outfit will also contest Assembly elections slated early next year. However, in view of "over-

whelming response" from erstwhile CPI-M activists it has been decided to delay the launch by a day so that a larger auditorium can be arranged for accommodating the followers, Mr Tapas Basu, close aide of Mr Choudhury, said today.

Earlier, Mr Choudhury said the new party would be formed at a meeting on 22 October at a central Calcutta auditorium. But since the announcement many have expressed their desire to join the outfit.

The new venue will be the Yuva Kendra at Moulaali. — SNS



Mr Saifuddin Choudhury

them over. "Even those who were expelled are being approached to return to the party. Whatever Mr Anil Biswas may say he knows that we will not be pushover in the state politics," says Mr Subir Chowdhury, a prominent member of the CPI-M's Calcutta party unit who has resigned to join Mr Saifuddin Choudhury's proposed forum.

Mr Saifuddin Choudhury is hopeful that a large section of the disaffected elements in the CPI-M and other Left parties which has either already joined or going to join the Trinamul Congress will come over to the new "democratic" party when it is launched in December. "We have been approached by them in large numbers. Now that they have an alternative they are going to join us. Like us they too are victims of perverse actions of the party. They have a natural affinity for us. We are in touch with secular parties like the Congress.

"Next Sunday we shall be sharing with Congress leaders the same plat-

form at a seminar to discuss the prospect of a secular alternative in West Bengal. You will see important developments happening from early December."

Compromise the mantra as party readies to bury 'historic blunder' and ally with 'class enemies'

CPM treads the centre path

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & Agencies

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Oct. 20. — Political euphemisms and theoretical fribustering hardly hid the scar left by the Election Commission's derecognition of the CPI-M as a national party as it got down to 'update' the 36-year old party programme at the special national conference today.

It's time for compromise, revolution can wait as survival is thicker than ideology. Couched as it was in Marxist jargons like "class alliance for people's democratic revolution", that seemed to be the central message emanating from veteran CPI-M leaders as they took the stage one by one.

The conference made a sedate but purposeful start with Mr Jyoti Basu urging the comrades, in his presidential speech, not to hesitate in taking the leadership role.

No arrests have been made. The police have not yet made a report official though an emergency meeting is believed to have been called by the chief minister, Mr W Nipamacha Singh, who also holds the Home portfolio. The chief minister and top police officials are no available for comments. The police are yet to identify the group that snatched weapons.

Ulfa ultra killed

DIBRUGARH, Oct. 20. — An Ulfa militant was killed in an encounter with the Army at Naojan Tipam in upper Assam's Dibrugarh district today, the official sources said. A self-styled "lieutenant", Nitra Sakia of the "action group" was killed. A large number of weapons were also recovered.

need to unite all 'sections' of the society in the fight against communalism and capitalism. Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet said as much. The speakers also tore apart the EC derecognition as a "lopsided" rule.

The leadership has shortlisted 116 amendments for the special conference, including major changes allowing the party to strike an "understanding with non-proletarian parties in the larger interest of democracy" and to "fight the forces of communalism". Most of the 400 delegates have accepted that the party should play a more "active role" in parliamentary politics.

Burying the "historic blunder" has, thus, emerged as the single major theme of the conference. But there will be no fundamental changes in the concept of "proletarian struggle", stress the leaders. But then again, they say, compromises with parliamentary democracy are inevitable.

STILL WITH STALIN

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Oct. 20. — Despite the derecognition drive the world over in the last decade, Joseph Stalin remains a revered icon for the CPI-M. A huge portrait of Stalin and those of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Che, Mao and Ho Chi Minh were displayed with Indian Communist leaders at the conference venue. — **PTI**

In all probability, the conference will endorse the need for more political compromises to have a bigger say in the country's governance. Coalition possibilities are accepted as inevitabilities even if the would-be partners were yesterday's class enemies. That is the complexion of the transition period towards people's democracy as the party must reconcile to the fact that the proletarian struggle

gle will be a protracted process, the speakers said.

Mr Surjeet said the party's dominance in the Leftist movement owed much to the tactics drawn up in the 1964 party congress. "While updating the party programme, we have retained the core of the 1964 programme with regard to the stage of the revolution, the character of the Indian state and the class alliance necessary for people's democratic revolution."

The speeches emphasised the changes in the Communist world, post-Soviet, but the delegates wanted to see the Indian situation in a totally different perspective. The party programme will hence become more 'Indian'. Shadows of a "swadeshi Marxism", that would warm the cockles of Mr KS Sudershan's heart.

Though Mr Surjeet stressed that the updated party programme would incorporate

the collective efforts and the self-critical appraisal, not much was heard on the internal-democracy front despite the storm kicked up by Mr Saifuddin and Co.

Even as the conference was in progress, a forum of dissident Kerala comrades alleged that the party's grassroots cadres were not given access to discuss the draft programme.

The EMS Samskarika Vedittee regretted that most branch committees and ordinary members were "denied" the opportunity to discuss the draft, saying that it was not circulated at the branch level — the lowest unit in the CPI-M. They said party organs did not publish in Malayalam a complete translation of the draft.

BJP barb: The BJP today said the conference to decide on the CPI-M's participation in a Central government was "irrelevant" as the next polls were four years away.

Sudarsan Sethi, the court staff who was also injured, had recovered fully.

Narrating yesterday's shooting, Mr Sethi said that he was waiting at the portico for the arrival of the district judge when suddenly some shots were fired from the main gate.

"Before I could realise what was going on people were running in all directions and the firing continued. A stray bullet hit me on the leg and I fell on my knees," he said.

As many as seven persons died in the family feud that has been going on since 1982 with the last kill taking place in April 2000.

Police sources today said the main target of the assailants appeared to have been Sridhar and Sikhar Jena both of whom are undertrials in the Kuna Mangaraj murder case. Before



Bodies of four of the five killed in a shootout at Guwahati railway station on Friday night. An Army jawan gunned down four persons before being shot dead by a colleague. — Eastern Projections

Sikkim to control private truckers' operations

NIRAJ LAMA

Truckers belonging to the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Truck

to be formalised. The ground-work is already over and it

CPI(M) reverts to third front theme

By C. Gouridasan Nair

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT. 20. The CPI(M) leadership is reverting to the third alternative theme.

The politburo member and West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu, indicated as much while addressing delegates of the three-day special conference which began here today to update the party programme. The programme would enable the party "to intervene with a clear perspective in the political life of the country in such a manner as to help reforge the third alternative and to carry forward the struggle to build the Left and democratic front".

Mr. Basu, who was presiding over the inaugural session of the conference being attended by some 400 delegates, said what was needed today was an alternative to the BJP and a departure from the policies pursued by the Congress for over four decades.

He said recent developments underlined the need for a third alternative. "The forces which had fallen into disarray in the last three years are now regrouping once again. They are doing so in the background of the growing struggles and movements of all sections which are suffering from the harmful effects of the economic policies of the Centre... It is necessary to immediately gather all those forces who are willing to fight against the danger of communalism and the attacks on the people's economic interests."

Mr. Basu mounted a searing attack on the BJP and the RSS accusing them of "spewing hatred on minorities" and "systematically infiltrating the institutions of the state with the aim of subverting the secular state and the Constitution." But he seemed to be soft on the Congress, making a general indictment of the Congress for its failure "to fulfil the

aspirations of the people during the Independence struggle".

The instability and discontent which the present economic system had generated were utilised by the communal and divisive forces to strengthen themselves. He said the kind of Hindutva ideology being proclaimed by the BJP was an insult to the religion and alleged that the BJP Government's aim was to fulfil the RSS' long-term goals. He came down heavily on the RSS demand for "Hinduisation" of Muslims and Christians and the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, who openly swore allegiance to the RSS aims. The coalition at the Centre consisted of parties some of which did not share the RSS ideology but were bound together by their "opportunistic desire" for power.

The CPI(M) general secretary, Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, who inaugurated the conference, also felt that the current situation demanded the strengthening of the Left and democratic forces to take on the communal forces and the 'imperialist-driven globalisation'. The vacuum created by the break in the Congress' monopoly of power was filled not by democratic forces but by the dark forces of communalism. "It is a more reactionary alternative given its rank communal and right-wing ideology."

A seminar on restructuring of Centre-State relations is to be held here on Sunday. The former Prime Minister, Mr. H.D. Deve Gowda, the Samajwadi Party leader, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, the RJD leader, Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav, and the Asom Gana Parishad leader, Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, besides the CPI general secretary, Mr. A.B. Bardhan, and senior CPI(M) leaders are expected to attend.

The third alternative theme is expected to get reinforced and that could be one of the immediate political dividends of the special conference.

THE HINDU

21 OCT 2000

Politburo corrects historic blunder, weighs Cong ties

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
& Agencies

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Oct. 21. — Rectifying the "historic blunder", the CPI-M Politburo and the Central Committee have approved an amendment to the party programme, removing the bar on joining future governments at the Centre.

However, the issue will come up at the ongoing special party conference here tomorrow.

How far the Marxists should travel closer to the Congress in its fight against the BJP emerged as the contentious issue in the CPI-M plenum today.

With the two top party panels clearing the amendment, an uncompromising stance against the "forces of communalism" would logically mean a softer attitude towards the Congress.

Many delegates held the view that the party can, and should, come to deal with any political group in its battle against the Hindutva forces. Mr Jyoti Basu himself took the lead in the discussions, lashing out at the BJP agenda, but treading softly vis-a-vis the Congress.

Mr Prakash Karat presented a conflicting view when asked if the Congress would be a part of the third front, which the CPI-M is trying to rebuild.

Mr Karat pointedly said there was not much difference bet-

ween the Congress and the BJP and the Marxists had no plans to ally with the Congress. However, as a vague qualification, he added in the same breath that the BJP was more communal and was guided by the RSS.

Several other delegates also reminded the comrades that the Congress had a longer history of playing politics with religion than the BJP. These "facts of history" cannot be wished away. Some delegates would even like to make a distinction between the RSS-controlled BJP and the "better elements" who believe in maintaining the nation's "secular fabric".

Though the prime aim of this conference is believed to be the CPI-M's future coordinates in national politics and its preparedness to join a central coalition, there were conflicting statements even on this premise.

Mr Karat dispelled the view that the conference was mainly aimed at deciding if the party should share power at the Centre. "That is a tactical decision which will be made by the Central Committee and the Politburo. The party programme cannot provide any specific guidelines on the question of tactical decision."

Call to arms: In several resolutions, the party decided to launch a nationwide movement

against the Centre by roping in all Left parties along with "secular and democratic" forces initially, and culminating it with a "militant action" against the NDA government in the next budget session of Parliament.

The conference resolved to strengthen the "people's struggles" against the policies of the Vajpayee government and called upon all its units to launch mass agitations and struggles. "In this effort, the anti-power tariff hike stir in Andhra Pradesh is a source of inspiration," a resolution against the Centre's economic policy said.

The party also condemned the "brutal violence" unleashed by the Israeli forces against on the Palestinian people.

NCP support: The Nationalist Congress Party today welcomed Mr Basu's call to shape up a third alternative to the BJP-led coalition and said such a front should combat both communalism and corruption.

NCP leader Mr Tariq Anwar said his party supported the CPI-M view that the current situation demanded strengthening of Left and democratic forces to take on the communal forces and the "imperialist-driven globalisation".

This call for third front should have come earlier, he added.

THE STATESMAN

22 OCT 2000

22 OCT 2000

CPM to 'correct' programme, Subhas falls in line

Blunder & brawl buried

FROM INDRANIL GHOSH AND
MONOBINA GUPTA

Thiruvananthapuram, Oct. 21: The CPM today confirmed that it has decided to lift a 36-year-old bar on joining a government at the Centre, prompting pro-changers to sheathe swords and rally behind the party in its fight against Mamata Banerjee.

Politburo member Prakash Karat said the scope of a proviso, which forced the CPM to squander a rare opportunity four years ago to lead a government at the Centre, would be expanded to allow the party to consider sharing power if the "concrete situation" demanded so.

Karat, one of the hardliners who advocated status quo in 1996, was at pains to stress that the decision then could not be faulted as it was in line with the "reality" four years ago. Jyoti Basu had later termed the refusal to join the government a "historic blunder".

The "correction" of the blunder is expected to help the CPM

1-1 22/10
put in a forceful argument when it tries tomorrow to convince erstwhile Third Front partners to come together again.

