

CM retires, the soldier remains

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Nov. 3: Nothing much was different. Jyoti Basu walked out of Writers' for the last time as chief minister brisk and curt. Perhaps, a little less curt. At times, even apologetic.

On June 21, 1977, before stepping into Writers' for the first time as chief minister, he had addressed a meeting organised by government employees in front of the VIP gate. On November 3, 2000, he did the same before stepping out.

Nothing much was different. It was it? The crowds that had gathered outside for a glimpse of Basu filled the stretch of road in front of Writers'. On June 21, 1977, tens of thousands had taken to the streets in post-emergency euphoria. The crowds had thinned, as had Jyoti Basu's hair, in the wear and tear of 24 years.

Minutes before 11.30 am, Basu's white *panjabi*, set off by a beige sleeveless jacket, flashed briefly in the corridor of power as he marched into his room, looking straight ahead, just as he has done always. Next to him was chief minister-designate Buddhadev Bhattacharya.

"What's scheduled for today? Hand me the work, it's the last day for me here."

For the next half-hour he cleared files. The last file to bear his signature was on government control over cold storage hiring charges.

Bhattacharya and finance minister Asim Dasgupta filed in next. Some more files were brought in. Basu had had enough for his last day.

"No more files for me. Buddha will look after things from next week. Take them to him." Thus Bhattacharya was initiated into chief ministerial responsibility. Nothing much was different.

Reminiscing later before journalists, Basu said: "*Bidhanbabu aram bolechhilen, tomay chairay boshiyei jabo* (Bidhan Roy had told me that he would depart after putting me in the chair)."

TAKING CHARGE AND TURNING AWAY: 24 YEARS IN BETWEEN



(Left) Basu taking oath in June 1977 and (right) leaving his room at Writers' for the last time as chief minister on Friday. Picture by Aloke Mitra

The memory brought a smile to his taciturn face as he autographed a picture of himself with Bidhan Roy in Writers' Buildings.

Before that, at 12.35 he had walked out of his office, spending just over an hour, almost half of it taken up in accepting donations to the chief minister's relief fund and in receiving well-wishers.

As the visitors placed their bouquets, Radhika Jeevan Dhar, a driver at Writers' for years, presented the chief minister a painting. It was a portrait of Basu done

by Dhar's 14-year-old grandson, the background tomato red.

Basu's face lit up for a moment. He refused *mishit* offered to him throughout the day as steadfastly as he said he was retiring for health reasons. "I cannot carry on as, chief minister any more. Please extend your co-operation to the new chief minister."

It was a line that kept coming back through the two hours he stayed at Writers'. Addressing government employees, he said: "For the past few months, you

might have been dissatisfied with my curt answers. What could I do? It was my illness that prevented me from talking at length."

His parting words of apology

QUOTE

No more files for me. Buddha will look after things from next week. Take them to him

JYOTI BASU

did not come without a mild rebuke. There were moments when the people's needs had been given the go by, he told the gathering of mainly CPM-dominated coordination committee members.

Basu did not deny those expecting a touch of self-criticism. "We have at times drifted from the people. We shall have to strive not to hide anything from the people," he said, drawing the curtain down on a stage where he occupied the centrepiece for so many years.

Some are refusing to look at

life without him. Ashok Dogra, who drives his car in Delhi, had come over to see Basu off to retirement. He will not chauffeur any other chief minister.

"Does one ride a smaller animal after riding an elephant?" Dogra is refusing to change.

"Communists are soldiers," Basu said before stepping down from the dais to cheers of *Jyoti Basu tai salam*.

Someone reminded him that he had walked from Raj Bhavan to Writers' after being sworn in

Is it true? asks Atal

BY INDRANIL GHOSH

Calcutta, Nov. 3: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and chief minister Jyoti Basu, who often in jest describe each other as "the right leader in the wrong party", had a long telephone talk this evening.

"I understand from newspaper reports that you are retiring. Is it true?" Vajpayee asked.

"What you have gathered is true. I have had a long stint in office. So I am calling it a day now," Basu replied.

Enquiring after his health, Vajpayee hoped Basu would continue to be active. Vajpayee also made a few remarks about his own health.

"But you are still a young man," Basu said, telling the Prime Minister not to allow health concerns to weigh on his mind.

"What little I can make out of newspaper or magazine photographs, your operated knee is behaving fine. Even though you are walking with the aid of a stick, I think your movements will be normal soon," Basu said.

Speaking to The Telegraph after the chat, Basu said with a smile: "He offered me his good wishes."

■ No rollback now, Page 8

chief minister. "I was younger then. I prefer to take my car back home this time," Basu replied.

At 1.43 pm, WB-02E 0001 pulled away.

After Monday, Jyoti Basu will not be chief minister. But he remains president of the union at British Oxygen, a position he has held for double the number of years he has been chief minister. Today, one of his last acts was to sign an agreement as leader of that union.

Nothing much is different.

Differences with CPI remain, says Surjeet

CL MANOJ
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 3. — The CPI-M general secretary, Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet, today shot off a 'private letter' to his CPI counterpart, Mr AB Bardhan, explaining the "fundamental differences" between the two parties.

Unlike his last 'public' letter to Mr Bardhan in response to the latter's call for a Communist unification in an interview to **The Statesman**, this time Mr Surjeet wanted his letter to be kept away from the press.

CPI-M leaders said the letter clarifies two points. Mr Surjeet has underlined the difference between the CPI's concept of national democracy and the CPI-M's people's democracy. Though the post-Emergency Bhatinda congress of the CPI officially changed its view towards the Congress, Mr Surjeet says, it continued its links with the party in Kerala. For example it was part of the PK Vasudevan Nair government.

Mr Surjeet has written that it would be wrong to assume that the CPI-M had changed its

concept of people's democracy after updating its programme at the Thiruvananthapuram plenum. He defends his party on its 'collaboration' with the Congress — like its efforts to instal a Sonia Gandhi-led government — saying such moves were mainly "issue-based" and were made under specific circumstances.

The 'private letter' is an attempt by the CPI-M to have the last say in the matter after Mr Bardhan, earlier in the day, sent a reply to Mr Surjeet. While sticking to the basic issues that he had raised while calling for unification, Mr Bardhan requested not to rake up past controversies.

Responding to Mr Surjeet's charge that Mr Bardhan had wrongly evaluated the CPI-M's updated programme, the latter said he could not have evaluated the document "casually or lightly", for he hadn't seen it. He said his remarks that history would judge the 1964 split was not aimed at creating a controversy and appealed to avoid "polemical confrontation" since it would only "bring joy to the hearts of the enemies

of Communists and the Left". But he didn't miss the chance to take a dig at the CPI-M. "I'm wrong if I have ever hailed as a 'positive development' some of the important tactical positions adopted at the CPI-M plenum especially that which from press reports appeared to be a rectification of what was termed a 'historic blunder'".

Reminding Mr Surjeet of his own admission about an "urge for the unity of the Communist movement in India is prevalent among a large section of sympathisers", Mr Bardhan said: "This is an important fact. The urge for unity is not born out of nothing. It reflects an objective need. But I agree, this can't materialise in a vacuum or by brushing aside fundamentals. That's why I talked of Communist unification on a principled basis."

Mr Bardhan also rejected Mr Surjeet's allegations that the CPI had disrupted Left unity by aligning with the Congress in the past and heading a CPI-Congress government in Kerala. For the sake of Left unity, he said, the party sacrificed the Nair government.



Mr AB Bardhan and Mr HS Surjeet

JMM youths run amok at 'Assembly'

PTI & UNI

RANCHI, Nov. 3. — The Heavy Engineering Corporation's Lenin Hall here, earmarked for housing the Assembly of Jharkhand state, was damaged today by activists of Jharkhand Yuva Morcha, the JMM youth wing, police said.

About 70 JYM activists, led by its convener Mr Sarjeet Miridha, entered the hall with traditional weapons and started pelting stones while renovation work was in progress.

Supervising contractors were heckled and threatened with dire consequences. Work was stopped after glass and wooden fittings were damaged.

The contractors said they had been asked to complete renovation work by 9 November. They felt the deadline will not be met now.

Property worth over Rs 100,000 was destroyed.

The JMM and its youth wing has been demanding that the venue of the Jharkhand Assembly be shifted to Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council building or the Administrative Training Institute at Kanke Road.

The JYM said Ranchi being the summer capital of Bihar till 1956 had required infrastructure for housing the

BJP DENIAL

NEW DELHI, Nov. 3. — The BJP today denied reports that Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee was willing to offer the Jharkhand chief minister's post to Mr Sibbu Soren. The report is baseless, senior party leader, Mr JP Mathur, said.

The Prime Minister has not invited any JMM leader, he said. The JMM delegation that met him recently had done so on its own and there was no talk beyond exchange of pleasantries. — SNS

headquarters of the new state and there was no need of hiring buildings from the HEC for the Assembly and secretariat.

The Lenin Hall, selected by the committee on infrastructure constituted by Bihar government, is 14 km away from the government house and the chief minister's home and had no proper security arrangements, the activists alleged.

JYM leader, Mr Naveen Chanchal charged the district administration with misappropriating the money sanctioned in the name of reconstructing the Lenin Hall.

The renovation work was being undertaken by the public works department.

BJP cautious, Cong. sees hope

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, DEC. 3. Though the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party was somewhat cautious in its response today to Pakistan's offer of exercising "maximum restraint" on the Line of Control in Kashmir, the Opposition parties, particularly the Left and the Congress, view the offer as a "positive development" which could be used to start "parallel talks" with Pakistan even as India goes ahead to develop its offer of talks with militant groups in Kashmir.

In fact, several Kashmiri leaders are here — Mr. Abdul Ghani Bhat, chairman of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, former chairman, flew in today; Mr. Yaseen Malik, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chairman, was already here, and Mr. Abdul Ghani Lone, another senior Hurriyat leader, is expected back from Pakistan in the next few days. Some "informal-level" contacts are expected to take place.

The APHC has already welcomed Pakistan's offer as a "step in the right direction" and hoped India would "reciprocate" and "take more bold steps" such as its unilateral ceasefire offer to help start a political dialogue and find a solution to the Kashmir prob-

lem. Separately, Dr. Farooq Abdullah told PTI in New Delhi that "we have kept our doors open for anyone who wishes to restore peace in the Valley", and that "in-saniyat (humanitarianism)" would be the guiding principle.

Though it is being admitted that there is nothing new in Pakistan's offer of "restraint" along the LoC and that Pakistan had not addressed the basic issue of cross-border terrorism, a view seems to be developing that however small the window Pakistan has opened, India should seize the opportunity to look for restarting the de-

railed dialogue. Mr. Bangaru Laxman, BJP president, told *The Hindu* that in addition to "restraint on the LoC" Pakistan should also "pave the way for a dialogue with India by ordering cessation of cross-border terrorism. If that were to happen, I do not think India would have any objection to talks with Pakistan under the Shimla Agreement or the Lahore Declaration," he said.

Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, party vice-president, similarly emphasised the need to end cross-border terrorism. "We have always adopted a defensive posture on

the LoC. To that extent the offer of restraint by Pakistan is meaningless." However, he was hopeful that the next couple of days should see "some clarifications from Pakistan, if they are serious".

The Left and the Congress feel that along with informal contacts with militant groups in the Valley, the Government should make attempts to start "parallel talks" with Pakistan "at some level". Mr. Natwar Singh, party leader and former External Affairs Minister, said, "The Pakistan offer is to be welcomed. We should look at it with an unprejudiced mind. We made a gesture, they have responded. This could lead to talks which could be held under the Shimla Agreement." But "tripartite talks" between India, Pakistan and Kashmiri militant groups "were out of the question".

Mr. A.B. Bardhan, CPI general secretary, saw in the Pakistan response a "process of inching forward towards talks". The Centre's reaction should be positive and the opportunity "should not be rejected out of hand". Mr. Prakash Karat, CPI(M) politburo member, was of the view that at "some level" talks with Pakistan would have to begin. It was time India "spelt out its political approach to the problem."

'Pak. response encouraging'

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, DEC. 3. The former All-Party Hurriyat Conference chairman, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, sees Pakistan's response of exercising restraint along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir as a "positive and encouraging development", which can be used to create a conducive atmosphere for initiating the peace process.

"The common factor in India's initiative, Pakistan's response and our reaction is the stress on the need for a dialogue," the Mirwaiz, who arrived here today told *The Hindu*. He said the Hurriyat Conference had always maintained that the Kashmir issue was political in nature and it needed to be resolved that way "without military means".

He expressed the hope that the ceasefire offer and Pakistan's response would pave the way for involvement of all the three parties in the talks in a positive way. "After Pakistan's response, the ball is now in the court of the Indian Government."

THE HINDU

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DEC 2

Violence victims' kin may get employment

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Dec. 5. — Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya visits Kespur tomorrow with a message of restoring peace to the violence-hit area. After his first Cabinet meeting as chief minister today, he hinted at extending employment benefits to relatives of those affected by violence in the districts.

But this may take some time because the government is yet to determine who these "political sufferers" are. Only then can their kin be given special employment benefits in the state government.

The proposal came before the Cabinet from the labour department. It may be recalled that Mr Jyoti Basu as chief minister had earlier expressed his desire to help those affected by violence in Midnapore, Hooghly and Bankura. There had been demands for compensation for relatives of those killed in political violence.

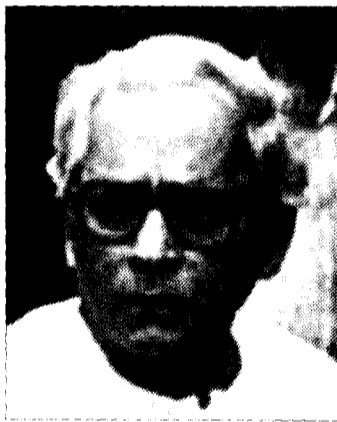
At the Cabinet meeting today, Mr Bhattacharya said that more discussions are needed before a decision could be taken on identifying political sufferers.

The chief minister, who will address a public meeting in Kespur tomorrow, said he would appeal for peace. He will also discuss ways of restoring peace with district officials.

The Cabinet also approved the formation of three more fire stations in the state, to be located in Jalpaiguri, Bankura

and South 24-Parganas. It has decided to give the Chanchal area of Malda the status of a subdivision. This will be done in a week. The chief minister said he would not participate in the dharna on 7 December before Parliament House by Left Front MLAs.

The MLAs will be demanding



Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya

that the Centre provide the state with flood relief funds. Regarding the 20 December bandh on the same issue, Mr Bhattacharya said: "Let us wait and see how things turn out, specially the attitude of the Central government."

Grand welcome

A grand welcome awaits Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya who will arrive here tomorrow as part of his tour of the districts. The chief minister will address a party rally here, adds SNS

from Kespur (Midnapore).

The entire route from Midnapore town to Kespur, through which his convoy will pass, has been decorated with party flags, festoons and 15 arches. Over 300 securitymen, including Eastern Frontier Rifles, anti-sabotage forces, dog squad and task forces, have been deployed and would be monitored by the IG (Western Range), Mr JR Bhagat.

The district magistrate, Mr MV Rao, and the SP, Midnapore, Mr Gourav Dutta, today visited Kespur to check the security arrangement.

The party leaders are aiming for a record number of people, two lakh with one lakh from Kespur block alone, to attend the rally. People here have been, in a sense, ordered to turn up at the rally.

Day labourers have to leave aside their work for the day in order to be present at the rally.

They had to take part in processions organised by the CPI-M today. Some of them even paid Rs 50 to Rs 70 each for the rally.

Over 100 Trinamul activists, who had fled from their home, are yet to return. They are staying away because they are wanted in criminal cases, police said. Around 250 party workers will escort Mr Bhattacharya to Kespur from Midnapore circuit house. He will be given guard of honour by 1500 partymen and 500 women comrades in Kespur. Tribal dance will be part of the reception.

THE STATESMAN

5 DEC 2000

Join CPM, Buddha tells Trinamul men

UDAY BASU
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KESPUR, Dec. 6. — Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya today urged those who are with the Trinamul Congress "by mistake" to quit the party and join the CPI-M, "if they care for themselves, their families and their state".

At a huge rally of party supporters here, the most troubled spot in violence-ridden Midnapore, the chief minister said: "The Trinamul has learnt a lesson. Its activists here, who set fire to thousands of our party supporters' homes, now realise their hands too have got burnt. The Trinamul is isolated from the people."

Those who had joined the Trinamul "by mistake", he said, should now "forget" what they have done and join the CPI-M, because "the Trinamul's is the path of sin and injustice".

"Why should you be with the Trinamul and not with us? We are not a party of princes. We are not born merely to be ministers, but have been fighting for the poor and the downtrodden for years."

The chief minister then

solemnly declared that his government's policy towards Kespur is "no arson, no killing and no looting".

"The Prime Minister and the Union home minister asked me whether peace will return to Kespur, and I told them that it will," he told the crowd. "I also told them that the people of Kespur do not want violence. It was some criminals who spread the violence."

He, however, added that Opposition parties too "will

■ Cadres drive out
Trinamul men, page 3

have to talk about peace".

He asserted that many Trinamul supporters had returned to Kespur, but some hadn't "because they can't face the people after their crimes".

He stressed that it was the Trinamul that began the violence in the districts, and "that is why we lost the Panskura Lok Sabha seat. But now you have turned round, you will not allow violence to break out. But if Trinamul goons attack, will you bow before them?"

The minister for land and land reforms, Mr Suryakanta Mishra, scoffed at Miss Mamata Banerjee's "Panskura line", saying it had met with an accident just as the Howrah-Amritsar Mail did. "It's because she neither looks after the railway tracks nor the people of the state."

Only last week the Trinamul chief had addressed a party rally at Hati Phalka near here, but "hardly any Trinamul supporter attended it. It means the Trinamul train running on the Panskura line got stranded at Hati Phalka. It could not reach Kespur," he said amid loud cheers.

At the Midnapore circuit house, Mr Bhattacharya told reporters he had told district officials to see that peace returns immediately, adds a report from Midnapore. He promised a peaceful Assembly election in the district.

Police have been asked to round up criminals, whichever party is their political patron, he told reporters. Erring officers will be punished.

The chief minister spent an hour with officials, discussing the situation in the district.

THE STATESMAN

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7 DEC 1960

Basu harps on Left unity at farewell meet

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, October 31

"DON'T WORRY. The Left Front will be back in power". Jyoti Basu has always been a man of few words and his parting message to his colleagues was short and crisp. Today, Basu presided over his last Cabinet meeting as Chief Minister. "It is because we remained united that we could rule for 24 years. We worked together. Keep up the good work," Basu advised, his ministers clearly finding themselves at a loss to find words in response.

