

# One party rule

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Forward Bloc's charge against the Marxists

Since the last Assembly elections in May when the CPI-M lost its absolute majority it has had to watch while coalition partners raise the decibel levels against "its big brotherly attitude." But what Ashok Ghosh, a veteran Forward Bloc leader who is also the secretary of the West Bengal unit of the party and one of the founders of the Left Front, said at an open rally at Sahid Minar on Thursday is unprecedented by any standards. Not only did he defy the Left Front whip that no Front partner should criticise another publicly, he went a step further and threatened to pull his party out from the 25-year-old coalition if the CPI-M did not mend its ways of "reducing the Left Front to one-party rule". That is more than what he or any other Front partner has said in the recent past, which should be quite disturbing.

Whether the threat is carried out is immaterial; the tenor of his utterances at the party's state conference has shocked Alimuddin Street. So also that of Kamal Guha, the Forward Bloc's minister of agriculture, who in recent speeches has virtually declared a jihad against the CPI-M. What is more is that the Forward Bloc, at its state conference, has drawn up a litany of charges against the Marxists in a political document which again is unprecedented. Surprisingly the Marxists, unlike in the past, have chosen not to hit back and have sought to play down "these differences among Front constituents as nothing unusual".

They know any riposte will snowball into a major controversy and undermine the stability of the Left Front Government. That the approaching panchayat poll, which may take place some time in 2002, had something to do with the Forward Bloc's outbursts can be assumed. Being the second biggest Front constituent with 25 seats in the state assembly, the Forward Bloc recently sought the revival of the deputy chief minister's post and also claimed it. It wants to be treated with respect commensurate with its numerical strength. Already it is locked in an intense power struggle with the Marxists in some districts of north Bengal where both the parties have indulged in violence resulting in police firing and even bandhs. Expanding their areas of influence, even at the expense of Left Front partners, is what both are after.

This is at the root of the Left Front's problem which has led to clashes between the Marxists and the RSP as well. Being much bigger organisationally with better resources, including control of the police, the Marxists have sought to dominate the smaller partners by force when necessary. Their policy of dominating the grassroots has subverted attempts to form Left Front committees at the district level. The domineering attitude has ensured that the party runs panchayats and Zilla Parishads unilaterally.

Even at the state level crucial decisions are imposed on partners without discussion at Left Front meetings. The Marxists derive much of their strength from 32 government departments that they control many of which, including some key ones, have been taken away from smaller partners. The FB keeps venting its anger and frustration but it lacks the courage to do anything drastic because of the spoils of office. No wonder Marxists take the FB for granted.

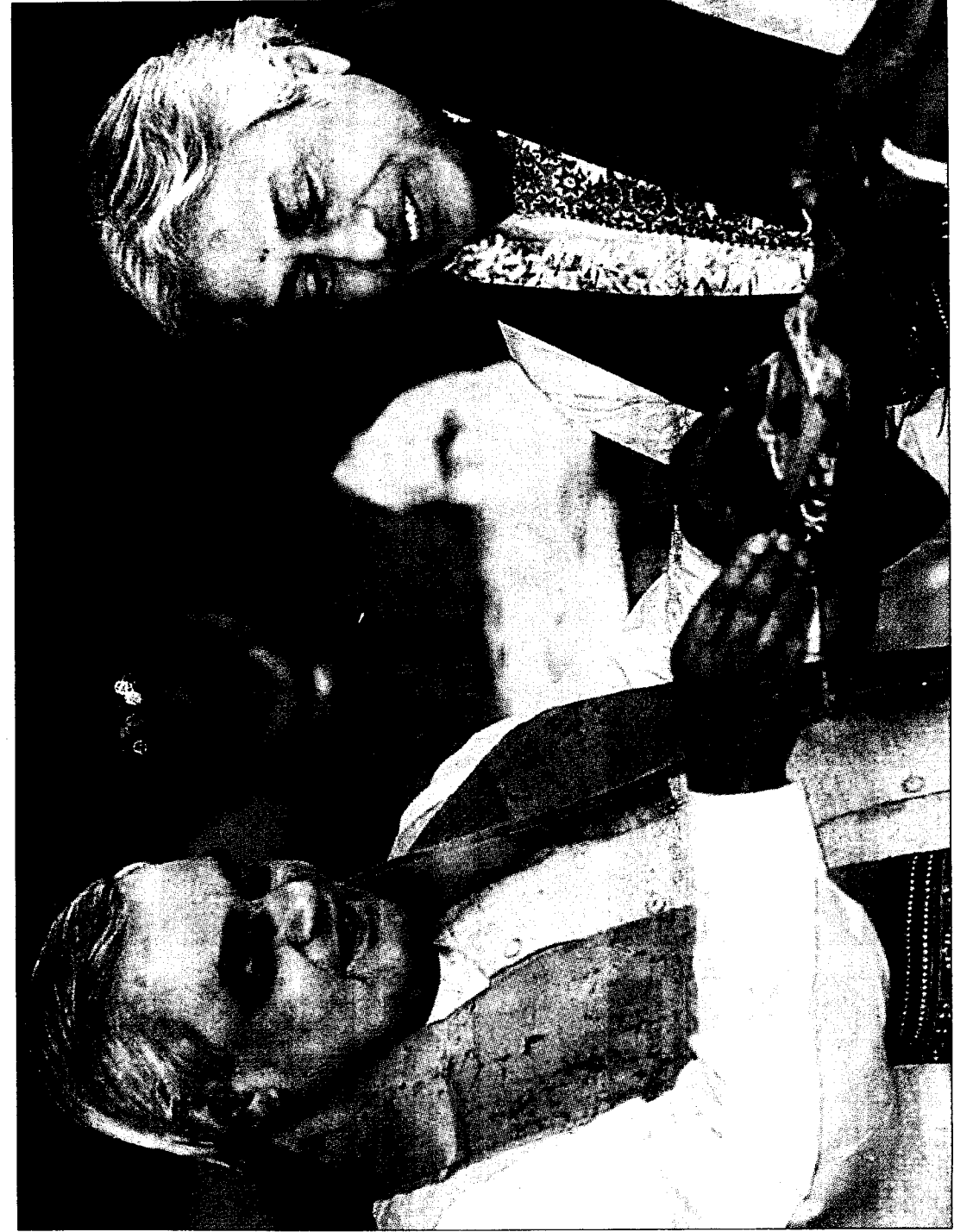
THE STATISMAN

25 DEC 2001

W Prime Minister Vajpayee utilises Bengal visit to declare war on Pak-sponsored militancy

# Terror shadow over Tagore town

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Prime Minister Vajpayee presents the Desikottama Award to Amjad Ali Khan during the Visva-Bharati convocation at Santiniketan on Saturday.

Arindam Sarkar  
Santiniketan, December 15

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee today combined Tagore and terrorism, diplomatic rhetoric and some plainspeak to drive home the message that peace can be established only by defeating violence. Appropriately the PM used the idyllic, peaceful surroundings of Visva-Bharati University here to launch an attack on State-sponsored terrorism that he believed was responsible for the attack on Parliament on Thursday. Vajpayee today attended the convocation ceremony of the university in his capacity as the *Acharya* of the institution.

Hours later, at another function in Kolkata, the Prime Minister kept up the heat on Pakistan. "Let me warn that we are on the brink of our patience. Terrorist attacks will be appropriately dealt with," he told the gathering.

At 11.30 am today, three IAF helicopters carrying Vajpayee, Governor Viren J Shah, a host of Union Ministers and Trinamool MP Mamata Banerjee landed at the Purbapalli Mela Ground in Santiniketan. From there, the Prime Minister drove down to Uttarayan. After a short break there, Vajpayee, clad in spotless white *dhori-kurta* with a saffron *uttarayya* slung on his shoulder, entered Amrakunja for the convocation ceremony, where he was received by Visva-Bharati vice-chancellor Sujit Basu.

At 11.45, Vajpayee declared the convocation open. "Coming to Visva-Bharati is an experience by

**COPYRIGHT CONTROVERSY**

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Saturday hinted that the Government would soon announce its stand on the status of Visva-Bharati's copyright on Rabindranath Tagore's works. His OSD, Sudheendra Kulkarni, said the PM had called up Union Human Resources Development Minister Murl Manohar Joshi in the morning and discussed the retention of Visva-Bharati's copyright on Tagore in the form of the Intellectual Property Right.

*Detailed report on Page 4*

itself. This is because Shantiniketan was the *karmabhoomi* of one of the greatest *rishis* of our times, Rabindranath Tagore symbolised all that is best of India, all that is eternal and universal, all that is ancient and yet modern," Vajpayee said in his address.

Then, hinting at the recent terrorist attack on Parliament, the PM lamented that despite all the advancement of technology, the world has not been able to achieve the harmony between sectarian interests and universal brotherhood. "This is what the world is witnessing in the form of terrorism. The phenomenon of terrorism has many dimensions, just as the strategy to counter it will also have to be implemented across many fronts. It is shocking that terrorists are being trained in our neighbourhood.

They have turned schools meant for religious education into factories of terror," Vajpayee told the gathering in a direct attack on Pakistan.

To drive home India's resolve to fight terrorism, the Prime Minister said: "We cannot expect terrorists and their sponsors to understand this fine relationship between education and peace. For, they are beyond the pale of humanity. Those behind the dastardly attack on our Parliament should know that our democracy and people cannot be cowed down." Quoting from Tagore, Vajpayee said: "*Chitta Jetha Bhay Sunya, Uchha Jetha Hiya* (Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high). We have learnt this lesson from Tagore."

Though Vajpayee deftly avoided any reference to the ongoing copyright controversy, he had some good words for the university authorities. "It is gratifying to note that Visva-Bharati's contribution is now being reflected in many enlightened quarters of the world."

The only discordant note of the convocation ceremony was sounded by a group of students, who demanded that the PM personally give away the *saptaparni*, or certificates, to the graduates. This is a traditional way of honouring the students of Visva-Bharati, but the ceremony had to be cancelled this time due to security reasons. "I understand your feelings. But the difficulty is that the *Acharya* of the university has become the PM," Vajpayee said.

More reports on Page 4

# Scheduled business bypassed in House

In the Assembly's winter session, Buddhadev Bhattacharya was supposed to make a statement on the Prevention of Organised Crime Bill. Instead, he spoke of the need to be tough with 'hijackers and kidnappers'. But the key aspect was the floor coordination between the Congress and the Trinamul, writes ANINDYA SENGUPTA



From Left: Speaker of the West Bengal Assembly, Hashim Abdul Halim, Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya and Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta on the first day of the winter session in Kolkata on 7 December. — Shyamal Moitra

for discussions.

But the motion was dropped as the date on which it was to be moved coincided with the day on which Parliament was attacked. Good sense prevailed on the Trinamul Congress Legislature Party, said to be on Mamata

Banerjee's prodding, and hence the decision against moving the no-trust motion.

Mr Bhattacharya, for a change, appreciated the Trinamul's stand and was magnanimous enough to praise the party.

Among the issues discussed

were the School Service Commission Amendment Bill, Anti-Smoking Bill and the Indian Electricity (West Bengal Amendment) Bill. The school service commission Bill put the government and School Education Minister Kanti Biswas

on the defensive because of its penal provisions.

Trinamul MLA Saugata Roy was vocal against the amendment Bill, stating that it was aimed at Ramakrishna Mission schools. The minister admitted to the Opposition's fears that teachers and students will have to bear the brunt of the attack if a school is de-recognised and salaries stopped.

Trinamul MLAs Arunava Ghosh, Nirbed Roy and Kalyan Banerjee trained their guns on the government's Horticulture Development Bill.

Trinamul MLA Partha Chatterjee maintained a low profile during the winter session, though he was vibrant during the budget session.

Though the Treasury Bench members hardly come up with convincing arguments as they cannot oppose government decisions, the CPI and the Forward Bloc opposed the school service commission Bill verbally, but not during division.

An interesting aspect of this session was the floor coordination between the Congress and the Trinamul Congress.

Though both had snapped ties after the Assembly election, Trinamul and Congress legislators made it clear to the ruling party that they are still comrades-in-arms on the floor of the House.

The Congress supported the Trinamul's no-confidence motion, while the Trinamul threw its weight behind the Congress when the latter moved an adjournment motion on health affairs and the hospital charge hike.

The House was adjourned after discussions on some non-official resolutions on the Ram Mandir, tuition fee hike and power tariff issues.

(The author is Special Representative, The Statesman, Kolkata.)

THE STATESMAN

19 DEC 2001

# Parliament attack gets Buddha going on Poca

51-1  
14/12

The chief minister sets the stage for a Bill on organised crime as Parliament is attacked, reports The Statesman

KOLKATA, Dec. 13. — The chief minister today set the stage for the introduction of a Bill on organised crime, sometime next year, by stating that tough administrative action is necessary to prevent ISI-backed hijacking and kidnapping in the state.

The Speaker's resolution, condemning this morning's incident inside in Parliament, provided Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya the much needed opportunity to make his point.

The chief minister began his speech with international terrorism and ended up saying that tough measures would be taken as

the government has evidence of ISI involvement in hijacking and kidnapping, meaning organised crime. Mr Jyoti Basu, after having succeeded in preventing the chief minister from tabling the Poca Bill in the ongoing winter session of the Assembly, had remarked that the chief minister would make a statement in this regard on the floor of the House.

The chief minister officially didn't, but seized the opportunity when the Speaker allowed discussions on today's incident and the need to fight terrorism.

Mr Bhattacharya said that the PWG and MCC are creating trouble in Midnapore, while the KLO is hand-in-glove with the Ulfa and ISI in north Bengal. "The KLO and Ulfa, with ISI's help, are camping in Bhutan and getting money for purchasing sophisticated arms. All this is because of Pakistan's help." He went on to add that these outfits were raising money through "hijacking and kidnapping". "They have gained

access to classified information from the Chandipur rocket launching station. They have a wide network," the chief minister remarked.

He informed the House that the state government has alerted the districts and more commandos will be deployed in sensitive areas like the Writers' Buildings, the Assembly, AIR and Doordarshan offices. He echoed Mr Subrata Mukherjee's concern about reports that the Palta waterworks could be a target of attack. What embarrassed the chief minister a bit was the mayor's remark that he was politicising today's discussion by referring to the US attacks on the "innocent people of Afghanistan." When the chief minister said that condemnation of the 11 September strikes should not have followed US attacks on Afghanistan without UN approval, Mr Subrata Mukherjee stood up to say, "Buddhababu, you were speaking well. But please don't make it a political speech."

## RUMBLINGS WITHIN THE LEFT FRONT

# CPM sights plot within

### OUR BUREAU

Calcutta, Dec. 22: The CPM has smelt "a conspiracy to discredit the sixth Left Front government" headed by Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee behind the public criticism of the state administration by the Forward Bloc and the RSP, its partners in power.

The CPM, which recently issued a whip to all Front partners not to publicly air grievances against their government, however, has decided not to confront the parties but initiate bilateral discussions to sort out the differences. Talks between the RSP and the CPM will be held on January 2 and a similar discussion between the Marxists and the Forward Bloc will take place later.

Both the RSP and the Forward Bloc have accused the CPM of ignoring their views while framing government policies and of taking "unilateral decisions". While Left Front chair-

man and politburo member Biman Bose has refused to comment on the contentions, state CPM secretary Anil Biswas told party workers at Krishnagar that forces opposed to the Front were trying "to hatch a conspiracy to discredit us".

The Trinamul Congress has been quick to capitalise on the Front partners' differences. Pankaj Banerjee, leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, said the spate of criticism against the CPM "has only vindicated our charge that the party does not believe in democratic norms".

A day after the Forward Bloc blasted "big brother CPM" at a city rally for taking "unilateral decisions" to run the government, the RSP's Burdwan district committee severely criticised the state administration for a "lack of work culture" at a two-day conference yesterday.

"Despite the fifth Left Front government's do-it-now slogan,

there has been a growing tendency among state government employees to neglect work," a political-organisational report of the district RSP observed.

The RSP also felt that "there has been considerable erosion in the spheres of healthcare, power and education. The scope of self-employment has declined and there has not been expected decentralisation of power through panchayat and civic bodies".

The party almost echoed the Forward Bloc's demand for a core committee by asking for a Front committee to ensure better coordination between ministers and the Front leadership. The RSP report sought "greater control over the ministers".

Party state secretary Debabrata Bandopadhyay today said the Front has ceased to be "a weapon of people's struggle". "Left Front unity cannot be sustained if it does not percolate to the grassroots," he observed.



Biswas: Conspiracy theory

## Bloc turns gun on rural rule

### BY A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Dec. 22: The Forward Bloc tirade against the Left Front government continued today with party leaders targeting the CPM-controlled panchayat and land reforms departments during its 14th state conference here.

Jayanta Roy, MP of the second-largest party within the Front, said the government had distributed 13 lakh acres to landless agricultural labourers over the past 20 years. But many of them had failed to cultivate the land and handed over the plots to richer people. "About 18 lakh families in rural Bengal were supposed to have benefited from the government's decision to distribute land. Unfortunately, poverty has compelled many of these families to hand over the plots to other persons whose financial position is sound," Roy complained.

He admitted that the government, which had initiated major land reforms, failed to foresee the problem while distributing the plots. "Most of these poor people don't have the financial support to cultivate the lands and they have transferred those to others in the face of extreme poverty. It is true that we, the government and the Front itself, had failed to foresee the problems of these poor labourers when we decided to give them land under the panchayat system."

Almost all the 41 delegates who participated in the day's proceedings felt that the sole intention of helping the landless labourers through the panchayat system had been frustrated as most of them had handed over the distributed land.

Interestingly, CPM rebel Saifuddin Chowdhury had criticised the party on the same issue before leaving it to form the Party for Democratic Socialism. Asked whether

his party supported Chowdhury on this account, Roy said: "We are not concerned about what Chowdhury had said about the panchayat system in the state. What I am telling you is the observation of my party on the panchayat system".

The Forward Bloc urged the land reforms and panchayat departments to take legal steps against those who had handed over the plots. Under panchayati raj, a landless labourer cannot hand over land given to him.

The CPM leadership refused to attach any importance to the criticism. One leader said: "They (the Forward Bloc) are making all these comments to keep their party supporters in rural belts active before the ensuing panchayat polls." Panchayat polls, due in 2003, is likely to be held next year.

The Forward Bloc had fared poorly in the last panchayat elections and the party leadership admitted it in the conference.

THE TELEGRAPH

23 DEC 2001

## SOUNDING THE RETREAT <sup>10</sup>

The politburo of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is the enemy of promise in West Bengal. It has gone out of its way to hinder one crucial plan the chief minister of the state, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, had for giving a new image to the state. The politburo has scuttled Mr Bhattacharjee's plans to introduce a new law, the prevention of organized crime ordinance. Such a law would give a tremendous boost to the flagging morale of the state's police force and transform the state's record on law and order. Mr Bhattacharjee was convinced about the need for such a stringent law after a series of crimes ranging from kidnapping to robbery which provided clues that organized criminal gangs were trying to gain access into West Bengal. Pushed out of Maharashtra because of the existence of a separate law against organized crime there, the criminal gangs were looking at West Bengal as a possible soft target. Since then, the threat of terrorism and the resurgence of Maoist violence in Midnapur have given to POCO a new and immediate urgency. Between Mr Bhattacharjee's recognition of the need for POCO and the passing of the ordinance has fallen the shadow of the politburo and its putative national agenda.