But the immediate gain was the apparent olive branch held out by Subhas Chakraborty, the perceived arrowhead of dissidents in the party. Showering a mix of encomiums and cursory criticism, Chakraborty put the leadership at ease by berating Mamata and pledging his loyalty to the CPM.

Another notable pro-changer from Bengal, Goutam Deb, also toed the party line, but only after making trenchant observations on the relevance of certain aspects of the CPM's approach to socialism.

But Chakraborty's unequivocal

support to the draft of the updated programme overshadowed the other developments of the day.

"I have been a party member for a long time. I have attended many party conferences and been associated with its policies. I have no hesitation to wholeheartedly support this document as well," he told the delegates at the programme update session here.

Warming the leadership's hearts further, Chakraborty targeted the Trinamul-BJP combine — once considered a potential refuge for disgruntled CPM leaders. "The emergence of this force is not a happy development. A large number of our party supporters is being killed by them," he said.

Mildly criticising the leadership for turning back on the 1996 opportunity, Chakraborty said the CPM could have initiated on a national scale policies like land reforms which made it a force in Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. "If only we had responded to the situation four years ago, the present condition in India might not have arisen," he added.

An area where he appeared to be countering the party's position was the issue of class versus caste. The postulate that politics was all about class conflict should be re-examined as caste considerations often supplant class issues in India, he said.

■ See Page 6

THE TELEGRAPH

2001 2000

Plenum begins third front warm-up

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
& Agencies

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Oct. 22. — A day after the politburo said the CPI-M could share power at the Centre, top non-BJP and non-Congress leaders joined the party's plenum today indicating it has earnestly begun efforts to form a third front.

The non-Marxist leaders who spoke at a seminar on Centre-state relations and democratic federalism, organised here for the special CPI-M conference, included Mr HD Deve Gowda, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav and — most conspicuously — Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, whose Asom Gana

Parishad is a constituent of the NDA government.

The BJP's nervous reaction to the CPI-M plenum shows the party is getting increasingly jittery about its sway over its allies. BJP leader and Union minister Mr Venkaiah Naidu today said the CPI-M's call for the formation of a third front had a "hidden agenda".

The CPI-M, he said, had made the call to wean away some small parties with an aim to tie-up with the Congress indirectly. The party had realised that it could not directly ally with the Congress, he said. There was no scope for a third front at the national level, he said.

In what must have sent shiv-

ers down the NDA spin doctors' spines, Mr Mahanta said the Centre should act like a coordinating body, keeping to itself a few subjects of "common interest" relating to the unity and integrity of the country.

Mr Gowda charged the Vajpayee government with playing the "worst type of politics by interfering" in state subjects.

In his inaugural address, Mr Jyoti Basu suggested amendment to the Constitution to provide safeguards against "abuse" of Article 356 and 355. He demanded a time-limit for Governor's sanction and President's assent to legislations passed by Assemblies.

Earlier, Politburo member Mr Sitaram Yechuri said it was not

true that the CPI-M was going "soft" towards the Congress, for there was nothing common with the policies of that party. "What we are trying is to shape an anti-Congress, anti-BJP front."

He said there was a "deep churning", not only in non-BJP and non-Congress camps, but also within the NDA. Mr Mahanta's presence at the CPI-M seminar was proof that he may not have been way off the mark.

Elaborating on this "churning" process, another top CPI-M leader pointed to the fact that Andhra Pradesh leader and prime NDA prop, Mr Chandrababu Naidu, was now in China.

Responding to an invitation by the Communist Party of China, the Andhra Pradesh

chief minister reached Beijing today to "acquaint" himself with China's decade-old economic growth, especially its impressive strides in infrastructure, information technology and social sectors.

Yechuri & 'blunder'

Even after the Politburo last night rectified the 'historic blunder', a prime architect of that 'blunder', Mr Sitaram Yechuri, today maintained that it would do no good to the party had it joined a national coalition government in 1996.

Asked why the question of participation at the Centre was then being discussed afresh, the Politburo member said: "There

was a need for clarification to party members that it was the concrete situation that prevented us from joining the Centre in 1996. If you join the Centre, you should be in a position to do good to the people. By being in the Prime Minister's seat in 1996, we would not have been able to do good to the people."

Evidently, the likes of Mr Prakash Karat and Mr Sitaram Yechuri who refused to heed Mr Jyoti Basu's counsel of joining the national coalition are putting up a brave front after having been forced to come around to the Bengal patriarch's views.

The party criticised the "stingy" assistance provided by the Centre to Bengal for floods.

THE STATESMAN

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Saifuddin gropes for policy bearings

Saugata Roy
Calcutta, October 22

SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHURY seems caught between two worlds. The regimented Left is now dead to him while the "progressive, democratic and secular world" he craves for is yet to be born. Chowdhury can't cast off the socialist moorings that he inherits from the CPI(M) but wishes to rope in secular forces within the Congress that are more bent upon driving the CPI(M) out of power. He is close to the Congress as long as it fights communalism but has a guarded stand on its economic policies.

Chowdhury, therefore, is buying time to work on the commonalities between like-minded parties and has postponed plans to float the new political platform from the convention on Monday. "I don't believe that if the ruling party is progressive and secular, the Opposition has to deny secular tenets and follow a right-wing path. On the contrary, political parties should compete within a secular premise," the rebel leader said while sharing the dais with State Congress chief Pranab Mukherjee at a seminar today.

Asked if he would like to have an electoral alliance with the Congress in the coming elections, Chowdhury said: "Let us float the platform first and the party. We will think of electoral alliances then. We have to work hard to revive commitment for ideals. We may not contest for MLAs or MPs in the coming polls."

Chowdhury maintains that the growth of communal forces in West Bengal is a fallout of a pervading frustration among the



Saifuddin Chowdhury (left) with PCC president Pranab Mukherjee (right) in the city on Sunday. Photo: Ashok Nath Dey

youth before whom the Left Front Government couldn't present a development model.

"Why are secular ideals on the wane? It is because the ruling Front couldn't shed its primitive ideas on development and reach out to the unemployed educated youth who needed a little support from the State. They had the skill but required a little capital or some equipment that the State could have provided by way of loans. The Left Front has failed in modern governance, letting a large section join the reactionary forces. What it lacks is the mindset but is not ready to admit it." This, Chowdhury asserts, is a major reason for the erosion in the Left's support base.

Violence of the type the CPI(M) and Trinamool are indulging in, he is convinced, does not pay. "We can't cling to power or grab it by violent means. Although the ruling Front is an elected government and enjoys popular support, we must learn to honour public opinion and accept defeat. Take for example the developments in Indonesia, Chile and Yugoslavia. Everyone had to bow to the public voice. Violence leads us nowhere. Let leaders compete for peace instead of spreading violence."

He does not, however, forget to mention the achievements of the Left Front, especially in the agrarian sector.

Politics must abandon the cloak-and-dagger style and be transpar-

ent, feels Chowdhury. "I could have initiated the dialogue with Congress leaders behind the curtains. But I chose to come public. Present-day politics has become a behind-the-scenes affair causing disgust and resentment among the people. There is need to drag leaders out from behind the curtains and make things transparent."

Ashim Chatterjee, secretary of the Communist Revolutionary League, a former LF partner, charged the Front government with having failed to serve the interests of wage labourers, Muslims and Dalits. All left, democratic, secular and patriotic forces should sink their differences to save the country from "fascist forces," he felt.

Pranab's no to BJP Mahajot offer

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, October 22

PRADESH CONGRESS president Pranab Mukherjee today declined the State BJP offer to join the anti-Left Mahajot.

He is in no hurry to oust the Left Front because he does not want to grab power by "any means". Mukherjee would prefer, instead, to plan a common minimum alternative programme before the ouster.

He dubbed the grand alliance an opportunist combination. "The Congress does not believe in negative politics. There is no denying the Left Front should be removed from power. But what next?"

"Forces that come together just to grab power disintegrate easily as we have seen during the two United Front Governments in Bengal. Coming to power is easy. But it is difficult to hold a coalition together for five years."

Saugata Roy, Congress Assembly deputy leader, agrees with Mukherjee. "I don't deny Mamata Banerjee's popularity. But a coalition does not work on individual charisma only. Even Hitler was once quite popular among the Germans."

Yet, Mukherjee welcomed the search for a third alternative. "If we look at the alternative as a mere conglomeration to snatch power, then I have my doubts. It can be effective only if it addresses

people's problems."

He endorsed Saifuddin Chowdhury's view over working on shared aims to create a democratic secular alternative. He said: "I hold him in high esteem. Let him float a party. Then we could think of an electoral alliance."

The PCC president clarified, however, that his party would stick to the moderate economic resolution adopted at the Panchmarhi plenary session. And he is keen on building an effective coalition against communalism.

"People put BJP in power to govern. Who gave it the right to strike at our Constitution's secular foundations?" Mukherjee was referring to the RSS chief's call for "Indianisation" of the Church. "The danger is evident when Home Minister L K Advani says that the RSS is to the BJP what Gandhiji was to Nehru," he added.

Mukherjee criticised the Left for its stubborn anti-Congress stand. "A blind anti-Congress stand or bitter anti-communism would lead us nowhere."

The PCC chief ran down the State for its failure to live up to people's expectations in both economic and cultural spheres. "The net per capita income has fallen below the national average. It wasn't so poor in the 1970s. The Left Government failed to create even the cultural atmosphere conducive to rational opinions."

PARTY CONFERENCE / "HISTORIC BLUNDER" BURIED FOR GOOD

CPI(M) won't reject power at Centre

By C. Gouridasan Nair

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT. 23. The decks have been cleared for the CPI(M) to participate in Governments at the Centre with the special conference of the party, which concluded here today, incorporating an amendment to that effect in the Party Programme.

The amendment, mooted by the CPI(M) Central committee "to clarify" the position on participation in Governments at the Centre and in the States, was adopted unanimously at the conference, the CPI(M) general secretary, Mr. Harkishen Singh Surjeet said.

Although the CPI(M) leaders have been trying to make it appear that the amendment was just clarificatory in nature, its incorporation in the updated programme marks a significant departure from the earlier position that the party could participate only in State Governments. Now, the formulation in the relevant paragraph has been so worded as to make it applicable to the Central Government as well. The decision in this regard would be taken depending on the concrete situation at the time when the party is called upon to take such a decision.

The amendment to the relevant paragraph was, as stated by Mr. Surjeet, adopted unanimously. However, according to party in-



CPI(M) leaders (from left) Mr. Manik Sarkar, Mr. E. Balanandan, Dr. M. K. Pandhe, Mr. E. K. Nayanar, Mr. Jyoti Basu, Mr. H. S. Surjeet and Mr. V. S. Achuthanandan greeting participants at the rally held to mark the concluding of the three-day special conference of the party in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday. — Photo: C. Ratheesh Kumar

siders, there was an attempt from the floor to scuttle it.

A delegate from Maharashtra or Madhya Pradesh reportedly moved another amendment which, in effect, sought retention of the original paragraph. But only 30 to 35 of the 400-odd delegates to the conference were prepared to back it. The CPI(M) leaders have been insisting that there was never a bar on the party joining the Central Government. However, the CPI(M) general secretary is on record that the original party programme addressed

only "the question of participation in State Governments" and that the question of participation "arose subsequently" making it necessary to reformulate the relevant paragraph. With this, the 1996 decision not to allow the West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu, to head the United Front Government, described by Mr. Basu as a "historic blunder," can be considered buried for good.

Briefing presspersons on the final day's deliberations, Mr. Surjeet said though there was voting

on some of the amendments, the updated programme in its entirety was adopted unanimously. He cited the amendment enjoining that in the agrarian reforms to be implemented after the completion of the people's democratic revolution, the question of providing compensation to small landlords may be considered.

The original programme contained no such assurance to the small landlords whose main occupation may be non-agricultural and who may play a role in the democratic movement.

No tie-up with Cong.: Page 15

Plenum clears way for power-sharing at Centre

CPI-M keeps Congress at arm's length

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE and AGENCIES

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Oct. 23. — The CPI-M plenum concluded here today ratifying a central committee proposal enabling the party to share power at the Centre with democratic and secular forces, but party leaders continued to stress that a "third front" was distinct from both the BJP and Congress.

The party does make a distinction between the Congress and BJP, Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet told reporters after the conference adopted the amended party programme. "But I don't want to number them as first and second enemies." He blamed the Congress for creating space for the BJP and its agenda of Hindutva and said the "third front" was so called because it was against both.