Since morning today, Writers' Buildings, from where Basu's writ ran for 24 years, wore a pensive garb. The message that the Chief Minister was quitting had travelled far and wide from the corridors of power. State Government employees, party leaders, MLAs, reporters and children swarmed the protected area even as Basu was in the Cabinet meeting. Many of them had come to donate money to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. But the bottomline was: everyone wanted to have a last glimpse of Basu in his familiar chair.

Time and again, Basu tried to shake off the overhanging grief. "I am still the Chief Minister and will come to office tomorrow. If you want to meet me, you can," he told his colleagues to lighten the atmosphere somewhat. Then, switching gears, he reminded the ministers about the oath-taking ceremony on

Sonia praise for Basu

CONGRESS PRESIDENT Sonia Gandhi has sent her "respectful good wishes" to Jyoti Basu on the eve of his laying down office. Basu's relinquishing office marked the end of "an era in the history of your party and West Bengal", she has said in a message.

She recalled his links with the Nehru-Gandhi family and said such connections had "transcended ideological and political differences. Throughout your unique career you have raised the level of national political dialogue and have set high standards for public action and private discourse."

HTC, Calcutta

it would be fair if we take a resolution on Basu's contributions as Chief Minister," he pleaded.

It was now time for a photo session. The ministers all gathered around the Chief Minister seated in his chair. Some women employees were waiting inside to serve tea to the ministers. "Come this side," the Chief Minister beckoned them.

November 6.
"Now that I will not be there, you will have to take oath again. Make it a point to attend the swearing-in ceremony."

An uneasy silence descended in the Cabinet meeting room. It was veteran minister and Basu's colleague since 1977 Debabrata Banerjee who got up to offer his regards to the Chief Minister. Senior minister and CPI leader Nandagopal Bhattacharya turn came next. "Since this is a Cabinet meeting

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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Atal asks Buddha to rein in clash spiral

FROM DIPLOSH MAJUMDAR

New Delhi, Nov. 30: A "politely firm" Prime Minister today asked chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee to end the "growing" violence in West Bengal and the propaganda that the Centre was not doing enough for flood-hit areas.

Atal Behari Vajpayee said with elections around the corner, he did not expect the Left Front regime not to be critical of his government. But Vajpayee, whose criticism of Jyoti Basu had always been either muted or oblique, added that the propaganda should not convey the BJP-led coalition was doing nothing at all.

Bhattacharjee, who had called on Vajpayee for the first time since taking over as chief minister, heard the lecture patiently. At

a press conference later, he described his visit to the Prime Minister's house as a courtesy call and said the only issue discussed was the flood.

Government sources, however, said the Prime Minister told the chief minister that "you must do something to end violence" and urged him to cooperate with the Opposition for smooth elections next year.

Bhattacharjee pointed out that he has been calling all-party meetings but Mamata Banerjee was not attending them. He told reporters political clashes were restricted to seven police station areas in Midnapore. Even in this district, he said, violence was on the wane and people who had fled were returning home.

When the chief minister accused Mamata of instigating violence with her provocative speech-

es, Vajpayee was quick to respond. "Mamata keeps telling me that in your party mouthpiece, her statements are distorted and published in a provocative manner. This vitiates the atmosphere," he said.

The plan to split Haldia Petrochemicals into two has been dropped. Instead, Indian Oil Corporation will pick up a stake in the company, the chief minister said in Delhi. (See Page 6)

Vajpayee, supported by the Union secretary of expenditure, contested the state government's claim that it was not getting enough flood relief from the Centre. He got his officials to provide the break-up of the help the Centre has provided since the floods in September-October. The figures were later released to the media.

The official sources suggested

that even without the Rs 430 crore assistance provided by Hudco, the government had pumped in about Rs 800 crore under different schemes. The Prime Minister also said he was aware that Union finance minister Yashwant Sinha had met his West Bengal counterpart and Asim Dasgupta had gone back satisfied.

But at the press conference, Bhattacharjee said the Centre had not done enough to offset the damage estimated at over Rs 5,600 crore. The state badly needed Rs 1,487 crore, he said.

When Bhattacharjee called on the home minister, L.K. Advani echoed Vajpayee in advising the chief minister to check political clashes. Advani heard out Bhattacharjee's demand for help to solve the Kamtapur problem but asked him not to be soft on infiltration from across the border.

The chief minister told reporters that the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation was being helped by the Ulfu militants. Some GNLFD dissidents were also being trained by a Naga militant group.

He pointed out to Advani that Mamata's call for job reservation for Muslims could cause tension. He also told reporters that the Trinamul Congress leader had a soft spot for the Kamtapur movement.

The meetings with Vajpayee and Advani had a few rough patches but, on the whole, were cordial. Ending the meeting with the Prime Minister, Bhattacharjee said the former Calcutta University professor and Uttar Pradesh Governor, Vishnukant Shastri, had introduced him to Vajpayee's poetry, which he had enjoyed reading. Vajpayee thanked the chief minister for his kind words.

■ Another report on Page 6

Politics to me is about people: Jyoti Basu

By Malabika Bhattacharya

CALCUTTA, NOV. 4. Mr. Jyoti Basu, who has become the first politician in living memory to lay down office of Chief Minister of West Bengal after bringing to an end a 24-year-old innings, appears relaxed. With the pressures of office gone, Mr. Basu, the most visible face of Indian communism, is all set to embark upon a new phase of his career, as the shaper of the proposed third front. In an interview, Mr. Basu shared with **The Hindu's Malabika Bhattacharya** his experience in office, his idea of the future and his impressions of his successor. Excerpts from the interview:

The Hindu: Politicians in India are not known for giving up office on their own. You are an exception.

Mr. Jyoti Basu: I never hankered for office. I held the office of Chief Minister only because my party wanted me to do so. I tried to do my job to the best of my abilities. I think, we have achieved a lot. There are certain negative features, too. We must correct them.

But your decision to quit office is a rare one.

It's because of my illness. A year ago, I told my party to relieve me of my duties but they thought I must continue. I respected my colleagues' wishes and carried on.

But, then, you could carry on despite your poor health condition.

INTERVIEW

No, now I feel I can't do that any longer. I am going to office only for a short while. As Chief Minister of a State with eight crore people, I can't spend so little time in office. I felt I was not doing justice to the people.

If your party performs badly in the coming Assembly election and wants you back in office, would you respond to your party's call?

No, no. We will win the Assembly election.

Don't you think that politicians' retirement age should be fixed? In fact, this issue is being debated in other communist parties also.

I don't know about the others. This issue was discussed in our party but (smiles), there has been no unanimity on this. As things stand now, you are expected to go on doing things till you die. But, you cannot go on doing the way



Mr. Jyoti Basu, outgoing West Bengal Chief Minister, signing a memorandum of understanding entered into between the State Industrial Development Corporation and the Bengal Port Ltd. at his residence in Calcutta on Saturday. Looking on is Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, chairman, WIBDC. — Photo: Sushata Patronobish

you did 40 years ago. Anyhow, I have accepted this position. Till death, whatever little I can do, I will continue to do for the people. And that can be done as long as my brain functions.

What does politics mean to you?

Politics to me is about people. We communists say that we have no other interest but to serve the people.

Nowadays not everyone in the CPI(M) keeps that in mind.

Sometimes, of course, we forget that.

Will you campaign for the Assembly election?

If I am well, I can participate in the election. May be I will need to hire a helicopter.

You will be a regular at the party office from now on?

Now that I have retired, I would be able to go to the party office more often and help the comrades. The party has become weak in certain areas.

Which are the areas you have in mind?

Calcutta and North-24 Parganas district. In Calcutta, the comrades were badly divided which was reflected in the party conference (at Thiruvananthapuram). The bitterness was over the issue

of participation in a Government at the Centre. (smiles).

Finally the Basu line triumphed.

(Smiles). I am not saying that, you are. I said why should there be bitterness? We were also in a minority when we put forth the argument in favour of participation in a Central Government.

Those who opposed you realised their mistakes.

Yes, of course, they did. We have changed our party programmes.

What does it matter now even if you change your policy?

What can you do? It's a very difficult situation now. At that point in time, an opportunity presented itself before us. The Congress, too, was not in a position to withdraw support from our Government. We thought even if we were in a minority we would be able to play a much bigger role. We knew we would not be able to continue forever but we also knew we could make certain policy changes.

Now, the issue of participation is on your agenda but it's too late in the day. Isn't it?

Yes, it's very difficult to do anything now. Our party congress resolution is: forge the United Front.

Do you see any possibility of such a front emerging in the near future?

I cannot give you a timetable. But the task is very difficult. As for us in Bengal, we have our strength intact. But we don't have that influence in many parts of India. There we need allies. The old allies have disintegrated.

There are rumblings within the CPI(M) with many threatening to quit.

There may be some.

You have been like a banyan tree all these years. Your departure may provoke the disgruntled elements within the party to leave?

Fortunately, I played that role. But we communists believe that individuals are not all. The party, the organisation also play an important role. My successor is an experienced man. He would be able to inspire confidence in others.

What are the qualities you saw in him?

People used to say he is only interested in culture. That he does not mix with people. But, that has all changed in the past year or so. He is acceptable to the party and I am sure, he would be acceptable to the people as well.

It seems that the rural Bengal is not enamoured of your party anymore. Your comment.

Our strength is intact in rural Bengal. One by-election in Midnapore does not reflect the actual position. But I always say, there is no room for complacency.

Have you detected complacency in the party leaders and workers?

I will be frank. Our workers in certain districts have become detached from the people. I always say, go to the people, listen to their criticisms and if you can't do what they are asking for, then tell them why you can't. Speak the truth.

Is there any possibility of a split in the party?

No, no. It's the newspapers that write about it. Why should there be a split? What will they do outside the party?

You think the rebels realise this?

Everyone realises this. Some individuals may leave. That's all. There is no chance of a mass exodus.

The younger set of leaders now at the helm of the party are popularly known as hardliners. By contrast, you, at age 87, are famous for being a modern man.

I think that they are all realistic, modern and perfectly capable of analysing a situation properly and coming to a proper conclusion.

Between 1977 and 2000, a new generation of voters have come into existence whose sympathies are not with the Left.

The young generation does not know about our sufferings, our struggles. That's why I always say that the party has to educate the young people to understand the problem. Somehow, this exercise has stopped for the past three years. I am being frank. This is not only true of the Bengal party but also for the other States as well.

This is the quality your leaders lack. They are rarely frank.

If you believe that people make history then you must be frank with them.

Some say that people want a change in Bengal.

Yes. Change is necessary. But that change can be brought about only by a stronger Left Front, not by any other party.

What is your family's reaction to your retirement?

I told my granddaughter, Doel, that I have retired. She clapped in joy and said: "very good." I told her: "You are the only one who appreciated my decision."

THE HINDU

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Basu steps down, reminding party to stay close to people

A section of the CPM has become complacent and is showing signs of alienation from the people, Jyoti Basu told The Telegraph in an interview.

"In many areas, we have stopped going to the people, listening to their woes and criticism. As a result, we have become weak. The sooner we correct the situation the

better," he said.

When the CPM was small, the cadre used to be in constant touch with the people and were aware of their needs, aspirations, anguish and struggle.

"We would deal with them in a proper way, listening to them and their criticism. We would not always be in a position to mitigate their problems, but we would be honest and tell them

about our inability," Basu said.

His message to the party is to ensure that it does not lose touch with the people and that it woos the new voter.

"Many may think that we will win elections on the basis of our performance. Performance alone cannot be a factor; otherwise, we should have won the Calcutta civic polls, considering what we have done for the

city. The new voter has to be viewed in a different context — of unemployment, capital and

Interview on Page 6

talent outflow, technology and the all-pervading television culture," he said.

The party has become "physi-

interested in cultural activities.

"You people have no idea how he has changed over the past two years. Go and find out from the chambers of commerce how well he is handling complex subjects. Not very many people know that it was Buddha

who took the initiative in information technology after we told him that we are already late, you take charge. He gets

things done. Please give him some time."

Basu said Buddha was acceptable to the people, the party, the Front and industry. "He will be a fine leader."

The outgoing chief minister would try to campaign for the Assembly polls. "I have asked them (party) to find out if we can use a helicopter for campaigning," he said.

cally weak" because of internal differences in North 24-Parganas and Calcutta. Basu said that in the North 24-Parganas unit the division was over participation in a Central government.

"Things are improving and the debate on participation is behind us," he added.

Basu dismissed the popular notion that his successor Bhadracharya was only

Basu passes baton to Buddha

Opp. stays away from swearing-in

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, November 6

IT WAS one of the briefest ceremonies that ever took place in the chandeliered Durbar Hall of Raj Bhavan, but it rung the curtain down on the long history of Jyoti Basu's reign in West Bengal.

As his successor Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee was sworn in as the new Chief Minister, the difference was not missed on old-timers. Basu had always taken the oath in English. Bhattacharjee did so in Bengali.

The spotlight might have been on the change of guard, but the occasion certainly didn't impress the Trinamool Congress and the BJP. They boycotted the swearing-in because, they said, a man who had flopped as home (police) minister was being elevated as Chief Minister. Their grouse: the Government had failed hopelessly in stopping the wave of violence sweeping the State in recent times. The Congress grumbled many of its leaders hadn't been invited, and so they stayed away.

Nevertheless, they took nothing away from the occasion, the State's glitterati turned out in strength to witness the end of an era.

By 4.20 pm, 400-odd guests had packed into the gorgeous Durbar Hall. They were from all walks of life — politics, literature, sports, music, cinema and industry. Senior bureaucrats, foreign dignitaries and top defence officers — they were all there. Governor Viren J Shah, in a traditional dhoti and kurta, strode in at 4.28 pm. Two minutes later, he appointed Buddhacharjee the new Chief Minister.

The Governor then administered the oath of office and secrecy to Buddhacharjee, as Basu watched the solemn proceedings, a rare smile playing on his face. After Buddhacharjee was sworn in, Shah administered the oath to the ministers in a chorus. The show was over in 10 minutes.



Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee takes charge as Chief Minister at the Raj Bhavan on Monday; (Right) Jyoti Basu being greeted with a bouquet of 5,000 roses at the Netaji Indoor Stadium. Photos: Ashok Nath Dey & Pabitra Das

Unlike in the past, when Basu had taken oath under shamanias erected on the Raj Bhavan lawns, Bhattacharjee's coronation took place indoors.

The hall, cavernous and elegant with its seven chandeliers lit up, was a grand sight. Actress Aparna Sen, Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly, eminent author Buddhadeb Guha, CPI(M) Politburo member Sitaram Yechury, Rabindra Sangeet exponent Suchitra Mitra, singer Ruma Guha Thakurta, US Consul General Christopher J Sandrolini, industrialists Harsh Neotia,

On Page 3

- **Buddhadeb: Comrade and a culture czar**
- **Standing ovation for unbeaten 23**
- **Siddhartha Shankar Ray, from whom Jyoti Basu took over as Chief Minister in 1977, on the successes and failures of the Left Front Govt**
- **Frozen frames: Glimpses of a glorious past**
- **Opp. swears not to let the new CM rest**

with its seven chandeliers lit up, was a grand sight. Actress Aparna Sen, Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly, eminent author Buddhadeb Guha, CPI(M) Politburo member Sitaram Yechury, Rabindra Sangeet exponent Suchitra Mitra, singer Ruma Guha Thakurta, US Consul General Christopher J Sandrolini, industrialists Harsh Neotia,

successor Bhattacharjee, Cabinet colleague Subhas Chakrabarty and old friend Somnath Chatterjee. His convoy had just waded through a crowd of admirers and they had turned out in strength to bid adieu to Basu. Schoolchildren, the young and old, lined the streets from his Salt Lake home to the Raj Bhavan waving flags and showering rose petals on the convoy as it



has put up a huge arch which had a line from Tagore carved out in thermocol: "Bhengecho dhawaar/ Eescho Jyotirmoy/ Tomari hok Joy."

This set the mood and the quotation greeted Basu at several points on his way to the Raj Bhavan. Above, a helicopter followed the convoy till the destination. Transport Minister Subhas Chakrabarty and wife Romola had promised to make Basu's last journey as chief minister a memorable affair. And no doubt, the couple put up a brilliant show. Chakrabarty, who has always prided on his organisational capabilities, roped in State buses in bringing in school students for the occasion. And Romola Devi added to the numbers by pooling in women from various organisations.

At the end of it all, even a stone-faced Basu admitted that he was touched by the farewell. In a voice that for as moment seemed choked with emotion. For the first time perhaps.

In front of the Salt Lake stadium, the organisers of this unique road show—Pather Panchali—

Basu rides out of power on wave of emotion

Kinsuk Basu
Calcutta, November 6

THE JOURNEY that began on June 21, 1977, came to an end on November 6, 2000. The nation's longest-serving Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, today rode out of power on a wave of emotional outpourings.

As Basu walked out of his Salt Lake residence and breezed into the Durbar Hall at Raj Bhavan, it wasn't clear whether the elite gathering has assembled to welcome his successor or bid farewell to the man who guided their des-

tiny for over 23 years. To make the event a memorable one, the entire stretch of Basu's journey from his residence to Raj Bhavan was transformed into a sea of humanity with men, women and children waving flags and cheering their leader. But Basu was his usual self — composed and seeming unaffected by this show of affection. Not once did he roll down the glass of his bullet-proof ambassador to acknowledge the greetings.

Basu's convoy left the Chief Minister's residence at 3.45 sharp amid the blowing of conch shells and showering of rose petals by schoolchildren, who were waiting there since noon. Such acts could have violated the security norms of a Z category VIP, but who cared? Further down the road, trumpets blared out farewell notes as people jostled for a last glimpse of Basu in his familiar ride down the Bypass street.

In front of the Salt Lake stadium, the organisers of this unique road show—Pather Panchali—

Subdued Surjeet calls EC verdict unrealistic

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 30 — The usually cheerful and never say-die CPI-M general secretary had lost his quick smile.

A little earlier, the Election Commission had derecognised the CPI-M as a national party. While terming the verdict as unrealistic, Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet was candid enough to say that the EC move would affect his party's prestige.

"What can I say about the Election Commission decision when the panel itself had admitted that there was some logic in our submission," a subdued Mr Surjeet told **The Statesman**. He, however, had a lot to say about the EC's norms.

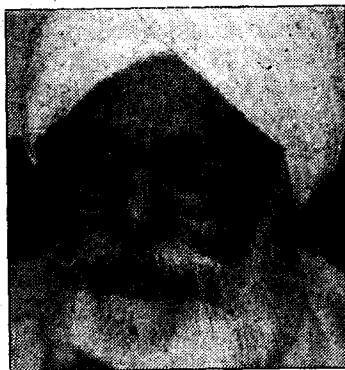
"The decision was based on the rules framed way back in 1968. They have not been updated according to the changed political realities. As per these rules, a party has to get 6 per cent votes in at least four states to be a national party. On that ground, the EC derecognised the CPI-M, even though we are the third largest party in the present Lok Sabha, besides heading three state governments. We also have representations in 12 state Assemblies and have millions of members in our party and mass organisations," he said.