The leadership of the CPI(M) decided in its wisdom to oppose the prevention of terrorism ordinance which the Central government has put on the anvil. Suspicious of the motives of the Bharatiya Janata Party and of the misuse of POTO by the BJP against the minorities, the CPI(M) has set itself up to oppose POTO at the national level. Mr Bhattacharjee is not an unqualified supporter of POTO: his position is a little more nuanced. Mr

Bhattacharjee does not deny the need for special laws to combat organized crime and terrorism. But he argues that the enactment of such laws should be left to the state governments. A Central legislation will only work against the federal structure of the Indian Constitution. There is an obvious difference between the position taken by the politburo of the CPI(M) and the argument advanced by the chief minister of West Bengal. His argument, however, has been set aside by the decision of the politburo. The latter believes that the enactment of POCO in West Bengal while the party opposes POTO nationally will only create confusion about the intentions of the party. It has thus

**In scuttling the introduction of POCO, the CPI(M) has proved to be the enemy of promise in West Bengal**

prevailed upon Mr Bhattacharjee to delay the presentation of POCO to the state assembly. Mr Bhattacharjee, ever the loyal party man, has consented to do just that.

The episode is imbued with a wider significance. It suggests that Mr Bhattacharjee's efforts to separate the functioning of his

government from the direct influence of the party are not making very much headway. The process of reform and rejuvenation that Mr Bhattacharjee is so keen to initiate and implement hinges on the degree of autonomy he enjoys from the backroom boys of his party. The CPI(M) is a centralized party with a long history of interference in the affairs of successive Left Front governments. The CPI(M) refuses to acknowledge that a government has a commitment to the people who elected it, whereas the apparatchiki have no such commitment since they are not elected representatives of the people. Mr Bhattacharjee had promised a government of the future. His setback on POCO marks a retreat to the past.

THE TELEGRAPH

- 8 DEC 2001

# Left Front allies turn on each other

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA Dec. 24. — The spat between the Left Front 'allies' is now very public. And confirmation was provided today, if any was needed, that its all over the spoils of office. To top off a week of incessant bickering, the second-largest LF component — the Forward Bloc — made plain the reasons for its angst. In the words of FB leader and state agriculture minister Mr Kamal Guha, a deputy chief minister's post is "essential for good governance."

Mr Guha had met the chief minister ostensibly to discuss the bickering within the Left Front. Speaking to reporters after he emerged from the meeting, Mr Guha said: "These conflicts can be resolved only when ministers of various Front partners discuss the issues. A meeting should be convened soon."

A far more subdued articulation of his party's stand than what he and his colleagues have been serving up over the past few days:

■ "The CPI-M is a crocodile and not a leech. A leech only sucks blood, but a crocodile eats up its victims alive," he said in Cooch Behar last Thursday.

■ "We won't tolerate the bossing of any Left Front partner and the CPI-M must give up its attitude of taking decisions first and then asking the partners to endorse them at LF

meetings," said Mr Ashoke Ghosh, FB state general secretary, at Salt Lake on Sunday.

Not to be outdone, another LF 'partner' jumped into the fray; but on the side of big brother CPI-M.

■ "We want the FB to stop airing its criticism in public. SUCI was dropped from the LF because it refused to accept the Front's code of conduct," warned Mr Debabrata Bandyopadhyay, RSP state secretary, on Saturday.

■ "It wouldn't serve any purpose for any of the constituents to single out the CPI-M and make it the target of attack in public, whatever be the complaint," Mr Sunil Sengupta, RSP central committee member, insisted today.

The principle the RSP seems to be working on is as old as the hills — my enemy's enemy is my friend! And they will surely not refuse to be suitably accommodated by the CPI-M at a later date for this display of 'loyalty' to the LF

The CPM itself, one eye on those it fears may rock the boat, is apparently not so sanguine. A worried-looking Mr Anil Biswas today announced that the LF could consider Mr Guha's proposal for a deputy chief minister's post if his party moved it.

Not so fast, says Mr Bandyopadhyay. There has been no such post in previous LF governments, he insists.

The CPI, once the parent now the orphan child of Indian communism, knows on whose

back it has to ride for any electoral success. Unsurprisingly, Mr Kshetra Panda, CPI state council member, said his party would first like to get details of Mr Guha's suggestion before reacting to it.

Seldom has this kind of venom been spewed by LF partners at each other — both in public and in private.

The FB's attack, close on the heels of the LF victory in the Assembly polls, has surprised other partners and amused the Trinamul.

The Trinamul spokesman, Mr Pankaj Banerjee, has not only lauded the FB leadership for standing up to the CPI-M, but has also claimed that the no-holds-barred attack by the Front constituent only vindicates what his party has long been saying about the CPI-M's "misrule, atrocities, muscle and money power".

What has caused real embarrassment for the LF is that there was hardly any immediate provocation for the FB to go hammer and tongs against the CPI-M. It can't be passed off as normal tactics in the latest bout of sparring between big brother and the rest.

For, the language has a sting even the Trinamul can't match. But then the Trinamul isn't in a position to bargain for the loaves and fishes of office.

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THE STATESMAN

25 DEC 2001

# CPI spoiler on Poca nod

Tapan Das  
Kolkata, December 6

THE STATE Cabinet today approved the proposed Bill on Poca, while recording strong disapproval by the CPI. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee later announced that the legislation wouldn't be introduced in the coming Assembly session.

This is perhaps the first time that a Left Front partner has insisted that its "total disapproval" be recorded against a Cabinet decision on a major policy decision. Sources said the Water Resources Investigation Minister Nandagopal Bhattacharya, who is from the CPI, insisted on recording his party's "total opposition to Poca".

"My party's position against the proposed legislation is known. We are sticking to our

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opposition," he said. "This Bill is bound to be denounced by the public and will leave scope for misuse by the police. I'm not wise enough to give my views on the proposed Bill with a mere glance at it in this meeting. We need more time."

To avoid an impasse, Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta suggested the CPI separately meet the Chief Minister before the Bill is finally introduced in the Assembly and resolve the differences, but to no avail. The CPI minister stuck to his stand.

The Chief Minister had a different tale for reporters. "The Cabinet has approved the Poca Bill. But we're not bringing it immediately to avoid misunderstanding. There is a lot of misunderstanding and confusion among many that the Bill is little different from Poto."

Elaborating the finer differences between the two proposed laws, Buddhadeb said: "Poto is draconian. There is a lot of difference between the two. The objectives and contents of Poca are diametrically opposite."

"While Poto can be used against lawful agitations, strikes and public gatherings, Poca would deal with specified crimes. These include kidnapping for ransom, hijacking and armed insurgency," he said. Poto empowers a DSP to take action, but under Poca, no officer below D-G can start proceedings against an accused. An accused cannot be charge-sheeted without the Home Department's approval."

However, agreeing that these safeguards might not be enough to set all doubts at rest, the Chief Minister said there is still scope



# Buddhadev backtracks on Poca

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Dec. 6. — Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya today finally yielded ground. He decided against moving the Prevention of Organised Crime Bill during the winter session of the Assembly, commencing tomorrow.

Pushed to the wall over Poca by his party and Left Front constituents, the chief minister sought to perform a face-saving act after an emergency Cabinet meeting discussed the Bill this morning for the second time in two weeks.

"The Bill was cleared again by the Cabinet. But we are not moving it during this short session of the House," he said.

The Cabinet, incidentally, diluted several provisions of the draft it had cleared on 22 November. But Mr Bhattacharya took the plea that the delay was ostensibly due to his government's intention to avoid confusion in people's minds over the difference between the Cen-

tre's proposed law and the state's proposed legislation to combat terror.

Reiterating that the two laws were different, the chief minister said the state would prefer to wait till Parliament debates the Centre's anti-terror Bill. He said: "That's a black law. It's draconian and Left parties will oppose it."

In a further attempt to display firmness, Mr Bhattacharya said the state would go ahead and table the Bill later "whether or not Parliament passes Poto". In such an eventuality, any action against terrorists and organised criminals in the state would be taken under Poca and not Poto, he added.

Outlining the watered down provisions of the draft Bill cleared by the Cabinet today, he said the crimes specified were kidnapping for ransom, hijacking and armed insurgency affecting the country's security and integrity.

The amended draft specifies that one could be booked under the law if one has been chargesheeted for such crimes at least twice in the

past. Also, for a criminal to be booked under it, clearance must be sought from the state's director-general of police or the city police commissioner either before or soon after his arrest.

The bail provisions had also been diluted. The amended draft removes the provision for detention without bail for 180 days. An accused can obtain bail earlier but the public prosecutor must appear during the hearing in court. Also, an accused must be chargesheeted within 180 days of arrest. But the state government's clearance must be sought by the police before a chargesheet is filed.

Shelving of Poca is being seen as a setback for the chief minister, who had maintained a brave face when his predecessor snubbed him over the Bill. Mr Jyoti Basu had said in New Delhi last week that the state Assembly would not pass the Bill though the Cabinet had cleared it. Mr Bhattacharya had seemed firm about moving the Bill then and said he would make a statement in the Assembly.

THE STATESMAN

- 7 DEC 2001

# Haldia offer to Purnendu

BY SUTANUKA GHOSAL

Calcutta, Nov. 26: The Bengal government has offered Purnendu Chatterjee, its partner in Haldia Petrochemicals, majority stake and management control.

Both sides now hold 43 per cent each with the balance resting with the Tatas.

Nirupam Sen, the commerce and industry minister, said: "If Purnendu Chatterjee brings in the money required for the survival of HPL, the government will gladly hand over majority control to him."

Sen revealed that Chatterjee was told of the government's decision at the last promoters' meeting in Delhi. "Purnendu has already been reminded about the matter."

Chatterjee group officials refused comment, but said he had sounded optimistic after the Delhi talks. Sources said Chatterjee has been set a deadline of December 31 to make up his mind on bringing in additional funds.

Sen confirmed this when he said: "Hopefully, things will be sorted out by December-end."

The development follows the logjam in negotiations with Indian Oil, which was proposed to be brought in as the fourth promoter. But Indian Oil insisting on management control with a shareholding of 26 per cent, which is not acceptable to the other partners.

Under the original agreement among the partners, if the Bengal

government or the Tatas sell their stake, in part or whole, it has to be offered to the other partner first. "If he (Chatterjee) refuses that offer, we will have to bring in some other party who is keen to run the company. We will abide by the joint venture agreement," Sen said.

Ratan Tata has expressed his wish to sell out of HPL. The Bengal government also does not feel it should be engaged in running a business. "One thing is clear — the state government will not be in the business of running HPL," Sen said.

He said it had yet to be decided at what price shares would be offered to Chatterjee. "We will appoint a consultant for valuation of HPL's shares. All these are part of the financial restructuring package which is being worked out."

Talks are still on with Indian Oil, Sen said. "They have however, not changed their position."

Indian Oil officials said: "Our offer expires on November 30 and we have not received any offer in black and white from the West Bengal government."

The minister said the government wants to come to a solution immediately because of the "financial crisis" the company faces. There have been reports of HPL cheques bouncing.

Chatterjee has not brought in his share of the money (Rs 107 crore) the promoters had agreed to invest about a year ago. The government (Rs 107 crore) and the Tatas (Rs 36 crore) have.

THE TELEGRAPH

27 NOV 2001

# Poca: Left parties express misgivings

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Nov. 26. — The Left Front partners — CPI, RSP and the Forward Bloc— have expressed their misgivings about the aims and objectives of the proposed legislation of Prevention of Organised Crime Act.

The chief minister will move the Bill during the December session of the Assembly.

The CPI has written a letter to the LF chairman, Mr Biman Bose, indicating its reservations about the whole exercise. Mr Manju Majumder, CPI state secretary, said today that his party can't spell out its stand on the proposed legislation till it has some idea about its provisions. The party has

requested Mr Bose to let the partners have a fair idea about the contours of the Bill so that there is no difficulty in its passage in the Assembly.

The FB general secretary, Mr Debabrata Biswas, said his party is still in the dark about the provisions of the proposed Bill and as such is in no position to formulate its views on it. "We are in principle opposed to the Poto which is even worse than Esma or Tada. We can't in the same breath support a replication of the Central ordinance in the state. We will explain our position on Poca only after examining its provisions," Mr Biswas said.

Meanwhile chief minister Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya met

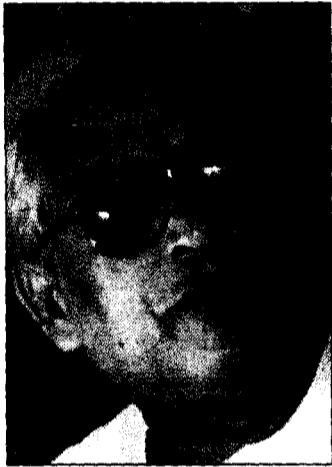
RSP leaders during the day and explained the aims and scope of the proposed legislation. Mr Debabrata Bandyopadhyay, RSP state secretary, said the chief minister has assured him that the Bill has no similarity with Poto and the "noise" being made on this score is without any basis.

The RSP submitted to the chief minister a set of its suggestions, many of which were, however, made on the basis of the Prevention of Organised Crime Ordinance. "Most of the objectionable clauses of Poca will not feature in the Act (Poca). This is the impression we have got during our talks with the chief minister," Mr Bandyopadhyay said.

THE STATESMAN

21 NOV 1951

# Buddha no to all-party meet on Poca



**BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE**

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, November 22

CHIEF MINISTER Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today dismissed the Congress demand for an all-party meet on the proposed Prevention of Organised Crime Act (Poca). "There is no need for such a meeting," the CM said. He clarified his position when Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Atish Chandra Sinha broached the subject to him during a meeting today at Writers' Buildings.

Sinha told reporters afterwards that Bhattacharjee had promised that the Act would contain nothing "which can be

used arbitrarily either against the Opposition or members of the minority community."

But Sinha stuck to his guns, saying while the Congress favoured a strong law against organised crime and subversive activities, the Government must reach a consensus on the subject through consultation with all political parties. "If the Government remains true to its words, it shouldn't have any hesitation in discussing the matter frankly and with an open mind. It must leave no stones unturned in dispelling fears that the Act could give the administration and police any draconian powers," he added.

28/11  
The CLP leader also sought Bhattacharjee's immediate intervention in the matter relating to the November 17 death of an 18 year-old in BSF firing at Madhupur village in Murshidabad. "It was cold-blooded murder. Stern action must be taken against the guilty BSF personnel. There should also be suitable compensation to the poor family of the deceased," he said.

Sinha also conveyed his party's disapproval of the enhanced charges at Government hospitals and health centres. "This makes a mockery of the Left Front Government's claim of being pro-poor," Sinha said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 NOV 2004

# 10-13 Terrorism a weapon of those 'against us': Chomsky 2/11

By Our Special Correspondent

**KOLKATA, NOV. 20.** Prof. Noam Chomsky, social theorist and political analyst, says that it is a very serious analytic error to say terrorism is the weapon of the weak. Like other means of violence, it is primarily a weapon of the strong — overwhelmingly, in fact.

Addressing a gathering in Kolkata, Prof. Chomsky said that terrorism was not the weapon of the weak. "It is the weapon of those who are against 'us', whoever 'us' happens to be."

Speaking on "Sept. 11 and its aftermath: Where is the world heading?", Prof. Chomsky said that the new millennium had given the world two things: terrorist attack and the reaction to it. "The reaction to the attack told us in which direction the world is heading to."

Today's lecture was organised by the West Bengal Government at the Science City auditorium. The Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, presided over the lecture.

Prof. Chomsky, also a world-renowned linguist, is on a four-day visit to the city during which time he would receive an honorary doctorate from Calcutta University. As State guests, Prof. Chomsky, accompanied by his wife, Ms. Carol, would visit the Asiatic Society, meet the city's intellectuals and hold a news conference before leaving for Pakistan on Friday morning.

What happened on September 11, Prof. Chomsky said, was wide-



**The West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, with Prof. Noam Chomsky and his wife, Ms. Carol Chomsky, in Kolkata on Tuesday.** — Photo: Sushanta Patronobish

ly regarded as a historic event. "It is true. It was a historic event and the question we should be asking is: exactly why?"

For the first time in 200 years, the U.S. came under attack. "That is why there was no regret for the attack on the uncivilised Afghan tribes. Among the questions that come to mind is: what is happening right now?"

Talking about the situation in Afghanistan, he said that there were seven to eight million people there on the verge of starva-

tion. That was true before September 11.

They were surviving on international aid. After the first week of bombing, according to the United Nations, there were 7.5 million Afghans in acute need of even a loaf of bread.

In the course of his speech, Prof. Chomsky explained how the nations were building up nuclear arsenal in the aftermath of September 11, the impact of September 11 on the U.S. as well as the world economy and so on.

THE HINDU

20 NOV 2001

Border crime discussed in Buddha-Vajpayee meet

# Influx: CM seeks more teeth

51-9  
20/11

9-81  
WB

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Nov. 19. - The chief minister sought 14 more BSF battalions on the state's border with Bangladesh during his meeting with the Prime Minister in the capital last week.

Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya today said he had apprised Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee about the sudden influx of Bangladeshi minorities to the state's border districts.

He said there were only 20 BSF battalions in the state though 34 are supposed to be stationed. Mr Bhattacharya, however, declined to delve into details of his talks with the Prime Minister on the influx. He said he had asked the Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, to send 14 more battalions to the state.

Mr Bhattacharya had also

discussed the issue of spurt in crime along the state's borders with Bangladesh and Nepal, with Mr Vajpayee and Mr Advani. He said the Centre has agreed to increase the Special Security Branch presence along the Indo-Nepal border.

The DGP, Mr DC Vajpai, today said, the Centre would raise an Indian Reserve Force to combat terrorism. The state would contribute two battalions to this force, one based in north Bengal and the other in south Bengal, he said.

**CM for working relationship with Centre:** Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya today said he did not want to go into any unnecessary confrontation with the Centre.

There should be a congenial working relationship with the Centre, said Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya when asked



Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya:  
Compromise path

whether he was taking a soft stance against the Centre.

He made it clear that there are political and ideological differences with the NDA-led Government and on this he would not compromise.

THE STATESMAN

20 NOV 2001

# LF extracts pound of flesh on POCO

9-87 WB  
15/11  
HT-3

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, November 14

CHIEF MINISTER Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee admitted at a Left Front meeting today that he had moved hastily on POCO and that he should have taken the coalition into confidence before placing the proposed legislation before the Cabinet.

He insisted, however, that the legislation he had in mind was quite different from the Centre's Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO).

Bhattacharjee's move has a parallel only in the way his predecessor Jyoti Basu pushed through the State's New Industrial Outlook in the Assembly without even consulting the CPI(M) state committee. The Left Front made it clear today that it wouldn't give Bhattacharjee the long rope that Basu enjoyed.

Earlier, the CPI(M) politburo had also cautioned the Chief Minister against the haste he showed. Other Front partners were not willing to back the legislation and urged Bhattacharjee to make a comparative study of



BHATTACHARJEE: I WAS HASTY...

the POTO, the TADA, the Maharashtra law against organised crime and POCO. They wanted a discussion among Front partners before the Bill was tabled.

After today's meeting, Left Front chairman Biman Bose tried to dispel any impression that the party politburo had restrained the Chief Minister.