The CPI-M's ideological preparation for a third front found an echo in a Janata Dal (Secular) statement in Delhi today. It stressed the need for a third force that would unite workers, Dalits and minorities. Former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda told reporters he was in Kerala yesterday with Mr Laloo Yadav and Mr Prafulla Mahanta at the CPI-M's invitation to discuss reviving the third front. Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav has been contacted and his response is awaited.

The CPI-M however has rejected the Rashtriya Janata Dal's suggestion for a deal with Congress. "Laloo Yadav has his political compulsions," Mr

Surjeet told reporters here.

Mr Yadav said at a press programme here that a third front to fight the BJP's communal policies was the "need of the hour". Asked whether the



Mr Surjeet: Time was running out for party programme change.

Congress would be part of it, he said as far as he was concerned the BJP and RSS were the "main enemies".

Foreign funding

Another important amendment that the CPI-M plenum adopted was the recognition that foreign funding is inevitable in areas of science and technology, though the party has iterated its commitment to strengthening the public sector. The central committee's statement asserted that Marxism-Leninism was the answer in the "concrete conditions of India".

The conference was in a way an academic exercise, with delegates endorsing decisions the

central committee made three months ago, with minor changes. It "unanimously" accepted 28 of the 239 amendments moved by 400 odd delegates, the official statement said. But there was division of votes for the rest, some of them quite close. This, according to Mr Surjeet, reflects a transparent process of democracy unique to the CPI-M.

The conference accepted that changes in party programme were necessary in a uni-polar world with the USA calling the shots. The CPI-M, Mr Surjeet said, had to change tactics after identifying the BJP as the major threat to national unity and the main class enemy.

Mr Surjeet said the party could not have waited another year for the next party congress to update its programme because a lot of changes have taken place. The party believes that fighting the BJP and policies of political alliances are separate issues. The party has no hesitation in joining with all forces in the fight against BJP.

"The CPI-M will rapidly forge ahead to change the correlation of class forces among Indian people advancing towards the goal of people's democracy — the path of socialism in India."

The conference ended with the singing of *Internationale*. Later in the evening, all senior party leaders addressed a huge rally of party workers.

Kerala's CPI-M unit handed over a cheque for Rs 5 lakh to Mr Jyoti Basu for flood relief.

■ Another report on page 6

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2000

THE CPI(M)'S NEW LINE 25/10

WITH THE TALK of working towards forging a third alternative — gathering the non-Congress forces against the ruling BJP-led coalition — the CPI(M) has only reverted to its old line that led to the formation of the United Front in 1996. The developments since then, such as the situation where the United Front as a platform had to depend on the Congress for the survival of its Government and the disintegration of the platform after the Congress caused the fall of the Government and such parties as the Telugu Desam and the DMK moved over to the BJP's side and also the resistance put up by Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party (that continues to remain strong and hence relevant in Uttar Pradesh) to the idea of teaming up with the Congress, must have influenced the CPI(M) in reviving, once again, the idea of a third alternative.

But then the party cannot gloss over the ground realities. As for instance, the Janata Dal as a party, around which the third alternative was built at that time, has now been decimated completely and redeeming the platform is easier said than done. And the idea of forging a non-Congress alternative to the ruling BJP-led coalition at the Centre in the given context can only mean a front consisting of such outfits as the Samajwadi Party, Mr. Laloo Yadav's RJD and Ms. Jayalalitha's AIADMK. The fact that the CPI(M) too cannot claim to have a substantial support base outside West Bengal and Kerala cannot but render the proposed front merely a combination of regional parties. Indeed, the Congress, after showing signs of revival in such States as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar after Ms. Sonia Gandhi took over as party president, seems moribund even if it did put up a good showing in Gujarat. And the idea of a non-Congress alternative to the BJP-led combine that the CPI(M) is now talking of may seem relevant in these two States that account for about one fifth of the Lok Sabha's strength;

this, however, is only in the long run. And even in the long run, the fact is that the Congress continues to remain the only alternative to the BJP in many other parts of the country. In this context, the statements by the CPI(M)'s leadership from the party conference at Thiruvananthapuram seem no more than rhetoric.

Coming as they did at a time when elections are due to the State Assemblies in West Bengal and Kerala (the two States of relevance for the party), the new line can only be seen as reflecting the needs of the immediate context. After all, the CPI(M) in particular and the Left parties in general cannot afford to be seen as associates of the Congress in these two States. But then it remains to be seen as to how the party's leaders would rationalise their stand in Tamil Nadu, where the State Assembly elections are likely to be held at the same time and the CPI(M) continues to be a partner in the AIADMK-led front along with the Congress.

Be that as it may, the cause for all these problems that the CPI(M) is facing now is the party's inability to expand, in any significant way, beyond its traditional bases in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. The recent decision by the Election Commission, placing the CPI(M) in the category of regional parties in the three States, is only a reflection of this reality. The agitational course that the party's leaders had decided at the Thiruvananthapuram conference against the economic reforms in the coming days may be a means, in their perception, to widen the party's base. But then, it remains to be seen to what extent such a campaign could be conducted by the CPI(M) outside its traditional strongholds. It is in this context that the talk of forging a third alternative — a combination of non-Congress forces against the BJP-led combine — and that too after the decimation of the Janata Dal seems quite unrealistic.

THE HINDU

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MARXIST JITTERS

Saifuddin's challenge makes CPI-M nervous

CLEAR signs of nervousness are evident among CPI-M leaders anxiously monitoring the response that the break-way pro-democracy Marxists led by Saifuddin Choudhury are evoking among former party colleagues and beyond as they plan to formally launch their platform, the Janachetana Mancha, in Calcutta. Despite the brave face that Jyoti Basu, Anil Biswas and Sitaram Yechury are trying to present on the impending split of their party their conciliatory utterances and gestures and the lengths to which they are prepared to go to appease Subhas Chakroborty and Samir Putatunda, for instance is all too painfully clear. If they join hands with Saifuddin, they know it will make it that much more difficult to retain power in the coming assembly election. They are aware of the personal pull and organising ability that Subhas and Samir command and the position they share with Saifuddin and his pro-democracy followers. Significantly Jyoti Basu no longer calls them "shameless persons lacking in self respect or self esteem". Nor does Anil Biswas arrogantly ask Subhas and "others like him" to quit the party. On the contrary efforts are on to "manage" them by inducements of berths in the party's state secretariat and even central committee. Comrades are asked to treat them with respect. An all out attempt is being made to humour them. The leaks the party leaders once engineered to denigrate Subhas are now on hold. The effort is to keep Subhas and Samir away from Saifuddin. But these are veterans who know the leadership's cloak and dagger tactics as when they dealt with titans like Nripen Chakravarty. They also know that after the elections, the party leadership will simply dump them.

Ironically, the Marxists have trained their guns on Saifuddin and are trying to project him as a renegade full of bourgeois vices. The effort is to drive a wedge between the pro-democracy liberals. This is old hat. The leadership's hypocrisy comes through clearly when Anil Biswas says that the party would not allow the CPI-M to degenerate into a bourgeois outfit. Doesn't he realise that the CPI-M today is much worse than a moth-eaten bourgeois party — rampant corruption, nepotism, factional feuds and rank opportunism have become its hallmark. The kind of class struggle that he and comrades like him now preach and practice is sheer perversion. How many agricultural labourers, industrial workers, Muslims, women and people of the scheduled tribes are there in the leadership to claim that the party is championing the cause of the weak and downtrodden? Saifuddin knows that the rhetoric of CPI-M leaders is hollow. If he can touch the hearts of the people, as he is set to do, he will be unstoppable.

THE STATESMAN

25 OCT 2000

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CPI moots unification with reformed CPM

CL MANOJ
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 26. — With the CPI-M correcting some of its earlier 'blunders', the CPI has suggested a reunification.

"There are no fundamental differences between the parties now. It is time for a reunification of the Communist movement," the CPI general secretary told **The Statesman**.

Mr AB Bardhan said: "The differences (between the CPI and the CPI-M have been) the issue of the class character of the state, and the next stage of revolution. Also ... the differences over national democracy and people's democracy.

"I don't think these differences are as fundamental as they are made out to be, particularly in the context of the situation (the new CPI-M programmes) that

has evolved... Now this debate hasn't the degree of relevance it had when the Communist Party was split."

The 'post-blunder' CPI-M has softened its attitude towards the Congress (national bourgeois). It has agreed to join a government of 'Left, secular and progressive' forces at the Centre before 'people's democracy' can be attained. These have raised questions on the justification for splitting the undivided Communist Party in 1964.

Mr Bardhan said: "I would prefer history to judge it (the split) rather than (satisfy) an immediate demand to answer that question. But looking to the future, I call for immediate Communist unification on a principled basis, which will qualitatively boost the Left movement in India. Unfortunately, the realisation for such

unification is not yet there."

Mr Bardhan made a dig at those CPI-M leaders who have been playing down the significance of the shift in party line. "To make this out as insignificant is to really obfuscate the issue. If it's the same old thing, or more or less the same old thing, then what was all this exercise at Thiruvananthapuram about?" He, however, said he wouldn't "give it back to the CPI-M which used to criticise the CPI for its past links with the Congress".



Mr AB Bardhan

look. The BJP represents the most reactionary forces. And in the context of the struggle against communalism, there will be changes in the attitude and tactics towards other parties including the Congress. This

"Communist parties should not be judged on their attitude towards the Congress... We have our own programme, tactics and goals. The Congress is a bourgeois party which we fought in the past and will fight in the future.

"The BJP too is a bourgeois party with a strong Rightist and fascist out-

is where the difference lies."

He said that if the CPI could be blamed for joining the Samyukt Vidhayak Dal governments in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar which had the Jan Sangh as a partner, the CPI-M too could be blamed for supporting the Janata Party (government) which too had the Jan Sangh in it.

"I think these temporary aberrations arising out of the peculiar conditions that prevailed then cannot be attributed to any ideological or political slip." He welcomed the CPI-M's agreeing to join a "grand secular force to fight the main enemy BJP".

"Today it has become clear that no single party can have the confidence to attain power at the Centre. Therefore, if the BJP-led Rightist and reactionary coalition is to be replaced, it's only another coalition of secular, democratic

and the Left that can do it. This raises the question of the Left playing an active and positive role in that. And I think the position adopted at the CPI-M conference in this regard is positive."

Which is the bigger enemy in West Bengal, the Trinamul which has the 'communal BJP' as an ally, or the Congress?

Mr Bardhan said: "West Bengal has always been a stronghold of secularism. Miss Mamata Banerjee's main crime is to have carried the BJP into the state and allowed it to gain a foothold. She is also the standard-bearer of the anti-Left forces. It's under her leadership the attempts have been launched to reverse the benefits of the 24-year-old Left rule.

■ CPM rebels unhappy with change, page 3

Myanmarese army shoots 3 Indian soldiers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 26. — Three Indian soldiers were shot dead near the Nagaland border yesterday by the Myanmarese army which mistook them for insurgents.

At a later flag meeting of the local commanders, the Myanmarese officer tendered an unqualified apology, defence sources said here this evening.

A strong squad of the Myanmarese army was combing the area across the border near Yanching in Mon district, reportedly moving in on a place where NSCN-Khaplang activists had taken up position in the vicinity of Phrulo-Hoyet.

That part of the border was being simultaneously patrolled by Assam Rifles men. The shootout injured at least two other Indian soldiers.

India enters Sharjah final

SHARJAH, Oct. 26. — India moved into the final of the triangular series with a three-wicket win over Zimbabwe here tonight.

Set to score 219, India reached the target with nine balls to spare. Skipper Sourav Ganguly topscored with 66, while Vinod Kamblil finally came good with 60.

India will take on Sri Lanka in the final on Sunday.

Earlier, opener Alistair Campbell waged a lonely battle with an unbeaten 105 as his team mates crumbled in the face of a career-best burst by Indian paceman Zaheer Khan. Campbell's 133-ball knock included six hits to the ropes and a six off Sunil Joshi.

The Indian bowlers put up a disciplined show and restricted Zimbabwe to 218 for 9 in their 50 overs. Sourav rotated his bowlers astutely, not allowing the batsmen any scope to pick on any of them.

Zaheer, who took 4 wickets for 42 runs, and Venkatesh Prasad (2 for 38) bowled brilliantly in the slog overs, allowing Zimbabwe only 46 runs.

— PTI & UNI

■ Details on page 12

2 killed in train blast near Bhatinda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BHATINDA, Oct. 26. — Two persons were killed and 31 injured in a blast on the Bhatinda-Rewari passenger train near here today. Police suspect Diwali fire crackers caught fire and caused the blast.