Mr Surjeet pointed out that small parties like Mr Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party could remain as national parties as they contest in small

states where only a few thousand votes are needed to qualify for the EC norms. So the EC move is unrealistic, he said. The verdict, the CPI-M leader was sure, would not convince the people.

The party, he rued, would suffer. "It can affect the prestige of the party. Because now people can say we are only a regional party," Mr Surjeet said.

Would the CPI-M contest the decision in a court of law? "I think we should wait for the EC



Mr HKS Surjeet

to see the merits in our plea and feel the need to update its laws, he said. The CPI-M politburo has issued a statement urging the EC to make a realistic review of its rules.

Mr Surjeet said the CPI-M, in the wake of the Congress's decline, had emerged as the rallying point of the secular and progressive forces to fight the BJP's communal policies and the NDA government's anti-poor programmes". So, the EC move

would send a wrong signal; "it will please only the money-force in the country". However, the CPI, the only LF partner with national party status, has not made any comments.

Kerala

CPI-M leaders in Kerala have condemned the EC's decision as "unjust" and "anti-democratic". Mr VS Achuthanandan, CPI-M politburo member and convenor of the ruling Left Democratic Front, has said that the decision showed the anti-democratic face of the BJP. The CPI-M is the biggest party in the country after the BJP and Congress and to reduce it to a regional party is unjust. The people would reject this decision with the contempt it deserves, he said.

Another politburo member, Mr SR Ramachandran Pillai, urged the Commission to amend its "outdated" rules to make them rational.

Tripura

The CPI-M state secretary, Mr Baidyanath Mazumder, termed the poll panel's decision as "most unfortunate".

He felt the party should chart its next course of action at the CPI-M central committee meeting. Chief minister Mr Manik Sarkar has left for New Delhi. He will join the politburo meeting tomorrow.

~~CPI(M) loses national party status~~

11/10 40-1
By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 30. The Election Commission today derecognised CPI(M) as a national party but kept alive its registration as a State party in Kerala, Tripura and West Bengal. The Commission ordered that the symbol of "hammer, sickle and star" shall be reserved for the party's exclusive use in the three States.

Coming at a time when only a few months are left for the Assembly elections in five States, the E.C. order stripping the CPI(M) of its recognition as a national party has delivered a blow to the party.

Referring to the CPI(M) plea that it was a political party with a long-standing record and the symbols order should not apply in such a manner, the poll panel said, "The Commission sees some force in the submission that a party recognised as a national party should have a reasonable presence in Parliament.

"The Commission does realise that the CPI(M) is the third largest party, in terms of its strength in both the Houses of Parliament, and also that it is heading three State Governments and has its representation in the legislative Assemblies of 12 States."

Reacting to the EC order, the CPI(M) Polit Bureau urged the Commission to revise the Election Symbols Order without delay so that the actual strength of a party as reflected in Parliament and at the all-India level is properly recognised. It described the EC order as "unfortunate".

EC rules defective — Page 8

THE HINDU

1971

Saifuddin to float new party by year-end

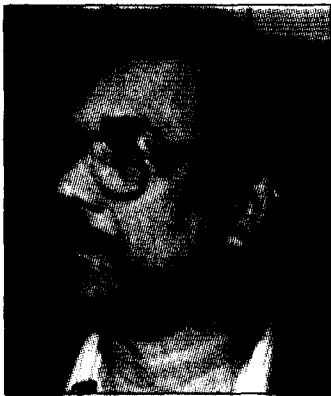
MANASH GHOSH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Oct. 3. — Unfazed by yesterday's central committee decision to remove his name from the primary membership of the CPI-M, Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury today announced that he would float a new party with like-minded reform-oriented members of the CPI-M before the year was out. The new party would be part of the emerging third force comprising Left, democratic and secular parties of the state, he told **The Statesman**.

The central committee's decision, though "not unexpected" was "untimely and undesirable" in view of the devastating floods in West Bengal, Mr Chowdhury said. He "thanked" the leadership all the same for parting company in a "civilised manner". The decision ended his primary membership after three long decades in the party.

With no trace of bitterness or rancour, he said, "I had asked the party that our separation despite our ideological and other differences should be

embitter our relations. Usually expulsion or resignation from a Marxist party creates such bitterness that the image of the Left suffers a lot.



Saifuddin: unfazed

"I did not want this to happen. I wanted to introduce a new culture among the Left parties so that even after separation, relations are not embittered by differences in ideological approach. I hate the exchange of abuses.

"I hope the CPI-M will be able to maintain this spirit in future. But the timing of the

of the floods, is so bad that I am in no position to engage the CPI-M leadership in any debate. When people are suffering from flood devastations, providing them relief is of paramount importance. Not debates or political discussions. It will be highly improper to do that."

But Mr Chowdhury was thankful to the leadership for "helping" him and other like-minded party comrades to take the next logical political steps by "precipitating matters". Even before the party plenum could start in Thiruvananthapuram, the CPI-M leadership "by its ill-timed decision has pushed us out and given momentum to the things we want to say and do". "Of course our political direction is towards forming an alternative which will be more democratic and a better Left front. It will be non-sectarian, accountable and responsive to the needs of all sections of people".

Mr Chowdhury said the new party's policies and programmes would be oriented to

SAIFUDDIN: Left learnt no lesson

(Continued from page 1)

meet the developing needs of the state. They would not be aimed against any particular party or leader, but would fight sectarianism of every kind. "The new party will not try to break any of the existing political outfits, ruling or in the Opposition. People will be free to join our party believing in democracy, development and secularism. We will specially welcome those who want to free development from sectarian politics.

"We are not in for competition to grab people with muscle power or deceit. We will try to avoid mistakes which have made even the most negative forces get closer to people. We will talk to various political parties including the Congress. There is no harm in that since Comrade Surjeet also talks to Sonia Gandhi and Arjun Singh".

Mr Chowdhury said Miss Mamata Banerjee could be spoken to provided she distanced herself from the BJP, which was a near impossibility. "Let Mamata do it first, but I don't see any prospect of that. Mr Vajpayee himself visits her residence when he is in Calcutta. Mamata is in

emotional debt to Vajpayee. She remains a captive in her admiration for Mr Vajpayee's persuasive power," he said.

The reformist Marxist leader said the positive ideals of great leaders and thinkers from Marx, Lenin, Voltaire, George Washington to Mahatma Gandhi would form the cornerstone of the new party. "But we will certainly discard those principles and ideals as irrelevant and obsolete which say that power even in successful democracies should be captured through force and violence. "These utopian ideals will find no place in our party as we are against all kinds of force and violence. We will also discard dictatorship and authoritarianism of all kind. Overcentralisation of organisation and power will also have no place. Sadly enough, the Indian Marxists drew no lesson from failed reformist movements that communist leaders like Dubcek in Czechoslovakia and those in Hungary launched in the mid-sixties," he said.

Mr Chowdhury said the proposed changes to be brought about in the CPI-M party programme at Thiruvananthapuram would not amount to much as these attempts would be half-hearted.

THE STATESMAN

VULGAR VENDETTA

Jealousy forces Saifuddin out of CPI-M

THERE is nothing surprising in the CPI-M central committee's decision to remove Saifuddin Choudhury's name from the primary membership of the party. That the committee took so long over it was a surprise since hardliners from Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury to their cronies in West Bengal, including Anil Biswas and Biman Bose, have been baying for his blood. Although Saifuddin had genuine differences of perception on political issues, there is no doubt that petty personal jealousies played a major part in his ouster. That someone who at the age of 26 was the youngest parliamentarian and was destined to rise to positions of respect and authority in the party has now been removed in a vile and conspiratorial manner speaks volumes for the depths to which the new generation of party leaders has fallen. Ironically, most of these leaders pride themselves in being true practitioners of Marxism-Leninism. Saifuddin's crime was that being an honest, capable and articulate parliamentarian, he was much sought after not only by the media but by two Congress Prime Ministers — Rajiv Gandhi and PV Narasimha Rao. He formed part of several Indian delegations including one on Kashmir. All this besides his induction into the party's central committee and elevation to deputy leader of the House caused tremendous heart-burning. Canards were spread about Saifuddin getting favours from Congress. In 1993 when he proposed that instead of toppling the Narasimha Rao Government with BJP support, the party should resist the rise of the Sangh Parivar with help from the Congress, his rivals started planning his exclusion from the central committee and denial of a nomination in the 1996 Lok Sabha election.

The most distressing aspect is the chicanery. Not even the tallest of leaders, Jyoti Basu, did anything to counter this despite knowing that what was being done to Saifuddin was immoral and unjust. Basu pleaded guilty; he did not stand up to the machinations. More disgusting is the coterie's double standard. While Saifuddin was punished for violating party discipline in talking to the "bourgeois" press, other pro-democracy leaders like Subhas Chakraborty and Samir Putatunda who have said harsher things about the party and the Left Front Government have been let off with a reprimand. The coterie's strategy is to drive a wedge between Subhas and Samir, on the one hand, and Saifuddin on the other. In their perception, any harsh action against the first two might significantly erode the party base among the youth in south Bengal. This is a dangerous miscalculation. The ruling coterie does not realise Saifuddin's potential or that the three Ss — Subhas, Saifuddin and Samir — are inseparable.

THE STATESMAN

10 OCT 2000

10 OCT 2000

Bidyut 'suicide'

puts party
in a fix

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, May 5

CHIEF MINISTER Jyoti Basu told reporters today that former commerce and industry minister Bidyut Ganguly, who died of severe burn injuries, had committed suicide. He said that the State Government had received the post-mortem report that revealed Ganguly had set himself on fire.

Basu's statement, four days after Ganguly's death, has come as a shot in the arm for a section of party members who had maintained that the minister had taken his life since he was unable to cope with the pressures of life.

The announcement has, however, left another section disgruntled. They say there is no reason to believe in the suicide theory since the police did not record Ganguly's statement and no one heard him scream in pain. The State Government had already sought forensic report in connection with Ganguly's death.

Basu's statement — a month before the State-wide municipal polls — has put the CPI(M) in a fix. Senior party leaders, including State secretary Anil Biswas, met during the day, presumably, to discuss the impact of Basu's statement on the disgruntled district party members.

Since Ganguly's death, dissident members of the party's local committee in Bhatpara in North 24-Parganas had claimed that the inability of senior leaders to sympathise with Ganguly's view of streamlining the functioning of the party along democratic lines drove him to commit suicide.

Senior party leaders, who were not happy with Ganguly's hobnobbing with Subhas Chakrabarty and Gautam Deb — the two dissident ministers in the party — have often complained that the former chairman of Bhatpara Municipality was a source of continuous embarrassment to the party because of his flamboyant lifestyle.

"His was a case of deviation from the morals which makes a communist and so there is enough reasons why the party should not sympathise with an errant member," said Amitava Basu, a CPI(M) heavyweight in the North 24-Parganas district.

Another report on Page 3

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 6 MAY 1960

Born in a joint family at Sihi village, Burdwan, Benoy Choudhury studied in Burdwan Municipal High School where he found in Saroj Mukherjee a lifetime comrade.

He completed his ISC from Serampore Baptist Mission College. Within a few months of enrolment, he became a Jugantar Party member in 1928 and took inspiration from leaders like Bhupendranath Dutta. Choudhury was arrested before he could appear for his BA examination in economics.

He registered his name with the Anushilan Samiti in 1930. At 19, he participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement and was jailed for six months. Three years later, he was jailed

A son of the soil

again for his role in the Birbhum conspiracy.

As an All Bengal Students' Association member, he addressed a gathering for the first time in Chinsurah.

He was drawn to Marxism

was in jail till 1952.

While in Buxa prison, he conducted the Assembly polls for the first time in 1952. He defeated the Maharaja of Burdwan (Congress). He was elected to the Assembly eight

After he was freed in October 1938, Choudhury joined the banned CPI. From 1938 to 1949, he was CPI's Burdwan committee secretary. Choudhury organised trade union movements in Asansol,

while in jail.

When Choudhury met Mahatma Gandhi in Dum Dum Central Jail, Gandhiji told him: "I'm out an out a Communist, minus violence." Choudhury then resolved to work for the masses.

times and held important portfolios — including those of land and land reforms, panchayat, development and planning.

Choudhury played a key role in land and panchayat reforms and wrote extensively on land reforms in West Bengal.

playing an active role in the Ranigunj Paper Mill workers' movement.

After the government expelled him from Burdwan, he went underground till 1943. He was arrested in 1950, like many other communists, and

Choudhury was denied a ticket for the 1996 assembly elections, for criticising the party leadership. Ahead of that election, he had said: "Losing power alone can help redeem the party." He felt that power had "given rise to corruption" and that "the government was run by contractors".

The CPI-M politburo had to issue a statement denying that the minister had said this in Burdwan. That was when he was denied a nomination.

In an address to party workers at Burdwan, Choudhury urged them to revive the faith of the people in the Left democratic movement.

That is what he lived for, devoting himself to the freedom struggle and working the struggles of the working class.

BENOY KRISHNA CHOUDHURY (1911-2000)

17 MAY 2000

17 MAY 2000

Basu gets Delhi clear his wishlist

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 16

WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Jyoti Basu returned to Calcutta a satisfied man today. The Planning Commission agreed to raise the State's annual plan for 2000-2001 from Rs 46 crore to Rs 6343 crore, a 40 per cent increase over last year's Plan size. Besides this, the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee agreed to meet 75 per cent of the total outlay for the anti-erosion schemes for the State and sanctioned a Central assistance of Rs 30 crore for the purpose.

After a day of consultations at the Prime Minister's office and the Planning Commission, the Bengal Finance

Minister Ashim Dasgupta told reporters that it was agreed that the State Government would be given normal Central plan assistance of Rs 986 crore which constitutes 22 per cent of the Plan size.

The Chief Minister, who came prepared for a meeting with the Prime Minister with a wish-list of eight main issues, including one or two of national importance, said the Prime Minister agreed to consider his request that the Centre lower the hike in PDS items by 50 per cent for below poverty line (BPL) families and by 25 per cent for those in the lower strata among the above poverty line (APL). The reduction would call for only 0.3 per cent of the entire Union Budget.

Emerging after his hour-long meeting with Mr Vajpayee, Mr Basu said the Prime Minister also assured he would look into the reported threat by the British Airways to withdraw its flights from Calcutta.

Further discussion with the Finance Minister is on the anvil over the State's suggestion that instead of resorting to indiscriminate disinvestment of PSUs, they should be evaluated on a case-to-case basis.

Similarly, on the complaint about the overcentralisation of the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana, Mr Vajpayee reportedly assured that "some middle path" would be adopted. A meeting of State Finance Ministers is also on the cards on June 22.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 MAY 2001

CPM liberals want pre-plenum meets to debate draft

Saugata Roy
Calcutta, August 6

LIBERALS IN the CPI(M) insist that special conferences at the State and district levels should be organised ahead of the Thiruvananthapuram plenum, to discuss the Updated Party Programme draft. Delegates to the plenum should be elected from these conferences.

The liberals say the draft has left some grey areas and open-ended comments on important matters and even some hardliners concede that the liberals have reason in what they say.

The document, for instance, does not elaborate on the role of the big bourgeoisie in a unipolar world.

It nullifies the earlier assessment of the international situation in the Sixties as an overestimation of the

strengths of socialism, but does not delve into the workings of finance capital and its mobility. It fails to state clearly how the big bourgeoisie should adapt to the changed world scenario.

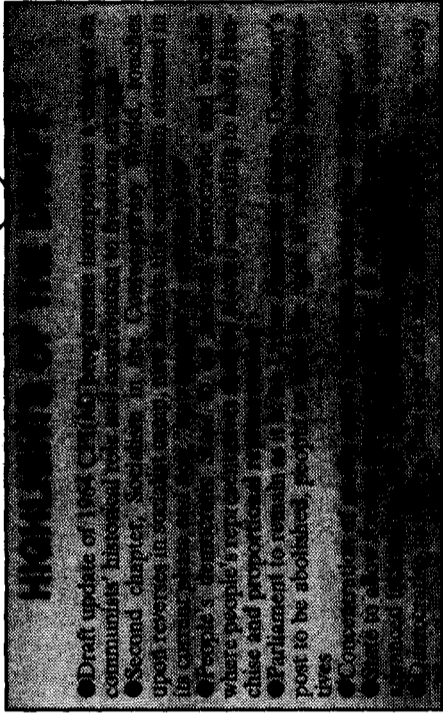
Some party leaders say that the concept of financial capital has undergone change. Technology has triggered vast changes in the composition of capital and development of productive forces. This makes a reconstruction of Lenin's concept of imperialism imperative. In fact, after the technological revolution, imperialism has got a fresh lease of life. It is not moribund, as Lenin saw it.

Another key aspect of the debate concerns the path revolution should take. Since World War-II neither the ruling class nor the oppressed has grabbed power by stifling the democratic set up and India is no

Directive Principles. The democratic set up, despite some hiccups, can still serve the interests of the downtrodden. The party should uphold the ethos of the Statute instead of repudiating it.

The bid to explore this democratic set up has triggered the debate over participation in the Central Government. This debate has been addressed in section 7.17 of the draft. The Central Committee that once ruled out such an option, now says: "When the 1964 programme was adopted, the question of participation in State Governments had arisen. Subsequently, the issue of participation in the Central Government arose. The formulation in the original para 112 is so worded as to be applicable to the Central Government too."


But this does not satisfy the liberals. If ever the question of joining



Liberals say that the Jyoti Government has brought about changes in the villages and given the public more than "immediate relief", as was envisaged in the party program.

They question the very basis of this "immediate relief", perceiving it as deficient. In the barage the Left Front Government announced some "undesirable measures", such as mal education free till the higher secondary level. The Government should instead aim for "transfer of power".

Some are unhappy with workings of the Left Front Government, saying it has impeded mass movements. In fact, it has, in a way, legalised contract labour even in the State sector. Party units elsewhere are fighting this.



Draft of Updated Party Programme
(Adopted at Central Committee meeting held on April 25-26, 2000)

the Centre does arise, the Central Committee only should not have the prerogative to decide. Instead, the party must adopt a strategy on this. Unlike the three earlier Left Governments in Kerala that did not survive long, the party-led formation in West Bengal has held power for 24 years. This is unique to the communist movement.

CPM warning to Subhas

SUMIT SEN
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Aug. 12. — The CPI-M has warned Mr Subhas Chakraborty for his recent controversial comments. A secret CPI-M state committee note, without naming the transport minister, minces no words in criticising him.

Interestingly, the CPI-M top brass has chosen to concentrate its attack on Mr Chakraborty, largely sparing his liberal supporters.

The document was tabled at the recently concluded three-day party state committee meeting, where some senior leaders too lashed out at Mr Chakraborty. That had prompted the transport minister to say he would leave the party if his seniors wanted him to.