"The Chief Minister was keen to have the ordinance in place before the accused in the Khadim abduction case got bail," Bose

said. But he did not deny that such "policy matters" should have come to the Left Front first for a discussion.

The Left Front chairman was, however, convinced that the Chief Minister wasn't going the Advani way. "The proposed POCO has nothing to do with the POTO. The Central ordinance is ranged against journalists and lawyers while there is no such provision in the POCO." But Bose would not comment on the POCO provisions. All he would say was: "The Chief Minister will place his argument in detail while laying the Bill in the Assembly"

Bhattacharjee today informed the Left Front of administrative arrangements for the bifurcation of Midnapore into two districts, East and West. "He has also held an all-party meeting on this issue at Midnapore," the Left Front chairman said.

He also promised Front partners to tackle the problem of Bangladeshis seeking shelter in the border district with Home Minister LK Advani. The Chief Minister is scheduled to go to Delhi on November 17.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 NOV 2007

# Protesters demand ban on anti-Lenin film *Taurus*

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, November 12

THE BHASHA Shahid Smarak Samity members today protested against Aleksandr Sokurov's *Taurus* for portraying Lenin in a poor light. The samity has demanded that future screening of *Taurus* be stopped at the festival.

"We are from an older generation and we are used to seeing Lenin in our way. The film apparently attempts to show Lenin through the eyes of the present generation. There maybe difference of opinions," said veteran theatre personality Sova Sen, who sat with the protesters.



Shakti Samanta at the film fest

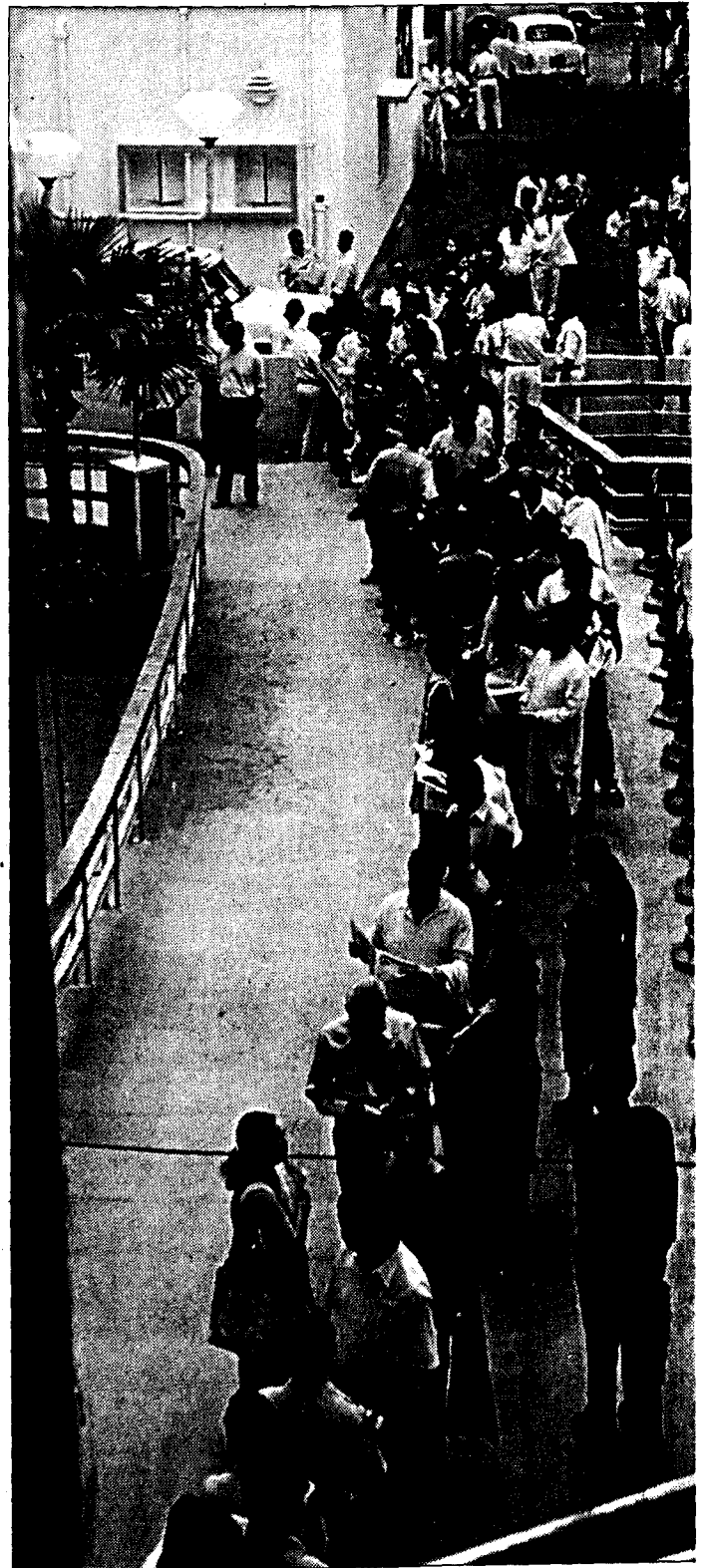
Sen said she could not sit through the entire film. "It was unbearable and disgusting. Even technically the film didn't seem any good. Either it was a very old print or shot in extremely foggy conditions," she said.

Lenin and Stalin have been portrayed in a derogatory manner in the film, she added.

Sokurov's three films *Taurus*, *Moloch* and *Mother and Son* are being shown in the marvel section. *Taurus* was the first film in the section that was screened last evening.

"There are several scenes in the film which are derogatory to Lenin and also give a bad name to socialism and communism. We have to protest against such depiction. Since the festival is organised by the Left Front Government it should own responsibility for the kinds of films being shown," said a samity member.

The festival authorities were not available for comment. The head of the department of Film Studies, Jadavpur University, Sanjay Mukhopadhyay said the film had thrown a new challenge to Leftist politics. "Such attacks on communism and Communists have happened in the past. This is another attack and has to be faced," he said. Among the audience who had seen the film last evening many were unhappy about the film.



SUBHENDU GHOSH/HINDUSTAN TIME

Kolkatans queue up in front of Nandan on Monday.

Sharmila Banerjee  
Kolkata, November 12

FROM BRAZIL to West Bengal — the neglect of parallel cinema is dogging talented directors. The Kolkata Film Festival, on its second day, provided a platform for the small filmmakers from all over the world to vent their grievances.

Brazilian director Andre Klotzel said: "Only 8 per cent of

## Neglect of parallel films worries directors

culture, Klotzel said: "Raising the voice of a country through its films is very important.

In India, the scene is not much different either. Tamil director B Lenin, whose short

good films to watch, they'll do it happily. But resources are not properly mobilised into making



# Peace and projects to win Keshpur heart

## FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Keshpur, Nov. 12: Let there be peace, said Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, reaching Keshpur.

And there was applause.

The trouble zone had donned its best colours to greet the chief minister on his second visit to the hot spot after assuming charge.

Nobody was talking of last night's blast at Shania village in nearby Danton when explosives stored in the house of alleged Trinamul Congress supporters exploded, injuring three.

Today, at Keshpur, everyone was referring to violence in the past tense. The talk was of a period of "prosperity and amity".

The chief minister had come laden not just with a feel-good speech, but a bagful of projects. He and his four Cabinet colleagues — health minister Suryakanta Mishra, power minister Mrinal Banerjee, civil defence minister Srikumar Mukherjee

and mass education minister Nandaran Dal — gifted the people a health centre, an auditorium, a children's park, a power sub-station, an ambulance and a supermarket.

All to win the heart of Keshpur after winning the Assembly seat by a record one lakh-plus votes.

Though the 15-km stretch that the chief minister's convoy travelled was decorated with colourful gates and lined with smiling people waving red flags, the flames that had singed Keshpur in the long violence leading up to the Assembly polls, had not died down fully.

It was these flames that the chief minister had come to douse. "Enough is enough, let us now have peace. I know that a lot of houses were burnt to ashes and properties of ordinary people were damaged. Let this nuisance be stopped so that everybody can live in peace. My appeal to all of you is to give up violence and stay

as good neighbours for the development of Keshpur," Bhattacharjee told a 60,000-strong gathering.

He held a marathon meeting with the district magistrate, superintendent of police and other senior officials at the Midnapore Circuit House to review law and order and progress of different development works.

The chief minister urged the people of Keshpur to forget whatever happened in the past. "Forgive all mistakes and live a new life. Time has come to join hands for a better tomorrow."

He said those who had left their homes following political clashes could now return safely. The chief minister said he had directed the district administration to make all arrangements so that all could return home.

"I have information that 22 Trinamul supporters are still out of their villages and some others are not returning home. I am telling them to return home," he said.

THE TELEGRAPH

13 NOV 2001

# Look within and unite, CM tells Front partners

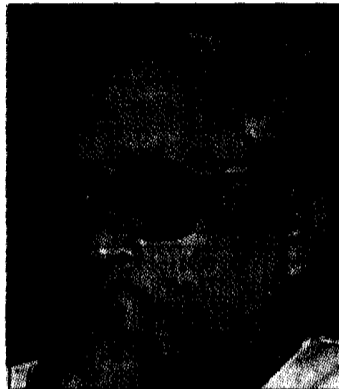
HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, November 9

CHIEF MINISTER Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has thus far been busy jacking up the administration to make it deliver the goods. But beyond that lies a politician expecting things from his comrades.

In his recent booklet, *Unnato Bamfrontier Sandhane*, Politburo member Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee introspects on the "blemishes" on the Front and the bickering that "ails" the formation.

Peeved at the recent barbs from his Front partners over key Government decisions, ranging from the eviction drive along Tolly's Nullah to the controversy over special attendants in hospitals, the Chief Minister says: "The Left Front may have differences, but let not our enemies cash in on these. Instead, let us keep our differences to ourselves and resolve them."

He cautions Front partners against internal feuds. "Unity is strength, especially when our ene-



BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE

mies are keen on forging jotes or a mahajotes." And, the Chief Minister expects more "commitment, dedication and a resolve to deliver" from the Front activists. "It's unfortunate that some of our activists have fallen prey to the same social ills we criticise. People are keeping a tab on our activities. Why should they tolerate such deviations? Hence, the need for self-education and introspection. It is a continuous process to

keep us on the right track." Like his predecessor and Front patriarch Jyoti Basu, Bhattacharjee looks up to his comrades to reach out to families and consolidate the support base. "This can only bring about the desired change in the correlation of political forces. Let's not forget that some workers are with the enemy camp still. We have to win them back."

Bhattacharjee doesn't claim that his perception of an improved Government or the Left Front is the ultimate. "We are still in the midst of a search for an improved alternative. We don't have illusions of setting up a Socialist order in a province. Our target is to chart out an alternative course of development based on improved democracy and secularism — a path that none has dared to travel."

Improved work culture and mass involvement in welfare projects are the main objectives of the "developed Left Front" concept, Left front chairman Biman Bose pointed out while releasing the booklet.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

## IN SEARCH OF SAFETY AWAY FROM HEARTH AND HOME



Bangladeshis detained at the BSF outpost in Petrapole on Thursday. — Sallendra Mal

### S Dinajpur officials in a spot

MANAS R BANERJEE  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BADALPUR (South Dinajpur), Nov. 8. — Bangladeshi families who have taken refuge in different parts of the South Dinajpur district have put the local administration in a spot.

The district administration is hesitant to take any legal action for the deportation of these families for humanitarian reasons. They have not yet received instructions from the state government on what should be done with them.

Some families in this district town have already told district officials that they would never return to Bangladesh. They said: "We are not in a position to live there fighting the fundamentalists backed by the BNP". They have decided to seek permission of the panchayat to live here.

A Ajimpur resident said: "We supported the Awami League but could not cast our vote during the elections. Fundamentalists came to our house and forcibly put voting ink on our fingers so that we could not cast our votes according to our choice". "We have left three bighas of land, our homes, and our cattle. Our

■ See INFLUX: page 10

# Driven by fear and despair

UDAY BASU  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

PETRAPOLE (North 24-Parganas), Nov. 8. — They looked as if they were caught in a trap — the mother and her three children. The mother shuddered at the thought of returning home and the children, without food for about 10 hours, cast flitting glances at the mother seeking a sense of security, but in vain.

Nirmala Das and her children were among the 13 Bangladeshi nationals detained today at the BSF outpost here. They fled their home in Barisal last night in search of safe passage across the border, fearing torture and persecution by "fanatics".

They were intercepted by BSF personnel when they tried to cross the border.

Nirmala was in tears pleading to be allowed to stay on at least till "things settle down" in her country. Her belongings, wrapped in soiled bed sheets, lay stacked near the steps of the outpost, while her children clutched at her sari. Nirmala hasn't been a witness to any torture, but she has heard tales of persecution, arson and molestation and she decided to flee.

Nirode Das from Aralia village of Bhola district said he fled his home as he was unable to "pay any more fine" to his tormentors. "It started since the election verdict was known and the BNP and its allies captured power. They came in droves and threatened us with dire consequences if we didn't pay up. The amount of fines kept mounting and we were forced to cough up money too frequently. The last time I paid

them Taka 700 and then realised I can't appease their lust for money," he said.

The police and the district administration denied there was any large-scale exodus from Bangladesh.

"During the last month 80 to 82 Bangladeshis were detained and pushed back along this border region and the number, compared to any other month is not unusually high," Mr Milan Pramanik, SDO, said.

But scores of people are daily coming from across the border without the knowledge of the district administration and the BSF, said Mr Biswanath Roy Choudhury, vice president, Bongaon Panchayat Samiti.

The SDO did not contest Mr Choudhury's claim and said such an exodus is "a distinct possibility".

THE STATESMAN

9 NOV 2007

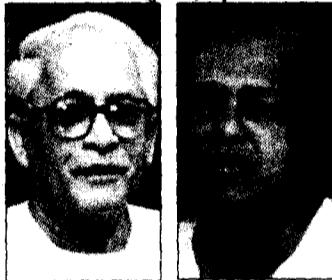
# Influx worries Subhas, CM cool

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, November 7

SUBHAS CHAKRABARTY today described the steady influx of Bangladeshis into the State as "quite serious and alarming", in sharp difference with Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee who said there was no reason for alarm and that the situation was under control.

"Thousands of people, including several Muslims, have crossed over from Bangladesh to different districts of West Bengal in the last few days. I've seen a large number of Bangladeshis camping on the roadsides at different places in North 24-Parganas," the Transport and Sports Minister said.

The Chief Minister, on the other hand, said: "There is yet



BUDDHADEB AND SUBHAS CHAKRABARTY

no need to take an alarmist position. I'm getting daily reports on the situation from all the District Magistrates (DMs). Things are under control."

But Buddhadeb hastened to add that the DMs have been asked not to be complacent and step up vigil on the borders. Intelligence agencies have also been

alerted. Subhas refused to dismiss the issue as lightly. He said India and West Bengal in particular cannot ignore the problem as it can assume a dangerous proportion. "After all, our capacity to bear the burden of the increasing influx is limited. We must also be careful about maintaining communal harmony," he said.

In an attempt to bury the hatchet with his opponents within the party, Subhas insisted he had "no fundamental difference with Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. If there were any serious differences between us, he would not have kept me in his Cabinet".

But he admitted that there were occasional differences of opinion and that was but natural.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 NOV 2001

# Uniform Act for all civic bodies soon

Tapan Das  
Kolkata, November 6

THE MUNICIPAL Affairs and Urban Development Department has decided to introduce a West Bengal Municipal Corporation Act.

The Bill which will be tabled in the winter session seeks to remove anomalies in the rules and administrative procedures of various municipalities and corporations. The proposed Act wouldn't be in disagreement with that of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, insisted Municipal Affairs and Urban Development Minister, Ashoke Bhattacharya.

Varying rules and regulations in various civic bodies were hampering work he said. While many have municipal commissions as in the CMC, some have chief executive officers. Recruitment rules also varied leading to legal hassles, he added.

The new Act will bring in a host of stringent measures to ensure transparency, accountability and self-sufficiency of the State's 122 Municipalities. Like in the panchayats, the district magistrates would be required to closely monitor the regular business of the municipalities. Bhattacharya will meet the DMs of the Presidency Burdwan and North Bengal ranges next week to discuss the arrangement.

The civic bodies would also take in business management graduates and chartered accountants on contract.

The Government's move comes in the wake of the administrative measures against 4 municipal bodies for misappropriation of funds. Of the four indicted, Rajarhat-Gopalpur is under the control of the CPI (M), two under the Trinamool and one of the Forward Bloc.

"Such gross irregularities as have been committed by these four civic bodies would not have perhaps taken place in the first place, and detected much later had there been a greater vigilance and control on their accounts by professional personnel," said commented a top official.



ASHOKE BHATTACHARYA

## ONE YEAR OF BUDDHA RAJ

# Miles to go, says CM

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, November 6

BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE today said he has "a long way to go and do a lot of things in order to be satisfied" about his tenure in the office. "Some important steps have been taken in the spheres of work culture, improvement in health and education systems and these have yielded good results. But I'm not fully satisfied yet with everything that has been done so far."

Speaking to reporters at the Writers' Buildings on the completion of a year as Chief Minister, Bhattacharjee assured that he was determined to go ahead with determination to achieve the goals set by the Left Front.

Asked if the steps taken by him now would have proved far more effective had these been taken 10 years ago, he countered: "This does not at all mean that all my predecessors were nincompoops and the present incumbents are very capable persons. But better late than never."

Asserting that "I'm not a coward," he said he would not hesitate to take "courageous and bold steps to tone up the administration... People are with us and they will surely extend their full support to our efforts."

Bhattacharjee insisted that attendance in Government offices has vastly improved and a series of more stringent steps to improve efficiency and accountability will follow in January.

ed: "I'm still of the opinion that the need for such an ordinance was very urgent and I strongly feel that it should be enacted."

Admitting strong opposition to it even from Left Front partners, he said: "We have to work within a democratic set-up and I have to take into consideration different viewpoints and others' opinions on various matters."

Lashing out at Pota, he said law and order is a State subject and the Centre cannot impose its will on the States to enact such a law. "There are many draconian provisions in this law. We will never support these. The State Home Secretary is going through the Central law and we'll make our opposition known very soon."

from the districts. It is he who incited the bloodbath at Keshpur, Garbeta and Pingla and killed our men. He was the Home (Police) Minister then."

Trinamool Policy Making Body chairman Pankaj Banerjee slammed Buddhadeb for his failure to turn around the State's industrial scenario. "Haldia has turned out to be non-starter. Nineteen major industries closed down the day he took oath as Chief Minister. He plans to liquidate some of the sick State Public Undertakings as well. The police have failed to frame charge sheets against the accused in the recent abduction cases. These are hard facts the Chief Minister can hardly ignore."

alising the downtrodden and stifling voice of dissent. "He doesn't bother to consult the Opposition. He doesn't take cognisance of the letters Opposition MLAs send him. The Basu Government just n't like this. Bhattacharjee goes by his whims."