Jute coverings of high velocity crackers — "atom bombs" — were recovered from the blast site, 22 km from here.

It was a low intensity explosion and there were no projectiles, police said. The victims had burn injuries and were in state of shock, the DGP said. They have been hospitalised.

The blast occurred at 2.20 m. near the Bangi Nihal railway station between Bhatinda and Sirsa stations.

The DGP said a high-level probe team, headed by the Bhatinda DIG, had reported on a detailed investigation that apparently the blast was caused by the crackers catching fire. A forensic team would visit the spot tomorrow.

Senior civil and police officers have rushed to the blast site. The accident spot falls in the Bikaner division of Northern Railway, officers from Bikaner are expected here later tonight.

FBI follows Osama 'hijack' trail to Delhi

SRINJOY CHOWDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 26. — FBI officials from the USA were here last week, looking for leads on the five men who hijacked an Indian Airlines flight, IC-814, to Kandahar last December.

The FBI has been interviewing officials, trying to find out if the hijackers had links with Osama bin Laden or made any remarks before the passengers and crew that were anti-American, anti-Christian or derogatory to the US President. "I think the FBI believes the five hijackers are in Pakistan. It is building a case before seeking extradition. It is probably trying to make certain of the hijackers' identity," said an official who met two US sleuths.

Indian officials have reportedly told the Americans about anti-US comments made by the hijackers to the passengers and crew. The air bandits apparently made statements like "they say they (USA) are a superpower and think they can rule the world. But they will fail." There were several references to the war between "Christians and Muslims" in Chechnya. The Americans learnt about the harangue by 'Doctor' (Shahid Akhtar Sayeed, a resident of Karachi) on 30 December, a day before the passengers were released. 'Doctor' had described the Chechens as "freedom-fighters" who were also fighting for Islam.

He spoke about bin Laden as did fellow hijacker 'Bhola' (Mistri Zahoor Ibrahim, also from Karachi). 'Bhola' reminded passengers that the Saudis had "thrown him (bin Laden) out", forcing him to take shelter in Afghanistan. Bin Laden is a wealthy and nice man who "could buy up the USA and most certainly, India", Bhola said. Yet he lives in the jungles, because he is fighting for Muslims all over the world, 'Doctor' had chipped in.

To the passengers, who included many Christians, 'Doctor' said: "When you get home, read the Koran. You will learn about the greatness of Islam." The previous day, the hijackers' leader, 'Chief' (Ibrahim Athar, brother of Maulana Masood Azhar), had spoken of the massacre of Muslims in Chechnya and other parts of the world, and the UN's failure to protect them.



CPM rebels unhappy with change

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Oct. 26. — CPI-M rebels have described the party stand — sharing power at the Centre if a situation demands — as an instance of "ideological dishonesty."

It is not enough to insert a sentence in the party programme saying that it is ready to take part in a government at the Centre. The previous decision to stay away from the Centre had an ideological basis, rebel leaders said.

When the CPI-M did not allow Mr Jyoti Basu to head a government at the Centre in 1996, the ideological ground was that the party would not participate in a government where it was in no position to



Mr Saifuddin Choudhury

implement its policies.

"But, now when the party virtually admits that it made a historical blunder, as Mr Basu had said soon after he was denied the

opportunity to become the Prime Minister, it does not back the shift in its position with an ideological explanation," a rebel leader said.

Mr Saifuddin Choudhury, whose name was struck off the party rolls for clamouring for more inner-party democracy, said socialism has to go hand-in-hand with democracy. It will be a mistake to pit parliamentary democracy against socialism, as the CPI-M does, Mr Choudhury said.

The shift in the CPI-M's party programme adopted at Thiruvananthapuram is, in a way, a vindication of what Mr Choudhury has been saying over the past few months. Explaining the ideological basis of a party or forum he is going to launch in a few days, Mr Choudhury said the country's socio-economic set-



Mr Jyoti Basu

up can be recast on the model of socialism blended with principles of democracy.

Mr Subir Choudhury, a close aide of Mr Saifuddin Chou-

dhury, regretted the "intemperate" language Mr Basu used yesterday against the former central committee member.

Mr Basu had questioned the locus standi of the former CPI-M MP and belittled his efforts to form a party. "It is only natural that Mr Basu would sometimes lose his cool since his party is making him speak on anything from Haldia petro complex to Saifuddin Choudhury," Mr Subir Choudhury said.

He said the purpose of floating a new party was not to get votes, "but to make the people aware of the role of transparency in politics, the importance of respecting all views, including those of a myopic minority and the happy marriage between socialism and democracy."

City defies ban on fire crackers

CALCUTTA, Oct. 26. — It was intended to be a quiet Kali Puja, and a well-lit Diwali. The lights were there alright, but the city was evidently not prepared to do away with the fire crackers.

The sound of chocolate bombs and Kali-patkas were heard at regular intervals in residential neighbourhoods — in New Alipore, Bhawanipore, Kalighat, Lake Market, Raja Rammohan Sarani and Salt Lake to name a few.

Around 120 people were arrested for bursting crackers. The offenders were picked up from Tangra, Shyampur, Lake, Muchipara and Garden Reach and Salt Lake.

A pandal at Salt Lake's BF block caught fire when a cracker struck it around 8.30 pm. The puja was organised by Maitrayee Sangha Club. The image was damaged, and had to be replaced later in the evening. Salt Lake police arrested eight people for bursting crackers from BF, CF, KBKC and BG blocks.

NGOs like People for Animals, Compassionate Crusaders Trust and Beauty Without Cruelty used the occasion to question a central ritual of Kali puja. Their members stood outside the Kalighat temple around 10.30 am, protesting against the ritual of goat sacrifice and pleading for non-violent worship.

The Godhuli Club in Moinipur, many of whose members are from the minority community, found a unique way to celebrate Kali Puja. Four children, each from a different community, inaugurated the Puja. Ballygunge Place East witnessed power cuts for hours today. CESC officials said it was a local fault, and there were no power cuts in other city areas.

— SNS

BUDDHADEV TO TAKE OVER NEXT WEEK

Basu firm on calling it a day this time

By Malabika Bhattacharya

CALCUTTA, OCT. 27. Barely a week after successfully orchestrating the sweeping reforms in the CPI(M), Mr. Jyoti Basu, founder-member of the party's politburo, announced today his plans to relinquish the office of Chief Minister of West Bengal in the first week of November.

The longest-serving Chief Minister, Mr. Basu, said his successor — the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. Buddha-

dev Bhattacharya — would be announced at the meeting of the ruling Left Front on Saturday.

"I am determined to resign this time," Mr. Basu said at Writers' Buildings. "My indifferent health continues to be a major concern as a result of which I cannot devote enough time to the business of governance." He had announced his resignation twice earlier but the party did not allow him to do so.

Sources in the CPI(M) said that Mr. Basu would be installed as the Front chairman to coordinate the smooth functioning of the partners as well as monitor the quality of governance. In another way, Mr. Basu will continue to be a superpower centre as the office of the Front chairman, by virtue of his presence in it, will enjoy almost the same amount of influence, power and prestige equal to that of the office of Chief Minister.

"Whenever required, he (Mr. Basu) will act as the crisis-manager," Mr. Anil Biswas, CPI(M) State party secretary said.

It is said that the new Chief Minister would be installed between November 6 and 8.

Somnath offers to quit

Meanwhile, in a separate but related development, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, a Basu-confidant, leader of the CPI(M) in Parliament and Chairman of the WBIDC, offered to quit office saying that he would not like to continue in the absence of Mr. Basu. Also citing failing health as a



reason for his planned retirement, he said: "I cannot cope with the pressures of Parliament anymore because of my poor health. I will quit the day Mr. Basu retires."

The State secretariat of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) met during the day to examine and ratify Mr. Basu's decision on retirement and forwarded it to the Left Front which would ceremonially endorse it tomorrow.

Mr. Basu, who has been in the Communist party since 1940, said that even though he would not contest the coming Assembly elections, he would most certainly participate in the campaign on behalf of the Front.

"I am definite we will come back to power since the Opposition is showing signs of frustration as reflected in its demand for imposition of President's Rule on the State," he commented.

Mr. Basu said the Front Government had created a record not only in the country but in the world by its achievements which include the introduction of the panchayati raj system, land reforms and holding of elections at regular intervals in a democratic environment. He referred to the Election Commission's certificates to his government for holding peaceful polls.

Many in the CPI(M) and the Left parties are most certain to try and stall the issue of Mr. Basu's retirement but the chances of success of such efforts appear re-

mote given the fact that the CPI(M) general secretary, Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, who had twice succeeded in dissuading Mr. Basu from retiring, has apparently come round to accepting the idea after Mr. Basu forcefully put forth his arguments.

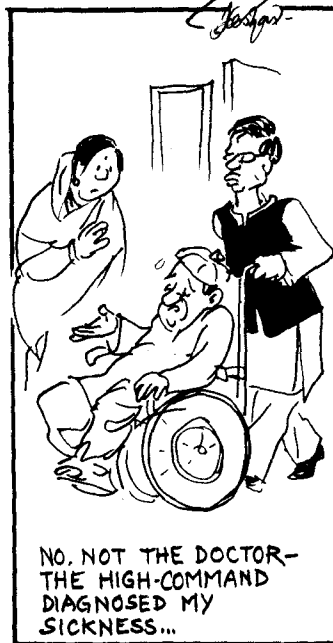
At the recent party meet in Thiruvananthapuram, Mr. Surjeet, like before, tried to dissuade Mr. Basu from pressing the plan for retirement saying: "Please hang on for a few more months," but relented only after realising Mr. Basu would not change his stand.

"I dissuaded you from retiring earlier because of the threat of imposition of President's rule on Bengal. True, the threat has receded but I will still request you to stay on."

Mr. Basu, however, chose to give expression to his own plans.

See also Page 13

ALL IN THE GAME



3 A OCT 2000

Basu quits after Left Front nod

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

SILIGURI/CALCUTTA, Oct. 28. — Mr Jyoti Basu tonight submitted his resignation to the Governor after the Left Front approved his decision to step down.

"The Governor received Mr Basu's resignation at 10 p.m.," said Raj Bhavan officials in Darjeeling.

Earlier, the LF cleared Mr Basu's resignation and unanimously elected Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya as his successor. Mr Bhattacharya will be sworn in on 6 November.

The deputy chief minister's post, which Mr Bhattacharya has been occupying to lessen Mr Basu's burden, will be abolished.

The LF meeting may have been a formality after Mr Basu yesterday announced his decision. But it was charged with emotion, with Mr Basu explaining the reasons for his resignation.

Some LF constituent leaders tried to prevail on Mr Basu to continue till the next Assembly polls, but they had to concede his demand after he spoke at length on his failing health.

Mr Basu prefaced his speech with an explanation: why he



Mr Jyoti Basu at the Left Front meeting at CPI-M headquarters in Calcutta on Saturday. — The Statesman

had to break the news to the media before informing the Left Front committee. "It would have been better if I could

announce the decision at this meeting. But the news had been leaked to the press and when journalists sought confir-

mation I had to oblige. I acted unintentionally," he told the meeting.

Yesterday, some LF partners

GOVERNOR TO RETURN ON 4 NOVEMBER

DARJEELING, Oct. 28. — The Governor will leave for Calcutta on 4 November for the swearing-in ceremony of Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya. Mr Viren Shah was to have stayed in Darjeeling till 19 November but had to change his schedule after getting a message from the chief secretary yesterday evening. It said Mr Jyoti Basu had decided to resign as the chief minister.

Mr Shah was not available for comment. He, however, is expected to be back in Darjeeling soon after the swearing-in ceremony. Members of family will stay in Darjeeling till he returns from Calcutta. — SNS

were dismayed after getting the news of Mr Basu's resignation. They had even decided to express disapproval against the step at today's meeting.

Mr Debabrata Bandopadhyay, RSP state secretary, however, told journalists after the meeting that though they wanted Mr Basu to continue for some more time, they had to be "realistic".

Mr Sailen Dasgupta, Left Front chairman, told journalists that Mr Basu had pleaded with the party several times to relieve him of the onerous responsibilities of the post of chief minister.

Mr Basu had been attending his office for about two hours in the morning and keeping appointments for the later part of the

day, Mr Dasgupta said. "Obviously, he wasn't able to give more time to his work. Hence, we decided to accede to his request when he raised the matter once again a few days back."