The senior leaders' note read: How could a Cabinet minister and party state committee member (Mr Chakraborty) allege that the Left Front hadn't done anything for unorganised sector workers? This matter could have been raised

at a party fora or at the ministry level. Instead, it was made public, giving the enemies of the front a weapon to wield against the government.

Earlier, when Mr Chakraborty had issued a statement on the matter it had taken Mr Jyoti Basu's intervention to stop the war of words between the transport minister and his rivals.

In the note, CPI-M leaders say "senior comrades", owing to their position in the state administration, had to share a dais with Central ministers. But while doing so, why should someone (Mr Chakraborty) openly praise a Central minister (Miss Mamata Banerjee). His support to a person responsible for the killings of partymen, turning election into a mockery and abusing respected party leaders had given rise to unwanted questions among partymen.

The note said some leaders had made a habit of speaking against party decisions. Some people had been sympathetic towards those who fought the civic polls (e.g. Mr Sujit Bose) with Trinamul help after being expelled from the party.

THE STATESMAN

13 AUG 2000

Party responds to Basu quit call

OUR BUREAU

9 P.P. / C.P.M. / 19/8

Calcutta, Aug. 18: Bengal is moving to the threshold of a dramatic, but inevitable, political change with the CPM indicating that in the coming weeks it might take up Jyoti Basu on his offer to retire.

"He (Basu) has been pressuring us to relieve him for quite some time. We are not as inhuman as not to respond to him," state CPM secretary Anil Biswas said.

Basu himself appeared to be leaving the formal announcement about his retirement to the party and refused to make a commitment. He told **The Telegraph**: "We communists cannot take a decision on our own till the party permits us."

The 86-year-old chief minister, who has repeatedly expressed his desire to step down over the past couple of years, said he had not been keeping well, particularly since the incident in Delhi last month when he fell ill during a party meeting. "I have informed the party about this and now it is up to the party to take a decision," he added.

As for himself, he remains a true-red communist. "I will not retire now. I will continue in office till I die."

A special meeting of the CPM politburo is likely to be convened to discuss his retirement. Going by indications, Basu may retire well before the Assembly polls expected next April. But neither Basu nor the party is ready to name a date.

Asked if he would consider retiring in September-October if the party gave the go-ahead, Basu said: "Then, I will have to think about it."

Politburo members in Delhi denied knowledge of a deadline, but were reconciled to impending retirement. "I am not aware of any specific date that has been set," Prakash Karat said.

Implicit in the denial is acceptance of the fact that the politburo is looking at life without Basu. "There is no debate over whether he will retire or not. The question is the timing," said a leader.

In the likely event of Basu's laying down office, his under-study, Buddhadev Bhattacharya,

will be sworn in as chief minister with a reconstituted Cabinet.

On Wednesday, in course of a nearly 40-minute meeting, Basu asked Biswas to clear the way for his stepdown. He said his physicians had been advising rest.

Basu, it is learnt, also argued that Bhattacharya and the people must be given a few months' time to know each other. "He (Bhattacharya) has matured in the past several months. Why don't you have him as the chief minister?" Basu told Biswas.

In an intriguing twist to the succession saga, the chief minister also suggested that the party might even try out Somnath Chatterjee. Asked in Delhi if the chief minister might retire before the Assembly polls, Chatterjee said: "If he insists."

But another section feels it is important for Basu to remain at the helm till the Assembly polls. "If necessary, Basu can function from his Salt Lake residence. Senior ministers, like Bhattacharya, Asim Dasgupta and Suryakanta Mishra, and officials can go to Salt Lake," a senior leader said.

THE TELEGRAPH

19 AUG 2000

Basu wants rebels driven out of party

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Aug. 19. — Mr Jyoti Basu today warned CPI-M leaders that members who don't abide by the party's majority decision, will be driven out of the party.

Mr Basu told the party leadership first to try to change leaders who defy party policies adopted through democratic centralism. If they are not amenable to change, then they should be driven out, he said.

"We don't need such leaders and men in our party. They can't be allowed to mislead the people by remaining in the party and propagating things the party condemn," Mr Basu said while speaking at a meeting to condole the death of the CPI-M's Calcutta district committee secretary, Naren Sen.

Mr Basu made no bones about the fact that he was targeting "pro-democracy" leaders in his party. He said sarcastically: "I often find in the media that we have some pro-democracy leaders: Who are they? Is there any party in the country that is more democratic than ours? Which party, except ours, holds organisational elections regularly from the top to the bottom?"

Mr Basu launched into a tirade against defiance of the party's majority decision with Mr Subhash Chakraborty, looking on silently from the audience's front row.

Twice, Mr Basu reminded partymen, he had been in the minority but abided by the majority decision. "Ours is not a club, but a party wedded to an ideology and working for the people. When I differ from the majority, my opinion may be right, but history will prove it. I cannot violate party discipline," he said.

Organisational unity, especially in the feud-ridden Calcutta district committee, was the common refrain in the speeches of Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary; Mr Raghunath Kushari, the new CDC secretary; and Mr Sailen Dasgupta, Left Front chairman.

Recalling Naren Sen's "ideal Communistic behaviour", Mr Biswas said: "A true Communist will not try to project himself as a leader and claim such an honour for himself because of his organisational abilities".

Sen was known for his simplicity.

Mr Basu asked CPI-M leaders and members to work closely with the masses and strengthen their ties with them. The bond had become "loose over the years", he said.

Mr Basu also emphasised on the need for greater unity among Left Front constituents.

He made a scathing attack on a section of the Press for their "slandorous campaign" against the Left Front. But he also cautioned partymen against attacking journalists.

"The Anandabazar Patrika wrote the other day that I was angry with Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet at our party's state committee meeting. The truth is that before I spoke, Surjeet had already left for Delhi. The reporter who wrote the false report, will certainly get a promotion. The Statesman even wrote I had left the Raj Bhavan in a huff immediately after some freedom fighters made certain demands of me at a programme on 15 August. The fact is that I myself found out where the Governor was and took leave of him as I had prior engagements. There was no need for concocting that piece of information, yet it was done," Mr Basu said.

Mr Basu criticised Miss Mamata Banerjee and Mr Ajit Panja for defending the visit of two American consulate officials to Nanoor. "Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, who was once foreign minister, and the present foreign secretary could understand it was a clear interference with the country's internal affairs, but not these two ministers," he added.

THE STATESMAN

20 AUG 1971

Buddha will succeed Basu, says Anil

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, August 21

DEPUTY CHIEF Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee will succeed Jyoti Basu after the ailing Chief Minister calls it a day, CPI(M) state secretary Anil Biswas said today.

The CPI(M) will discuss Basu's retirement at its next politburo meeting, Biswas said. "He will continue as Chief Minister as long as he chooses to. But if he wishes to step down on health grounds, we will relieve him," Biswas said.

By naming Bhattacharjee as the man in line for the Chief Minister's post, Biswas has put an end to the after-Basu-who speculation.

"When Bhattacharjee has been appointed Deputy Chief Minister, the choice is clear. He would be the next Chief Minister." The State secretary made it clear that there was no difference of opinion in the party on the matter.

The State committee has already reduced Basu's burden somewhat by cutting down on some of his administrative responsibilities.

Apart from creating the berth of Deputy Chief Minister, the State has also set up a three-member sub-committee to monitor the day-to-day progress of Government work, especially linked to commerce and industry, infrastructure and decentralization of power.

This team includes Bhattacharjee, Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta and Panchayat Minister Suryakanta Mishra.

That apart a separate Cabinet sub-committee monitors commerce and industry. Basu often meets members of these committees.

Bhattacharjee has been assigned to look after the home (police) department in addition to his responsibilities as Information and Cultural Affairs Minister.

Taking the cue from Basu who has called for purging undesirable elements from the CPI(M), Biswas said the party had expelled as many as 10,000 such elements.

Without taking names, he cautioned the liberals for taking too many liberties and flouting discipline. "The party is not united as before and we are taking care to rectify this. But those who defy party directives would end up being expelled," Biswas said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 AUG 2000

Karat blames Keshpur violence on landlords



Prakash Karat

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, August 26

KY 3 2718
CPI(M) POLITBURO member Prakash Karat today described the recent spurt in violence in West Bengal as efforts by rich landlords to negate the effects of successful land reforms.

"Rich landlords are up in arms to stall the progress of land reforms as evident from the recent attacks on peasants," Karat said while speaking at the 20th anniversary of the party's theoretical magazine Marxbadi Path.

Pointing to the changes that the landlords and the bourgeoisie have undergone in recent times, the CPI (M) ideologue emphasised on their increased collaboration with the trans-national imperialist forces.

The change, Karat argued, was the root of the spiralling violence in West Bengal to suppress the Left forces.

He, however, admitted that the development and proliferation of capitalism in

recent years has lured a section of the middle-class.

"Liberalisation with its expanded opportunities has created an illusion among a section of the middle-class marking a substantial change in its character," Karat said.

The Politburo member, therefore, harped on the need to adopt a radical vision and launch a relentless ideological battle to gain back the middle-class that has drifted away from the socialist ideas.

Expressing concern over the rising influence of Hindutva all over the country, Karat called upon democratic forces to prevent the middle-class, the peasantry and the working class from falling into its trap.

"The struggle against communalism is inseparably linked with the fight against the big bourgeoisie and imperialism," Karat said. The communists, therefore, have to adapt to the changing situation, he said while referring to the process of updating the party programme that was adopted way back in 1964.

Trinamool men killed

IN FRESH clashes on Saturday at least two Trinamool Congress supporters were killed and 47 were injured in Keshpur. About 2,000 armed CPI(M) supporters attacked Bolghata, Shimla, Radhanagar and Akartala villages in retaliation to the killing of two CPI(M) workers on Friday. Police said the Trinamool Congress supporters resisted the attack but Tarun Majhi and Raju Kotal, two Trinamool supporters, were killed and seven others suffered bullet injuries. The injured were admitted to the Chandrakona hospital.

In a separate incident, CPI(M) supporters from Garbeta and Urasai areas entered 10 villages in Keshpur and started firing indiscriminately. Forty Trinamool supporters were injured. Meanwhile, tension ran high in Keshpur following the indefinite bandh called by the Trinamool Congress from 6 am today. UNI, Midnapore

Plenum an eyewash: Saifuddin



Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Sept. 8. — Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury today said the CPI-M leadership's uncompromising refusal to reorient party programmes to suit the times was driving it towards an inevitable split.

The questionable methods the CPM had adopted by "selecting and not electing" delegates for the Thiruvananthapuram plenum — planned to discuss and adopt the revised programme — had made the entire exercise pointless, Mr Chowdhury said.

The pro-democracy leader in the party felt the plenum exercise was an eyewash — it wouldn't address any of the issues that his colleagues or he had raised in the party. Pro-democracy leaders were being systematically kept out of the plenum so the revised programme could have a safe

passage and no serious discussion was held on issues that would embarrass the leadership.

"The presence of a few leaders who share our thinking and concern at the plenum would not make any material difference to the outcome of the conference as they would be sidelined," Mr Chowdhury said.

At a seminar on 'Non-violence, secularism and democracy as a pre-condition to development' in the city today, Mr Chowdhury said a lot remained to be achieved on the development front in the state. He said non-violence was the only way to keep the democratic fabric alive in the state.

He said a particular party is promoting communalism in the state by encouraging a Hindu-Muslim divide. According to Mr Chowdhury, the attempt to impose Article 356 in West Bengal threatened peace and democracy in the state.

Mr Somnath Chatterjee attacked media for their allegedly biased attitude towards a particular political party which he claimed was unleashing violence in the state. The activities of this party, he said, were aimed at stalling development in the state.

THE STATESMAN

1 SEP 1970

CPM halted Basu's 15 Sept quit move

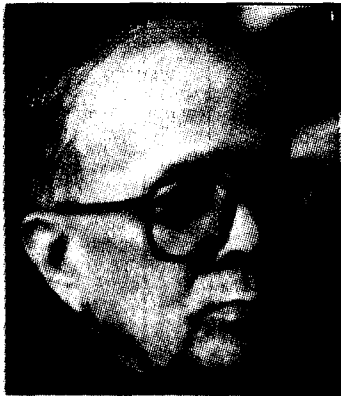
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CALCUTTA, Sept. 2. — Mr Jyoti Basu today said he had set his mind on quitting on 15 September, but had been dissuaded by senior comrades who requested him to hang on till the retirement was okayed by the CPI-M's top state and central bodies.

"I had made up my mind to retire on 15 September," the chief minister told *rediff.com*. "But the central leadership asked me to continue till both the politburo and the state committee approved my wishes.

"Moreover, our general secretary, Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet, is currently in China," Mr Basu said. "The party's highest policy decision-making body will sit together to discuss my retirement wishes only after he returns." He, however, said the issue was not discussed in the CPI-M state secretariat meeting today.

The chief minister said age-related problems were making



Mr Jyoti Basu

it increasingly difficult for him to bear the burden of the demanding schedule of the chief minister's secretariat.

"I am not keeping well for the past few years. I have been in active politics for over 60 years and have headed the West Bengal government for 24 years at a stretch. At 87, you can well understand the kind of mental and physical strain I am exposed to. That is why I

had asked my party leadership to relieve me from the chief minister's responsibilities."

Mr Basu did not think his departure would split the LF. "Ours is not a bourgeois party. We believe in the democratic process. We have always endeavoured hard for the uplift of the working class. A true communist will never hanker for power. And especially when everybody including our Front partners have unanimously chosen Buddha as my heir apparent, I don't foresee any factional feuds likely to plague our party. Buddha has been doing a stupendous job as both home minister and deputy CM. I'm convinced he will be an equally successful chief minister."

Mr Basu blamed Miss Mamata Banerjee for creating a law and order problem in "otherwise peaceful West Bengal".

"In Kespur, she made inflammatory and provocative speeches there ... I pity her (Mamata). Her armed supporters drove our cadres out of their homes."

CPI-M rebel calls for alliance with Trinamul

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

USTHI (South-24 Parganas),
Sept. 2. — Rebel CPI-M leader,
Mr Samir Putatunda, plans to
launch a movement along
with, if possible, the Congress
and the Trinamul Congress.

"We're readying for a new
type of movement and we're
even open to the Trinamul and
the Congress joining it," said
the secretary of the CPI-M's
South 24-Parganas unit. The
movement will see some new
faces, he said.

Mr Putatunda, who belongs
to the party's liberal camp,
urged people to have leaders of
Mr Subhas Chakraborty's
stature in every locality.

He spoke against the state's
law and order situation at a
party meeting here today.
"Everyday when I wake up, I
consider myself lucky not to
have been killed."

Violence can't be stopped by
counter-violence, he said. It's
only through uniting people
irrespective of their political
loyalties that it can be checked.

Mr Putatunda warned that
violence is on the rise in some
parts of South 24-Parganas.
"We've to see that the district
doesn't become another
Kespur." He said a new envi-
ronment has to be created so
that everyone can freely
express his opinion. He wel-
comed discussions on Mr Jyoti
Basu's success and failures.

Basu admitted to AIIMS

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 28. — Mr Jyoti Basu was today admitted to hospital after he complained of dizziness at the CPI-M central committee meeting. Doctors said his heart rate was very low, but his condition was said to be stable when this report went to press.

The chief minister was taken to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital after he felt ill, around 11 a.m. He suffered a second fit of dizziness at the hospital, when he got up to use the toilet. Within minutes, he was admitted to the cardiac care unit, where doctors diagnosed his condition as Bradycardia.

His aides were apparently not happy with the hospital's arrangements, so that the veteran Marxist leader was shifted to All-India Institute of Medical Sciences around 3:30 p.m.

His heart rate was below normal, which doctors say is worrying at his age. The chief minister is 87.

By 3.30 p.m., Mr Basu was admitted to AIIMS. (A late night UNI report said he was shifted to the hospital's private ward after being kept under observation in the coronary care unit for six hours.)

An RML staffer who attended on the chief minister said: "The people with him did not seem satisfied with the facilities here though we had the best cardiologists attending on him."

A senior doctor of SSKM hospital, who was in constant touch with doctors attending on Mr Basu here, said in Calcutta that his condition is "stable". He has eaten fish and rice.

Eminent cardiologist Dr Mani Chhetri and the chief minister's son have flown to Delhi from Calcutta, while his family physician, Dr AK Maiti, flew in from Mumbai.

Admitting that the illness was quite serious, a cardiolo-



Mr Jyoti Basu at New Delhi's Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital on Friday, before he was shifted to AIIMS. — The Statesman

gist told **The Statesman**: "One can only wait and watch. Nothing can be determined. His age is a vital factor." He, however, added that there were people "who live normal lives with a heart rate as low as 50".

At RML hospital this morning, party members speculated that Mr Basu could be suffering a relapse of Irritable Bowel Syndrome. "He had no sleep last night and he has been on the move continuously for three days," a close aide said.

Details of medicines which Mr Basu has been consuming over the past few weeks, including those to treat acidity, were hastily procured and handed over to the attending doctors.

The CPI-M general secretary,

Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet, told **The Statesman** this evening that all medical tests carried out on Mr Basu at AIIMS were "normal".

Mr Surjeet said the CPI-M central committee meeting would continue as scheduled tomorrow and the day after.

Today, too, the committee continued its discussions after a few hours' break.

Mr Basu arrived in the capital on 26 July for his party's politburo and central committee meetings.

He was recently in England for his grand-daughter's wedding.

The UK trip followed his trip to Israel, where he was the first Indian Communist leader to go on an official visit.

The chief minister has expressed his desire to retire several times in the recent past, citing ill health and age. But he left the decision to his party, which would not spare him.

CPI-M bigwigs are apparently unwilling to face the next Assembly election without Mr Basu at the helm, though the party's state secretary, Mr Anil Biswas, announced some time ago that chief minister would not contest the next Assembly election.

Mr Basu did not campaign in the recent civic elections in Calcutta and Salt Lake. That his party did not perform as well as it expected, making way for major inroads by the Trinamul Congress, was attributed by some to Mr Basu's staying away from the campaigning.

■ Illness may strengthen Basu's retirement plea, page 4

THE STATESMAN

29 JUL 2000

Alimuddin, Subhas upset Basu

SUMIT SEN
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SF-1 1676

CALCUTTA, June 15. — Mr Jyoti Basu is learnt to be unhappy with both Mr Subhas Chakraborty and Alimuddin Street for the direction their spat is taking. He said this to a prominent CPI-M liberal who called on him at home yesterday.

The liberals got together behind closed doors last evening to profess support to the transport minister. Mr Chakraborty himself and at least four other key CPI-M men were present.

Mr Gautam Deb, state housing minister, and known to be a close Subhas man, complained to Mr Basu about the way Mr Chakraborty was being "cornered" in the party. The chief minister expressed dis-

minister's habit of repeatedly making controversial statements, as well as over the manner the state CPI-M was going about dealing with the problem.