Mamata then cited a series of Government orders ranging from the "steep fee hike in colleges and universities" to "the eviction drive along the Tolly's Nullah without the least improvement of the nullah". She also accused the Chief Minister of bias. "CPI(M) cadres can escape the arms of the law even if they beat up a hospital superintendent at his chamber while the police round up innocents

unsparing on the Chief Minister. "He can't react to a problem in time as is evident from his apathy towards the refugees from Bangladesh. He is a total failure," thundered Mamata. "Why waste time in rating a person full of promises and no work at all? He has no idea of the grassroots as he has never worked among them."

Looking back on the Basu regime, she said: "Basu had a stature. The administration during his tenure was responsive to the Opposition though I was beaten up in front of his chamber. At least, the Home Department used to take our telephone calls then."

According to her, the current Chief Minister is bent on margin-

hardly afford that since the facts and figures on land acquisition were still coming in and being collated for operational purposes.

As the concerned file was being held up at the lower level of the Finance department, the higher-ups were contacted and formal plea for the sanction submitted. Even after there was clearance from the Finance Department's top officials the babu dealing with the file refused to oblige. The Puja holidays intervened and this was used as a convenient ploy. The file, needless to add, has not yet reached the beneficiary department.

But the Trinamool chief is unsparing on the Chief Minister. "He can't react to a problem in time as is evident from his apathy towards the refugees from Bangladesh. He is a total failure," thundered Mamata. "Why waste time in rating a person full of promises and no work at all? He has no idea of the grassroots as he has never worked among them."

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cleared the proposal and the State public sector unit, Webel, was assigned the job computer installations. Webel was also to provide two technicians at each site to operate the computers.

But by the time the proposal was cleared, only two months were left of the last financial year. So the Finance Department had sanctioned money which amounted to two months' payment to Webel. The crunch was felt when there was no sanction of money for the current fiscal till October. Webel made it known that they would withdraw the computers. The L & LR Department could

The situation had come to such a pass because there was no way of ascertaining the exact status of the land acquisition cases spread over the districts.

It was in this backdrop that the L & LR Department mooted the proposal on a computer linkage between the 17 districts on the one hand and the offices of the Divisional Commissioners of the Presidency, Burdwan and Jalpaiguri Divisions on the other.

It was assumed that the decision-making on land acquisitions would just be a click of the mouse away. After a series of negotiations the Finance Department

been stalled by a dealing assistant of the Finance Department for over a fortnight.

It is a story too surrealistic to believe. The Land and Land Revenue (L & LR) Department had found out some time ago that the Government was being forced to pay interest at the rate of 12 per cent for years together on the valuation of land acquired for developmental purposes because the acquisitions had not been formalised, nor the prices paid to the landowners. A rough calculation put the value of the land notified for acquisition but not actually acquired at Rs 120 crore.

THERE COULD never be a worse advertisement for Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's "Do it now" mantra.

At a time when Bhattacharjee is gracefully acknowledging felicitations from various quarters on completing one year in office (before and after the Assembly election) and reeling off his Government's achievements during this period, Government Order (GO) on the release of a small amount for computers installed for an important function has

# For Mamata, Buddha is Zero No 1

Saugata Roy  
Kolkata, November 6

MAMATA BANERJEE has no good word for her arch-rival Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on his first anniversary as Chief Minister and gives him 0 out of 100 on all fronts. Mamata, in fact, has come to believe that things were better when Jyoti Basu was the Chief Minister.

Former State Congress president Somen Mitra, however, won't go that far: "It's too early to make a comparison with the Basu regime." Asked what he got out of his discussion with the Chief Minister on law and order today, Mitra said: "Only a cup of coffee."

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# The Chief Minister would do it now, only if he could

Subhamoy Chatterjee  
Kolkata, November 6

THERE COULD never be a worse advertisement for Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's "Do it now" mantra.

At a time when Bhattacharjee is gracefully acknowledging felicitations from various quarters on completing one year in office (before and after the Assembly election) and reeling off his Government's achievements during this period, Government Order (GO) on the release of a small amount for computers installed for an important function has



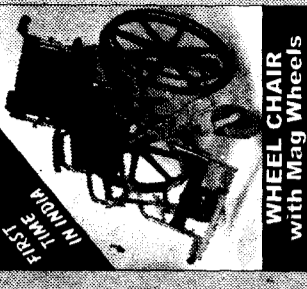
SUBHAMOY CHATTERJEE/INDUSTRIAL TIMES  
Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee at a Press conference on Tuesday.

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# CM warns separatists, watches infiltrators

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Siliguri, Nov. 4: Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today gave an ultimatum to Kamtapuri separatists while expressing grave concern over the recent influx of Bangladeshis.

Talking to reporters at the North Bengal University after kicking off its 40th anniversary celebrations, Bhattacharjee said Kamtapur Liberation Organisation activists should surrender or face the wrath of the state.

"The KLO has ignored the government's overtures to join the mainstream. It is our last message to them: either surrender before it's too late or face the music. The government is in no mood to compromise with extremists and those who perpetrate terror. It is time these misguided youths saw sense and gave up arms," the chief minister warned.

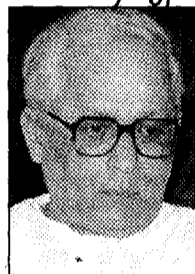
Dismissing the Kamtapur People's Party's charge of violating human rights, he said Kamtapuri activists languishing in jail would be released if

found innocent.

The chief minister, who also inaugurated the Rabindra-Bhanu Mancha near here, voiced his government's anxiety over the steady flow of harassed Hindus from Bangladesh into the border districts. "We are certainly concerned about the recent infiltration. We are keeping a close watch and taking appropriate steps to stem the influx."

Refusing to put a figure on the exodus, the chief minister said: "There has been infiltration in nine border districts, with the highest (concentration) being in South Dinajpur and Malda." He denied that refugee camps had been set up or that the authorities were providing food and shelter to the infiltrators.

"If the situation worsens, we will have to take up the matter with the Centre. The matter has to be sorted out between the Centre and the Bangladeshi authorities," he said.



Buddha

Bhattacharjee added that his government had beefed up security in north Bengal, especially in the vulnerable Bengal-Assam-Bhutan corridor along Kumargramduar in Jalpaiguri. "We are now aware that the Bhutan-based Ulfa and Bodo extremists have been pushed out. These

extremists and their KLO comrades are trying to take shelter in Assam and Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts. Besides, some ISI-backed organisations and Nepal Maoists are very active in the region. We are keeping a close watch on them," he said.

"Police administration and intelligence are being strengthened and several police stations will be established. One will come up at Samuktala in Kumargramduar under Alipurduar sub-division I. The special Indo-Nepal border taskforce is awaiting the Centre's nod," the chief minister added.

THE TELEGRAPH

5 NOV 2001

GNLF leader upbeat following 'ground-breaking' one-to-one

# Pact whiff after CM-Ghising meet

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Darjeeling, Nov. 3: The hills were abuzz with speculation that the CPM had entered into a 'new partnership' with the GNLF after a one-to-one meeting between Subash Ghising and Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee that both termed "cordial" and "ground-breaking".

But neither leader would throw light on whether new political equations had emerged after the one-hour meeting at Darjeeling's Richmond Hill Guest House.

"We discussed all the relevant points on a lot of subjects that had been hindering the overall development of the hills," the GNLF leader said. "In all, the meeting was cordial."

Echoing Ghising, the chief minister said: "We discussed all the relevant issues that had been

raised by the GNLF chief and the DGHC (Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council). The talks were very successful. What we basically discussed were the developmental bottlenecks in the hills, and ways to solve the growing power crisis and unemployment problem in the hills."

But political observers read more into Ghising's easing of pressure on the state government to immediately arrest those who made an attempt on his life in February.

"We discussed threadbare the issue of the attack on me. I am satisfied that the state government has taken some concrete steps," the GNLF leader said.

"It is surprising that the



Buddhadeb (left) and Subash Ghising

GNLF chief, in his first public appearance following the attempt on his life on February 10, termed the meeting as cordial," sources said.

"Ghising had been maintaining that the real culprits behind his attack were still at large and that there would be no further

election to the DGHC after 2001," said a political observer.

This was the chief minister's first visit to the hills after he assumed office in May. Earlier, addressing a gathering after inaugurating the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Museum and Centre for Studies of Himalayan Language, Society and Culture at Gid-dha Pahar, some 4 km from Kurseong town, a nostalgic Bhattacharjee conceded the communists "folly" in assessing Netaji's contributions to the freedom struggle.

"But today, we have realised our mistake... (Netaji) is renowned the world over for his courage and rare persuasive struggle for India's freedom. His

was a struggle without strings attached. (He was) a natural warrior and committed soldier," the chief minister said.

He unveiled a bust of Netaji at his ancestral home in Kurseong where the British had interned him for over three months.

"We communists today realise the contribution of the great fighter. We salute Netaji for his freedom struggle," the chief minister said.

The ancestral home has been converted into the centre which will be run in collaboration with the Netaji Institute of Asian Studies.

Bhattacharjee urged the DGHC and all the municipalities of Darjeeling hills to work together with the state government for the socio-economic uplift of the hill people.

# Ordinance: Buddha backs out, grudgingly

SANTANU BANERJEE  
KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 2

**W**ILTING under pressure from the CPI(M)'s Central leadership in New Delhi, differences within Left Front partners and of course, within a section of his own party in the state, West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya admitted today that "despite the desire to hasten up the process for the West Bengal (Prevention) of Organised Crime Ordinance, it does not stay any more an ordinance and it would be sent as a Bill when the Assembly reopens in December.

Bhattacharya, who said that though there's no draconian provision like detention without trial, "both the LF con-

stituents and the Opposition, can contribute to the debate and we shall wait."

"I would have wanted it to be implemented sooner but under the given circumstances, it appears that's not possible.

When asked if he had shifted his stand because of differences cropping up from within the party, Bhattacharya denied it saying: "At least I don't know of such differences." However, he said, "We approved it in Cabinet because it was necessary."

The move comes in the wake of widespread criticism from Cabinet members against Bhattacharya's plan to promulgate the ordi-

nance. The issue became a major controversy with differences cropping up among members of the Left Front coalition who wanted a thorough debate on the issue within the Front itself.

More importantly, the chief minister's decision, which has already won the backing of the state's top police officials, was opposed by the Central CPI(M) leadership, who did not want any "more draconian" anti-terrorist law by the Centre.

It significantly coincided with the party's grand plans to oppose the Centre's ordinance (Prevention of Terrorist Ordinance or POTO). "Its implementation would have caused a great setback to our plans to

go against the Centre's move on the POTO," said a senior party leader.

The ordinance that was passed before the Puja holidays was framed to tackle new forms of crime, like hijacking, kidnapping and anti-national and subversive activities. With the ordinance, the detention period for criminals had been extended to 180 days as against the stipulated 90 days.

Incidentally, Bhattacharya has been the only politician in the state who officially recognises the incidence of Bangladeshi infiltrations.

A CPI(M) politburo member said that during the Puja break, much pressure was built up within the party which prodded both the Central Committee and the politburo members to undertake a comparative study between the state and Centre's ordinances.

## Holidays a setback

**KOLKATA:** Resuming work after the nine-day long Puja holidays on Thursday, West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya admitted that long holidays are setbacks to the work culture that his government has been trying hard to implement. "But you cannot break customs overnight," he admitted with an apparent air of helplessness. Interestingly, he went on to say: "We have undertaken a study to see if these leaves can be shortened; it will also look assess whether a five-day week has actually improved the performance of the staffers."

—ENS



INDIAN EXPRESS

3 NOV 2000



# CM puts terror law on hold

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Nov. 1. — Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya today formally yielded to demands within and outside the Left Front and put on hold the promulgation of the Ordinance on prevention of organised crime.

"It will not be wise to rush the Ordinance. But the law must be framed and a Bill on the lines of the Ordinance tabled soon," the chief minister said.

He ducked a question on whether he was under pressure from the CPI-M leadership, but insisted there were no differences in the party on the contents of the proposed law.

The issue was discussed by the CPI-M central committee earlier this week. Mr Bhattacharya said he had thought of promulgating the Ordinance under "special circumstances." The Cabinet had cleared the draft Ordinance last week.

But differences in the LF and with the Opposition prompted him to have a debate in the Assembly.

Mr Bhattacharya stuck to his guns on the need for the pro-

posed law, whether promulgated through an Ordinance or otherwise. Some misgivings on the proposed law have arisen because it has been misinterpreted, he said. It is being projected as if the law provides for detention without trial.

"The law is necessary because of incidents like the Partha Roy Burman case," he said.

Mr Bhattacharya wants public prosecutors to be given an opportunity to oppose bail in organised crime cases. But how could Chunnu Mia, one of the main accused in the Roy Burman kidnapping case, get bail? The chief minister said: "It is exactly why I want the law."

Chunnu was granted bail because he was not chargesheeted within 90 days of his arrest. The proposed law will give the prosecution 180 days to file a charge-sheet against an accused in an organised crime case.

- Buddha red-faced on holiday bounty, page 4
- Editorial: Buddhadev's retreat, page 6
- Advani defends Poto, page 8

THE STATESMAN

2 NOV 2000

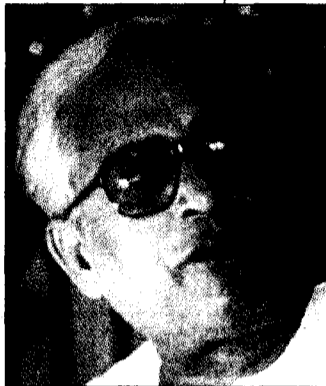
# Buddha drops POCO for now

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, November 1

FORCED BY the CPI(M) central committee and Left Front partners, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has thought it wise to drop the idea of bringing in the Prevention of Crime Ordinance (Poco) as of now. However, he is determined to table it in the Assembly as a Bill and see it through as Poca.

He maintained the ordinance had been thought up keeping in mind the prevalent situation in the backdrop of the Khadim abduction and that such a law was the need of the hour. But since differences persisted within the Front and the Opposition and since the Government believes in democracy, it thought it prudent to get the law passed as an Act rather than an ordinance.

Front partners expressed happiness over Buddha's decision not to press with the ordinance plan. But they said they



**BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE**

would demand a scrutiny of the proposed legislation in the Front meeting on November 14.

Forward Bloc State secretary Asoke Ghosh said the party's displeasure to the Poco move was vindicated by the CPI(M) Politburo, if not the Chief Minister himself. "We are averse to some provisions in it. This was why we wanted a discussion

within the Front before it's placed in the Cabinet. Denied that opportunity, I asked my party's ministers to point out the controversial sections at the Cabinet meeting. Sensing the mood, the CM insisted on its approval with an assurance that he would accommodate the opinions before placing it as a Bill in the Assembly. It's good that he has agreed to lend an ear to the Front partners and the Opposition," said Ghosh.

CPI State secretary Manju Majumdar welcomed the CM's gesture. "Such a sensitive legislation requires a thorough discussion. We are happy with what Bhattacharjee has said today," he said. RSP central committee member Sunil Sengupta echoed a similar view.

But Left Front chairman Biman Bose could not say if the issue would figure in the coming Front meeting.

**Related report on Page 3**

# Party cautions Buddhadeb against haste on Poca

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, October 31

THE CPI (M) central committee would not like the Chief Minister to take a hasty decision on the proposed Prevention of Crime Ordinance (Poco).

Party Politburo member Biman Bose said the committee has nothing against Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's legal initiative to curb organised crime but Alimuddin Street would like to weigh the proposed Ordinance against the Central legislation before it gets the final shape.

"The Politburo and the central committee want a comparison between the Poca and Centre's Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (Poto). But no such directive has been issued as our party doesn't interfere in administrative matters," he said.

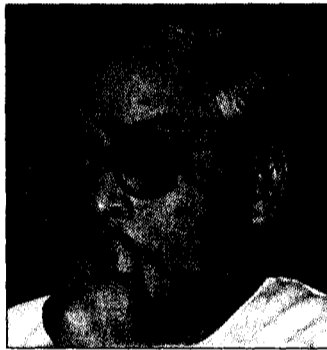
The decision has been left to the Chief Minister—whether to go ahead with the Ordinance or wait till the coming Assembly session.

"I haven't discussed it with the Chief Minister yet. It is his prerogative to make the final

move," Bose said. "The State Cabinet has approved the Ordinance but I don't know if Bhattacharjee has it on hold or has sent it for the Governor's assent."

"He can continue talks with other parties even if the legislation is in the form of an Ordinance or just wait. Or bring forward the Assembly session to place it as a Bill."

It seems that Alimuddin Street wants to play up the "difference" between the two legislations. Dubbing the Poto as draconian, Bose said: "The Central law curbs the freedom of journalists. It asks them to divulge their sources while reporting on terrorist groups. The Poca, on the contrary, doesn't have such a provision. It doesn't target any party or group. It only proposes to extend the detention period for filing chargesheets."



BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 NOV 2007

# CPI-M TELLS Buddha to change terror Bill

9 8 11 10  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 30. — The CPI-M central leadership has reportedly asked Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya not to pass the proposed anti-terrorism Ordinance, but introduce a Bill that won't contain any "draconian measures".

This was announced today by Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Mr Prakash Karat.

The Centre's Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance has been widely criticised, for it contains several "draconian elements". The CPI-M, leading a protest against the Centre's Ordinance, found the criticisms politically inconvenient.

Mr Surjeet and Mr Karat, however, denied that the state government had any plans to issue such an Ordinance. "The chief minister has told us that the government is not planning to bring in any Ordinance. Instead, it would introduce a Bill in the next session of the Assembly that will take care of the requirements of West Bengal to deal with elements such as the Kamtapuri activists. The chief minister has told us that the Bill won't contain draconian measures like the Poto," Mr Karat said.

Will the Bill be able to stop ISI activities in the state? Mr Karat said: "ISI activities are all over the country... We haven't seen the details of the Bill. The state is working on it. But the chief minister has told us that the Bill will be effective to deal with extremists in the state."

Mr Surjeet said the Vajpayee government is wrong in thinking that it can get through with Poto. The CPI-M will defeat it in Parliament. "Poto will be a violation of democratic rights and misused against trade union activities and popular struggles."

■ Centre defends Poto, page 8

THE STATESMAN

31 OCT 2001

# POLITICISED PEACE

## A Left rally burdened with contradictions

IF the Left Front needed an issue to bring all its constituents together on a single platform, it was provided by the American air strikes in Afghanistan. Alimuddin Street could not resist the opportunity to launch its own strikes against American and British imperialism, even if in the process it made nonsense of its own resolution less than a fortnight ago to protect the city from the scourge of rallies and roadblocks. It was not just that the *mahamichhil*, as it was called, threw the city out of gear, disrupted examinations and obstructed freedom of movement. More galling was the orchestrated revival of anti-imperialist rhetoric that had at one time resulted in the mad drive to dismantle statues of British leaders — works of art fit for a prestigious museum. Where a political agenda must be adopted for the limited purpose of sustaining the morale of cadres, everything else becomes secondary. Even a normally sensible Buddhadev Bhattacharya must climb down from his position and share the platform with Jyoti Basu who grabs the slightest opportunity to emerge from retirement and speak at cross purposes with his successor. It will be a tragedy if Buddhadev is reduced to rolling back his honest efforts to undo the damage of the past and, worse, begin to speak in more than one voice. Disturbing signs were evident in the case of Laxmi De who led an assault on the superintendent of Calcutta Medical College and went scot-free after a clean chit from Buddhadev even before an inquiry could begin and which may be quietly buried. Now he maintains a deafening silence when Left Front chairman Biman Bose says that rallies and roadblocks are out because they are a curse for the common man but processions are a different matter especially when Marxists have a ready excuse to target an old enemy.