Some front partners proposed that Mr Basu be made the Left Front chairman. But the meeting felt he didn't need any such official position, for "he's not only a CPI-M politburo member but also an undisputed LF leader, and as such would continue to guide it," Mr Biman Bose, CPI-M politburo member, said.

All of Mr Basu's ministers will hold their portfolios in the new ministry, Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary, said.

■ More reports on page 3

Spectre of another split, ideological clash haunts CPM

MANASH GHOSH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Oct. 28. — Mr Jyoti Basu's resignation has cleared the decks for one more split in the CPI-M and another ideological battle between hardliners and liberals.

Liberals, like Mr Subhas Chakraborty, loyal to Mr Basu, will now won't hesitate to take on the party on ideological issues.

The liberals, led by Mr Chakraborty, want CPI-M to dump its "hypocritical posturings" on parliamentary democracy. And even after the change in the party's programme at the Thiruvananthapuram plenum, the hardliners want to stick to the party's original objective of establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat.

Another liberal, Mr Samir Putatunda, South 24-Parganas unit secretary, described the amended programme as "mere renovation and certainly not updating". Many fellow liberals share his view, indicating that ideological battle will intensify.

Mr Basu is aware of the impending battle and its consequences. So he felt this was the best time to leave. For, he wants to go down in history as a symbol of unity, not only for his party but also for the Left Front. He knows the split could affect other LF partners too and doesn't want to take sides in the battle.

Mr Basu had more than once asked Mr Chakraborty not to split the party "while I'm around". The transport minister respected his wish, for he looked up to him as a leader who could sort differences.

But with Mr Basu no longer the administrative head, Mr Chakraborty knows there'll be none to redress the liberals' grievances and settle disputes.

The liberals are worried because Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya's elevation as chief minister will create serious functional problems. Though earlier Mr Bhattacharya sympathised with those demanding greater democracy and transparency in the party, eventually hardliners won him over

by offering him the chief ministership.

A greater worry for the liberals is Mr Bhattacharya's lack of mass base. Unlike Mr Basu, he doesn't have an "image", hence, he can be easily manipulated by hardliners, the liberals fear. Mr

Bhattacharya's future is dependent heavily on the hardliners' favours, like shifting him from his "risky" Jadavpur seat to a safer one, from where he can win easily.

The ideological battle will centre around the contradictions in the party's amended programme. For instance, the liberals want the hardliners to come clear on the parliamentary system.

After trumpeting "pathbreaking" achievements like introducing land reforms and panchayati raj during the LF's 24-year rule, they say the leadership should be honest enough to admit that considerable changes could be effected through parliamentary institutions.

Though the party has been in power for almost

a quarter of a century, many hardliners still fear that reactionary forces would topple their government by taking advantage of the parliamentary system.

"Mr Prakash Karat and Mr Anil Biswas shouldn't brag about LF's achievements when they have no faith in the system that helped the party with significant achievements. With dogmatists like them calling the shots in the central committee and politburo, we know where we stand on the ideological plane," said a Chakraborty associate. "They lack courage to own their blunders. They have not regretted their ... 1996 Himalayan blunder. The reason is simple. If they did they wouldn't be... leaders any more."

The hardliners have come under attack from their own fold too. Mr Biswas and Mr Biman Bose have been criticised by some fellow hardliners for not being able to keep Mr Asim Chatterjee's Communist Revolutionary League of India in the LF. "It's your discredit that you couldn't keep the Left's natural ally with you," said a leader.

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Buddha competent enough: Basu

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE



Mr Jyoti Basu addresses his last rally as chief minister at Sahid Minar on Monday. — The Statesman (Report on page 3)

CALCUTTA, Oct. 30. — Mr Jyoti Basu is confident that he has put the state he ran for the past 23 years in the hands of the right man.

“Buddhadev is not a child. He is very experienced and competent enough to run the affairs of the state,” he said at Writers’ Buildings today.

“Buddha is not new to politics. He joined at an early age and had been involved in the student and youth movements of the party. He is very experienced. All of us discussed and decided that Buddha would be the next chief minister. He will perform well,” Mr Basu said, and called the man in question to sit next to him when photographers clamoured for a photo-op.

Even though many believe that the Marxists’ popularity graph has dipped of late, Mr Basu is confident that Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya will

lead the party well during the next Assembly elections. “There’s no reason why we shouldn’t win the next elections. All of us would help Buddha in this regard”, he assured.

But, won’t his absence affect the CPI-M’s poll prospects? “I don’t deny the importance of an individual. But one cannot undermine the importance of party organisation, party campaigns and programmes. All these play a very important role too,” Mr Basu said.

The octogenarian leader couldn’t resist taking a swipe at archrival Miss Mamata Banerjee, when reporters sought his reaction to her statement that Mr Basu was running away before the polls. “Mamata doesn’t have any political decency. When Miss Banerjee became a minister, I thought she would change a bit. But she hasn’t,” Mr Basu retorted.

As for Opposition leaders who were criticising his decision to

quit, Mr Basu assured them that he would definitely join again, if “they can give me proper medicines to make me fit once again”.

Asked about his post-retirement plans, Mr Basu said that he wasn’t quitting politics. “I’m not leaving the party. As a chief minister I have done whatever was required in all these 23 years. But I cannot continue any longer because of my health. If I can’t work, why should I occupy the CM’s office. For the last one-and-a-half years I have been urging the party to relieve me of my responsibilities”.

Mr Basu said he was grateful to the people of Bengal for the affection they have lavished on him for the past 23 years.

Regarding the formation of the third front, Mr Basu admitted that it was an uphill task to rope in all sorts of parties. “But it should be done,” he insisted.

DTH open to all, but no advantage to media giants

SRINJOY CHOWDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

Oct 30 — Direct-to-home or DTH
group of

move is the disastrous experience of the cellular phone and FM channels. It is also a move to cut down monopolies. This means that just the players with the deepest pockets — clearly Zee and Star — will not get a head-start.

Those who will get licenses will have to enter a revenue-sharing arrangement with the government of India.

of reducing the power of the big
medi-

31 OCT 2000

THE STATESMAN

Surjeet rejects Bardhan's unity call

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 30. — The CPI-M has rejected the CPI call for Communist reunification and stressed that there still are fundamental differences dividing the two Communist parties.

In a letter to Mr AB Bardhan since his interview with **The Statesman**, Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet has virtually signalled another round of cold war between the two parties. He also released his three-page letter to the Press, which said, "since you (Mr Bardhan) have aired your views in public, I am compelled to do the same".

Conceding that "the urge for the unity of the Communist movement is prevalent among large sections of the sympathisers and well-wishers", Mr Surjeet reminded Mr Bardhan that "echoing this desire is one thing, but shifting the onus without addressing the larger issue of the programmatic understanding, is

an exercise, which seems guile". The CPI leadership said it would respond to Mr Surjeet's letter as soon as Mr Bardhan returns from Calcutta.

"We will discuss the issue in the party forum after Comrade Bardhan returns to Delhi and then will give a formal reply to Comrade Surjeet," Mr D Raja, CPI secretariate member, said. He felt Mr Surjeet's reply to Mr Bardhan's "views expressed in a newspaper interview, is not in the right perspective".

In his letter, Mr Surjeet said Mr Bardhan, unlike him, was "not in the leadership at the time when the intense debate began in the undivided party in



Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet

the mid-50s", and therefore "it may be a bit difficult (for Mr Bardhan) to realise the pain and pangs that preceded the split... I would urge upon you to go through the voluminous material that is available on this subject. Even a cursory glance through his data will reveal that there is no truth in the statement. There is no fundamental differences between the parties now".

Expressing shock at Mr Bardhan's "evaluation of the special conference of the CPI-M for updating its programme, as contained in **The Statesman**", Mr Surjeet said the 1964 split was the result of a decade-long inner-party struggle. "The

central issue in the debate was the class character of the state and the government as well as the class alliance. Whereas the then dominant leadership and later on the post-split CPI advocated cooperation with the government characterising it as representing the national bourgeoisie, those who later formed the CPI-M differed from the assessment and characterised the Indian state as being ruled by the bourgeois-landlord classes headed by the big bourgeoisie".

After underlining the fundamental differences, Mr Surjeet balmied the CPI for disrupted Left unity by forming an anti-CPM alliance with the Congress and heading such (alliance) a government in Kerala.

Reminding Mr Bardhan that a copy of the updated CPI-M programme had been sent to him in advance, Mr Surjeet told Mr Bardhan to note that

■ See SURJEET: page 8

Governor accepts Basu's resignation on health grounds

Siliguri

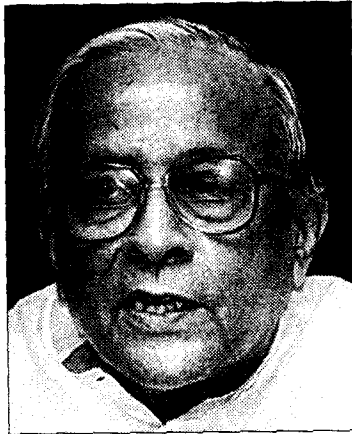
29 OCTOBER

WEST BENGAL governor Viren J. Shah on Sunday accepted the resignation of the state's longest serving chief minister Jyoti Basu on health grounds and asked him to continue till alternative arrangements were made.

"The governor accepted Mr Basu's resignation and asked him to continue in office till alternative arrangements are made," Raj Bhavan sources in Darjeeling, where Mr Shah is holidaying, said.

The governor will return to Calcutta after being officially intimated by the chief secretary on the swearing-in of the new Left Front government headed by Mr Basu's successor Buddhdev Bhattacharya, they said.

Mr Basu's resignation was received by the governor at 10:00 p.m. on Saturday shortly after the Left Front approved



Basu: End of an era

octogenarian Basu's decision to demit office and elected his deputy Bhattacharya as his successor. After the meeting, The Front chairman, Mr Sailen Dasgupta said "Basu will continue to function as chief minister till November 6 when Bhattacharya will be sworn in."

Mr Dasgupta said other ministers will also take oath but

"there will not be any change in their portfolios and the deputy chief minister's post will be abolished."

Mr Basu ruled West Bengal for 24 consecutive years before announcing his decision to resign on health grounds at the meeting.

He explained in detail to the coalition partners his inability to function as the chief minister. "I have been requesting for long to relieve me from the post. Now I want to quit. I seek your approval," Mr Basu told the meeting. Mr Dasgupta said a proposal to make Mr Basu the Left Front chairman was not discussed, but he will continue to work for the party both at the state and national levels as the party politburo member.

The Front partners became emotional and some of them raised objection to the undisputed leader's stepping down, but later every one approved his decision to demit office. — PTI

VETERAN LEADER UPSET OVER POLL METHOD

Sonia meets a challenger in Prasada

New Delhi

29 OCTOBER

IN PERHAPS the first fight against the Nehru-Gandhi family for the Congress president's post, dissident leader Jitendra Prasada filed on Sunday, his nomination against incumbent Sonia Gandhi for the November 12 poll amid scuffle and scenes involving loyalist and dissident supporters.

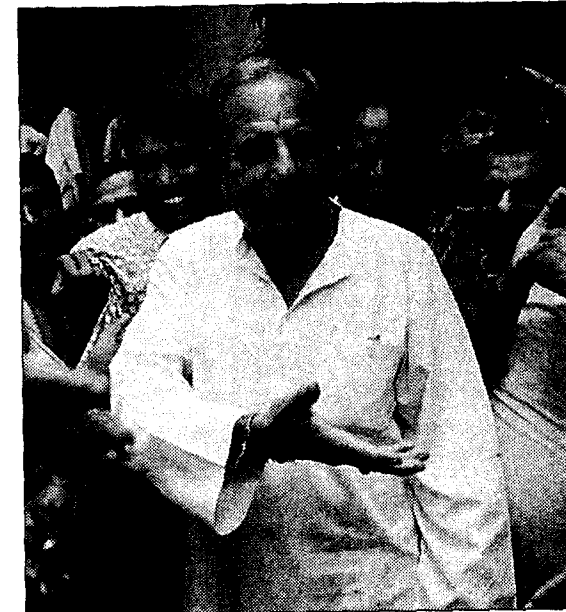
Mr Prasada, who had declared on Saturday to continue his "fight on issues to its logical conclusion", finally ended suspense on Sunday by driving in a motorcade to the AICC headquarters and personally filing his nomination in the company of three MPs and some MLAs supporting him.