Mr Chakraborty had apparently come close to quitting the ministry on Tuesday — the day Mr Anil Biswas asked him to leave if he did not think the Left Front was

■ Editorial: Terminally sick, page 6

with the poor. The transport minister had got in touch with senior state party leaders that evening, and told them he was putting in his papers. He had been, however, persuaded to hang on.

Yesterday, Mr Gautam Deb, Mr Tarit Topdar, MP, Mr Samir Putatunda

with the transport minister and expressed solidarity with him. A host of other party leaders were also present. They all told him not to step down on his own.

Some leaders of the liberal camp today said if the leadership really felt Mr Chakraborty should go, Alimuddin Street must follow known communist party norms, and tell him that directly. There was no justification for indirectly advising him to step down, they argued.

Mr Samir Putatunda today said: "There has been a deliberate attempt from certain quarters to malign Mr Chakraborty. This will only affect the Left movement in the state."

Insiders said the Subhas imbroglio has leadership in a

page 4

Trinamul raps move to get Subrata disqualified

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SF-3

CALCUTTA, June 15. — The Trinamul Congress today ridiculed the Congress Legislature Party's move to get Mr Subrata Mukherjee disqualified as an MLA.

"The attempt is a delayed tactic to stop the Trinamul from becoming an alternative to the Left Front," said a Trinamul leader.

The CLP yesterday submitted a petition to the Speaker, Mr HA Halim, seeking Mr Mukherjee's disqualification under the Anti-Defectio Act for contesting the CMC polls as the Trinamul's mayoral nominee.

Mr Mukherjee himself felt amused at the move which, he said, was too late in the day. "I was disgusted with the Congress. I joined the Trinamul and became its acting chairman several months ago. There was no secrecy about. Yet, the Congress did not take any action then. If I lacked the courage to act against me, it is not my problem," said.

Meanwhile, the PCC vice president, said Mamata Banerjee's decision to project Mr Mukherjee as

Candidate prevented from campaigning

CALCUTTA, June 15. — Trinamul workers of Kankurgachhi today allegedly prevented Ms Archana Datta, a BJP women's wing leader who is contesting from Ward 32 as an Independent candidate in the CMC polls, from campaigning this afternoon.

Ms Datta, who was conducting a door-to-door campaign at the CIT's Bustee Rehabilitation Scheme-X at Kankurgachhi, was allegedly abused for her role in sabotaging the prospect of the official Trinamul candidate, Ms Manju De. She later lodged a complaint with the Maniktala police. — SNS

mayoral nominee showed the "hypocrisy of her so-called value-based politics."

"When Mr Sudip Bandopadhyay or Mr Suniti Chatteraj contested as the Trinamul's Lok Sabha candidates, they had resigned from the Congress. But Mr Mukherjee's

ethics," Mr Saugata Roy said.

But Mr Mukherjee said it does not behove the Congress MLAs, who sought his disqualification, to talk about "value-based politics". "I am going to write to the Speaker, urging him to disqualify those Congress MLAs who voted for the Trinamul's Raya Sabha nominee and not their party candidate," he said.

He explained that he had not resigned as an MLA yet because he did not want to contest a by-poll. "By-polls held by the ruling party are mockery of democracy. All possible electoral malpractices are resorted to for defeating a val candidate. I thus decided to face the electorate of my constituency in a general election," he said.

Mr Mukherjee added that the CLP had, by its action, only betrayed its "victiveness and fear." "It is indictive because it tried to stop me from contesting. Also the party fears that I may be elected mayor," he added.

Mr Roy said only a few months left for term of the present Assembly over, it is doubtful whether Mr Mukherjee could be disqualified.

THE STATESMAN

10 JUN 1976

Subhas irks CPM again

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SF 14/6

CALCUTTA, June 13. — Mr Anil Biswas today suggested Mr Subhas Chakraborty quit his post as minister if he really thought the LF government had done nothing for the welfare of day labourers.

And the chief minister implied he didn't think it worthwhile to react to Mr Chakraborty's statements.

Yesterday, inaugurating a commercial complex on VIP Road, the state transport minister had accused the state and Central governments of ignoring the plight of daily wage labourers. Private promoters, in fact, were doing a better job: "they provide jobs to three to five lakh daily labourers," Mr Chakraborty had said.

"If I were in the LF ministry and convinced that the LF government is not working in the interest of such poor people, I would not have remained in the government," Mr Anil Biswas announced today. Asked if the ministry and the front would suffer should Mr Chakraborty quit, the CPI-M state secretary said: "No".

Would the CPI-M leadership seek an explanation from Mr Chakraborty for his statement?

No, said Mr Biswas again. For, such comments by Mr Chakraborty's did not have any impact on the people. They did not believe him.

So has the CPI-M decided to ignore him henceforth? "We are not ignoring him," Mr Biswas said. "But the people will ignore him."

Will the party punish Mr Chakraborty? "We don't feel any necessity to do so." The comments have not hurt the party's image — for, "the CPI-M's image does not depend on any individual".

Asked for his comment on Mr Chakraborty's statement, Mr Jyoti Basu said: "I do not react to his statements." On Mr Anil Biswas's observation today, Mr Basu said: "I am not aware of what he has said." He would say no further.

CPI-M insiders said Mr Biswas's comments show Alimuddin Street is fast running out of patience with Mr Chakraborty. Party mandarins had earlier passed strictures on the minister for being "soft" on Mr Sujit Bose of South Dum Dum who was expelled from the CPI-M.

Mr Chakraborty has repeatedly made controversial statements that have raised hardline hackles: showering praises on Miss Mamata Banerjee, predicting a drop in the Left's vote share before the civic body elections, and complaining of the lack of inner-party democracy.

Now, say insiders, even Mr Basu — known to have a soft spot for Mr Chakraborty — is annoyed. CPI-M liberals too feel the minister could do with showing a little more restraint.

Mr Chakraborty was unavailable for comment.

THE STATESMAN

14 JUN 2000

I won't resign, says Subhas

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, June 14

THE BATTLE BETWEEN the hardliners and liberals in the State CPI(M) took a new turn with Transport Minister Subhas Chakrabarty declaring emphatically that he would not resign from the Left Front ministry. "Why should I resign? I did not force myself into the Cabinet in the first place. I will decide myself what I should," an angry Chakrabarty said.

His outburst was in response to a statement made by the party's State secretary Anil Biswas yesterday. "If I were a minister in the Left Front Government, and if I felt that this Government has done nothing for daily wage-earners, I would have resigned immediately," Biswas had remarked.

Biswas was reacting to a speech made by Chakrabarty at a public function on Monday, where he said that no Government since Independence, not even the Left Front regime in the State, had done anything for daily-wage earners.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 JUN 2000

CPM to seek change in EC rules

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NATIONAL PARTY STATUS

NEW DELHI, June 16. — The CPI-M has decided to urge the Election Commission for a change in the rules of the commission to retain the party's national status.

The party received a show-cause notice from the EC last week. The commission asked why the party should not be derecognised as a national party. The CPI-M will send a reply by mid-July. The hearing on CPI-M's national party status is expected to be held in August.

According to senior CPI-M leaders, the party is going to contest the Election Commission's notice claiming that the EC rules were "archaic" as the rules, framed in 1967, were no longer valid in the present national scenario.

"The rule regarding national party status came into force in 1967 when some parties were splitting and new parties were being created. The rules have no relevance now," said a senior leader of the party.

Stressing his point, the CPI-M leader claimed that it would be ridiculous if CPI-M, being the third largest party in Parliament was derecognised as a national party, "while the CPI, with hardly any MPs, continuing to remain a national party".

The CPI-M has been served notice by the EC because the party has failed to fulfil the criteria needed to retain the status of a national party. Any party has to be recognised as a state party in at least four states to be a national party. To get recognition at state level, the party needs to fulfil at least one of the following criteria:

- (a) Get at least six per cent of the total votes polled.
- (b) Get at least one parliamentary seat out of every 25 seats from the state.
- (c) Get at least one Assembly seat out of every 30 seats in the state Assembly.

In the present circumstances, the CPI-M

has the state party status in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala but has failed to retain its status in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

In the Andhra Pradesh elections, the CPI-M was virtually wiped out both in parliamentary and the Assembly polls. In the previous elections, the party managed to get quite a few Assembly seats riding piggyback on Mr Chandrababu Naidu, who decided to ally with the BJP this time around.

The CPI-M's tie-up with Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav in the Bihar elections failed to give the desired dividend to the party. It bagged only a couple of Assembly seats, while it needed 13 seats to retain the state party status.

"However, despite getting derecognised in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, the CPI-M's total vote share at the national level elections is just below six per cent and that should be reason enough not to get derecognised as a national party," the senior CPI-M leader argued.

THE STATESMAN

17 JUN 2000

CPM's hardliners support Farooq on autonomy for Jammu & Kashmir^{HC-7}

By Shikha Mukherjee
The Times of India News Service

CALCUTTA: Realpolitik may have tempered the CPM's official position on the issue of autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir, pushing the party towards a moderate and negotiated settlement which falls far short of the proposal contained in the report submitted to the J&K assembly by that state's chief minister, Farooq Abdullah.

There are, however, a section of hardliners within the CPM's central committee who are supportive of the idea of granting virtually total autonomy to J&K. While the party's official line fears the fallout of the proposals in the autonomy report, predicting that the state would be divided on religious lines into Muslim, Buddhist and Sikh frag-

ments, hardliners insist that "all genuine democrats, irrespective of party and creed, should support the demand for autonomy."

In their view, any opinion to the contrary would be dangerous to the integrity and unity of India. While the pragmatists within the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) feel that the conventional idea of autonomy, under which only defence, foreign relations and a part of finance should remain with the Union government, is no longer feasible, some central committee hardliners believe that "all states, not only Jammu and Kashmir, should enjoy real autonomy."

Real autonomy, these hardliners maintain, is the only way to prevent the country from breaking up. Angry over Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi's statement on the

Jaffna crisis, comparing the situation to Kosovo, the CPM hardliners feel that unless the structure of centralised power is dismantled and "federalism in its true sense" is established, there will be unrest and upsurge across the country.

In a throwback to an earlier era, when the CPM argued that only strong states could form the basis of a federal India, where the Centre would be shorn of its powers of control, except in the areas of defence, foreign relations, finance and trade, the central committee hardliners feel that years of Central intervention in state matters have contributed to the worsening of the situation in places like Jammu and Kashmir.

'Strong states make for a strong Centre', is the mantra of the hardliners within the CPM.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 JUN 2000

'EC norms for national status irrelevant'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22. The CPI(M) will question the Election Commission's criteria, for recognising a political party as a national party, when it replies to the EC's notice asking it to explain why its current national status should not be withdrawn as it falls short of the required norms.

Party sources said today that the present norms, formulated in 1968, were no longer "relevant" and did not reflect the actual strength of a party on the ground. It was "ridiculous" that while parties with much fewer MPs and smaller organisational presence were recognised as national parties, the CPI(M), with 33 MPs, and larger national spread was threatened with "derecognition".

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), for instance, had only seven or eight MPs and the CPI only three and yet they were legitimised as national parties because they just about fulfilled the criteria, whereas the CPI(M) was being shown the door though it was the third largest party in Parliament.

Moreover, the NCP was confined to just four States — Maharashtra and three north-eastern States — and had no representation either in the north or south. Similarly the Bahujan Sa-

10-13
maj Party had a base only in four north Indian States — U.P., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. Yet these two parties enjoyed the status of national parties. And the CPI(M) was facing the axe though it was ruling in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura.

The three norms for national recognition are: one out of 25 MPs in four States; or one out of 30 MLAs in four States; or six per cent of the total votes in four States. On all the three counts, the CPI(M) misses out by a whisker. Earlier, it qualified because it had the requisite strength in four States but its poor performance in the last Assembly elections of Andhra Pradesh spoilt its card.

The CPI(M) politburo member, Mr. S. Ramachandran Pillai, said it was "obvious" that the EC norms were out of sync with reality. The situation had changed vastly since these were prescribed, over 30 years ago, and there was need to have a fresh look at them. "We will tell the EC that new rules need to be framed in order to reflect more accurately the strength of political parties on the ground", he said.

The CPI which barely meets one of the three criteria — it has one out of 30 MLAs in four States — is worried that the slightest drop in its vote, in the next elections to the Kerala

20/6
Assembly and Tamil Nadu, may create a similar problem.

The party's national secretary, Mr. Shameem Faizee, acknowledged that the EC norms were flawed because they relied too heavily on electoral performance, ignoring organisational strength of a party on the ground. The CPI, for instance, had a much larger national spread organisationally than was reflected through its strength in Parliament or State Assemblies. "If we do even slightly badly we will face the same fate as the CPI(M) despite the fact that we will continue to have good organisational presence on the ground", he pointed out.

The EC's norms were guided entirely by a party's performance in one election. As a result, a national party could lose status in one election and gain it in the next. "We would like the EC to judge a party's status by its performance over a period of time. If a party does consistently poorly in five or six elections then there could be a case to deprive it of its status as a national party", he pointed out.

The view in Left circles was that irrespective of the CPI(M)'s current difficulties, there was a case to review the EC norms in order to make them more compatible with political realities.

THE HINDU

23 JUN 2000

Geeta Mukherjee passes away in Delhi

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, March 4

VETERAN CPI leader and MP from Panskura, Geeta Mukherjee died in Delhi early today. She was 75.

Mukherjee breathed her last around 7.10 am, hours before she was to leave for Aligarh to address a party meeting. She suffered a massive heart attack and collapsed.

She was elected to the West Bengal Assembly in 1967 and 1972. In 1980, she became MP from Panskura and has since been returned to Parliament from the same constituency.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Home Minister L K Advani rushed to Mukherjee's house, soon after Hannan Mollah, CPI(M) MP from West Bengal, broke the news to them. Later, Vajpayee said: "I have lost a friend. It's a personal loss. The country has lost a front-ranking leader." Around 1 pm, the departed leader's body was taken to the CPI's Ajay Bhavan headquarters in Delhi.

In Calcutta, a pall of gloom descended as news of Mukherjee's death spread through the city. "The phones at Bhupesh Bhavan (CPI

State headquarters) have not stopped ringing. Condolence messages have been pouring in," a party leader said. Around 8.50 pm, an aircraft with the body touched down in Calcutta. West Bengal Water Resources Minister Nandagopal Mukherjee, CPI central secretariat members D Raja, Shamim Faizi, Atul Anjan and Jalaluddin Ansari accompanied the body from Delhi.

The leader's body would be kept at a Bow Street parlour for the night. Tomorrow afternoon, it will be taken to Bhupesh Bhavan to enable Lok Sabha Speaker G M C Balayogi pay his last respects.

The body will again be brought to the party office on Monday to let people pay their last respects from 9 am to 12 noon. It will then be taken in a procession to the Keoratala crematorium.

Assembly Speaker Hasim Abdul Halim informed the House of Geeta Mukherjee's death. On Monday, the Assembly will formally adopt an obituary motion.

Governor Viren J Shah remembered Mukherjee as one who had "strengthened the unity of the socialist forces and the working classes."

Chief Minister Jyoti Basu said he was shocked at Mukherjee's death. "She was in the forefront of the Left movement. Geeta Mukherjee and her late husband Bishwanath Mukherjee were my long-time comrades. She worked for the common people with courage and dedication."

Forward Bloc state secretary Ashok Ghosh said that people of this country would never forget Mukherjee's contribution to the freedom struggle. She also played a stellar role in transforming the country into a socialist State.

Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee said: "The void created by Mukherjee's demise cannot be filled. It is both a personal loss and a blow for Bengal. I have always respected her. Political ideology never came in the way. Three days ago, she called me up and I could hear that she was panting. I told her she needed rest."

State Congress vice-president Saugata Roy described Mukherjee's death as a blow to the country. "She was a dedicated communist worker and a well-known parliamentarian, whose career spanned over 30 years. She also brought commitment and passion where ever she worked."

Obituary on Page 10

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 MAR 2000

CPI spurns CPM offer, firm on pullout

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, March 8. — The CPI today stuck to its decision to pull out of the Left Front ministry, rejecting a CPI-M offer of a Rajya Sabha seat in 2002.

The CPI-M reacted to the snub by withdrawing the offer late in the evening.

Mr Anil Biswas, party state secretary, said the Front had unanimously asked the CPI to accept the CPI-M offer and stay in the ministry; yet the CPI had turned the request down. So the CPI-M is no longer bound to honour its promise of an RS seat in 2002.

He, however, hoped the CPI, for the sake of Left unity, would change its decision to quit the government.

The two CPI ministers' resignation letters now lie with the state party secretary, CPI leaders said. They said they would wait for the outcome of ongoing talks between the general secretaries of the CPI and the CPI-M in Delhi before

deciding what to do next.

Mr Jyoti Basu told **The Statesman** that the CPI decision would definitely harm LF unity. "The CPI hasn't accepted the offer. The CPI leadership, however, is talking with our leaders in Delhi. What else can I say?"

Would he intervene? Mr Basu parried the question, merely saying the Left parties have a long-standing agreement to stick together.

CPI-M insiders said state party heavyweights will leave for Delhi tomorrow and discuss the matter with party general secretary Mr HS Surjeet.

After the CPI decided to quit the government yesterday, CPI-M leaders — including Mr Biswas, Mr Biman Bose and Mr Sailem Dasgupta — held a series of meetings today to find a way out of the crisis.

They decided the CPI must do without an RS seat from the state this time but could be offered one from the CPI-M's

quota in 2002.

When the Front met in the afternoon, most partners endorsed the CPI-M's offer and urged the CPI to accept it and stay in the ministry.

The CPI state secretariat met after the LF meeting. It decided to reject the offer and stick to yesterday's decision, party leader and water resources minister Mr Nandagopal Bhattacharya told reporters. The state CPI leaders spoke to Mr AB Bardhan, party general secretary, who approved the decision.

Meanwhile, in keeping with yesterday's announcement, the CPI's two ministers — Mr Bhattacharya and Mr Srikumar Mukherjee (civil defence) — neither attended office today nor used government vehicles.

Mr Bhattacharya said his party should have been given an RS seat this time in keeping with an understanding struck long ago by the late CPI-M and CPI stalwarts, Promode Dasgupta and

Biswanath Mukherjee.

Following the agreement, Bhupesh Gupta and, after his death, Kalyan Roy had represented the CPI in the Upper House. After Roy died, he was replaced by Mr Gurudas Dasgupta who has now been an RS member for about 15 years.

At today's Left Front meeting, Forward Bloc state secretary Mr Ashok Ghosh once again supported the CPI's demand for an RS seat and reportedly raised a mild objection to the CPI-M's offer of a seat in 2002. He argued that seat adjustments for the 2002 RS polls should be decided after the Assembly elections, scheduled for 2001.