Marxists have learnt to distinguish ideological obligations from practical necessities — in other words, speak according to convenience, invite multinationals but damn imperialists on the slightest pretext, talk of improving urban living standards but clog the roads with slogan shouting cadres whose understanding of Marxist doctrine is minimal if it exists at all. If it looks like a pathetic attempt to sustain Left unity in the context of the disappearance of old values, the duplicity surprises no one in Bengal and the rest of India — who's listening in America and Britain anyway? There was no word of sympathy for the thousands of unsuspecting civilians of several nationalities killed in the 11 September assault, nor for the thousands who have lost their near and dear ones, many of whom are still in distress. The anti-American response falls within the political agenda of the few Marxists left in one corner of the world and an opportunity to expand a vote-bank that now doesn't extend beyond Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. As always they are working to a plan but with two difficulties: one, the agenda has room for politicised peace, not for the gamut of basic human values; and, two, it throws the grand design of a "new Left" out of the window. Buddhadev cannot be a very happy man.

THE STATESMAN

# CPM men beat up hospital super in MLA's presence

9-8 1975 51-1 810

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Oct. 7. — The superintendent of Calcutta Medical College and Hospital and his son were today beaten up by CPI-M men in the presence of Mr Laxmi De, MLA and party chief whip.

Dr Sacchidananda Sinha's fault — he "dared" to evict unauthorised occupants from the hospital's service quarters yesterday.

Though gheraoing superintendents had been a regular affair till the health minister banned it last week, today's incident is unprecedented. It seems that the government's move to free health service from agitation had failed to impress Mr De.

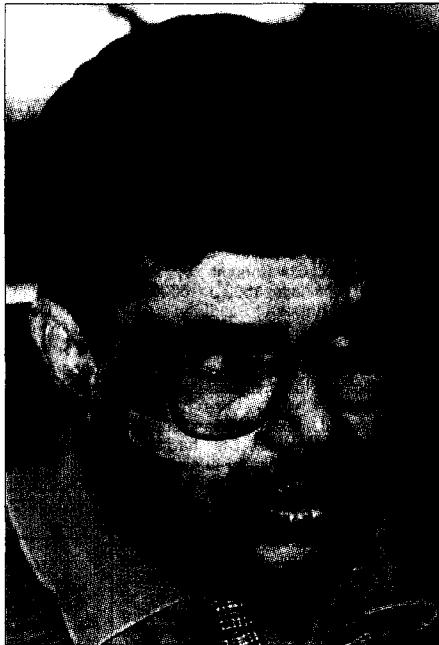
Dr Sinha's family members have filed an FIR against Mr De and four others at the Bowbazar police station. On the basis of the complaint, police have started criminal cases against them for unlawful assemblage, assault of a government official on duty and causing injury to him.

Three of those who were named in the FIR were later arrested, said Mr Zulfikar Hasan, DC (central). But Mr De was not held. He met Mr Anil Biswas and denied the charges against him.

A police picket, in addition to the existing outpost inside the hospital premises, has been posted outside the superintendent's quarters.

On receiving the health department's instructions, the hospital authority had evicted about 60 families, illegally occupying the service quarters of the Group C and D employees. Six unauthorised constructions within and outside the hospital premises, including a CITU-affiliated union office, were demolished.

Dr Sinha's wife, Mrs Soma Sinha said Mr De arrived in his VIP car around 11.50 a.m. and called her husband downstairs. He demanded an explanation from the superintendent as to why he had evicted people from 27 rooms. "He asked my



An injured Dr Sacchidananda Sinha.  
— The Statesman

husband why he had conducted the eviction when he had told him not to do so," Mrs Sinha said.

She was at the balcony of her house when about 50 people, mostly outsiders, came out of nowhere. They dragged Dr Sinha to the ground and started beating him up. They kicked him on his chest and face. They also threw stones at him and abused him. Mr De watched it all from a safe distance and made no attempt to rescue Dr Sinha, she added.

Her son, Mr Rupam Sinha, medical student in Bangalore, ran down to save his father. He was also assaulted. He has a fracture in his right arm and injuries in his legs.

Mr De had quietly sneaked off by then, Mrs Sinha said.

The attack was led by Sambhu, Shankar, Rajendra and other CPI-M party members, who are known for flexing their muscles on hospital issues, said Mr Rupam Sinha. They have been named in the FIR along with Mr De, he added.

The Sinhas called up the police outpost inside the hospital when Mr De arrived apprehending attack. "But by the time they reached the spot, the damage was done," Mr Rupam Sinha said.

Mr De later called up to "apologise," but Mrs Sinha didn't attend the call. "He's known to us because he used to call us for booking beds in the hospital for people close to him," she said. "We don't want to stay here in such insecurity."

However, the MLA had received a clean chit from the party top brass.

Mr Anil Biswas said Mr De wasn't present at the spot during the incident and had left much before it happened.

"I met him during the day and he had informed me of the incident," Mr Biswas told reporters at the Alimuddin Street headquarters. Police are probing into the incident and the CPI-M's Kolkata district committee will also conduct a parallel investigation, Mr Biswas said. "The report will be given to me either today or tomorrow," he added.

Though senior party leaders have demanded the arrest of Opposition MLAs if they are involved in similar cases, Mr Biswas said: "Let those allegedly involved be proved guilty first".

He said eviction from hospital premises will not be slowed down. There will be no pressure on the administration to call off the drive nor will our party men be allowed to oppose eviction, he added.

Mr Tapas Ray, Trinamul leader, said now that a CPI-M leader has flouted Left Front instruction, it remains to be seen what steps the government takes against him.

■ Another report on page 4

THE STATESMAN

2 001 2001

IT is not yet five months since the Congress-Trinamul alliance lost the Assembly elections. Its break-up, which followed the defeat, is an even more recent event. Yet, there are signs already that a fresh alignment of Opposition forces may be in the offing.

The immediate impetus comes from the panchayat elections, which are due in a mere year and a half. It is clear, however, that the real goal of at least a section of the Opposition is to present a new challenge to the Left Front rule at the state level.

For several years now, it has been clear that the Left has continued to rule through its rural power base, which compensates for its relative weakness in urban West Bengal.

In real terms, say senior Pradesh Congress Committee leaders, "panchayat power" includes control over the police and district administrations. This is why, they say, the forthcoming polls are crucial.

"Our party cannot do well in Assembly or Lok Sabha polls if it has no role in the panchayats," PCC president Pranab Mukherjee told the Press at the end of a two-day PCC general body meeting last week.

It is at this meeting that the desire for unity was clearly voiced by a number of Congress leaders, perhaps for the first time after the break-up

# New anti-Left force maturing

The Congress in West Bengal now seems interested in winning back full credibility as an Opposition party and is eager to fight the Marxists. The Trinamul camp, too, seems to have entered a phase of soul-searching that corresponds to the situation in the Congress, writes TAPAS RAY

with Trinamul Congress.

About 35 per cent of those who took part in the discussions urged the leadership to work for a fresh consolidation of anti-Left forces. Between 60 and 65 per cent of it felt that the alliance with the Trinamul had harmed the party and spoke in favour of a go-it-alone policy, but it is doubtful whether this negative view will prevail in the long run. There are several reasons for this surmise.

One of the reasons pertains to the situation in the state Congress today.

There was a time, not so long

ago, when the party seemed averse to presenting any real challenge to the Left and was ridiculed as the CPI-M's "B-team". The alliance with the Trinamul before the Assembly polls changed this image to some extent.

The party now seems interested in winning back full credibility as an Opposition party. "A few individual leaders may have taken favours from the Left," some PCC leaders say, "but Congress as a whole is now eager to fight the Marxists."

The only way to do so is to go on the offensive against the Left Front government. If Congress does so, its path will run parallel to the Trinamul's. Even if a formal alliance is not formed, the objective basis for one will be laid, and workers of the two parties will come closer psychologically.

It may or may not be a coincidence that the Congress appears to be taking this path not at the behest of the PCC president, but upon being pushed there from above and below - by Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, chief whip of the Congress Parliamentary Party, whom some PCC leaders describe as "close to Mamata," and a section of grassroots leaders and workers.

Early in September, Mr Das Munshi had urged Mr Mukherjee to take up a programme of agitation against the Left Front government on such issues as the politicisation of education and the state's poor plan performance.

He had indicated that the Congress workers in the state were a disheartened lot. Instead of making these observations in confidence, he had chosen to write to Mr Mukherjee, and distributed copies of the letter at a Press conference.

Naturally, this embarrassed the PCC chief. When Mr Mukherjee visited Malda and Birbhum subsequently, some party workers told him they wanted the party to agitate

against the Left Front government and to ensure a degree of visibility as an Opposition force, through the media.

Pradesh Congress insiders say the party has now accepted some of Mr Das Munshi's proposals.

Among these is an agitation programme against the Left Front government, and the forming of a 25-member "introspection" committee to find answers to such questions as, why the state Congress has remained so far from power for so many years, and why it is no longer producing national-level leaders.

This is clearly a compromise, since differences between Mr Mukherjee and Mr Das Munshi over tactics had brought the question of leadership into discussion.

PCC insiders say that "certain pro-Mamata leaders" were keen that Mr Mukherjee should go, and Mr Das Munshi should take his place as the PCC president.

The Trinamul camp, too, seems to have entered a phase of soul-searching that corresponds to the situation in the Congress.

PCC insiders say that some senior Trinamul leaders, including MLAs, were thinking of returning to the Congress.

One of them admitted that many Trinamul workers in Kespur were switching loyalty to the CPI-M to save themselves. He is dissatisfied with the pace at which the work of building an organisational structure - a weak point identified after the electoral defeat - has progressed in the Trinamul.

"There was a call for work in this direction at our recent panchayat conference," he told this correspondent, "but no concrete effort has been visible since then."

Though he said he was "not yet" thinking of rejoining Congress, the question of the party's leadership was on his mind - he said he felt the Congress would be better off under Mr Das Munshi than it is under the present leadership.

In other words, though Mamata Banerjee has returned to the National Democratic Alliance at the Centre and reiterated a go-it-alone policy in West Bengal, sections of her party are leaning towards the Congress.

Even if they do not rejoin the Congress, they seem to view the party as a viable Opposition force once again.

There are many in the Congress who share Trinamul's anti-Left combativeness and even want a fresh alliance with it. The conditions for a new Opposition alliance, thus, seem to be maturing in the state.

(The author is Special Representative, The Statesman, Kolkata.)

# Consensus eludes CM's anti-blockade proposal

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, October 1

CHIEF MINISTER Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee found support for his efforts for an agreement against "rail and road blockade", but not a consensus with the Trinamool boycotting the meeting.

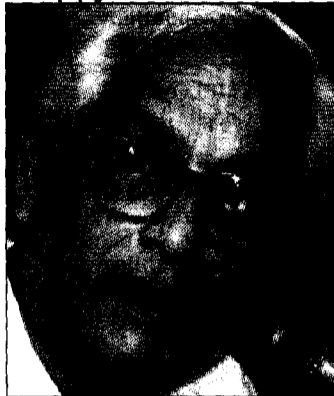
The SUCI too opposed the move in principle, but its representatives were present at the meeting.

Buddhadeb dubbed the Trinamool's absence from the all-party meeting as a failure to fulfil their responsibilities towards the people and the State Government as the main Opposition. In a bid to drive a wedge within the Trinamool camp, the Government let Panja-loyalist Bani Singha Roy to represent the State Trinamool Congress. Singha Roy spoke in support of the proposal.

Buddhadeb stressed on banning road and rail blockades as means of political agitation. "We have nothing against processions, meetings or political gatherings. In fact, we are not talking of intruding into the trade union rights, democratic rights or human rights," Buddhadeb said.

"The same does not hold true for rail and road blockade. They affect and harass innocent people at large, who may not be related to the issue of blockade at all. How would such an agitation affect the Government, if the Opposition took to the streets, instead of trying to solve it mutually," Buddhadeb said.

But he didn't insist on enforcing a ban. Rather, the Chief Minister invited people to debate on the issue before taking a legal stance. "The Government is not



BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE

planning to impose a law to enforce the ban. We have laws, provision of fines and even jail, against blockades. But I would prefer a consensus," he said.

"You cannot expect the resolution to be a decision from today," the Chief Minister said. He added that a draft of the resolution will be sent to all parties in the district and block levels and a general opinion building exercise and awareness would be created to help parties arrive at an agreement. Pradesh Congress leader Manas Bhuniya and State BJP president Asim Ghosh too welcomed the move.

Even as there was a consensus among the Left Front, partners differed over interpretations. For instance, CPI(M) State Secretariat member Shyamal Chakrabarty said the Front representatives agreed to do away with blockades. State CPI(M) Secretary Anil Biswas clarified that the blockades should no longer be used as a means of protest against the State or the Centre.

But for Forward Bloc State

## SC boost for Buddha

CHIEF MINISTER Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said that his Government has got legal sanction for eviction of squatters along the Tolly's Nullah after the Supreme Court rejected a writ petition from one of the evictees on Monday.

He also warned that anyone found encroaching on land on the banks of any other canal in the city would get the same treatment as the squatters along the Tolly's Nullah.

The Mayor's reaction to the court order was: "Since I am in the Opposition, I cannot be happy."

HTC, Kolkata

Secretary Asoke Ghosh, the connotation was entirely different. "The Chief Minister proposed a ban on sporadic blockades often held on trivial issues. But he didn't rule out blockades on a larger political and social cause. The only difference is political parties or trade unions will now have to take permission from the police 48 hours before such programme," he said.

Himangsu Das of the CPI also argued for a qualified restriction on blockades. But Das upheld the people's rights to "protest and put up resistance" against discrimination.

RSP leader Kshiti Goswami urged the CM to draft the points of agreement and circulate it among all political parties. Buddhadeb accepted the idea.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2 OCT 2001



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■ Civic chairman resignation irrevocable ■ Mamata stays put on agitation

# Mayor stands by eviction

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Sept. 25. — In a development that may affect the internal equations of the Trinamul Congress, the city mayor, Mr Subrata Mukherjee, said today the resignation of the CMC chairman, Mr Anil Mukherjee, cannot be revoked.

The mayor said there is no provision under law for acceptance or refusal once the CMC chairman or mayor resigns. "It is taken for granted to be accepted," the mayor said.

Mr Mukherjee reiterated that he stood by the eviction drive at Tolly's Nullah, as it was the first condition to be fulfilled for the Rs 1700 crore Asian Development Bank loan.

Mr Mukherjee said, the municipal affairs minister, Mr Ashok Bhattacharya, has asked the municipal commissioner whether the CMC chairman had tendered his resignation. In the eventuality, the minister has said, he would issue a notification for fresh elections in the corporation.

"There is an exclusive budget of Rs 40 crore for the Tolly's Nullah development scheme, of which, Rs 6 crore is from state government", the mayor added. The project in-

## NITISH URGES BUDDHA TO ENSURE OUSTER

KOLKATA, Sept. 25. — The railway minister, Mr Nitish Kumar, has urged the chief minister, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya, to take "personal interest" in the removal of encroachments from the banks of the Tolly's Nullah in the city's southern suburb, for the extension of the Metro Railway.

In a letter to the chief minister on September 18, copies of which were released to the media here yesterday, the railway minister also urged Mr Bhattacharya to issue "necessary directives," so that the work on the multi-crore rupee project continued "unhindered."

Since the Metro's extension programme would extensively benefit the millions, a personal intervention by the chief minister was required to continue the construction work unabatedly, Mr Kumar said in the letter. — SNS

cludes total development of the neighbouring 41 wards, prevention of waterlogging and diseases like malaria and dengue.

"A treatment plant will have to be set up near Joka for treating the water before releasing it into the rivers. The rivers, Bidyadhari and Pulti, will have to be dredged or else there will be massive backflow of water from them," the mayor said. A multi-agency committee headed by the mayor is commissioned to implement the project. If not implemented this winter, the scheme would be delayed by another year, he added.

Mr Mukherjee also said, he wanted the eviction process to

be completed smoothly. "According to the government, those having legal right to the land will be rehabilitated. "But I wanted the rehabilitation scheme to be extended to some more people. But the chief minister didn't give me a chance", Mr Mukherjee added. He regretted the deteriorating relation between the ruling and Opposition parties. "The tradition of good relations between opposing parties is fast eroding. It's not a sign of a healthy parliamentary democracy", he lamented.

**Trinamul anti-eviction stir:** A day after Miss Mamata Banerjee's announcement that Trinamul would go in for unan-



Miss Mamata Banerjee



Mr Subrata Mukherjee

nounced programmes to protest against the eviction along the Tolly's Nullah, the party's youth wing has chalked out agitational programmes in the city and districts. They will also protest against the law and order situation. At a Trinamul Youth Congress meet this afternoon, it was also decided that Miss Banerjee will be requested to call a state bandh before the Pujas.

Miss Banerjee left for Delhi this evening to attend tomorrow's NDA meeting. Before leaving she said, the media should have played a constructive role in defending the rights of the poor living along Tolly's Nullah. Mr Jyotipriya Mallick, Trinamul

MLA, Mr Alok Das, Trinamul working president, and Mr Madan Mitra, party general secretary, took the lead at today's meeting to suggest that every district TYC unit be asked to organise 5,000 party activists for any militant movement at short notice. Their suggestion was approved.

The TYC has also decided to organise a rally between Garia and Naktala on 28 September to protest the manner in which squatters were being evicted. On 29 September, TYC will organise road blocks and if necessary, deflate bus tyres across the state. On 1 October, TYC will gherao all SDPOs' offices.

THE STATESMAN

26 SEP 2001

# Buddha firm on eviction

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Sept. 24. — "Under no circumstances will the Tolly's Nullah eviction drive be stopped," the chief minister said today.

A Trinamul team, comprising Mr Subrata Mukherjee, Mr Pankaj Banerjee, Mr Partha Chatterjee, Mr Rajib Deb and Mr Sovan Chattopadhyay, met Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya at the Writers' Buildings.

Mr Bhattacharya made his intentions clear to them. The urban development minister has said the next drive may start tomorrow or the day after.

Later at a Press conference, the chief minister said eviction will be carried out for the benefit of a greater section of the people. "For the interest of a handful, we can't ignore the benefit of the mass."

Asked why he was not communicating with Miss Mamata Banerjee, he said: "You can't clap with one hand. I tried several times to talk to her, but she showed no interest."

Moreover, Mr Bhattacharya told the

mayor and Trinamul MLAs that Calcutta High Court had ordered encroachers' removal.

In his letter to Mr Bhattacharya, the Union railway minister, Mr Nitish Kumar, requested him to take a personal interest and give necessary directives on the matter so that the Metro extension work continues unhindered.

Mr Bhattacharya asked for the mayor's cooperation in the eviction drive. He reportedly told Mr Mukherjee that all discussions on this issue took place in the mayor's presence and he had concurred with these. It was unfortunate that Mr Mukherjee later changed his stand.

Mr Ashok Bhattacharya said eviction was necessary for the canal's desiltation



Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya

and for improving the city drainage system, Mr Ashok Bhattacharya said that it's better to carry out the eviction work on holidays as NS Road will have to be closed from time to time. But, he also said the next eviction will start in a couple of days. He said the irrigation department and Metro rail will start their work within a month.