Soon after Mr Prasada filed five sets of nomination papers, there was a scuffle between his supporters and Sonia loyalists amid vociferous slogans and counterslogans. The police had a tough time separating the two groups even as leaders like Ajit Jogi and Renuka Chowdhary tried to pacify the situation.

This was the second time in recent years that a contest was being witnessed for the Congress president's post.

In 1997, Sharad Pawar and the late Rajesh Pilot had contested against then incumbent Sitaram Kesri who won with a massive majority and Mr Prasada had played a major role in his success.

After filing his papers, Mr Prasada said his decision to contest was a tribute to late party leaders, Sitaram Kesri and Rajesh Pilot, who strove for inner party democracy and to honour the wishes of the party workers. Later, the chairman of the



DRAWING BATTLE LINES: Congress party member Jitendra Prasada leaves the party office after filing his nomination for the upcoming party election in New Delhi on Sunday. — AP

party's Central Election Authority (CEA) Ram Niwas Mirdha told reporters that as many as 85 nominations — 80 in favour of Ms Gandhi and five for Mr Prasada — have been filed.

The Congress leaders who supported Mr Prasada's candidature included three party MPs from Uttar Pradesh, Khan Gufran Zahidi, Begum Noor Bano and Sujana Singh Bundela, besides half a dozen party MLAs from the state including Sarvashakti Singh and Chetram.

Prominent among other Prasada supporters were former MPs, Manvendra Singh, Ram Ratan Ram, Venod Sharma and Pinaki Mishra.

Mr Mirdha said of the five nominations filed in favour of Mr Prasada, two were from Uttar Pradesh and three were jointly from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Jharkhand. — PTI

Basu rules out talks with Mamata

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
& AGENCIES

CALCUTTA, Sept. 13. — Mr Jyoti Basu withdrew today the talks offer his deputy had made to Miss Mamata Banerjee on Monday, declaring the CPI-M had "nothing to discuss" with the Trinamul Congress.

The chief minister repeated his description of the railway minister as a "violent woman", iterated the Trinamul-BJP was entirely responsible for the raging political violence in the state, and announced there was no reason for him to visit Midnapore.

He said he had sent to Mr LK

Advani his rejoinder to Mr George Fernandes's "politically motivated and biased" report on law and order in West Bengal.

A persistent buzz of Mamata's name at the press conference had the chief minister bristling with rage.

"Mamata, Mamata, Mamata ... how many times will you say her name? What is my relation with Mamata? I have said time and again that she is a violent type of woman," he fumed.

There was no way he was going to meet her, the chief minister said. "I have nothing to do with her. The question of holding a m

arise."

Mr Basu repeated at the press conference all the themes he has of late been harping on: the defence minister's "lies" and the "exaggerated" representation in the media of the Midnapore conflict, the CII's certificate to the state as an investment destination, the "untrue" apprehensions about the railway minister's security in West Bengal, and the "discrepancies" in the Centre's communiques on law and order to the state.

The Centre could not, even if it wanted, advance the Assembly polls in the state, Mr Basu said. "There is the

Constitution ..."

He would not share with reporters the gist of his letter to Mr Advani. "You have to work to keep your jobs. Why should I tell you? Read the copy of the letter when it is given to you."

Kshiti: Contrasted with the chief minister's belligerence, it was left to the RSP, junior Front partner, to strike the note of reconciliation today.

The government must talk with Miss Mamata Banerjee to find a way to ease the disturbing law and order situation, senior RSP leader and PWD

■ See BASU: page 8

BASU:

(Continued from page 1)

minister, Mr Kshiti Goswami, said in Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri.

He had been criticised for making the suggestion some time ago, Mr Goswami recalled — but the deputy chief minister himself had veered to this line of thinking now. It would not help for the government to wait and watch as the state burnt, the minister said — talks were imperative.

But Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya himself appeared ready to tow the chief minister's hardline on Miss Banerjee today. At the press meet in Calcutta, he demanded to know from journalists why they gave her "so much importance".

And the chief minister's party echoed him.

On the opening day of its state committee meeting, the West Bengal CPI-M charged the Vajpayee government of "hatching a conspiracy" against the Left, and announced a statewide campaign to counter the move.

THE STATESMAN

CPM reprimands Saifuddin again



Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Sept. 14. — The state CPI-M leadership today reprimanded Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury for the third time and cautioned him against making controversial statements to the Press in "violation of party norms."

According to party insiders, the former MP can be expelled if he continues to make such statements.

At the two-day CPI-M state committee meeting, the state secretariat was authorised to take action against Mr Chowdhury if the situation so warranted. There was voting on the issue.

And liberal camp leaders, unhappy over the move, stayed away.

Party insiders say some hardliner leaders — like Mr Bireswar Lahiri and Mr Dipak Dasgupta — reportedly argued for Mr Chowdhury's expulsion. Some liberal camp leaders wondered if the party could take such a stand against Mr Chowdhury merely because of differences on political issues.

They reportedly alleged that the party had failed to take tough stand on those indicted in the organisational probe into the Beni Engineering case. They were apparently not happy with the leadership's softening of stand on Mr Lakshmi Chatterjee, former North 24-Parganas district committee member arrested last year after complaints by the Beni Engineering owner.

The leadership decided at the state committee meeting to divest Mr Chatterjee of organisational posts.

Mr Subhas Chakraborty and Mr Amitava Nandi were indirectly indicted by the three-member probe committee for allegedly accepting donations from the owner of the Kamarhati-based industrial unit for voluntary organisations controlled by them. Insiders say they will be pulled up within the party fora and the matter will not be made public.

During the day, Mr Gautam Deb, state housing minister, reportedly said Mr Chakraborty's name was unnecessarily dragged into the Beni Engineering case to protect another prominent North 24-Parganas leader. Mr Anil Biswas, state party secretary, told reporters that Mr Lakshmi Chatterjee got the "benefit of doubt" and hence expulsion move was not initiated against him.

Insiders say the leadership decided not to proceed further on Mr Subhas Chakraborty's charges against two probe committee members after he withdrew his allegation that the two had been influenced during the course of probe. The state committee decided to expel Mr Durgapada Ghosh, a member of Birbhum district party committee, for owning land beyond the ceiling. It accepted an inquiry committee report on corruption charges against two party members of Kakdwip, South 24-Parganas.

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THE STATESMAN

15 SEP 2000

ALARM IN ANDHRA

518.9.8¹¹ Naxalite threat to Naidu 117

THE Naxalite menace in Andhra Pradesh is long-standing and made worse by the fact that Chandrababu Naidu's hi-tech reputation is not matched by reforms in the countryside. The underground movement has its roots in the demand for redistribution of land and in the grinding poverty of people whose cause was taken up by outfits like PWG. An earnest effort to address socio-economic issues in the villages would have halted the Naxalite influence that now causes alarm. The latest threat to the chief minister's life is a direct consequence of this failure. The late NTR tried experiments like lifting the ban on the PWG in the hope that it would encourage them to join the mainstream. It was reinforced with a rehabilitation package for militants who surrender. Nothing has worked. It is now up to the chief minister to mix progressive ideas on technology with rural uplift. Or else his government which has earned handsome applause for cyber consciousness is destined to be plagued by unrest in Telengana.

Obviously Naxalites have made up their minds to go their own way seeking support and a steady supply of arms from rebel groups in other states. No wonder the police in Hyderabad have noticed that Naxalites are adopting guerrilla tactics acquired through extremist literature and exchanges with other extremist groups. The police can at best defend themselves and pass off elimination of extremists as "encounters"; administrative firmness is essential when the situation threatens to go out of hand. That does not solve the problem. Nor can violence rooted in human distress which finds grass-root support be stamped out by law. Concern for basic rural issues must be seen as real before attitudes change. Naidu has performed a miracle in Hyderabad to virtually eliminate political rivals; he needs to perform another in the countryside.

THE STATESMAN

Chandrababu Naidu would like to go down as the man who finished the People's War Group. For their part, the Naxalites would seek to buy time to recoup and regroup. Therefore, the talks both sides seem agreeable to would buy precious little, if anything at all. STANLEY THEODORE reports

Bizarre war, cold tactics

Pix courtesy India Today

THE present drama involving Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu and the People's War Group expressing a willingness for talks has its origin in the meaningless and purposeless meandering of the debate in the state assembly on the Naxalite issue. After Mr Naidu's reply, where he said his mandate was to ensure law and order in the state, Congress legislator Jeevan Reddy drew the chief minister's attention to a newspaper report of 3 April wherein revolutionary writer Vara Vara Rao made a statement favouring talks between the government and the Naxalites. This happened exactly four weeks after panchayat raj minister A Madhav Reddy was killed in a landmine explosion.

Mr Naidu then said the PWG's aim was to achieve power by the gun and unless they stopped violence there was no scope for talks. "If one holds a gun and says that he will do as he pleases, there is nothing to talk about," he said. But as an afterthought he added that he would convene an all-party meeting to discuss the matter and he would have no hesitation in inviting Vara Vara Rao and revolutionary balladeer Mr Gaddar. His underlying condition,

though not forceful, was clear — the PWG would have to stop its violent activities.

The PWG took a full month to make their point. On 4 May they listed eight demands — ranging from a judicial inquiry into the encounter that killed their three top leaders in December last to a lifting of the ban on the outfit and an end to combining operations by the police.

They also described their violence as acts of self-defence against state repression. They said their demands needed to be met for them to stop the violence and to create a conducive atmosphere for talks.

The operative part of their two-page note was: "If the government is ready to meet these demands and they are proven in implementation, we herewith announce that we will cease fire." Significantly, they claimed their demands were well within the framework of the Constitution and

the law.

The fortnight before this, three key encounters occurred. On 16 April, four Naxalites of the special action team that killed Madhav Reddy were shot dead in the capital. On 26 April, six Naxalites of the Rachakonda armed squad, one of the most militant units, were killed in Nalgonda. Twenty-four hours later 12 Naxalites were killed in Warangal and this decimated the major Parakal armed squad.

The chronology of events suggests that a sense of desperation has crept into the PWG as is evident from its conciliatory tone of making "only constitutional demands". This is primarily because the Constitution is one thing the PWG does not believe in.

Behind this is an extremely shrewd tactic of the underground organisation. It is looking for a break because it has really been chased and beaten over the past 18 months. The need for some quality

breathing space is being felt all the more because of the serious reverses the PWG has suffered. It needs time to recoup and regroup. What the PWG is looking for is the breaks it got in 1990 and again in 1994. In 1990, then Congress chief minister M Channa Reddy, shaken by the kidnappings of legislators, allowed the PWG to operate on the surface. For the entire year it held meetings and launched a membership drive. After Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in 1991, the ban was imposed and for the next four years the Congress government and the police went about with a purpose of finishing the PWG.

In 1995, when NT Rama Rao returned to power, he announced the "suspension" of the ban. Though he and Mr Naidu, then his revenue minister, were hard pressed to define what "suspension of ban" meant, the bottom line was that the PWG was being put on probation — "if the outfit behaved itself, the ban would be lifted".

These two periods are critical to the PWG, being what the situation is today. Had Channa Reddy or NTR not suffered from weak knees, the story might well have been different. Apart from tending to their wounds, the PWG needs the time to understand where it is headed. It needs to address itself to a serious deficiency that it has discovered during its introspection sessions — that it is not educating the people sufficiently enough on the need for an armed struggle against the state. A leader acknowledged that keeping away from the police is taking so much of the militant cadres' attention that the outfit is left with neither the time nor the energy to even think of pro-



A Madhav Reddy (inset) and the remains of the vehicle in which he was travelling; and Naidu — talking tough.

paganda.

Against this backdrop, expressing a willingness for talks appears to be the PWG's clear ploy to buy time and space. On the other hand, Mr Naidu suffers no such compulsions as his police hold

the edge in the bush battles. His readiness for talks is no more than a politician's readiness to talk to anyone under the sun as long as his purpose is served. Mr Naidu, in this case, has his purpose well defined — to go down as the man who finished the PWG.

Now comes the most pertinent question: what are the two going to talk about? To begin with, the PWG will insist on these eight demands, with only the lifting of the ban being some sort of an irritant between the two. As NTR did in 1995, Mr Naidu may offer to put them on probation and say the future depends on how well they stay away from violence.

Yet as head of an elected government he should and will ask them to join the mainstream if their demands

are to be met. Joining the mainstream means the PWG has to shed its underground nature and participate in elections. This in turn means that the PWG would have to go back on its cardinal principle — achieving political power through a protracted armed struggle.