The RSP — which gets a seat this time with the CPI-M keeping the other three — described the CPI decision as unfortunate and welcomed the CPI-M's offer. So did the other partners.

■ **Photograph, another report on page 4**

Surjeet, Bardhan fail to end crisis

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, March 9. — The CPI stuck to its decision to pull out of the West Bengal government even after the CPI and CPI-M general secretaries held preliminary discussions in New Delhi today.

Mr HS Surjeet reportedly told Mr AB Bardhan he would meet him again after talking to the state CPI-M leaders who have arrived in Delhi for the party's three-day central committee meeting beginning tomorrow.

The CPI state secretary, Mr Manju Majumdar, said the party's state executive committee would hold an emergency meeting tomorrow. CPI insiders said the committee is expected to endorse the state secretariat decision to quit the ministry.

The CPI may also call a state council meeting to deal with the issue. State party leaders are reportedly in constant touch with Mr Bardhan and other CPI leaders in Delhi.

The Forward Bloc general secretary, Mr Debabrata Biswas, today rushed to Delhi to hold talks with senior CPI-M and the CPI leaders and find a way out of the deadlock.

The FB state secretary, Mr Ashok Ghosh, has urged Mr Surjeet to offer an RS seat to the CPI and end the crisis.

Yesterday, Mr Bardhan had written to Mr Surjeet requesting him to resolve the problem "in the interests of Left unity". A CPI leader in Delhi said Mr Bardhan referred to the understanding among Front partners, reached long ago, that every major partner must have a seat in the Upper House.

Mr Bardhan said the reaction of the West Bengal CPI to the denial of an RS seat was naturally very sharp. "As they have stated, the CPI has been in the Left Front and will continue to be there. But staying in the government under such circumstances becomes untenable."

Mr Ashok Ghosh said the dispute within the Front has been sending the wrong signals to the people.

THE STATESMAN

10 MAR 2000

RED THREAT

The Naxalite challenge is political

NAXALITES killed a minister in Madhya Pradesh in mid-December last year. Within three months they have killed another in Andhra Pradesh. What is worrying about the latter strike is the efficiency and precision with which it was carried out. In the interim, Naxalite groups have struck repeatedly killing a large number of policemen in the two states. Add to that the election-related Naxalite violence in Bihar and we are almost literally looking down the barrel of a gun. Probably a sophisticated semi-automatic. The Centre has convened meetings. The latest strike came barely a day after the Union home secretary held a meeting to discuss inter-state co-ordination of anti-Naxal operations. Security has to be tightened, and co-ordination is essential. But it is apparent that these meetings are not producing results. There is a possibility that these grand strategies will have little impact unless there is greater local focus at the ground level. Those who are best placed to contribute to local and grand strategies are local law-enforcement and administrative agencies, who understand local socio-economic conditions and know the local terrain.

But what governments both at the Centre and in the states have to understand is that the Naxalite problem is not a routine security or law and order problem. It is embedded in socio-economic and political structures which have to be addressed with much greater sensitivity. Of the five states targeted for anti-Naxalite operations, three — Bihar, Orissa and MP — are very much in the underdeveloped zone. And it is in the most underdeveloped pockets of these states — for instance, the tribal belts in Orissa and MP — that the Naxalites have their strongest bases. In Maharashtra, Naxalite bases are very small. In Andhra Pradesh, insurgency has a distinct genealogy, which has to be factored in. But the central issue in all this cases is that of social oppression, desperate poverty and the state's near total abdication of its developmental role. Political managers will have to understand that the only way that they can effectively fight the Naxals is by fostering development and blunting exploitation. If that does not happen, the Naxalites will continue to have mass support in pockets where they operate. In many areas in Bihar and MP, Naxalites run a parallel regime where the state's writ does not run. In this sense the Naxalite "problem" is political. The answer is development and social justice.

THE STATESMAN
13 MAR 2000

CPI not to tolerate high-handedness of CPM: Bardhan

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MIDNAPORE, March 12. — The CPI general secretary, Mr AB Bardhan, today said his party will not tolerate big brotherly attitude of the CPI-M in West Bengal.

Talking to reporters after attending a meeting organised to pay tributes to Geeta Mukherjee, Mr Bardhan said, "we will not tolerate if they showed red eyes simply because they are big brothers in the Left Front."

"We will always try to solve any differences amicably, but will not tolerate big brotherly attitude," he said.

He, however, said, "we were in Left Front, we are in Left Front and will remain there."

Asked how the differences over nomination of Rajya Sabha

candidates could be solved with the CPI-M, Mr Bardhan said, it is the responsibility of the CPI-M as they are big brother.

Regarding CPI's decision to pull out of the Left Front ministry in the state in protest against CPI-M's decision to nominate their three candidates and one of the RSP for the Rajya Sabha from the state, he said a meeting is scheduled in Calcutta tomorrow,

which will take final decision to this effect.

Last time, the CPI had one member in Rajya Sabha — Mr Gurudas Dasgupta, but this time CPI-M had decided not to continue with the agreement.

The decision took a dramatic turn when CPI decided to quit the Left Front ministry in protest against CPI-M's decision.

RSP nominee: The RSP state committee at its meeting today

nominated Mr Manoj Bhattacharya, a central committee member of the party, as its lone candidate for the Rajya Sabha polls, adds SNS.

Apart from Mr Bhattacharya, the name of Mrs Gita Sen Gupta also came up. But a majority of state committee members decided to back Mr Bhattacharya's candidature.

There was voting on the issue. Senior party leaders such as Mr Debabrata Bandyopadhyaya, irrigation minister and also the party's state unit secretary, and Mr Kshiti Goswami, PWD minister, reportedly argued in favour of Mr Bhattacharya as its candidate for the Rajya Sabha seat.

■ Kerala CPI joins stir against CPM: page 8

No support to Rabri

MIDNAPORE, March 12. — The CPI will not support the Rabri Devi government in Bihar, Mr Bardhan said.

"Both Mr Laloo Yadav and Mrs Rabri Devi were corrupt", he said. Mr Yadav was "undemocratic" also, he said.

Asked if the CPI-M can support the Rabri government why his party cannot do it, he said "they can support, but we will not." — PTI

■ Another report on page 8

THE STATESMAN
13 MAR 2000

Basu move to end CPI-CPM row

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, March 13

9 P.M.
CPI-M

THE CRISIS in the Left Front Government over the CPI's decision to pull out its two ministers in protest against the denial of a Rajya Sabha berth seems all but resolved with the CPI relenting in response to an appeal by Chief Minister Jyoti Basu. It is a question of mere formality before the Minister for Water Resource and Investigation, Nandagopal Bhattacharyya, and Minister for Civil Defence, Sreekumar Mukherjee, return to their ministerial offices.

The ice was broken when Basu rang up CPI general secretary A B Bardhan during the meeting of the CPI's national executive in Delhi

HEI 14/3

today. The Chief Minister reportedly urged Bardhan not to press the issue further and ask the CPI ministers to resume duty in the larger interest of Left unity. Basu also spoke to Bhattacharyya, who was attending the CPI national executive meeting. The CPI national executive is understood to have concurred with Bardhan that Basu's wishes be respected.

CPI sources here said Bardhan had contacted the party's state secretary, Manjukumar Majumdar, and briefed him on his conversation with the Chief Minister. Bhattacharyya, who came back from Delhi after the national executive meeting, rushed to Basu's residence around 8 pm to thrash out the matter. The two CPI minis-

ters had sent their resignation to the party's state secretary instead of to the Chief Minister.

Bhattacharyya declined to divulge the details of his talks with Basu. CPI sources said the party's State Secretariat would meet tomorrow to discuss the instructions from the central leadership in the light of Basu's appeal. The State Executive was earlier scheduled to meet on this issue on March 19, but it was advanced following today's developments.

That he was making a peace move was made clear by Basu himself when he told reporters at the Writers' Buildings today that he was appealing to the CPI not to press on with the pullout decision.

More reports on Page 3

TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 2000

12 ✓
THE NAXALITE MENACE ✓ 14/3

THE DASTARDLY KILLING of Madhava Reddy, Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Minister, in a landmine explosion last week, is yet another grim reminder of the intensification of violence and extremism in many parts of the country. This fatal blast has been another well-planned and meticulously-executed explosion, which has the signature of the dreaded People's War Group (PWG). It is unfortunate that despite the intelligence reports and the police alert, the Minister did not pay heed to the warnings and take extra precautions. The PWG, which has been waging this war on elected representatives, the police and the bureaucracy over the years, could have taken the life of any VIP using that particular bridge. But they had picked on Madhava Reddy, who was earlier Home Minister and gave a new direction to the police operations against the naxalite groups in Andhra Pradesh.

This brazen act, along with the recent upsurge in naxalite and left-wing extremists' violence in the neighbouring States of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar and Orissa, drives home the point that half-hearted measures do not help. The Government of India has at last set up a Coordination Centre for naxalite-infested States and the Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, who chairs this special committee, recently announced the decision to conduct an aerial survey of naxal-affected areas and hide-outs. The Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, has scheduled the next meeting of these States for April 3. Instead of wasting time over funding, formalities and procedures, the Home Ministers, Directors-General of Police and the Home Secretaries of the affected States, along with the Centre, must hammer out a coordinated strategy to deal with this challenge. The aerial survey must be done quickly and the areas of concentration must be identified to launch a combined and simultaneous offensive against extremists.

But the Centre and the States must realise that the naxalite menace cannot be handled as a mere law and order problem. Merely banning some groups or gunning down some extremist elements in 'encounters' will not really solve the problem. It is important to subdue the extremists and stamp out violence but it is equally for State Governments to address the basic socio-economic issues which the naxalites and left-wing extremists in these regions have exploited to achieve this kind of presence. The socio-economic factors such as the glaring social inequalities, economic deprivation, corruption, unemployment, caste and communal conflicts have to be recognised and tackled. On the other side, it is apparent that many of these extremist ultra-left groups and naxalites are less driven by ideological moorings and are increasingly concentrating on senseless acts of violence to register their presence.

One more aspect of this problem that needs to be addressed is the security for VIPs. The police and intelligence agencies must be able to collect accurate information about the movement of killer squads and their potential targets. The coordination committee must constantly share intelligence on the inter-State movements or activities of these groups. The police and security agencies must devise more stringent and coded measures for improving security to VIPs on the hit list. Ministers and officials who are targets must follow the security drill and prescription, or pay the ultimate price as the Andhra Pradesh Minister did. The security drill, the route that the VIPs take and cars they use must be changed frequently so that extremists do not become too familiar with the routines. The police and security agencies must remain on full alert all the time, as they are dealing with a guerrilla operation.

THE HINDU
14 MAR 2000

Centre calls CMs' meet on Naxalites

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, March 14. — The Centre has convened a meeting of chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar along with Directors-General of Police to discuss the growing Naxal menace in these states, the Lok Sabha was informed today.

Replying to a spate of supplementaries during Question Hour, the home minister, Mr L K Advani, said the need to convene the conference was decided at a meeting he had with the MP Chief Minister, Mr Digvijay Singh, following the killing of Andhra minister, Madhav Reddy, by Naxalites.

He said the Centre would extend all assistance to states to tackle the problem and that it was wrong to say that the Centre was totally unconcerned about the issue.

Mr Advani said a conference of chief ministers of states affected by the Naxal menace was held in Hyderabad in 1998 where a coordination committee, headed by the Union home secretary, was set up for this purpose.

On the problem of militancy in the north-east, he said the Centre was providing assis-

tance to them also by way of supplying arms.

He said four of the eight north-eastern states have been affected by militancy.

These are Assam, Tripura, Nagaland and Manipur.

To a persistent demand from members, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr GMC Balayogi, agreed to a half-an-hour discussion on the issue.

Close shave

A police sub-inspector on patrol duty escaped unhurt when a Naxalite belonging to "Sikasa", a front organisation of the People's War Group, opened fire near Narsapur, in Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh last night.

When the SI stopped the Naxalite for a routine check the latter opened fire from his pistol. The SI returned fire but the Naxalite managed to flee.

Naxalite held: A teenager Naxalite carrying a reward of Rs 10,000 was arrested at Murchul village in Rajnandgaon district of Madhya Pradesh. Acting on a tip-off, police arrested Naxalite Tiyragarh Dalam member Birjhuram alias Sudhakar (16) resident of Churia Kanaha village, when he went visiting his relatives at Murchul.

THE STATESMAN

15 MAR 2000

CPI relents, decides to rejoin Govt

HT Correspondent

Calcutta, March 14

THE CURTAIN was rung down today on the six-day-long drama over the CPI's threat to pull out ministers from the West Bengal Cabinet on the Rajya Sabha seat issue with the party's state secretariat reversing its earlier stand.

At a meeting this afternoon, the state secretariat formally asked the two ministers to carry on with their normal functions, taking into consideration the views of the party's national executive and Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's request on the CPI ministers continuing in the government in the interest of Left unity. Today, Basu wrote to the Water Resource and Investigation Minister, Nandagopal Bhattacharyya, in this regard.

In a statement issued after a meeting, the state secretariat said that the party's "strong protest" to the Left Front had drawn the attention of political circles and the people. Party general secretary A B Bardhan had communicated the views of the national executive on the question of continuing in the government and the chief minister had written a letter to Bhattacharyya on the issue "We have noticed that our point of view has received importance in those letters. Thus, the party directs the ministers to carry on with their normal duties."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 MAR 2000

Power from the barrel of the gun

In most of the States where naxalite activity is noticed at a small level, the Governments show no interest in nipping the problem in the bud. It is only when the ultras resort to violence that the Governments wake up and let loose a reign of terror in the name of controlling them.

K. SRINIVAS REDDY
tracks the rise of the naxalites.

THE DEAFENING blast of the landmine that killed the Panchayat Raj Minister, A. Madhava Reddy, about 30 km from Hyderabad on the night of December 7, continues to reverberate throughout Andhra Pradesh. With the precision blasting of the landmine planted on an approach road of a railway road overbridge, the CPI(ML) People's War, better known as the PWG, sought to send some unmistakable signals to its adversaries: that it was not down and out as the police had claimed and that it would not forget and forgive. It was only some three months ago that the three PWG central committee leaders, Santosh Reddy, Naresh and Adi Reddy were killed in an alleged encounter in the Koyyuru forest area of Karimnagar district. The PWG had accused the police of arresting the three in Bangalore and killing them in a 'fake encounter'.

While the police patted themselves for the operation, the PWG was seething. That it would strike back was anticipated. The targets, be they politicians or police officers, were alerted. But the retaliation came in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh, when they hacked to death a Minister, Kavre, who was campaigning for local bodies elections in the forest areas of Bastar.

However, the police were still expecting such an attack in Andhra Pradesh also, but the way the naxals targeted Madhava Reddy and pulled off what was earlier perceived to be a "near-impossible feat" has shaken politicians and police alike. The police had never anticipated that the PWG cadres could detonate mines successfully at night. The theory behind this confidence was

that the chances of a 'miss' were high during night time since the person who detonates the mine would have to have a perfect synchronisation of his visual perception and physical action. Already sitting at least 100 yards away in pitch darkness, he would have had to identify the vehicle and detonate the mine as it crosses over it.

The success of such an attack depended on numerous parameters, such as vehicle speed, hand-eye coordination, and prior information about movement of the target. Yet, the PWG managed the detonation precisely as the vehicle carrying Madhava Reddy passed over the mines buried some four feet below the kutchra road surface.

It was as if everything was working against Madhava Reddy whose threat perception report put him in the 'Z plus' category of security. His movements had a set pattern. Before boarding the vehicle, he announced where he was going. The police were confident that there would not be any 'action' in Rangareddy district since naxalite movement was minimal. But the PWG struck.

Madhava Reddy's killing raises many disturbing questions. Police analysts point out that the set pattern in his movements proved fatal. This was not the first time that an established pattern in the movements of its target came in handy for the PWG. The Deputy Inspector General of Police, K. S. Vyas, was shot dead at the Lal Bahadur Stadium in Hyderabad in 1993 as he used to go jogging there every day. The Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Umesh Chandra, was shot dead in broad daylight last year when he was on his way to office from home. Despite the slaying of the two senior IPS officers which were made easier by the set pattern in their movements, the police failed to prevent the attack on Madhava Reddy.

Why did the PWG go after Madhava Reddy especially when his killing could lead to a severe backlash? A simple answer could be the confidence of the PWG leadership in its ability to take on the State Government. The PWG movement has already spread even to States such as Haryana, Delhi, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal in addition to Andhra

Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Bihar.

While the PWG was suffering blow after blow in Andhra Pradesh with the police effectively putting into practice its counter-revolutionary strategy, its influence in other States was spreading unhindered. Internationally also, the PWG got good exposure with its documents being featured on various websites on the Internet.

Last year's merger of the Party Unity (PU) operating in Bihar with the PWG had significantly helped the spread of its influence to newer areas. Though naxalite activity had not assumed alarming proportions in States such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Haryana and Punjab, the PWG had formed State committees to educate people and recruit them. The outfit, which wants to achieve a 'new democratic revolution' through protracted armed struggle, goes about the job systematically. The PWG does not just resort to violence in an area where it is trying to establish itself. The cadres would analyse the local problems and mobilise the people and begin what they call 'partial struggles'. Subsequently, when the cadres gain

THE HINDU
19 MAR 2000

P. T. O

Saifuddin let off after warning

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, March 26

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REBEL CPI(M) leader Saifuddin Chowdhury was hauled up again today at the State Committee meeting and let off with a warning.

The party leadership objected to press statements attributed to him on the reopening of Dunlop's Sahaganj unit and for reportedly suggesting a civic poll tie-up with the Congress.

Chowdhury had earlier been show-caused twice by the party. Today, he was chargesheeted for his statements and asked why he should not be suspended for repeatedly going to the media.

A statement released by the CPI(M) after the meeting said Chowdhury met some State Committee members and told them that he had not uttered a

9-P-P-CPIM
word of what had been attributed to him. He also submitted a written statement to the party bosses. The CPI(M) will make the rebel leader's explanations public through *Ganashakti*, its mouth-piece. He was told that henceforth he should release statements only to the party organ. They must not appear in other newspapers.

Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's retirement too came up in the meeting, a party insider said. Some members reportedly wondered why Basu's decision to pull out of the 2001 Assembly poll race was made public even before it was discussed in the party forum.

"We took exception to the manner in which his retirement announcement was made public. It was made clear to the party leadership that Basu was no ordinary leader and the decision to relieve

him of his duties cannot be arrived at without taking into confidence all the State Committee members here. The Politburo alone cannot arrive at this crucial decision," said a State Committee member.

The party statement, however, had no mention of Basu's retirement. When a reporter asked the Chief Minister whether the matter was discussed, he said: "The issue was not discussed."