The project, a part of Ganga Action Plan, costs Rs 33 crore. The Centre will provide Rs 26 crore and the rest Rs 7 crore will be given by the state.

The minister, however, said the state will have to pay Rs 7 crore more as the project was delayed due to some court cases.

He said apart from the 2.5-km stretch from Garia rail station to Garia bridge, eviction

will have to be carried out on another 4-km stretch till Kudghat. He asserted during the eviction drive, no one with land deed was displaced.

He assured the administration will be

careful not to evict any title holder.

Mr Ashok Bhattacharya said that it's better to carry out the eviction work on holidays as NS Road will have to be closed from time to time. But, he also said the next eviction will start in a couple of days. He said the irrigation department and Metro rail will start their work within a month.

The minister said, in a letter, the mayor has asked him to stop the eviction till the Supreme Court hears the case.

But he had replied that it was not possible to stop the eviction drive. He today met the DM and SP of South 24 Parganas and Mr GK Garg, chief administrative officer of Metro railway.

Mr Garg later told reporters that a pillar will be constructed in the middle of the canal and in order to remove obstruction of the flow of water in the canal, the embankment on both sides will be widened. The Metro authorities will pay Rs 5 crore more to the irrigation department for widening the embankment.

## CM reaction disappoints Subrata

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Sept. 24. — Mr Subrata Mukherjee said he was hurt and surprised at Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya's behaviour, when he went to meet him at the Writers' Buildings today.

At a press conference along with Miss Mamata Banerjee, Mr Sudip Bandopadhyay and Mr Pankaj Banerjee, Mr Mukherjee said at the meeting this morning the chief minister was adamant that the eviction work should continue. "It is not a question of compulsion but of moral responsibility, that we wait for the Supreme Court order. We don't have to wait very long for that," he said.

The chief minister only agreed to consider the rehabilitation of those who have valid documents, he said. When Mr Banerjee suggested a list be made of those with valid documents, Mr Bhattacharya reportedly said making the list was the work of the DM and engineers.

Mr Mukherjee said he had requested Miss Banerjee, to reconsider the decision of any form of protest and thanked her for putting the announced bandh on hold at the eviction site.

"This was with the hope that if there is any scope of discussion, it should be held. The move to oppose the eviction is not just for the sake of opposing it," he said. "But I was very disappointed that Mr Bhattacharya was so angry about the whole thing".

## Trinamul takes fight to Centre court

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Sept. 24. — The Trinamul Congress is going to seek constitutional help from the Centre as the party believes that parliamentary democracy in West Bengal is under threat.

Miss Mamata Banerjee said this today, adding that she had talked to Mr LK Advani on the Tolly's Nullah issue and the subsequent "brute force" allegedly resorted to for evicting the squatters and genuine house owners. A Trinamul delegation led by Miss Banerjee, is expected to meet the Governor tonight.

"We will raise the issue at the NDA meeting," she added. The meeting is on 26 September. She ruled out a bandh saying the

Trinamul won't do anything to "disturb the people".

She added her party was prepared for all sorts of agitation, without prior announcements, "till the government decides to rehabilitate the oustees. Henceforth, such agitations would be undeclared ones as the CPI-M government shamelessly uses the administration and police to curb our democratic movements," she said.



Miss Mamata Banerjee

as the CPI-M government shamelessly uses the administration and police to curb our democratic movements," she said.

Mr Sudip Bandopadhyay, Trinamul chief whip in the Lok Sabha, said the chief minister had butchered parliamentary democracy by insulting the mayor, Mr Subrata Mukherjee, and the leader of the Opposition, Mr Pankaj Banerjee, at today's meeting at

Writers' Buildings. Mr Bandopadhyay added that the government, despite being told by the CMC that it won't partici-

pate, went ahead with eviction work in an area falling under the CMC's jurisdiction. Miss Banerjee said, henceforth, she won't announce what the shape of her party's agitation would be. Programmes would be adopted at the right time to express solidarity with the distressed people of West Bengal.

Asked about the government's claim that many squatters along Tolly's Nullah had left much before the eviction drive had been launched, the Trinamul chief preferred to compare them with the people of Afghanistan fleeing the country fearing US attacks. "People left because of fear of being killed. The same thing happened here too," she said.

## CPM decries Mamata ouster stir

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Sept. 24. — The CPI-M believes in "transparent, democratic movement" to uphold the interests of the people and not in the "negative, undeclared one as threatened by Miss Mamata Banerjee", Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary, said today.

Mr Biswas was responding to Miss Banerjee's threat during the day to launch an "unannounced agitation" in protest against the eviction of unauthorised settlers along Tolly's Nullah.

"Miss Banerjee must be itching to learn from the terrorists their mode of attacks that have been condemned throughout the world. She makes such noise because she finds herself increasingly isolated from the

masses," Mr Biswas said.

He asserted no chief minister of a BJP or a Congress government in the country is as "refined and democratic" as Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya. He was reacting to the charge levelled by Miss Banerjee during the day that Mr Bhattacharya has become "arrogant". "On the contrary, Mr Bhattacharya has displayed his democratic spirit by meeting Trinamul Congress representatives and discussing the eviction of unauthorised settlers along Tolly's Nullah," Mr Biswas said.

Responding to Miss Banerjee's allegation that the government has clamped "undeclared Emergency" in the state and that there is no rule of law, Mr Biswas said: "Some of those, who are making such loud noise about Emergency, were even minis-

ters of Congress government during the Emergency and as such they know better than anybody else about the difference in the state of affairs that existed during the Emergency and the one prevailing now".

He repudiated Miss Banerjee's charge that the government has interfered with the powers of the CMC by "unilaterally going ahead with the eviction."

"Why is it then that the mayor assured the government of all cooperation by the CMC on the eve of the eviction. Everyone has seen newspaper photographs of the mayor and the minister for urban development at the meeting where the two discussed the eviction programme," he said.

He brushed aside Miss Banerjee's demand for central intervention in the state.

## Rehab package gathers dust

TARUN GOSWAMI  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Sept. 24. — A rehabilitation package for 600 families living along Tolly's Nullah between Kudghat and Garia has been gathering dust for over a decade.

The Centre had allotted Rs 34 lakh in 1988 under Calcutta Slum Improvement Project for the families' rehabilitation. Each family was to get Rs 24,000. The CMDA too had allotted six acres of land (dag No 10 and 13) at Chowkganiagachia, Kalikapur mouza.

Mr PB Nag, CMDA staff union general secretary, has written to the local MP, Miss Mamata Banerjee, to take up the matter with the Centre and state government. Mr Subrata Mukherjee, mayor and CMDA board member, too has been informed.

It was decided at a meeting in 1988 that the encroachers would be persuaded to leave to facilitate cleaning of the canal. The meeting was presided over by Benoy Chowdhury, then land and land reforms minister. Mr Kamal Basu, then mayor, senior CMDA officials and the irrigation department's chief engineer had attended the meeting. The matter was, however, not taken up as the irrigation department had shelved the cleaning of the canal for the time being.

Senior urban development officials said most of the people who prepared the scheme had either retired or had been transferred. They said there was no proposal to revive the scheme.

But why the government is not using the 600-acre land to rehabilitate the encroachers who have been evicted from the banks of Tolly's Nullah recently to facilitate Metro Railway expansion remains unanswered. Also, if the Centre could allot money then, why is Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya not trying to persuade it to do so now?

**BJP demand:** The state BJP vice-president, Mr Muzaffar Khan, today demanded rehabilitation and "suitable compensation" for Tolly's Nullah oustees. "It is the government that had allowed them to settle there," he said.

# Rashid Khan gets life term

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Aug. 31. — In the first case of conviction under Tada in West Bengal, Mohamad Rashid Khan and five of his associates were sentenced to life imprisonment today in connection with the Bowbazar blast.

However, the state government may move the Supreme Court challenging the acquittal of the accused under sections 302 and 436 of the Indian Penal Code under charges of murder and arson, respectively, it was learnt. Mr Ganesha Maity, a defence counsel, said they will move the Supreme Court against the judgment.

All six men had been pronounced guilty by Mr Pranab Kumar Deb, judge 12th bench, City Civil and Sessions Court, yesterday.

Pronouncing the sentence, Mr Deb said the accused were given life imprisonment under section 3(2)(1) of Tada on charges

of disrupting communal harmony. The accused were fined a sum of Rs 3,000 each, failing to pay which they would have to serve a six-month rigorous imprisonment term.

The accused were given five years rigorous imprisonment under section 3(3) of Tada. A fine of Rs 5,000 would have to be paid by the accused failing to pay which they would be sentenced to an year's rigorous imprisonment.

Under section three and five of the Explosives Substances Act, the accused were sentenced to an year's rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 500. Under section 120 B of the Indian Penal Code, the accused were sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of conspiring against the state.

The accused were fined Rs 3,000 each, failing to pay which they will have to serve a sentence of six months. All the terms of the sentence will have to be served simultaneously,

was neither a sessions judge nor an additional sessions judge prior to this appointment as stipulated under Tada. He was the registrar of the Port Blair Bench of Calcutta High Court, he submitted.

Opposing the submission, Mr Nabakumar Ghosh, assistant public prosecutor, submitted that the point which had not been raised earlier in the trial was irrelevant now. Though the defence counsel had the opportunity to raise the point earlier, it is being done after the court had pronounced the accused guilty. Mr Deb held that he could not pass judgment on his own appointment.

There was high drama in the court room when the judge summoned Rashid Khan, accused number one, to the witness box. An unshaven Khan diffidently walked to the box and almost broke down when he was asked whether he had anything to say on the judgment.

"Ami nirdosh" (I am not guilty.) he said in a squeaking voice. Then folding his hands and bowing before the judge, he returned to the courtroom lock-up. The other five accused followed him.

While his relatives wailed, there was a marked change in Khan's demeanour after the pronouncement of the judgment. Conferring with his relatives through the iron bars of the lock-up, he appeared to have regained his composure.

Khan had filed a petition before the Supreme Court praying for a speedy conclusion of his trial. He had submitted that he had been an undertrial during the past eight years.

A Division Bench of the Supreme Court had directed Mr Deb to complete the trial within 30 June. When he submitted that it was not possible to do so and had prayed for a two-month extension, the Supreme Court had held that the trial be completed within 31 August.



Rashid Khan being taken to court on Friday. — The Statesman

Mr Deb held.

Tempers rose on both the prosecution and defence sides earlier when, Mr Maity, a defence counsel, submitted that Mr Deb was not qualified to be the judge of a Tada court as he

9-87 145 ST-1 119

# Haldia Petrochem gets a financial lifeline

SNS & PTI

KOLKATA, Sept. 5. — Leading financial institutions today offered help for the debt-restructuring of Haldia Petrochemicals Limited. There were indications that Indian Oil Corporation would join the project as an equity partner.

The meeting was convened by HPL promoters to discuss the restructuring of company's debts with IDBI, ICICI and State Bank of India, in a bid to pull it out of the financial crisis.

Two of the three HPL promoters, the state government and the Chatterjee Group, attended the meeting in Mr Nirupam Sen's chamber.

"Banks and financial institutions offered all possible help for a speedy restructuring of HPL," Mr Sen told journalists after the meeting. He did not give details of the restructuring plan or any fixed timeframe. Positive discussions were held on marketing and the issue of preference shares. The minister evaded questions on the extent to which HPL's debt burden would decline after restructuring.

The HPL had received a proposal from IOC to enter as fourth partner in the project. "We have received a proposal from IOC and the proposed restructuring package will also consider it."

There is no specific objection on IOC's participa-

tion in the HPL," Mr Sen said. But the three existing promoters would first discuss the nature of its participation. "Participation does not imply that we must agree to whatever they want."

But he did not specify whether the other two promoters, the Tatas and the Chatterjee group, had any objections to IOC participation in HPL. Reports in a section of the Press had said both had objections to IOC coming in.

Yesterday, Mr Sen and Mr Asim Dasgupta discussed IOC participation issue with Mr LK Advani and Union petroleum minister, Mr Ram Naik.

Before the meeting, the IDBI representative said the company might consider converting a part of the loan extended to HPL into equity. "We will discuss the proposal," he said. The IDBI has the largest exposure of over Rs 950 crore in HPL among the FIs.

**Tatas absent from meeting:** The Tatas skipped the crucial meeting at Writers' Buildings, raising fears about their intentions.

No representative from Tata Sons, which holds 14 per cent stake in the Rs 5170 crore HPL, attended the meeting. "We had received a communication from the Tata's expressing their inability to attend today's meeting," Mr Sen told journalists.

THE STATESMAN

SEP 6 1987

# Blast justice done after eight years

BY OUR LEGAL REPORTER

Calcutta, Aug. 30: After sitting for eight years, India's only surviving Tada court came close to winding itself up today when it pronounced Rashid Khan and five associates guilty of engineering the 1993 Bowbazar blast in which 69 died and 40 were maimed.

Judge Pranab Kumar Deb will pronounce the sentence — either death or life-imprisonment — tomorrow and finally bring the curtains down on the court that outlasted all others in the country because of the Bowbazar case.

The judge found Rashid and his henchmen — Abdul Aziz, Panhalal Jaiswal, Md Mustafa, Md Halim and Md Gulzar — guilty of causing the blast and conspiring against the nation and the interests of communal harmony. But he acquitted them of the charges of murder and damage to property for lack of "direct evidence".

Investigations have revealed that the explosion, on the night of March 16, 1993 — four days after the Bombay serial blasts — at 267 Bepin Behari Ganguly Street, was triggered by a massive store of explosives. The impact was such that the three-storey building where the explosives were stored was blown up, three neighbouring buildings developed yawning cracks and the verandah of another building was shattered. Be-

sides, the blast exposed the rot in the echelons of Calcutta police — the blown-up building was located about 300 yards from Labazar — and the various units of the CPM.

The aftershocks of the blast continued to jolt the CPM. Senior leaders Lakshmi De — who was rehabilitated as late as in May 2001 when he fought and won the Assembly polls from Vidyasagar and was then made the Left Front chief whip in the House — and Shyamali Gupta, a party-nominated member of Jadavpur University's executive council, were hauled up. Investigations also revealed that several senior police officers were in regular touch with Rashid.

Rashid, who was known as the sultan of satta, and his five associates were arrested a day after the blast for storing explosives, including RDX. But Parvez Khan and Imtiaz Khan, two others accused in the case, still continue to elude the police.

According to the probe team, Rashid had been storing the explosives in anticipation of a communal riot. The city had just recovered from the worst riot in recent history — on December 6, 1992, the day the Babri Masjid was demolished — and Mumbai was still raw with the wounds of the riots and the serial explosions. The investigations had established Rashid's link with mafia don Dawood Ibrahim.

Sixty-five people died on the

spot and four died of wounds in hospital, making the blast the worst in the city's history. The case was transferred to the designated Tada court a few months after Rashid's arrest.

Massive security arrangements were made in and around the city sessions court today when Rashid and the five others were brought there at noon. Their family members and friends broke down after hearing the conviction.

Soon after the judgment, one of the accused, Md Mustafa, shouted out from his enclosure asking the judge to give him "a minute". Deb, about to leave the court, paused for some time before sitting down again. Mustafa said the hearing was incomplete as his case had not been heard yet. "No lawyer has represented my case and the verdict, therefore, is infructuous," he alleged. But the defence lawyer, asked by the judge about the merits of Mustafa's allegation, said he had argued on behalf of all six accused.

Both parties said they would move the Supreme Court against the Tada court's verdict. Public prosecutors Ashok Bakshi and Naba Bose said they would challenge the judgment as the accused had been acquitted of the charges of murder and damage to property. Defence counsel Ganesh Maity said he would move the apex court challenging the verdict of the Tada court.

## MARATHON TRIAL

**MARCH 16, 1993:** Blast rips through 267 B.B. Ganguly Street, opposite Rashid Khan's residence. Four other buildings and tramlines damaged

**MARCH 17:** Till 12 noon, 65 bodies recovered from debris. 40 people wounded, four later died. Rashid arrested. Police allege Rashid and his men had stored explosives for triggering communal violence

**LAST WEEK OF MARCH:** Experts confirm that explosives, including RDX, were stored in the building. Investigation reveals Rashid had imported huge quantity of explosives

**MAY 2000:** Case transferred to Tada court. Six judges take eight years and five months to examine 165 witnesses

**MAY 2004:** High court quashes Tada trial against Rashid. Supreme Court overturns order

**1997:** Construction begins on the land. Hotel comes up

**JANUARY 2001:** Rashid files appeal in Supreme Court asking it to quash all proceedings against him on the ground of unnecessary delay in trial. The apex court tells Tada court to complete trial by August 31, 2001



RASHID KHAN

Pictures: Aranya Sen Graphic: RAJ

# Rashid convicted in blast case

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

9/8 2/3 5/1 3/1/8  
KOLKATA, Aug. 30. — Mohammad Rashid Khan and five of his associates arrested in connection with the Bowbazar blast case were pronounced guilty under Section 120B of the Indian Penal Code, Sections 3 and 5 of the Explosives Substance Act and Sections 3(2)(1) and 3(3) of Tada Act today.

Pronouncing the verdict, Mr Pranab Kumar Deb, judge, 12th Bench, City Civil and Sessions Court, said the sentence on the convicted persons will be announced at 11 a.m. tomorrow.

The accused were however acquitted of the charges brought against them under Sections 302 and 436 of the Indian Penal Code. Besides Rashid Khan, the others convicted in the case are Abdul Ajij CK, Mohammad Mustafa alias Murtaja, Pannalal Jaiswara, Mohammad Gul-

zar and Mohammad Khalil.

The case was started against the accused after 69 people died in a bomb explosion at 267 Bowbazar Street. The incident occurred on 16 March 1993, a few months after the city was rocked by communal disturbances in the wake of Babari Masjid demolition in Ayodhya.

The courtroom, corridor and the vicinity of the court were packed with policemen in uniform and plainclothes. Identities of the visitors were checked as the crowd of advocates, reporters and the relatives of the accused swelled in the courtroom.

The accused were produced in the court at 11.45 p.m. The visitors craned their necks to hear Mr Deb pronouncing the judgement.

While the accused remained impassive, tears streamed down their relatives' cheeks after the judgement was read out.

Mohammad Mustafa, one of the accused, told Mr Deb that he did not have any advocate to defend him during the trial. The judge asked him to make a written submission tomorrow.

Mr Nabakumar Ghosh and Mr Ashok Bakshi were the public prosecutors in the case. Mr Ganesh Maity and Mr Abu Bakkar Dhali were the defence lawyers.

**Fears still persist:** Nine years have passed since the blast rocked Bowbazar and left a scar on the city, the fear of Rashid Khan continues to seal the lips of the people.

Businessmen and local people today refused to react to the satta don's conviction. "It was a devastation. But please don't ask anything now. Why bring up old issues", said the owner of a furniture shop located close to the blast site. Two men were found trailing **The Statesman** reporter and photographer.

The Chinese family that had lost a teenage daughter in the blast had moved out of the area years ago. People have almost forgotten how the girl's brother made it to the headlines when he swore to kill Rashid Khan to avenge his sister's death. Another Chinese family had moved into the flat two years ago.

At least three congested building blocks were razed and a number of surrounding ones were badly damaged in the blast.