If Mr Naidu fails to place this condition, then his tenure would be untenable.

Is it possible for the PWG to yield? At the centre of the outfit's beliefs is the contention that the present democracy is a farce and a revolution, with the people taking to arms, is needed to usher in a "New Democracy". To expect the PWG to tear these pages out of its book is absurd, to say the least.

But the group believes that except for the issue of taking power there are several other demands that it can make "on behalf of the people" while pursuing its primary objective of achieving power through an armed struggle. "During the entire course of the Vietnam War, there was a continuous dialogue in Paris. There were several rounds of talks between Israel and Palestine. But there will be no compromise on the PWG's core philosophy," one of the PWG's revolutionary leaders said.

Assuming that the dialogue progresses, the PWG will widen its range of demands. Most certainly Mr Naidu will be asked to go back on reforms, shun the World Bank and condemn the Sankhya Vahini. This is more or less like asking the chief minister to surrender his soul. But this is what the PWG will ask once the original set of demands is met.

Politically speaking, there is no real need for Mr Naidu to sit down and hear these demands, especially after he has won a re-election, which he said endorsed his reform process. But he certainly needs to explain the death toll and when the people of North Telengana can leave their homes without the fear of being caught in the crossfire. This is something the PWG also needs to explain. Beyond this, there is practically no meeting point between the two.

The PWG appears to hold the argument that in a democracy dissent has to be given space, even opinions that are against democracy itself. It wants to use this space that democracy provides to go about and spread the message of why it is necessary to wage a war against the state and overthrow it. For instance, the PWG's status is illegal but it wants the legislature to make it legal, even as it retains its prerogative of holding the gun. And to exploit this democratic space has the PWG come up with such cold tactics for talks.

Mr Naidu is at the opposite end of this spectrum. He, in all probability, will not allow the Naxalites much space. Further, he will turn the wrench by stepping up police action which in turn will choke the PWG's quest for space. That will be his cold tactic to win the war.

The PWG appears to hold the argument that in a democracy dissent has to be given space

The present drama is all about cold tactics. No party appears to show any concern for the lives and the families that are getting blown up in this bizarre war waged in the name of the people — not against insurgents or hostile neighbours but between sons of the soil themselves.

Each is agreeable to talks that will yield precious little or nothing at all. Each would seek to highlight one's point of view — that an effort has been made to buy peace and the other party had not respected it. In the same breath, each also expresses the willingness to offer more sacrifices. The drama is surreal and promises to make the Millennium Year the bloodiest ever.

(The author is Hyderabad-based correspondent of The Statesman.)

"If one holds a gun and says that he will do as he pleases, there is nothing to talk about..."

Multi-pronged assault on Naxalites

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

9.8.11 P. 2/11/11

New Delhi, April 4: The Centre today decided to ban the People's War Group (PWG) and some of its front organisations operating in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra and Bihar as part of a larger plan to "exert maximum pressure on Left-wing extremism".

The government also decided to establish a joint operations centre to be headed by a senior official from each of the five states where Naxalites have stepped up activities. The centre will coordinate both intelligence networking and ground operations.

Indications are that an officer from Andhra Pradesh, which has prioritised fighting Naxalite violence, will lead the centre which is yet to get a final shape.

The decisions were taken today at a meeting of chief ministers of the five states convened by Union home minister L.K. Advani. Advani said the Central ban on the Naxalite outfits was necessary, even though states will try to open dialogue with these.

"Banning is necessary as it will ensure that they come within the purview of a legal system. Outlawing them will help us to arrest the leaders of the various organisations," Advani said. Andhra Pradesh has already banned the PWG. The decision also means that the ban will be virtually countrywide which will enable all states to act against PWG activists.

While the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), which operates over a large area in central and south Bihar, has been outlawed by

the state, Madhya Pradesh has conveyed to the states that it plans to ban the PWG *dalams* (units) which operate from its territory. Orissa, Maharashtra and Bihar have been asked to ban the PWG operating from various parts of the three states.

Andhra Pradesh chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu landed a bombshell at the meeting. His intelligence had detected "established links of the PWG with radical organisations operating in Peru (Shining Path), Germany, Turkey, the Philippines, Belgium and Nepal", he said.

Naidu added that the PWG had also established links with other "separatist" groups in the country. He was interested in using unmanned aerial vehicles to track the movement of the extremists, the chief minister said. Advani said though the defence ministry had raised some initial objections, Naidu's proposal was being seriously considered and "it will most probably be sanctioned".

Emphasising that the Naxalite movement "in its origins was a rebellion against democracy", Advani said: "What started in West Bengal in the late Sixties with ideological and idealistic commitment has now degenerated into crime. It is bereft of any ideology and idealism. The so-called Naxal outfits exploit backwardness of the citizens and the regions."

Therefore, he said, there was a need to adopt a two-pronged strategy to fight Left-wing extremism: use of security forces and initiation of development programmes.

All states barring Bihar have sent their development plans to the Planning Commission for

Chandrababu Naidu with LK Advani at the Inter-State Council standing committee meeting. Picture by Rajesh Kumar

early release of funds.

On development, all states agreed to improve infrastructure in areas affected by Naxalite activities. The chief ministers agreed that more roads should be built. They said they would take up poverty alleviation programmes for tribals and the poor.

Advani assured the chief ministers that he will take up the demand made by Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh to amend the Forest Conservation Act which will remove the legal hurdles for laying new roads and starting development projects in tribal-dominated areas.

THE TELEGRAPH

5 APR 2000

MCC kills two Naxal hostages

OUR BUREAU

Feb. 2: Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) extremists yesterday abducted seven CPI(M-L) leaders and killed two of them in the Manika reserve Assembly constituency in Palamau district.

According to the police, the victims' bodies were recovered near Angraha village. The remaining hostages were released later. Police said the CPI(M-L) leaders were abducted when they were campaigning in support of their candidate at Kutmu village. The administration conducted nightlong raids to arrest the killers. However, no one has been arrested so far.

CPI(M-L) district secretary Jagnandan Prasad alleged that the local RJD candidate Ramchandra Singh was involved in the incident and demanded his arrest.

The MCC also abducted RJD candidate and sitting MLA from Manika Ramchandra Singh's brother and torched the former's campaign vehicles. According to

the Dhanbad police, the legislator's brother was on his way to Barwadih with the campaign vehicles when he was intercepted by at least 50 MCC activists. They snatched the vehicles and forced the MLA's brother to accompany them to the Dorami jungles.

The legislator's kin was beaten up and the campaign vehicles set ablaze. All the extremists were in police uniform, sources said.

The MCC also issued fresh pamphlets in Giridih declaring "death penalty" for police officers of Barhi, Barkattiha and Gorhar police stations on charges of killing one of their comrades Babka Tuddu alias Mahesh. The pamphlets were signed by the secretary of the underground Krantikari Kisan Samity — a frontal wing of the MCC. The pamphlets alleged that Tuddu was beaten to death by the police after

being arrested.

The outfit has also put up poll boycott posters in Ranchi's Namkum block. The posters threatened people with dire consequences if they violated the ban.

The outfit warned that those defying the poll boycott call would have their hands chopped off. The posters have sparked panic in the region as the MCC was never active in Namkum, which is located near the Ranchi town.

Intelligence reports said the extremists have also infiltrated Kanke, Burmu and Lapung blocks bordering Hazaribagh, Gumla, Lohardaga and Chatra districts.

Police patrolling has been intensified in Namkum following the outfit's poster campaign. However, police sources said since there were no MCC bases in Namkum, the posters may have been put up by local antisocials to

spark panic on the eve of elections.

Poll list released

The BJP today released a list of the remaining 35 names for the Orissa Assembly polls. The first lot of 27 nominees has already been announced. For the 63 seats it is contesting, the party has fielded 22 tribals, seven Dalits, four women and one person from the minority community. Of the ten sitting MLAs, only one has been dropped. BJP general secretary M. Venkaiah Naidu said the issue of projecting a chief minister in Orissa will be discussed after withdrawal of nominations. But BJP sources said that since Biju Janata Dal (BJD) chief Naveen Patnaik is contesting the polls, he would be the consensus choice.

Naidu also announced that home minister L.K. Advani would launch the party's Bihar campaign in concert with its allies on February 6. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is expected to join the campaign later.

VIOLENCE FOR VIOLENCE IS NO WAY OF TACKLING THE NAXALITE PROBLEM, WARNS MANORANJAN MUHANJY

Attention: This civil war is growing

ANOTHER TADA and nothing more. Home minister (Terrorist) and ter LK Advani has even said that Disruptive Activities talk of socio-economic roots of Prevention Act), yet Naxalite violence should be abandoned another ban on a doned since that gives them Naxalite organisation now pro-respectability.

posed in Madhya Pradesh, It is this coercive approach of killings in false 'encounters', the rulers and the Naxalites' acquisition of even more sophisti-retaliation, which have unleashed weapons by the police, and, a new wave of violence in central of course, a coordinated strategy India.

by the state governments of The Koyyuru incident in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar and Pradesh on December 2, 1999, is Orissa under the leadership of a landmark in the recent history of brutal suppression of the Naxalite movement. Three top leaders of the PWG, Nalla Adi Reddy alias Shyam, E Santosh Reddy (Mahesh) and Seelam Naresh (Murali) were killed in the Koyyuru forest area. A joint civil liberty investigation has confirmed it was a 'false encounter' staged by the police. The three had gone to the house of Govinda Reddy, who used to give them shelter in the past but had now been won over by the police and helped in this operation.

According to the fact-finding team of several human rights organisations, Shyam, Mahesh and Murali were taken into custody in a swift operation by the AP police in Bangalore on December 1, and flown to Hyderabad by a helicopter. After interrogation and torture, they were taken to Koyyuru forest. Another incredible dimension was added in Koyyuru. A peasant named Lakshmirajam, who was guarding the harvest in the field in Garjenapalli village with other farmers, was picked up at night and killed along with the three leaders. This was done to lend credence to the police story that the four died in exchange of fire when the Special Police Force (known as Greyhounds) were combing the forest area.

The PWG reacted violently. The assassination of the Madhya Pradesh minister, Lakhiram Kavre, a few days later was described as an act of revenge. Whether such acts of individual assassination, which have very little connection with the ongoing democratic struggle, can be an act of revolutionary violence is questionable.

The attack on a police station in Vishakhapatnam district by a huge, armed group on February 18, in which more than 10 policemen were killed, was also described as a reply to the Koyyuru killings. The landmine blast in Bastar last week, which killed 27 policemen in a van, caused widespread concern.

One can visualise a continuing train of violent attacks and counter-attacks in this expanding civil war in central India as neither side shows signs of a change in approach.

The recent elections did not see much disruption by the PWG and MCC, who gave a boycott call in all four states. Barring one landmine incident in Bihar in the first round of polling, they did not intimidate voters.

The Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) in Andhra Pradesh led by former civil servant SR Sankaran and PUCL president KG Kamabiran, who have conducted dialogue with the AP government as well as the ML groups, has appealed to both not to force voters either to vote or

abstain. It has had some salutary effect. The right to vote, after all, has been achieved through a long history of struggle. If it has been turned into an exercise legitimising oppressive rule, that has to be exposed through a political campaign rather than coercion.

The policy of liquidating Naxalites in 'encounters', far from suppressing the movement, has only exposed the brutal face of the state. Such killings violate Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution, which require the state to treat arrested persons according to the process of law. If the agencies of the state do not follow the law, how can it expect others to abide?

Meanwhile the ML movement remains a major challenge to the system. The greater the resort to 'encounters' — 275 killings in 1998, 226 in 1999, and over 2,000 during the last 20 years in AP — the greater the identification of the people in the struggle areas with the ML group. Moreover, when leaders are killed, the sober minds may have been lost.

The spate of mass rallies in AP, in recent weeks, and the massive meeting in Hyderabad on February 14 convened by many as 46 organisations, democratic upsurge for people's (through court order when the police withdrew permission) are indications of the common people's disgust with 'fake encounters'. In fact, the National Human Rights Commission in its order on March 29, 1997, had not only forbidden fake encounters, but had instructed the Andhra

government to punish those police officers found guilty of such illegal acts.

It is important to note that the PWG is now also engaged in constructive programmes, such as building irrigation facilities, ensuring primary education and primary healthcare, besides demanding full benefits of government programmes for tribals. Some ML groups, such as CPI-ML (Liberation), now participate in election and open mass programmes. Social oppression of Dalits and women in the struggle areas of Telengana and central Bihar is much reduced due to local people's alertness.