Party leaders also discussed strategy for the municipal polls. The CPI(M) will stress on organisational network, better candidate selection, more street-corner meetings, selection of progressive and democratic candidates from local Nagarik Samitis and giving more importance to the opinion of ward committees for the selection of candidates for the civic polls.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
27 MAR 2000

Saifuddin, CPI-M kiss

5/1 9/2 and make up 9/8 P.M. CPI-M

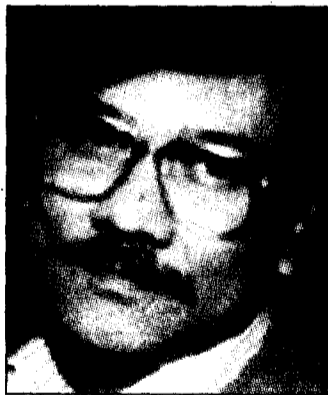
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Feb. 4. — The CPI-M appeared to tide over a major crisis as both the liberals and hardliners made a climb-down at a state committee meeting today where neither the hawks opted for an extreme step against Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury, nor did he press for his demand of internal democracy.

In an apparent rapprochement between the two camps, the party let off the liberal leader with the warning to ensure that there is no repetition of his views on the CPI-M's internal matters making it to the media, while Mr Chowdhury in his reply to the show-cause notice regretted "the confusion created after his views were published in newspapers".

CPI-M state secretary Mr Anil Biswas told a Press conference about Mr Chowdhury's reply after the state committee meeting. The committee had showcased Mr Chowdhury on 31 December for making Press statements on the party's internal matters.

For the past few months, the CPI-M has been threatened with the prospect of a near-revolt after Mr Chowdhury, Mr Subhas Chakraborty and Mr Samir Putatunda repeatedly accused hardliners of trying to stifle alternative viewpoints within the party.



Saifuddin: Press stress

The trio's demand for internal democracy in the party found tacit support from Mr Jyoti Basu, who gave a patient hearing to Mr Chowdhury and reportedly sympathised with

the issues he raised. Mr Basu even admitted that it was a mistake to have dropped Mr Chowdhury from the party's Central Committee.

The show-cause notice served on Mr Chowdhury evoked solidarity with him from the liberal group. As Mr Chowdhury received the notice and prepared to draft his reply, there was speculation that a major showdown was on the cards. Today's state committee meeting took care of that.

The impending civic body and Assembly elections may have prompted the two sides to settle for a truce, especially in view of the steady rise in popular support for the Trinamul. Mr Basu's reported assurance to the liberal camp that the issues they had raised would be accommodated in the party's revised programme, being drafted, may also have persuaded the liberals to soften their stand, at least for now.

Though a patch-up has been worked out, analysts wonder how long the rebels' issues can be kept bottled up.

THE STATESMAN

• 5 FEB 2000

Saifuddin firm on democracy demand

MANASH GHOSH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Feb. 7. — There is no question of the former CPI-M Central Committee member and Lok Sabha MP, Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury, resiling from his stated demands for inner-party democracy, transparency in organisational functioning, adopting development-oriented politics and significant changes in party programmes.

(Mr Chowdhury and Mr Subhas Chakraborty have launched the Bangiya Ganatantrik Mancha, a non-political organisation, for the protection of democracy in West Bengal, says UNI.

(The mancha held its first meeting recently and called on

■ See SAIFUDDIN: page 3

SAIFUDDIN: *didn't seek pardon*

(Continued from page 1)

all social democrats to work for the benefit of the rural masses and industrial labour force. Mr Chowdhury and Mr Harihar Mishra have been chosen the mancha's conveners.)

Mr Chowdhury, who left for New Delhi today, made it clear to **The Statesman** that he "firmly" stood by the issues that he had already raised in public and there was no scope of withdrawing them since they were fundamental to the party's survival.

"How can I withdraw since they are already before the people for consideration? It has become a public issue now which will have to be sorted out through debate. There is no scope for making up on these issues with anyone. In my reply to the show-cause notice served on me by the party, nowhere did I say that I was resiling from my stand. I had clearly stated in my reply that I was sorry if my views published in the newspapers had either upset anyone or caused confusion. I had certainly not sought pardon".

That there is no change in his political line was made clear by him during his stay here when he not only addressed a closed-door party workers meeting but also exchanged notes with like-minded party leaders.

At the workers' meeting, he recalled the "historic blunder" committed by some party leaders

who "scornfully" spurned the offer to let Mr Jyoti Basu become Prime Minister. Mr Chowdhury explained to the cadres that the "momentous opportunity" the party missed had "directly helped" in the BJP's ascendancy which eventually enabled it to grab state power for which all secular and "truly" democratic forces were now suffering.

"Ironically all those in the party who had rejected the offer are now moving heaven and earth to dislodge the BJP without success. Earlier they had tried to install a Congress-led Government. All this mess is because of opacity in our party's decision making".

Mr Chowdhury cited the example of the rise of neo-Nazis in Austria. To start with, the Austrians had installed an SS operative like Kurt Waldheim in power followed by Freedom Party's Joerg Haider who saw nothing wrong in the crimes committed by the Nazis. "The Austrian parallel is relevant to India since the Left democratic forces have contributed to the rise of the BJP".

Mr Chowdhury also decried violence and said it had no place in a democracy. Leaders who thought that violence was an effective means to "suppress or neutralise opposition" were politically unsound and were in fact, living in a fool's paradise. "Violence begets violence. This simple truth must be realised by all".

LENIN'S LEGACY

5-8 Social democracy could save the Left

FRACTIONAL politics in the CPI-M is not unusual. What is unusual is that the state committee should once again choose to couch internal differences in theoretical terms. What the CPI-M seriously need to do is to acknowledge that they are not a Marxist party. Most members of the Politburo are wholly innocent of any knowledge of Leninist theory of the role of the party in the socialist transformation of society. They are equally ignorant of the Leninist interpretation of the character of the state. To put it bluntly, they are a confused lot. The structure of the party — based on a bowdlerised version of Lenin's democratic centralism — is in direct contradiction to the mode of proliferation it has chosen, both in ideological and organisational terms. The organisation has grown by inducting the lumpen underclass, which in the sixties and seventies were identified closely with the Congress-style of politics that the arch-lumpen Sanjay Gandhi inaugurated, sadly despite the educational opportunities he had as the younger scion of India's "first family". In ideological terms, the CPI-M's progress is diffuse. In official pronouncements the CPI-M make grand ideological gestures. They have always been extremely vociferous about opposing liberalisation and globalisation. In practice, however, the CPI-M have been making half-hearted attempts at inviting capital to industrialise the state and rescue it from the current state of economic debasement for which they themselves are responsible.

Clearly the current contretemps in which the party find themselves is largely a matter of personal ambition and factional rivalry — most of the actors have their respective axes to grind. At the same time, both Subhas Chakraborty and Saifuddin Chowdhury have raised legitimate issues about the way the party functions. There are two questions. One is about inner-party democracy. If the CPI-M are serious about Leninist moorings they have to act as a "vanguard" party. This involves ideological dissemination, which in the post-Ranadive period was the justification for engaging in parliamentary politics. This they have clearly failed to achieve. Further, even within the Leninist conception of the vanguard party, there is scope for democracy through the concept of the soviet. Lenin did after all ride to power on the concept of "all power to the soviets". The possibility has been frustrated by American-style bossiest trade unionism, taken to extreme and immensely infructuous levels, that the Left adopted purely for immediate electoral benefit.

Given the "pragmatic" politics that Jyoti Basu and Surjeet represent, the CPI-M should now openly avow a social democratic character. If they were to do so they would serve the state and the nation better. First, it would enable them to tone down the unions and industrialise the state — making for more employment opportunities and greater prosperity. Second, it would help the Left in general to strengthen the centrist tendencies in the Indian polity, with a view to establishing some form of genuine secularism and the fundamentals of a welfare state. But to do that the CPI-M in theory need the marginalisation of armchair leaders like Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechuri — an unlikely circumstance.

THE STATESMAN

- 2 JAN 2000

Saifuddin will respond to party challenge

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 2. — The rumblings in the CPI-M took a new turn with the former central committee member, Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury, deciding to take up the challenge against the party after a show-cause notice was served on him.

Mr Chowdhury, who returned from Calcutta today after a series of meetings with party colleagues who are learnt to be supporting his cause of more democracy in the party, is yet to receive a show-cause notice.

"I have been told by a few people that a show-cause notice has been served against me. I am yet to receive any such notice. In any case, I have not indulged in any anti-party activity," he said.

Mr Chowdhury said when the show-cause notice reaches him, he would reply to it as per the party's requirements. He was of the opinion that he would be able to convince the party that he had not done anything wrong and his actions were aimed at strengthening the party.

The state unit's decision to serve a show-cause notice on Mr Chowdhury has come as a surprise to many, who believed that the party's former deputy leader in Parliament had the tacit support of a few heavy-weights in the party, including the Chief Minister, Mr Jyoti Basu.

Mr Basu, who is heading the party's panel for a fresh party programme, gave a patient hearing to Mr Chowdhury during his stay in Calcutta. The Deputy Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya, also had a long meeting with Mr Chowdhury on the subject.

However, in certain circles, the show-cause notice is being viewed as the party's present leadership trying to retain its hold over the party, and may just be the beginning of the process of throwing out Mr Chowdhury from the party.

But things may not be as smooth as many would like to believe as Mr Chowdhury reportedly has the backing of the state's transport minister, Mr Subhas Chakrabarty and Mr Samir Patitunda, a promi-

9 p.m. CPIM
nent figure in North 24-Parganas.

While Mr Chowdhury has been served a show-cause notice, Mr Chakrabarty and Mr Patitunda have been verbally cautioned by the party's state committee.

At the same time, questions raised by this section of the party seems to have created an ideological turmoil in the party when the new party programme is being drafted.

A number of senior CPI-M leaders, still not coming out in the open, are of the opinion that the 1964 party programme has become obsolete and several important questions need to be answered at this juncture.

Addressing the issue of secularism is one such issue, which has resulted in some confusion among the rank and file of the party.

Mr Chowdhury and some of his colleagues have also started raising questions on the relevance of dictatorship of the proletariat as well as democratic centralism in the party structure, which has allegedly resulted in mindless suffocation of party democracy.

Basu wants overhaul of party programmes

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Jan. 3. — Mr Jyoti Basu today sided emphatically with the CPI-M liberals, arguing forcefully that the party's foundational charter, "party programmes", needs sweeping changes.

The current formulation, unchanged since it was made in 1964, has become irrelevant in a fast-changing world, the chief minister said at *Ganashakti*'s 34th anniversary celebrations.

He said the party committee formed to suggest the changes is working on the matter. The subject will be discussed by the next politburo meeting and followed up in the central committee.

After this, the various party fora will chew on the matter for two months. At the end of about a year, the task will have been completed, Mr Basu said.

The chief minister took an apparent swipe at party hardliners, saying Marxism is a science and not a body of dogma. If one finds that some of its principles have been wrongly applied, corrective steps must be taken without delay. "There could be mistakes, but we will have to correct our actions."

The CPI-M is a revolutionary

party — and whenever there have been lapses, corrections have been made, Mr Basu reminded party leaders and members.

Even Mao Zedong had made a blunder — by saying "bombard the headquarters" during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution — he said. There could be differences among "us" on organisational matters, but that should not spawn "animosity" within party ranks.

Mr Basu reminded his audience how sharply opinion in the party was split on the issue of "participation at the Centre" in May 1996. Yet the party decided it would take a fresh look at the subject whenever another opportunity came. This was clearly a hint at how the party leadership had, over time, softened its stand on the issue.

"There are some weaknesses in the organisation and we have to overcome them," Mr Basu went on.

"No one should think that only his views should prevail," he said, in an obvious dig at hardliners.

Before he signed off, the chief minister, however, stressed that the CPI-M is a "truly"

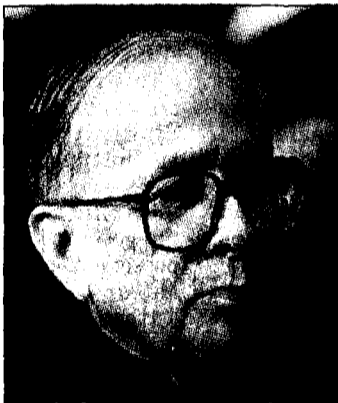
BASU:

(Continued from page 1)

democratic party. He wondered whether any other party in the country has such a democratic set-up. He highlighted the Left Front government's successes in various fields, but asked partymen to lend a patient ear to criticism from the people.

On familiar ground by now, the chief minister came down on "a section of the media for launching a slander campaign against us".

It was left to the state CPI-M secretary, Mr Anil Biswas, to describe how *Ganashakti* had evolved into a full-fledged newspaper from a small bulletin, and remember the role of the late Saroj Mukherjee behind the rise.



Basu: 'Agenda irrelevant'

■ See BASU: page 4

THE STATESMAN

- 4 JAN 2000

BASU'S DILEMMA

5/18
CPI-M unable to contain factionalism

JYOTI Basu is veering round to the view that the party's programmes need a thorough overhaul. He says programmes devised in 1964, when the Communist movement split, are no longer relevant and that the CPI-M, as a truly "revolutionary" party, must acknowledge its mistakes and adapt to the times. Basu's plea for an overhaul has two implications. One, he is entirely right that change is inevitable; two, he aims to strengthen the dissidents, led by Subhas Chakraborty and Saifuddin Chowdhury, who have been arguing that the leadership of the party should be more sensitive to dissent from within. The conflict has in the past few days developed an ideological slant. But the crux of the matter is factionalism. Throughout the state the majority faction has been depriving the minority faction of any say in party affairs. The minority faction is out of all committees. Factionalism is probably the worst in the North 24-Parganas district committee where Subhas Chakraborty's supporters have been cornered by the majority faction. Subhas can command crowds and cadres but not voting members who have been carefully admitted to support the old guard though young in years. As a result, some senior partymen have left the party. The CPI-M knows that it is in bad shape. Factionalism will severely erode its ability to meet the Trinamul Congress's challenge in the elections to 82 municipalities due in a couple of months.

This fear prompts Jyoti Basu to call for a change in party programmes so that dissidents can be accommodated. The need to do this is all the more acute because assembly elections are due in barely a year and may well be held sooner. The CPI-M knows that the Mamata factor will grow rather than diminish over time. Unless factionalism is arrested and the party broadbased, the CPI-M could be dislodged from power — something that could not have been imagined a year ago. Unfortunately Basu's writ does not run in the party anymore. This is mainly because he has made himself extremely vulnerable over his son and his unsavoury friends. He seems quite unable to deny the son anything and cronies like the Advocate-General take advantage. A lack of perspective does not help either. When Basu talks about changing the party's programmes, he sounds like he is endorsing the dissidents' argument that doctrinaire Marxism should be abandoned in favour of the market for the state's development. In that case, there is no point in clinging to the fiction that the CPI-M is a revolutionary party. Revolution has now become a synonym for stick-in-the-mud. It should proceed to bury its ghosts and acknowledge its social democratic character. But with Basu disabled thus who will lead it out of the mess? Continued refusal to face the truth will be fatal. Basu is not a victim of circumstances, he is a prisoner of his partiality for his son.

THE STATESMAN

- 5 JAN 2000

Liberal[✓]s unfit to be in party,[✓] says Anil Biswas

SUMIT SEN
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

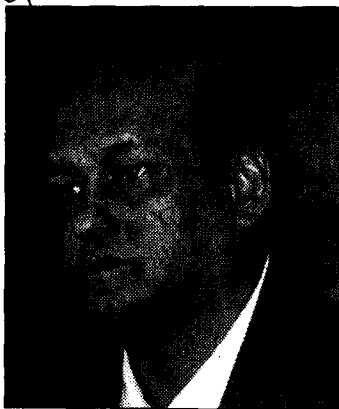
CALCUTTA, Jan. 6. — The CPI-M liberals are not fit to be in the party, Mr Anil Biswas said today.

The state CPI-M secretary argued that partymen who are clamouring for more organisational democracy — Mr Subhas Chakraborty, Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury and Mr Samir Putatunda — are harming the party.

Mr Biswas's comments suggest he may take on the liberals in direct battle, some party members said. If true, he will be going against the views expressed by Mr Jyoti Basu, who a few days ago had seemed to side with the liberals, calling for sweeping changes in the 'party programmes' formulated in 1964.

Mr Biswas's attack on the liberals came at a meeting of the CPI-M's city unit at Nazrul Manch, attended by hardliners such as Mr Biman Bose, Mr Benoy Konar, and Mr Naren Sen.

The state secretary asserted that the CPI-M is a "truly democratic party". All this hue and cry over an alleged lack of inner-party democracy, with liberal leaders rushing to the press



Mr Subhas Chakraborty

with their views, is pointless.

"Our party has strong ideological moorings; it does not encourage individualism," he said in an apparent dig at the liberals.

He buttressed his argument against the rebels' "pro-democracy movement" by citing examples from history.

Lenin too had at one point of time faced such onslaughts from some of his colleagues, he said. But these designs (of Lenin's adversaries) had failed. He reminded the audience that party unity depends on discipline and dedicated work.

There is no doubt that such programmes (a reference to the liberals' — and Mr Basu's —

call for sweeping changes in the 'party programmes') need updating. But it is also true that "all these years we had functioned smoothly on the basis of these programmes".

What is needed is an improvement in the performance of the various government wings, to ensure better service to the people.

Mr Biswas called for firm measures to overcome organisational weaknesses and undertake a rectification programme to make the CPI-M a truly mass revolutionary party.

Reminding city CPI-M leaders of the gradual fall in the Left's poll percentage in Calcutta, he asked the rival factions to strive for unity and do their best to improve the party's performance in the upcoming Calcutta Municipal Corporation elections.

He regretted that six out of ten activists of the party's Calcutta unit are not properly equipped ideologically.

Most of the complaints to the state CPI-M's control commission, which deals with complaints against party members, come from members of the Calcutta unit.

Mr Biswas called for appropriate steps to overcome the unit's problems.

THE STATESMAN
7 JAN 2000

518 FACADE CRACKS 9/1 CPI-M faces internal, external challenge

THE unity of the Left is now on the point of disintegration. The Left Front is in tatters — the RSP and Forward Bloc have steadfastly defied the CPI-M's opportunism in moving close to the Congress. Moreover, for some time now senior leaders of both parties have been keeping channels of communication with Mamata Banerjee open. Now two leaders each of the RSP and Forward Bloc have joined Trinamul. From Trinamul's point of view this is significant because these acquisitions are in north Bengal, where the party does not have a presence. If Trinamul succeeds in eroding the Left's base in north Bengal its challenge in the coming assembly elections will be significantly strengthened. It is not only a question of desertions. The lesser partners, who have been bullied by the CPI-M, are awaiting developments within it.