It was so powerful that a new tram line which was to be laid had been bent like a bow. The overhead wire for trams had snapped with local people claiming that a number of people had been electrocuted.

It took firemen at least three days to clear the debris from the blast site after which the authorities put the final death toll at 69.

THE STATESMAN

31 AUG 2001

# CM readies for court war on WTO

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Calcutta, Aug. 28: Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today said he would take the Vajpayee government to the Supreme Court for not consulting the states before signing the World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement on agriculture.

"By signing this agreement, the BJP-led government has invited disaster to the agriculture sec-

tor," the chief minister said. Bhattacharjee pointed out that agriculture was a state subject and the Centre had no right to ignore the interests of its provinces.

Bhattacharjee said he had already received a missive from Tamil Nadu's Jayalitha on the issue, but he refused to disclose which other states had offered him support. "I am in touch with several of them and I will disclose their names at the right moment," he said.

Asked whether the Supreme Court would pass judgment on an international protocol, the chief minister said: "I want the Supreme Court to say whether Delhi has acted legally while signing an agreement on a subject directly related to the rights of the states as far as our Constitution is concerned."

He argued that the WTO agreement would destroy the country's agricultural diversity. "Our farmers will be devastated once im-

ported seeds, especially those of paddy, are dumped in our country at prices beyond their reach," Bhattacharjee said.

He indicated that the case would be filed either by West Bengal only or by a group of like-minded states after the September 2 meeting of non-BJP chief ministers in New Delhi. "The September 2 meeting at Banga Bhavan will address the BJP's education policy. The WTO will come after that," the chief minister said.

## Japan strategy

West Bengal will cash in on the recession in the Japanese industrial scenario so that companies there are interested in setting up shop here. The chief minister, who is leaving for a week's visit to Japan on September 15, will speak to the heads of at least eight industrial corporations in Tokyo and Osaka.

"I want to take advantage of their economic situation and seek investments for Bengal," he said.

# Former civic body chairman held for Das's murder

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Aug. 24. - The former Dum Dum municipality chairman, Mr Sudhir Bhattacharya, was today arrested for his involvement in Sainen Das's murder, police said.

Mr Bhattacharya, who was detained this morning under charges that he allegedly paid Rs 1.10 lakh for the murder, was formally put under arrest late tonight after sustained interrogation. Police said he would be produced in the SDJM's court, Barrackpore, tomorrow.

Meanwhile, the DIG (Presidency Range), Mr Gautam Chakraborty, who is handling the case, said the plot was uncovered during the interrogation of Mr Bhattacharya.

The chief minister, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya, said: "With this arrest, we've been able to find the culprits. Some more arrests are in the offing."

The SP, North 24-Parganas, Mr Kuldip Singh, said: "The former chairman was probably into a coup to remove Sainen Das and hoped to replace him after killing him."

Mr Sudhir Bhattacharya was the municipality chairman for 32 years till he was defeated by Sainen Das in 1999. He was expelled from the CPI-M in 1974 for anti-party activities. However, he continued as the chairman after forming an organisation called Dum Dum Puro Unnayan Sanstha. From time to time, he enjoyed the support of the Congress and the CPI-M.

Five more people had been arrested since last night in connection with Sainen Das's murder from Dum Dum and Baguihati. They are Sambhu

Prasad Kamath, Debashis Ghatak, Babulal Sharma, Mrityunjay Ghosh and Tapas Bhattacharya. They were produced before the SDJM Barrackpore and remanded in police custody for 10 days. The first three have named the former chairman.

Police said on being tipped off by Kamath, an employee of the Dum Dum Municipal Hospital, they raided Mr Sudhir Bhattacharya's house this morning.

Kamath had admitted receiving the money during interrogation. Kamath said it was for chalking out a plan for the murder.

Police recovered Rs 40,000, paid for the killing, from three of them. About Rs 25,000 was recovered from Kamath and Rs, 5,000 from Babulal Sharma, a promoter and CPI-M activist in Dum Dum. Kamath reportedly lured Babulal into the plot. Babulal was promised more money if he could kill Sainen Das. Kamath also assured him that he would be permitted to build a house in the area once the job was done. He was given 16 copies of Das's photograph and his house was shown to him.

Babulal later contacted Debashis Ghatak and informed him about the time when Das usually left for office. The two came to the area thrice to identify Sainen Das. They planned to murder him either when he was leaving for office or was on his way back home.

All three have individually told police that Mr Sudhir Bhattacharya had paid them for the murder. Police said the murder could have been due to the contention for the post of Dum Dum municipality chairman. Planning began after the Assembly elections.

Mrs Shampa Bhattacharya, Mr Sudhir Bhattacharya's daughter-in-law, said: "Police are unnecessarily harassing Mr Bhattacharya." An aide of the former chairman said: "Mr Bhattacharya is being framed by the CPI-M because he was expelled from the party."

Babulal's mother, Mrs Santosh Sharma, said: "My son is a CPI-M activist and supplies building material. He has links with SP Kamath because he had hired him for worshipping Amitabh Bachchan's portrait." Mr Ramendranath Ghatak, Debashis's father, later admitted that Biswajit, alias Biswanath, prime accused, took shelter at his home on the day before the incident.

Mr Sudhir Bhattacharya's son, Mr Chandan Bhattacharya, is a promoter. He was allegedly involved in some land irregularities.

**Anil's stand:** A person's political affiliation doesn't exonerate him of a crime he may have committed, Mr Anil Biswas said today. He was commenting on the arrest of Mr Sudhir Bhattacharya. The CPI-M state secretary said the police had been given a free hand to bring to book the culprits involved in the murder.

Asked if a party probe will be ordered, Mr Biswas said there was no need as the party had not received any complaint against any activist.

**Political vendetta, says Pankaj:** The Trinamul Congress leader, Mr Pankaj Banerjee, said the arrest of the former Dum Dum municipality chairman was an act of political

■ See **MURDER**, page 8

THE STATESMAN

25 AUG 2001



# MURDER: 25/8

SVB  
(Continued from page 1)

vendetta. "Mr Bhattacharya, a 70-year-old man, has been targeted by Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya's police as he had constantly waged a war against the CPI-M," Mr Banerjee said.

According to him, Mr Sudhir Bhattacharya had opposed the CPI-M in the last Assembly polls and had also been instrumental in the victory of Mr Arunava Ghosh, Trinamul Congress candidate, from Dum Dum.

Mr Banerjee said the police had enough powers to force a criminal into saying that Mr Sudhir Bhattacharya had given him money to kill Sailen Das.

Trinamul Congress MLAs organised a sit-in near Gandhiji's statue on Mayo Road to protest against crimes and murders in the state.

The Trinamul youth Congress president, Mr Sanjoy Bakshi, said the chief minister should be ashamed because of the spate of murders in West Bengal.

THE STATESMAN

25 AUG 2001

# Dum Dum civic chief shot

## Killers were waiting for Dr Das near his house

### STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Aug. 13. — The Dum Dum municipality chairman, Dr Sainen Das (70), was shot this morning in front of his house in PK Guha Lane near Jessore Road in Dum Dum.

Around 9.40 a.m., Dr Das was about to enter his car that would have taken him to the municipal office when three men on a motorcycle shot him. The assailants tried to escape on their two-wheeler. But when it didn't start, they abandoned it and dismounted Mr Sandip Biswas from his scooter and fled on it.

Dr Das was rushed to the Dum Dum Municipality Hospital where he was declared dead. The assailants beat up Dr Das's driver, Mr Mantu Das.

Dum Dum police officers found a photocopy of a licence inside the tool box of the abandoned motorcycle. The paper showed the vehicle owner to be a resident of Muraripukur in the Manicktala area.

The DIG (Presidency Range), Mr Gautam Chakroborty, has asked the DC (ESD), Mr Mihir Bhattacharya, to trace the motorcycle owner, who was later detained for interrogation. Two others are being interrogated by Dum Dum police.

Manicktala police found the motorbike owner's house within 30 minutes. Members of his family told policemen that he was an employee of Ordnance Factory in Dum Dum.

The man told Manicktala police that he owned the vehicle. Later, he was taken to Dum Dum police station for interrogation.

He identified the motorcycle and reportedly said he had lent it to a person, who stayed near his office, according to a senior police officer.

Police suspect that "the man", who borrowed the motorcycle,

might be behind the murder. A team was sent to conduct raids in the area where he lived.

Dr Sainen Das was the councillor of ward No 8. He was a Rabindrasangeet exponent and a medical practitioner. His elder son died in a road accident some years ago. His younger son, Dr Ananyabrata Das, too is a medical practitioner. His wife, Mrs Kanan Das, is the councillor of ward No 9. of the same municipality.

Mrs Das said her husband normally left for office a lit-



Sainen Das

### On page 3:

- Oasis of peace still, says CM
- Haven for criminals, says Mamata
- More photographs

tle earlier. But this morning, he was late because they had returned home late last night after attending one of Dr Das's students' wedding in Bongaon.

"... The car was waiting for him", she said. They usually have many visitors every morning. "But there were no visitors today. This was a rather unusual thing. But

apart from this, nothing seemed unusual."

After he had climbed down the stairs, Mrs Das heard gun shots. She was in the bathroom then. "I immediately knew that something terrible had happened," she said.

Members of Dr Das's family said they hadn't got any threat calls. The North 24-Parganas SP, Mr Mr Kuldeep Singh, corroborated this.

Before the shooting, witnesses, including Dr Das's driver, Mr Mantu Das, had seen the three men on the motorcycle. They had been hanging around the house before the crime.

Mr Singh said police were trying to match the descriptions given by the witnesses to those of known criminals.

After the murder, CPI-M men blockaded Jessore Road and Dum Dum Road.

They demanded the arrest of the criminals.

A bandh was called in the Dum Dum, Dum Dum (North), Dum Dum (South), Rajarhat/Gopalpur municipal areas till 6 p.m. today. Almost all shops between Dum Dum and Nager Bazar were shut down. The blockades caused traffic disruptions in the city throughout the day.

Dr Das's body will be kept at Rabindra Sadan from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. tomorrow for partymen to pay homage. It will then be taken to the RG Kar Hospital, for he had donated his eyes and body, a local CPI-M leader said.

Officials at the Writers' Buildings said a meeting of all municipal chairpersons was scheduled to be held today at the Institute of Local Government and Urban Studies (Ilgus). But it had to be cancelled after the killing.

Mrs Anju Kar, minister of state for municipal affairs, who was present at Ilgus rushed to Dr Das's home.



A STAIN THAT WON'T GO AWAY: A man washes the blood from Dr Sainen Das' bullet wounds in front of his house at PK Guha Lane in Dum Dum on Monday. — Rajib De

## CPM protest day today

### STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Aug. 13. — The CPI-M will observe a state-wide protest day tomorrow to condemn Dr Sainen Das's murder.

Mr Anil Biswas described the murder as a "heinous and reprehensible act". He said: "Dr Das was a highly respected and amiable person, known for his medical work and skill in Rabindrasangeet. We condemn the killing. Police must immediately identify the culprits and bring them to book".

The Left Front chairman, Mr

Biman Bose, also denounced the murder and demanded punishment of the criminals.

The CPI-M will take out processions and stage demonstrations throughout the state tomorrow to protest against the "cold-blooded murder".

**Taxis withdrawn:** Taxis at NSC Bose Road were withdrawn around 10.30 a.m. today soon after the news of the murder spread, newspaper offices here were inundated with phone calls. People wanted to know whether a bandh has been called on Tuesday. Rumours spread thick and fast. Some said it would be a 12-hour bandh, others maintained that it would be for 24 hours. Some said it would be a Bangla bandh while others wondered whether it would be observed in North 24-Parganas or in Dum Dum.

# MEA no to Bangla for Bengal

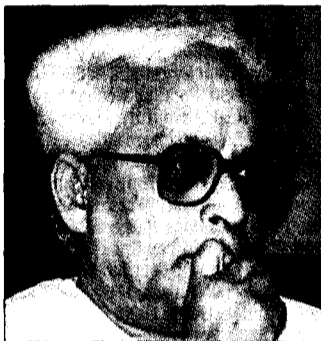
Chandan Nandy  
New Delhi, August 11

4 HFI  
17/8

THE MINISTRY of External Affairs (MEA) has turned down the West Bengal Government's demand to rename the State as Bangla. The MEA sent a note to the Home Ministry saying that such a name change would invite unnecessary diplomatic problems and strain ties with Bangladesh, which is already perturbed by the State Government's decision.

In July last year, the West Bengal Assembly had adopted a resolution to change the names of Calcutta and West Bengal to rid the State of its "colonial legacy". State Chief Secretary Manish Gupta then sought the Home Ministry's approval.

On December 9, the Ministry told the State that Calcutta



BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE

shouldn't be renamed unless there were very special reasons and that a "change should not be made merely on grounds of local patriotism or linguistic reasons". It sought detailed reasons for the proposed change.

Subsequently, North Block approved the renaming of Cal-

9 87 23

cutta in December, and the city was officially re-christened Kolkata on January 1.

But it wasn't that easy with 'West Bengal'. There was dissent in the State itself and the matter was shelved. In June, Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee revived the issue. Sources said a final decision was yet to be taken.

They said a constitutional amendment would be required to effect the change. Before Calcutta became Kolkata, the names of two other cities — Bombay and Madras — were changed to Mumbai and Chennai. But so far, no State has sought to rename itself.

It is unlikely that the Centre will agree to the State's proposal. It may insist that the Left Front think of another name for West Bengal.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 AUG 2001

# Police trace kidnap route

BY PRONAB MONDAL (1-1) 4/18  
BAPPA MAJUMDAR &  
AVIJIT NANDI MAJUMDAR

Calcutta, Aug. 3: Khadim's owner Parthapratim Roy Burman may have returned home alone, unaided by police, but facts that have surfaced in the past 24 hours indicate that the multi-agency investigation into the eight-day kidnap saga was on the right track from the beginning.

"One must realise that we are up against a formidable team high on resources, skills and resolution," head of the special investigation team and inspector-general of police (South Bengal) Prasun Mukherjee said today. "It wasn't a neighbourhood operation carried out by a cheap gang."

The CID has collected sizeable evidence, which points to the role of some inter-state gangs.

A CID officer said the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was called in to assist in tracking the phone calls routed through that country. The FBI traced two calls the Roy Burmans received three days after the abduction to the Amsterdam-New York-London-Chennai-Calcutta route.

Officially, the administration still refused to shed light on the kidnapping. Chief minister Bud-

haden Bhattacharjee, like CID inspector-general Partha Bhattacharyya, was mum today as well. "I shall make a statement on the issue when I am in a position to do so. You need not ask, I shall myself call you and explain everything. Wait till then," the chief minister told reporters.

The police carried out overnight raids after Roy Burman returned home yesterday and detained several people for interrogation. Some key arrests are likely to follow shortly.

"We have enough evidence that proves that local contacts actually collaborated with the abductors and helped them get a safe passage from the scene of the crime," an official said, adding that the CID was now trying to trace a police informer who was tipping off Tiljala businessman Chunnu about the raids.

Officials are also combing areas in North 24-Parganas, where, they believe, Roy Burman was taken and given crude medical treatment for eight days.

A West Bengal Armed Police official has been sent to Hyderabad where, the police believe, payment of the ransom was arranged. CID officials also visited Woodlands Hospital where Roy Burman was operated on today.

The wounded shoe magnate asked for time to reconstruct the entire incident, officials said.

The police have sought the help of their Mumbai and Uttar Pradesh counterparts to trace Hafiz Alam and Saudagar Singh, henchmen of Chhota Rajan's rival Fazl-ur-Rahman. Investigators feel they are among the main suspects in the case. They were told by their sources that the duo came to the city a week before the abduction.

But Mumbai police do not seem to have much idea about the activities of Alam and Singh. According to the information they have provided, both come from Uttar Pradesh and initially worked for Chhota Rajan before switching loyalties to Rahman.

However, investigators have learnt that both probably masterminded the abduction of a Bihar-based industrialist and a Gujarat businessman.

Roy Burman's abduction is a signal to the city's businessmen that they are no longer immune from being the target of interstate gangs. One theory doing the rounds is that the shoe baron was one of six city-based industrialists that the gangs may have targeted.

■ See Metro



doctors here — one an eye surgeon and the other a dental surgeon — but after they retired new recruitments weren't made. According to superintendent Asim Kumar Mitra, "Kabitirtha is a thickly populated area and most of the patients are very poor. We cannot do the needful because there is no supply of medicine."

The most hapless, however, is the Kidderpore Chest Centre. "There has been no supply of medicines for the last six months," says Dr BK Nandi. "The local councillor is a non-entity and we do not even know his/her name." Tuberculosis patients here are treated without any X-ray being done because the machine has been lying defunct for years now.



That these health centres are in a shambles is beyond debate. Councillor Shamima Khatun, a teacher by profession, is totally ignorant of local needs and has no time to visit these centres which have become a haven for drug addicts and anti-socials. Indeed, the sorry state of these Centres are in stark contrast to the well-managed nursing homes in the area owned

Netaji Nursing Home owned by state minister for food and supplies Kalimuddin Shams was established in 1999. Eminent personalities such as J&K chief minister Farooq Abdullah, Justice AH Ahmadi and Forward Bloc general secretary Ashok Ghose were present at its inauguration. Interestingly, Shams claimed in his inaugural speech that the nursing home was dedicated to the poorest of the poor of the area. Reality is something else.

Local legislator Ram Pyare Ram also runs his own nursing home, Shri Matri Bhavan. Apart from this, Ekbalpore Nursing Home and Bellona Nursing Home are run by M. Purkaiastho, a retired doctor of the Kidderpore Maternity Home, and Dr Qasim, a Trinamul leader, respectively.

These nursing homes are really expensive. A local health worker says that "they are plundering poor people" in the name of treatment. She adds that these nursing homes have their paid agents in Kolkata's government hospitals who "bring in patients" arriving in the city from different parts of the country for treatment.

## alth

s in Kolkata and its suburbs volumes of their wretched conditions, often more than one patient into a single cot and dirty cab-run by fleas are a common over, doctors at these hospitals irresponsible, more interested in lucrative private practices, reducing poor patients to the guinea pigs whose lives are of sequence, death the only reward, monetary gain and lack of have paralysed the sense of before self. Nursing homes the visiting grounds — financed otherwise.

and a stories that corroborate perfectly with the general trend in the state.

The Kidderpore Maternity Home located opposite Ekbalpore Nursing Home is a mess. A 40-bed unit with four doctors and 10 nurses, it has no ambulance facility despite numerous promises from the local legislators and councillors. Only normal deliveries are carried out here as the operation theatre remains closed.

Parveen Alam, a social worker, says "pregnant women have no option but to leave the home in case of an emergency and are often compelled to go to the nearby nursing homes". She adds that the poor cannot afford admission to these nursing homes, as a result of which many of them die during childbirth.

A doctor of the maternity home says that "the pharmacist Ajoy Roy is an influential CPI-M cadre and has been stationed here for the last five years" and that "he sells medicines meant for the patients to outsiders".

At the Kidderpore Dispensary, it's the same story. There used to be two

## ice, no problem

is symptomatic of the pathetic that prevails in the small recycling it operate on the south-east fringe city, writes Oindrila Mukherjee

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bon and lead. Constant exposure to these substances can lead to respiratory disorders, fibrosis of the liver, dermatitis, abdominal colic and other ailments. But the health risks are dismissed as "minor" by both workers and many experts.