However, cases of extortion by ML groups and inhuman punishment to police informers are also reported from these areas. Violence for violence is no policy. It breeds more violence while social problems accumulate. Chandrababu Naidu's policy of cyber-capitalism instead of drinking water in every village, LK Advani's new package for the "effective state" (the criminal law amendment that strengthens the hands of the police), and the RSS' Hindutva offensive do constitute a policy. But it is a wrong response to the democratic rights in contemporary India. It is likely to invite further turbulence if even the democratic possibilities provided by the existing constitutional system are not realised to help the poor.

Naxal movement's cruel

NEWSWATCH



M.K. NARAYANAN

Spring

Every now and then reports tend to be put out by the authorities that the Marxist-Leninist better known as the Naxalite movement is on the wane, having suffered yet another series of crippling blows at the hands of the forces of law and order. Inured to a daily diet of killings in J&K and the North East currently (and in Punjab previously), periodic reports of sectarian strife and violent tensions in the many heartland states of the country, and growing evidence of abductions, extortions and murders in urban agglomerations by criminals and criminal gangs, the nation remains indifferent to whether this is true, or another instance of obfuscation of facts. Such placebos administered by the authorities at regular intervals have a down side, however, in that by failing to assess the true measure of the problem, the steps taken remain at best half-hearted.

The unvarnished truth is that in the worst affected areas of Naxalite violence — which encompass a sizeable segment of India's land mass and embrace more than half a dozen heartland states of India (Andhra Pradesh and Bihar being the most violence-prone) — "annihilations" of so-called "class enemies" is not only in vogue, but is on the increase. Identification of "class enemies" is hardly done by ideologically inspired or idealistic elements, but by motley group of "self styled revolutionaries," who often have the backing of misguided libertarians, which enables them to drum up support amongst the intelligentsia. The spirit of the arch-deacon of the Naxalite movement — the late Charu Mazumdar — lives on and his philosophy "death to the class enemies" and precept "learning warfare by waging war" still survive. As existing social contradictions become more acute, the movement seems to be turning still more violent and sanguinary. Also despite the splintering of the Marxist-Leninist movement and the existence today of several parties, factions and groups, the sum total of the parts appears much greater than the whole in terms of strength and vigour.

It would be a mistake to view the Marxist-Leninist movement at the beginning of the 21st century as basically no different from "the Spring Thunder" that sent its thunder claps across Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala during the Sixties and the Seventies. The Marxist-Leninist ideology that aimed at cleansing the Augean stables of the Left Communists, mainly that of the CPI-M, and create a new dawn after the many false hopes raised by the Communist Left is virtually non-existent today. Stripped off its ideological underpinnings, the Marxist-Leninist movement has become a caricature of what it once professed to be. Furthermore, by embarking on a diet of unbribed violence, bereft of any doctrinal principal, it is devouring what is still left of its earlier revolutionary promises.

The disturbing aspects of "New Deal Marxism" are: first, a penchant for inflicting large scale casualties where previously violence was specifically targeted against individual "class enemies"; next, the savage nature of attacks now being launched against police officers and policemen unlike anything seen previously (even at the height of violence in the Sixties and the Seventies); third, the spate of high profile killings — a state minister in MP, senior IPS officers and prominent politicians in AP; fourth, the extent and degree of sophistication now apparent in conducting ambushes and attacks, and the upgradation of skills revealed in the course of such incidents; and fifth, the suspicion that is slowly getting confirmed of the nexus developing with foreign intelligence agencies like the ISI, which is reshaping the character of the movement.

Acquisition of deadly weapons seems to pose few difficulties for Naxalite groups like the PWG. While the Latin American connection is no longer secret, it is the abundance of weapons available in the arms bazaars of South East Asia and to India's Northwest in Pakistan and Afghanistan that has made matters easier. State-of-the-art triggering devices for setting-off bombs and explosives seem to be plentiful, specially with the PWG. Radio and electronic signals are increasingly being used to detonate bombs and set-off land mines. In several of the recent "actions" carried out by the PWG in AP and MP, the techniques employed are strikingly reminiscent of those currently in use by Islamist mercenaries in J&K and Northeast insurgents and this raises many pertinent issues. Ambushes using decoys and leaving false trails are also reminiscent of the tactics employed by the ISI trained Sikh terrorists in Punjab previously, and foreign militants in J&K even today. An inference that can be legitimately drawn — based on the cross pollination of techniques and tactics, is

that the common thread that seems to run through PWG related "actions" in AP, MP and Bihar points to links with the ISI.

In the past, the PWG had connections with the LTTE. It also maintained a distant relationship with the Latin America based "Sandro Luminoso" (Shining Path) guerrillas. A nexus of sorts existed between the PWG and the ULFA (in Assam). These linkages helped the PWG strengthen its base over the years. Lately it has been trying to build a super-structure, and evidence points to the ISI as its new "mentor." Stray items of evidence linking the PWG to ISI "moles" in Hyderabad and elsewhere must not, hence, be ignored. The consequences of the ISI operating under the cloak of an ideologically motivated militant movement which cuts a wide swathe across the territory of India can be serious. Dispirited police forces with little guidance and even less training in the tactics of the covert warfare cannot deal adequately with such a situation.

Andhra Pradesh provides a prime example of all that has been said above namely the degree of the "churn" in the movement, upgrading of methods and techniques, and the manner in which Naxalite groups are able to shake-off setbacks from time to time. During

1999, the PWG suffered a series of major setbacks, first during the summer months, and later in December when three of its central committee members were killed in an encounter. It was, never the less, able to bounce back by swiftly embarking upon a consolidation strategy and moving out most of its key people deeper into the forest areas or to "safe houses" outside the state. Employing the tactic used by the LTTE in Sri Lanka and Khalistan Commando Force (Panjwar faction) in the Punjab earlier, they insulated their "special action teams" from the main squads, leaving specifics tactics to the ingenuity and resource of the former. Through high profile killings of prominent political leaders (as many as half a dozen) and police officers (including two IPS officers) they greatly undermined police morale and as well as the confidence of the administration. Elections to Parliament and the Assembly also provided the PWG with an opportunity to unleash a reign of terror of near unprecedented intensity.

The situation in Bihar today on the Naxalite front is a far cry from the strategy outlined earlier by Vinod Mishra, the doyen of the Naxalite movement in Bihar. Vinod Mishra and the CPI-ML (Liberation Group) placed greater emphasis on developing heightened consciousness among the masses and on developing mass movements to create a truly People's Democratic Front, than on merely engaging in violence for its own sake. What is taking place in Bihar today is quite the contrary. Mindless violence is endemic and mass movements are non-existent

After the three central committee members were eliminated, the PWG virtually "declared war" blasting railway stations and carrying out random attacks on transport buses, rural banks, telephone exchange etc. This lasted for more than a fortnight during December, property worth several crores of rupees were destroyed, and at least five persons were killed. Sporadic violence continues, and quite a few instances of well planned attacks, on a DSP's office in Warangal district (during January) and an armed public outpost in Vishakapatnam district (during February) in which nearly a dozen policemen were killed, have been reported.

In adjoining Madhya Pradesh, the intensity and spread of Naxalite violence has been steadily going up. Till last year, their thrust was on organisational activities, including the setting up of "base areas" and "guerrilla zones" with the objective of establishing a "greater state of Dandakaranya." This is chang-

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ing, with nearly a dozen districts of Madhya Pradesh now being afflicted, to a greater or lesser extent by Naxalite violence. The main locus of Naxalite militancy, however, continues to be in the three districts of Bastar, Kankar and Dantewada, but the districts of Mandla, Rajnandgaoh in south Bihar and Sarguja alongside Bihar in the North East now figure on the violence map. In several parts of the Bastar region, extortions and intimidations by Naxalite groups have reached a stage where they tend to be regarded as a parallel centre of power. Levying of "cess" on government and other employees and "induced" co-operation between government personnel/local authorities and Naxalite groups evoke comparisons with Nagaland.

Recent months have witnessed an orgy of killings by the PWG which operates with equal felicity in both AP and MP. The Madhya Pradesh state transport minister was brutally hacked to death in his village (Balaghat district) on December 15 last year. In February, a landmine blast in Narayanpur police station limits in Bastar district killed at least 23 police personnel, the most serious incident of this kind, eclipsing the 1992 blast which killed 17 policemen. Well over a hundred policemen have been killed by Naxalites, but an adequate strategy to deal with the problem eludes the authorities.

The situation in Bihar today on the Naxalite front is a far cry from the strategy outlined earlier by Vinod Mishra, the doyen of the Naxalite movement in Bihar. Vinod Mishra and the CPI-ML (Liberation Group) placed greater emphasis on developing heightened consciousness among the masses and on developing mass movements to create a truly People's Democratic Front, than on merely engaging in violence for its own sake. What is taking place in Bihar today is quite the contrary. Mindless violence is endemic and mass movements are non-existent. While central Bihar remains the epicentre of Naxalite violence, violence has spread to the eastern and southern districts. Banka district in eastern Bihar now figures prominently on the Naxalite map, together with Bhagalpur and Sahebganj. Circulation of revolutionary literature and tracts on guerrilla warfare by Naxalite outfits is common in these areas. The most sinister aspect of Naxalite violence in Bihar is the extent to which the police and paramilitary forces have been deliberately targeted. More than 50 policemen have been killed by the PWG and Maoist Communist Centre in recent months. Almost half of the fatal casualties during the Parliamentary and Assembly elections were of policemen.

Competitive violence between the MCC and the PWG have laid waste vast areas of central and south Bihar. Railway stations have often been attacked by Naxalite groups, and the disruption of the main line rail traffic has figured prominently in their designs. Factional and violent rivalry between the PWG and the MCC has seriously disrupted orderly life in the state. Cadres of both Naxalite factions have become victims of such mutual attacks. The only saving grace is the temporary lull in retributive violence between the various "Landlord Senas" and the MCC/PWG supported Dalit groups.

A great deal of concern has been expressed about the deteriorating situation in central and state government circles, but hardly any worthwhile steps have been taken. A meeting of the co-ordination centre of Naxalite-affected states (constituted in June 1998 to review activities of Left Extremist groups in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Bihar) is scheduled to be held shortly. The Andhra Pradesh government is proposing to set up a special action force which would function as a dedicated interception and strike force to deal with Naxalite and other kinds of violence. The force will be equipped with sophisticated global positioning systems and be assisted by intelligence cells to be set up within the State Special Branch.

Knee jerk reactions to a complex and dangerous situation will not, however, deliver the goods. We are no longer dealing with stereotypes of the Sixties and the Seventies. The PWG and the MCC have better capabilities, more skills, and benefits flowing from modern technology. Unless governments think and act differently they will be overwhelmed by the force of Naxalite violence today and in the future. Fossilised thinking can be dangerous.

To start with, close links need to be forged between central agencies and law enforcement and police agencies in the state. Investigative agencies like the CBI, in addition to the IB, must be involved. In those states where the paramilitary forces have a presence, their inputs should be utilised, as often they have a good idea of the ground situation. The administration needs to be more receptive, and appreciate the difficulties of policing in Naxalite-infested areas. Many of today's administrators still view Naxalites through rose-tinted glasses of yesteryears when the movement was still in its idyllic phase. This must change.

The weakest link still is intelligence. Unless intelligence inputs improve, and are more focused and cell-specific it will be difficult to devise an analytically sound threat and risk assessment as a prelude to a pre-emptive strategy. Intelligence agencies must concentrate on securing better insights into the working of secret cells and "action teams" many of which possess only a fluid structure. This will not be easy, and new and specialised trade craft will be needed. Intelligence agencies must also develop a covert capability to deal with specific situations.

Technological inputs to improve the quality of intelligence must receive the highest priority. Capabilities for intercepting information must be strengthened. Use of remotely piloted vehicles and drones for intelligence (and for operational purposes) must be encouraged. Electronic sensors must be made use of in forest tracts and in interior pockets.

A national strategy to combat terrorism must be dovetailed with local strategies to weed out this problem. It is vital that in today's situation Naxalite groups are denied opportunities to strengthen their ISI links. The possible "gate ways" to Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan must hence be effectively policed. This may call for a special contingency scheme or plan, in which a meshing of counter Naxalite and counter-espionage strategies and tactics take place.

M.K. NARAYANAN is a former chief of the Intelligence Bureau

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