And the developments are ominous. The hardline leadership of the party, which controls its destiny through majorities in the secretariat and committees, have made it clear that it is not willing to countenance the challenge of "dissident" liberals, a minority in committees. But dissidents are now willing to take their grievances to a conclusion. We can take their high-sounding phrases about inner-party democracy and hide-bound programmes with a pinch of salt. They have been quiet till now. So why are they pursuing a collision course that could split the party? First, public disaffection with the party and the government is widespread and intense, and dissidents now know in a showdown with the ossified leadership they will have public sympathy as well as the support of a large body of young cadre. They can have a working arrangement with Mamata Banerjee, who has emerged as a credible alternative to the establishment. It is unlikely that dissidents will move before the municipal elections. Anil Biswas has till then to ponder. Perhaps Jyoti Basu, the reluctant patriarch, can make him see the error of his ways, before he puts in his papers.

Basu advises against crackdown on rebels

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Jan. 9: Chief minister Jyoti Basu today asked the state CPM leadership not to precipitate the brewing crisis in the party by taking a hard line against dissidents.

Basu advised caution during a long session at his house with state party secretary Anil Biswas. The meeting came a day after the CPM showcaused Saifuddin Chowdhury, one of the dissidents and former central committee member.

Sources close to Biswas said that Basu was told about the leadership's unhappiness at the public criticism of the party's functioning by the dissidents.

Basu reportedly asked Biswas not to take any hasty decision against the dissident triad of Chowdhury, transport minister Subhas Chakraborty and South 24-Parganas district secretary Samir Putatunda.

Basu had last week publicly called for modernising the party's

outdated programme, spurring the dissidents to claim that he was echoing their view.

However, Basu had tempered the dissidents' euphoria by discounting their claim that the party lacked transparency and democracy.

Basu, who is recuperating from a severe cold, said he would resume work tomorrow. "I am feeling comparatively well now," he added.

He said he would address the annual general meeting of the Merchants' Chamber of Commerce on Monday. He will also attend office at Writers' Buildings.

Chowdhury, who was served the notice at the party office yesterday, left for Katwa this morning. The party has already censured Chakraborty and Putatunda.

CPM hardliners feel that Chakraborty's recent comments and public appearances are more harmful than that of Chowdhury.

Hardliners like Benoy Konar

have criticised Chakraborty for addressing Mamata Banerjee as "sister". However, an undaunted Chakraborty, told a party meeting: "If a woman can accept me as *dada*, what is wrong with my addressing her as my younger sister?"

Chakraborty has also tried to prevail upon the hardliners not to press ahead with a rail roko in north Bengal to protest the Centre's apathy to the districts there.

Chakraborty reportedly urged party leaders not to launch any programme against Mamata, who heads the railway ministry, saying that it may boomerang on the CPM.

Mamata is scheduled to visit north Bengal to track the progress of railway projects. Chakraborty has accepted Mamata's invitation to accompany her, sparking another round of protests by his detractors.

On Sunday, Chakraborty participated along with Mamata in a procession to mark Guru Govind Singh's birth anniversary.

THE TELEGRAPH
10 JAN 2000

CPI(M) may lose national party status

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 11. The Election Commission is expected to serve a showcause notice on the CPI(M) to explain why its status as a national party should not be withdrawn as it has lost the eligibility for recognition as a national party after the recent Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

The Commission, which has started the process of review of the status of parties on the basis of their performance in the recent elections, has decided to accord the status of a national party to less than the seven-month-old party—Nationalist Congress Party—and grant formal recognition as a State party to the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal.

The Commission has come to the conclusion that the CPI (M) has lost the status as a national party after the recent elections. It adopts a three-fold criteria for recognition of a party either as a

State or national party and the CPI(M), *prima facie* does not qualify under any of the three-fold criteria.

The Commission's criteria is that a party can be recognised as a State party if it secures at least six per cent of the total votes polled in the last General or Assembly election or wins at least one out of every 25 members in the Lok Sabha or the fraction from the State or wins at least one out of every 30 members in the Assembly or any fraction of that number.

Before the last Lok Sabha/Assembly elections, the CPM(f) fulfilled one of the three-fold criteria in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal,

Kerala and Tripura. However, the party fared poorly in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections and won just one seat against 15 in the previous Assembly. The CPM(f) had fought the 1994 Assembly elections these in alliance with the Telugu Desam.

The Commission has recognised the Shiromani Akali Dal (Simranjit Singh Mann) as a State party in Punjab. The CPI (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation) has also qualified as State party in the Assam. "As regards the continued recognition of national and State parties, the Commission has completed the review of their poll performance and has to issue

showcause notices to the parties concerned before the recognition is withdrawn. This process will be initiated shortly," a press statement said.

The Nationalist Congress Party was understandably jubilant at being accorded the national party status. Mr. P. A. Sangma and Mr. Tariq Anwar, party general secretaries, said the NCP would play a more constructive and meaningful role, and address the country's need for an alternative national party.

The NCP president, Mr. Sharad Pawar, also expressed happiness over the development.

CPI-M yet to receive EC's notice

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 12

THE CPI-M has not yet received any show-cause notice from the Election Commission questioning its status as a national party following its performance in the recent Lok Sabha and Assembly election.

But with the Left party overtly failing to meet the test of the existing rules, the CPI-M is beginning to go into the rationale rather than the yardstick of numbers and percentages that qualify a political group as a national party. Alongwith this, it is also beginning to raise questions about the incompleteness of the whole electoral exercise.

"We are the third biggest political formation in Parliament. We are heading three State governments. If we do not qualify to be recognised as a national party, then who else will qualify?" asked CPI-M general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet. The party has 33 members in the Lok Sabha and another 15 in the Rajya Sabha and leads the governments in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala.

Refusing to comment on reports that the party would stand to lose its status as a national party follow-

ing its poor performance in the recent Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, Mr Surjeet merely maintained that the party would thoroughly examine the issue when it gets a notice from the Election Commission. "We have not received any notice as yet," he said.

Although Mr Surjeet declined to comment whether he found the existing system of categorising parties lop-sided, he referred to "various aspects" that put a State with

Recognition as a national party

one Lok Sabha constituency at par with one which has over 50.

Seen as an indication that the CPI-M would urge the Commission to put things on an even keel by weaving in additional criteria when it is served such a notice, party sources have also been pointing out to the fact that the rules took into consideration the entire span of general elections that covers both the Parliamentary and the Assembly polls. In this case, they maintain, Assembly elections have been held in only a few States, with several States still to go to the polls.

For the moment, the party appears to be banking on the putting across the "illogic" inherent in the situation and on the fact that any step towards scaling down recognition would be a long-drawn and time-consuming effort by which time, it hopes to recoup some of its losses. In fact, it would seem to be approaching the forthcoming Assembly elections in Bihar with this factor also in mind.

Rules stipulate that to qualify for recognition as a national party, a political formation should fulfil at least one of the three main criterion set out in at least four States across the country. It should either have one representative in the Lok Sabha for every 25 MPs of that House or one legislator for every 30 MLAs in a particular State Assembly or it should have polled six per cent of the valid votes polled in the last election in the State to the Lok Sabha or the Assembly.

The CPI-M meets this stipulation in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura. It met them in Andhra Pradesh too prior to the 1999 Parliamentary and Assembly elections there. Its representation slumped from 15 MLAs in the outgoing Assembly to one and its vote share dipped from 2.89 to 1.45.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 JAN 2000

Dissident activities cast shadow over CPM meet

Ashis Chakrabarti
Calcutta, January 13.

HE three-day CPI(M) politburo meeting begins here on Friday against the backdrop of the gathering storm in the West Bengal unit of the party.

Although the politburo meeting is scheduled to discuss the draft of the revised party programme, the dissension within the West Bengal unit, accentuated by the show-cause notice served on former central committee member Saifuddin Choudhary and the warning issued to powerful Minister Subhas Chakrabarty, is bound to cast its spell on the deliberations. So much so that the state party secretary

Anil Biswas issued a statement warning partymen against a "planned and widespread attack against the party".

The dissenters, who are daily mounting pressure on the party leadership through their covert campaigns, have timed their offensive to coincide with the debate on the revised party programme.

A five-member programme commission, including party general secretary Harkishen Singh Surjeet and West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, has reportedly suggested changes in the 1964 party programme which may result in important shifts in the party's parliamentary policies.

The debate over the party programme centres round the question of the party's role in a government at the Centre.

It came to the fore in 1996 when the central committee was almost vertically split on the question of allowing Mr Basu to

The dissidents have timed their activities to coincide with the debate on the revised party programme

head the United Front Government at the Centre. But the revised programme is believed to have addressed other important ideological issues as well.

Mr Basu has indicated that the party

needed a new programme to suit the demands of a changed political scenario dominated by the emergence of the BJP as the ruling power in New Delhi.

The new programme may make it easier for the party to align more closely with the Congress in the battle against "communal forces". But there is still a strong body of opinion in the party favouring equidistance from the Congress and the BJP.

But these and other polemical points seem to have been pushed to the background by the dissenters who want the party to be "more liberal and more democratic". Mr Saifuddin Choudhary and Mr Subhas Chakrabarty have been the most vocal of these leaders and they have launched a campaign to garner support

from like-minded partymen. Mr Choudhary is to reply to the show-cause letter by Jan. 15, but he is obviously biding time to test the ground. In fact, the dissenters seem to have launched a counter-offensive with a veiled threat that they were prepared to leave the party if the leadership punished Mr Choudhary and his followers.

In his statement, Mr Biswas complained that some newspapers had been carrying on a 'slander campaign to weaken the party and tarnish its image.' He called upon the people to ignore such campaigns and urged the partymen to strengthen the party's unity. While he avoided naming any of the dissenters, sources indicated that the meeting may discuss dissent in the party.

CPM rebels to hold back punch till May

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Jan. 14. — Mr Subhas Chakraborty today hinted that CPI-M liberals would wait till party programmes are revised before taking any decision on their future course of action.

He gave no indication, however, of backing out of the party revolt he has been spearheading.

"We will have to see how far the programmes are changed. Let the programmes be updated and we will comment after that," Mr Chakraborty said. "A clear picture is expected to emerge by May".

The transport minister's statement comes on the day his party politburo began a three-day session to finalise the draft for updating programmes formulated in 1964. The rebels have apparently acceded to pleas for patience from Mr Jyoti Basu and Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet, allowing politburo liberals a chance to push through a drastic overhaul of party programmes.

Would the inner party democracy he has been seeking come from changing party programmes?

If programmes are truly changed in tune with needs of the hour, it could help create a democratic environment in the CPI-M, Mr Chakraborty replied. "However, we will have to see what exactly our leaders

SURJEET CAR HIT

CALCUTTA, Jan. 14. — Police barred cars from parking on either side of AJC Bose Road near Mullick Bazar after a stolen Maruti hit Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet's car there this evening.

The Maruti sped away from Mr Surjeet's convoy after the accident, but not before its number had been noted down. Kareya police records showed the car was stolen from a businessman a year ago.

Meanwhile, traffic police towed away some parked cars from Mullick Bazar to Park Street police station, angering Mullick Bazar businessmen who blocked the road for more than an hour.

Mr Surjeet, CPI-M general secretary, is in the city for the party politburo meeting. — SNS

do in this regard".

Mr Chakraborty today repeated his demand for democracy in the party.

"Everybody in the world is in favour of democracy. One should not forget that we took part in the anti-autocratic struggle during the Emergency. No system can survive by ignoring democracy".

Asked about his recent charge on Doordarshan — that some

party leaders were responsible for the CPI-M's present state, and that many capable comrades had been denied their due status — Mr Chakraborty said he stood by his comments. What he had said was for the good of the party. The CPI-M hierarchy today was dictated by "principles of the snakes and ladders game."

It is learnt that Mr Basu and Mr Surjeet have launched a desperate effort to change party programmes to the satisfaction of the rebels so that an organisational crisis can be avoided.

A senior politburo member reportedly opined today that things would not have come to such a pass had the party updated its programme earlier. Had it done so, the organisational crisis over the contentious issue of participation in government in May 1996 could have been averted as well, he is learnt to have said.

One of the politburo members, Mr Sitaram Yechuri, however, contested the rebel charge on the lack of democracy in the CPI-M.

Theirs was a truly democratic party, he told reporters at Alimuddin Street during the politburo meeting recess, guided by the principles of democratic centralism.

On the dissidence in West Bengal, Mr Yechuri said that in case there was any dissent, the state unit would deal with it.

THE STATESMAN

15 JAN 2000

Basu for talks with rebels

SUMIT SEN
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Jan. 15. — Mr Jyoti Basu and a few other CPI-M leaders reportedly favour talks with party rebels, who today asked that the party constitution too be changed, after the politburo session.

Mr Basu, who seems generally sympathetic to the rebels, believes a patient hearing and prompt steps to redress some of their main grievances can go a long way in soothing them down.

The talks, the chief minister reportedly thinks, should come before next month's central committee meeting, which the rebels plan to rock with their complaints unless the leadership extends an olive branch by then. Liberal leaders — Mr Subhas Chakraborty, Mr Somnath Chatterjee and a host of MPs — are already in close touch with like-minded leaders from several other

states.

But the suggestion of talks with the dissidents faces strong opposition from hardliners who believe any such move can only harm the party. The decision has been left to Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet.

What would he do if some politburo members indeed ask to meet him, Mr Chakraborty was asked today. He preferred to reply in a lighter vein.

"I shall be obliged if they do. But they are highly respected people, and I can't imagine why they should like to meet a person like me. But of course I shall meet them, if I am asked to."

For now, he would meet Mr Surjeet before the general secretary leaves for Delhi tomorrow. He would tell Mr Surjeet about the liberals' grievances and how they are being "harassed" by the state unit's "vindictive" hardliners, sources said.

■ See REBELS: page 5

REBELS:

(Continued from page 1)

'Change constitution too': In Delhi, fellow liberal Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury raised the pressure on the hawks, saying changing the "party programmes" isn't enough. The CPI-M can have a democratic environment only if it changes its constitution too — and gives members rights that are now throttled in the name of democratic centralism.

Another thing that should go is the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat", for this often turns out to mean dictatorship by a group of party leaders, Mr Chowdhury told **The Statesman**.

He said he would reply to the state committee's show-cause notice on 23 January.

At today's meeting, the politburo criticised the Centre for slashing the interest rates on public provident funds and small savings schemes. It said the measure is "anti-people".

In another statement, the politburo condemned the Uttar Pradesh government's "repressive measures" aimed at breaking the strike by its electricity board staff.

THE STATESMAN
16 JAN 2000

Jolt for Basu, round one to hardliners

No change in CPM fundamentals

SUMIT SEN
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Jan. 16. — Mr Jyoti Basu and Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet have apparently suffered a setback in their efforts to drastically change the CPI-M's party programmes formulated 36 years ago.

While the Politburo agreed to change the programmes to a large extent, some of the changes demanded by the liberals could not be made possible because of the stiff resistance by hardliners, who are in majority in the Politburo.

The draft for updating the programmes as suggested by the five-member commission — with Mr Basu as convenor — will be placed before the Central Committee in its three-day meet from 10 March.

Politburo member Mr Sitaram Yechuri indicated that the fundamentals of the party programmes adopted in 1964 have remained unchanged. He said the concepts of dictatorship of the proletariat, democratic centralism and people's democratic revolution have remained unaltered.

Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury, the liberal camp leader, had alleged that the concept of democratic centralism was being used by a few leaders to throttle the democratic rights of party members and "dictatorship of the

proletariat" had become dictatorship of some leaders.

The liberals have also argued that the Marxian concept of people's democratic revolution no longer holds good in the current scenario and the party should emphasise its increasingly important role in parliamentary politics.

Party insiders say the hardliners, during the Politburo's meet that ended today, refused to compromise on the fundamentals. Though the hardliners have reportedly agreed to the CPI-M exploring the possibility of joining the Centre under the changed circumstances, they refused to write it down directly in the party programmes as desired by the liberal camp, including Mr Basu.

Mr Surjeet admitted the fundamentals of party programmes have remained unchanged, but refused to mention the changes suggested by the party commission and the Politburo.

Mr Basu said the Central Committee at its next meeting would decide whether the matter would be thrashed out at the next party congress or a plenum. He, too, refused to spell out the text of the discussions at the Politburo meeting.

It's learnt that Mr Surjeet has specifically asked the liberals not to take any hasty

move and wait till the party programmes are updated. At a discussion with Mr Subhas Chakraborty yesterday, Mr Surjeet reportedly told him to exercise restraint and patience as the leadership had already taken an initiative to change the programmes in the context of the fast-changing national and international scenario.

Mr Chakraborty described the meeting as a courtesy call and refused to say what transpired at the meeting. A liberal camper, however, said some of the camp leaders might meet Mr Surjeet in Delhi soon to further explain their stand.

Later, at a press meet, Mr Surjeet said the party would not mind taking initiatives to "rectify" the leaders and members whose actions violated party norms, in an obvious reference to the rebel trio of Mr Chowdhury, Mr Chakraborty and Mr Samir Putatunda.

If these measures fail, the party will have to take other firm measures, he said. "Nobody is above the party, including myself." He described the CPI-M as a "truly" democratic and revolutionary party which aims to change the society.

Mr Yechuri said the Marxian concepts of socialism and revolution are integral parts of the party's philosophy and there is no change of these being altered.

Saifuddin sends in reply

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Jan. 23. — CPI-M rebel leader Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury today kept his date with Alimuddin Street's show-cause deadline, but preferred to send in his reply through an emissary rather than handing it over himself.

When contacted, he refused to divulge the text of his letter. But insiders say, in his reply, Mr Chowdhury stood by his arguments for democracy within the organisation and sweeping changes in "party programmes".

In the carefully drafted letter, he also sought clarifications to certain questions from the party leadership. On the state unit's anger for talking to the Press, Mr Chowdhury has pointed out how some hardline

leaders have also attacked the liberals in the media.

He finalised the draft of the letter after a meeting with colleagues — Mr Subhas Chakraborty, Mr Samir Putatunda, Mr Gautam Deb and Mr Tarit Topdar — at Salt Lake's Rajarhat township project office.

The party state committee had served Mr Chowdhury a show-cause notice, taking exception to his recent Press interviews in which he voiced the liberal camp's demand for "inner-party democracy" and drastic changes in party programmes.

The CPI-M state secretariat will meet shortly to decide on Mr Chowdhury's fate based on his reply. The decision to show-cause the rebel leader was taken at the state committee meeting on 31 December.

Party state secretary Mr Anil Biswas has already made it clear that the leadership would take the decision at the state secretariat meeting. The matter will not be referred to the state committee, he clarified.

The liberal camp wants to press for "suitable changes" in the party constitution, particularly the clause relating to expelling a member without giving him an opportunity to defend himself.

Liberal leaders, still sore over the earlier expulsion of Mr Nepaldev Bhattacharya without being given an opportunity to defend himself, are expected to meet Mr Jyoti Basu seeking his rehabilitation in the party.

■ Liberals lash out at Yechuri, Biman: page 3

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