Electrical wires are exposed on the walls of DS

Plastic, in Mihir Ali Road and Santosh and Jagdish, who work in the shed where plastic is being recycled and cut into small blocks, are exposed to inhumanly hot temperatures. Protective gear such as gloves or masks are unheard of in all these units. Though workers scoff at the idea of covering their mouths, saying they are used to the conditions, despite the stomach and respiratory ailments, it is hard to see how the chemicals can avoid polluting the environment outside.

The owner of Suraj Factory at 8 East Topsia Road also admits to not having a trade license. "People do come to inspect. The nice ones don't bother. The bad ones demand money," he says. His shed and compound are heaped with plastic items ranging from saline water bottles, which fetch the highest price, to talcum powder containers, plastic syringes and combs.

Rafiq Mollah, who works with Jai Bajrangwali Rubber, says he earns Rs 50 a day. Jagdish and Santosh of DS Plastic earn 50 paise per kilogram of plastic recycled.

According to Satyesh C Chakraborty of Ekta Ecological Foundation, which published a study on the subject in December 2000, raw material worth Rs 53 crore is recycled every year in Kolkata alone. "And this is a modest estimate," he adds. "Entrepreneurs have to be assisted with finance. The recycling capacity can be improved. Different strategies need to be chalked up for different substances."

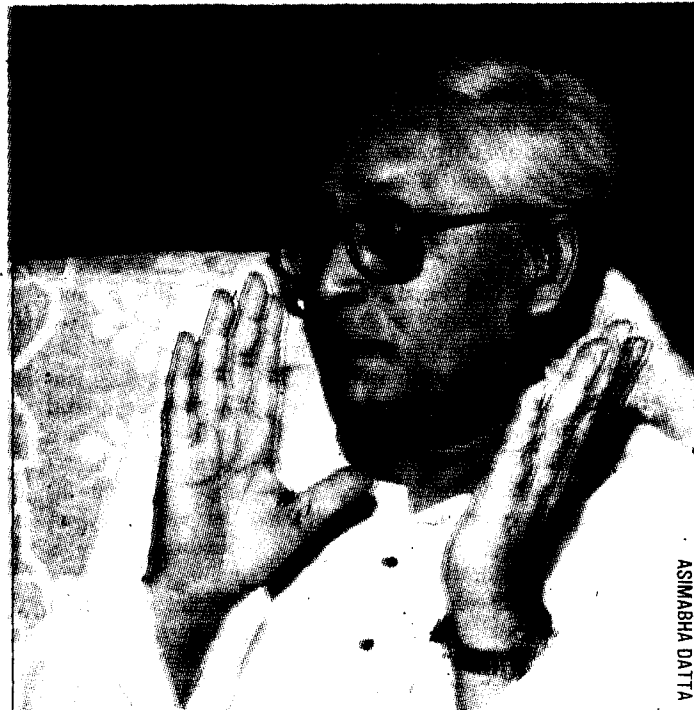
Chakraborty also places recycling units operating without a trade license at "over 50 per cent". But few studies and insufficient data make this an understudied sector.



g recycled at Topsia (above) and dry cell batteries being taken apart at Tangra

## 'I'm not here to make compromises'

*Buddhadev Bhattacharya leans as much towards literature and Rabindrasangeet as he does politics. Having won the right to head the state government, he is honest enough to admit to mistakes which have cost West Bengal dearly, has a mind of his own and is bent on laying down the rules, even if these run contrary to the old mindset. Excerpts of an interview with Arunava Das*



You must be aware that you represent sky-high hopes — for an hon-

these demands and aspirations? I'm quite aware of what we are capable of doing and what we are not. We'll definitely do what we think we can do. And the things that are impossible for us must be openly explained to the people. At the public meetings I addressed before the elections, I said: *Pa thakbe matite, kintu aamaader matha unchu korte hobe ekabingsho shatabdir akashe*. (With our feet placed firmly on the ground, we must look up to the 21st century sky). There is no doubting that people wanted a change. But some people were bent on giving this desire a negative shape. Had they been successful, things would have gone from bad to worse. But the Left Front victory made sure that didn't happen. And the people by and large have accepted this change.

So you admit things were bad and some sort of changes were necessary. Many believe that had Jyoti Basu continued things would have been tough for the Left.

Bad is a relative term. But it is true that in the course of so many years of rule, a sort of stagnation has set in. It was evident in our performance, both in the government and in the party. So I was very clear from the outset. I convinced our party men that we must go to the people and tell them what we had done and we had not done. There was the anti-incumbency factor and we convinced ourselves that we had to admit to our mistakes. There was no option. If I spent 30 minutes detailing our achievements, I also spent 30 minutes speaking of our mistakes. We identified our failures and admitted our inability to correct these. And that paid off.

What are you going to do about the failures?

Now that we have been able to identify our failures and problems, there's no point sweeping them under the carpet anymore. It should be an open exercise. Either you set things right or get lost.

What if you fail to set things right?

Look, I'm a realist. I don't dream of anything that is not achievable. But we must also see things in the larger perspective. We have poverty, unemployment and illiteracy and these issues aren't unique to West Bengal. We are one of the 28 states in the country. The GDP growth is only five per cent; in agriculture it is two per cent. The growth rate in industry has come down from seven to five per cent. So we have to do everything in the present context and in the present reality.

Unemployment has got to be the most testing of problems.

Yes, it is. But can one state solve unemployment altogether? The main problem lies in the planning that is done at the Central level. One hundred and fifty million people are unemployed. How can you hold one state responsible for this scenario?

But something has to be done...

Yes, of course.

job opportunities?

We have decided to put the accent on the traditional sectors — small and medium-scale industries. We have handloom that needs modernisation. Computers will be used to create new designs. We have sericulture, hosiery, leather, and plastics industries... Sixty-two items have been identified in both the manufacturing and service sector. Cooperative banks will play the main role in financing.

What about marketing?

The government will take care of more than 50 per cent of marketing through its PDS schemes. The small-scale manufacturers do not have much to worry about marketing any longer. We hope to generate 600,000 jobs through such schemes.

Knowledge-based industry is another important sector. I agree that it is not going to create many jobs in terms of numbers, but the future lies in this sector. Though a late starter, West Bengal already has a 20 per cent share of total national export in software. Last year, our export was worth Rs 965 crore. We started in 1996-97, announced our IT policy in 1999. But now we are making rapid strides. Two sectors in Salt Lake are already brimming with IT units. So is Nonadanga. Now we're ready to go to Durgapur.

Are you entering into any collaboration?

Companies like IBM and Wipro are showing a considerable interest in our state. With IBM helping us, we have set up a learning centre, the first in the country. Now IBM has come up with a proposal that it will take charge of computer teaching in secondary and higher secondary schools. It has offered assistance for 2,000 schools. But we are not in a position to respond because of a funds constraint. We will begin with 200. Not all schools are sufficiently equipped and have the minimum infrastructure for setting up computer centres. We are going to sign an MoU with Microsoft. It will help us introduce E-governance in government departments. Home, police, budget, land revenue, pension, salaries will be computerised soon. This apart, we have approached IBM to help us set up a training institute for IT teachers needed for schools, engineering and polytechnic colleges.

There has been a huge migration of students over the past few years. Have you contemplated measures to arrest this trend?

It's not easy. Give us some more time. From nine engineering colleges two years ago, West Bengal now has 31 colleges. IT is now being introduced in polytechnic colleges also.

There was a time when the CPI-M was strongly opposed to the use of computers...

In the past, we had certain notions about it. It was a

Turn to page 2

# Khadim's owner abducted

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 25. — One of the owners of the Khadim's Group, Mr Partha Roy Burman (44), was kidnapped today by five armed men from CN Roy Road (barely a kilometre from Tiljala police station). The abduction took place around 11 a.m.

The driver of Mr Roy Burman's car, Nabakumar Mondol (working with the Roy Burmans for a few months), was arrested tonight, SP, South 24-Parganas, Mr DK Ganguly, said. He was the first person to inform police about the abduction.

An eyewitness said the abductors were young, spoke Hindi and didn't wear masks.

All phone calls to Mr Roy Burman's Salt Lake home were being tapped. There was no ransom call till tonight.

The incident occurred when Mr Roy Burman was on his way to his godown at Topsia. He was travelling in a Tata Safari.

Sahajada Mastan, security guard at a local tannery, gave an account of what took place:

A white Maruti van was following the Safari while another one was parked outside French Tannery on CN Roy Road. The Safari hit a lamp post when the van behind it



The car of Mr Partha Roy Burman with a bullet mark on the windscreen at Tiljala police station in Kolkata on Wednesday. — The Statesman

tried to block its path from the left side. Five men, with revolvers, came out of the van, parked outside the tannery, and fired at the Safari's windscreen.

One of them dragged Mr Roy Burman and Nabakumar out of the car. Mr Roy Burman struggled to free himself. One

of the men shot at Mr Roy Burman in the leg. (However, there was no blood at the spot or in the abandoned Safari.)

Before the abductors took away the businessman, Nabakumar jumped into a taxi and fled.

The assailants huddled Mr Roy Burman into one of the

Maruti vans and both the vehicles sped away towards Jadavpur along EM Bypass.

The SP, South 24-Parganas, Mr Deb Kumar Ganguly, said police rushed to the spot soon after Nabakumar informed (within 10 minutes after the

■ See ABDUCTION: Page 5

## ABDUCTION:

(Continued from page 1)

incident) the Parama police investigation centre near Energy Education Park on EM Bypass. He said police and CID officers are raiding different places in South and North 24-Parganas. The detective department of the city police is also helping in the investigation.

District police at Midnapore, Bankura, Purulia and Burdwan have been asked to keep vigil at all entry and exit points. In Midnapore, police were checking all vehicles entering Bihar and Orissa. Security had been tightened at the six checkpoints.

Mr Siddhartha Roy Barman, the abducted businessman's younger brother, said: "Dada used to go to Kasba industrial estate and Topsia godown on Wednesdays. The kidnapers might have collected the information. I came to know about the incident from my own source around 11.30 a.m."



The spot on CN Roy Road from where Mr Partha Roy Burman was kidnapped on Wednesday. — The Statesman

He ruled out business rivalry to be the cause of the abduction. The Roy Burmans are also into real estate business. They have built a housing estate, with about 400 flats, at Narayanpur

near the city airport. Mr Partha Roy Burman, his wife and their three daughters, stay in BH block in Salt Lake. Earlier they used to live at Bangur Avenue. His wife, Mrs

Piu Roy Burman, said: "We never received any threats or ransom demands." His daughter, Rishika, said: "We didn't know anything about the incident. We were in

school." Mr Goutam Chakraborty, DIG (presidency range), said the abductors might have been tipped off by some locals. Several people were interrogated.

# Board to revamp infrastructure

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 20. — The government will set up a board to prepare a perspective plan to revamp the infrastructure and transport system in Kolkata in the next 25 years, the urban development minister told the Assembly today.

The plan can be executed with government and private participation and Rs 1,200 crore is needed to improve the transport system alone.

To operate and maintain the developed infrastructure, the state will levy service charges, though at reasonable rates, Mr Ashoke Bhattacharya, hinted.

The state is planning four new municipalities — Pan-skura in Midnapore, Dankuni in Hooghly, Dalkhola in North Dinajpur and Domkol in Murshidabad.

The government will form a metropolitan planning committee, under the provisions of the 74th Constitution Amendment, for better coordination among state and Central development agencies, including railways, Port Trust and airport authorities.

The state will be the first to implement the constitutional provision. The rules of the Act to be enacted have already been laid, the minister said.

In all, 41 municipalities, including Calcutta Municipal Corporation, will come under the purview of the committee to comprise 40 elected and 20 nominated members. He denied the Trinamul MLA, Mr Arunava Ghosh's allegation that the state had flouted High Court directives in allotting Salt Lake land to the IT giant, Wipro.

Mr Bhattacharya later said no irregularity was involved, and that the land was allotted by Weibel, authorised to do so

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 20. — Karim and Rashid Wakf Estate, had collected rent without enrolling it in the Wakf Board. Mr Roy said some similar charges against Mr Halim remain unanswered.

Mr Roy said the Speaker had misused his power to enforce discipline in the House and lowered its dignity by posting plain-clothes policemen inside the hall.

Quoting an editorial, Partisan Politics, in yesterday's *The Statesman*, Mr Pankaj Banerjee said: "Newspapers that educated people trust have already expressed their no-confidence against the Speaker."

He said Mr Halim had often referred to Opposition MLAs' misconduct. He read out from the House proceedings of 1964 which said Mr Kamal Guha, now agriculture minister, had thrown eggs at Sudharani Dutta of the Congress.

On 1 March 1969, the United contribution of Rs 16 crore to Rs 17 crore for the megacity project for which the state has, so far, released over Rs. 218 crore. He

denied charges that the state discriminated against Congress and Trinamul-controlled civic bodies in allotting money.

— SNS

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987-MS

## Mishra pats his own back

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 20. — Complicated surgeries, including heart bypasses, are regularly being done in the state and there are some areas where the state provides better medical facilities than others, the health minister said in the Assembly on Wednesday.

Participating in the debate on the health budget, Mr Suryakanta Mishra dodged Mr Saugata Roy's question on why the government had taken the Left Front chairman, Sallen Dasgupta, to the Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai, for treatment.

The Opposition as well as the RSP, Forward Bloc and CPI legislators today criticised the government for its failure to improve health care system.

Initiating the debate, Mrs Ratna Nag (Trinamul) said costly machines were gathering dust in hospitals in rural areas for lack of trained hands. He blamed the government's faulty transfer policy for this.

Mr Rabin Ghosh (FB) said many hospital employees had not been transferred for more than two decades. He urged Mr Mishra to transfer them immediately.

Mr Ghosh said that from Uluberia hospital, eight to 10 patients were transferred to Kolkata hospitals. But there was only ambulance to carry them. Hence, the patients' relatives had to hire private ambulances.

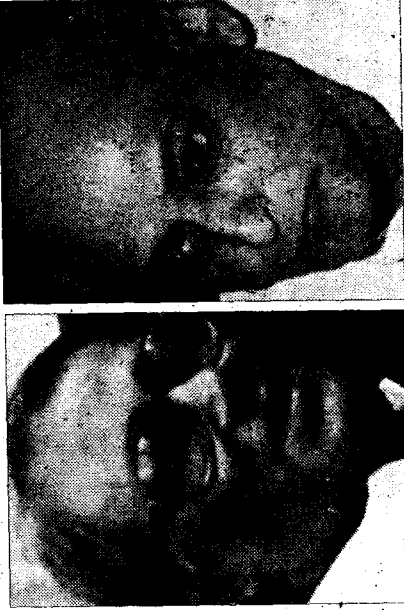
Mr Subhas Goswami (RSP) said the foundation for a garden to grow medicinal plants was laid at Alipurduar in 1982 by Nani Bhattacharya, then health minister. But nothing has come up till now. Mr Purnendu Sengupta (CPI) said steps should be taken immediately to improve the medical care system in rural areas.

Mr Mishra said the health department's new mantra was accountability of doctors and paramedical staff, modernisation and decentralisation. He said the old managing committees in hospitals had been done away with and new ones, comprising MLAs and specialists, would be set up soon.

Mr Mishra said the infant mortality rate in the state had come down, it's now the third lowest in the country.

He said his department would inform the MLAs about the funds allotted and spent by the primary health centres in the state and their present condition.

**Keep politics away:** Mr Mishra said politics should not be allowed to interfere with matters of public health and education, says a report from Purulia. He inaugurated a building of Purulia Block-I panchayat samiti executive office at Chakda village yesterday.



Mr Saugata Roy and Mr Hashim Abdul Halim

## PARTISAN POLITICS

### Speaker's bid to select PAC chairman

NEVER before has the appointment of chairman of West Bengal assembly's Public Accounts Committee generated so much controversy as it has this time. The reason is understandable. With Trinamul becoming the principal Opposition, there is considerable consternation among the ruling Marxists that they may no longer be able to hide the skeletons in their cupboards when the malleable Congress was the main Opposition. They are worried that if the chairmanship of the quasi-judicial PAC goes to any of the "hostile" Trinamul MLAs their image would suffer. It is to forestall this that the Marxists have not hesitated in making the Speaker Hashim Abdul Halim a party to the controversy. Compared even to his immediate predecessor and party comrade Mansoor Habibullah, Halim's highly partisan conduct as Speaker has undermined legislative norms and conventions and made his Chair controversial. The Wakf scandal has made matters worse for him. As a result the Opposition shows scant respect for him and, for the first time, departed from the past practice of unanimously electing him as Speaker and has now moved a no-confidence motion against him. Some of his statements on the appointment of PAC chairman, were shocking and smacked of partisan politics.

The apparent design is to split the Trinamul. That is why Halim said that the appointment of PAC chairman is his prerogative although he knows that the Opposition leader's word is generally final. It is an open secret why Halim in cahoots with his party prefers Subrata Mukherjee. The Mayor is under the control of the state government's municipal affairs department. As PAC chairman how can he sit in judgment since the Calcutta Corporation receives hundreds of crores of public funds from the state government? After all, the financial irregularities of both the municipal affairs department and the Calcutta Corporation come under the scrutiny of the CAG whose audit report forms the basis of PAC investigation. Subrata has compromised himself by promising he would not have any confrontation with the state government. His appointment will compromise the PAC's credibility. The Marxists are stoutly opposing Dipak Ghosh's candidature as he has stirred a hornet's nest by seeking judicial intervention in the Salt Lake land allotment scandal. Saugata Roy is also a fit candidate for the job which must go to someone who is equal to the task. Certainly not someone who cannot stand up to the Government.



## CESC MUST ANSWER

### Arguments against the tariff increase

IF one goes by representations made by the Bharat Chamber of Commerce before the West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission, the CESC's proposal to increase power tariffs is entirely without basis. One will have to hear the CESC out on the subject before coming to conclusions, but the many questions raised by the BCC should make the CESC squirm and the public extremely inquisitive. Most accusations levelled by the BCC against the CESC relate to ineffective or less than honest cost management, to enumerate a few: more expensive LDO is used instead of furnace oil for all fuel requirements; the two older plants at New Cossipore and Mulajore, that employ more people per KW produced accounting for less than 10 per cent of the utility's overall production which can be easily made up by its other plants which are under-utilised, effecting a saving on the wage bill of roughly Rs 80 crores; the CESC has brought its transmission and distribution losses up 58 per cent in nine years; the 6.6 KVA feeders are unmetered, the suspicion being that CESC officials are involved in illegal supply of unmetered power to bulk consumers; the savings on decreasing interest charges and normal growth in power sales should bring in the extra revenues they are looking for, while the fuel surcharge should take care of any increase in fuel rates over and above the applied tariff. These are serious accusations and since the BCC note is out in the public domain, the CESC needs to do some detailed answering and quickly. One should point out to the BCC that it is not easy to get rid of 2000 workers in the state of West Bengal, but it is a requirement the government should recognise.

On the tariff proposals as such, the BCC paints an even grimmer picture. It has conducted studies on four industrial units to show that the new method of computation, based on KVA instead of KWH, will lead to an increase in power bills ranging from 43 to 76 per cent. The effect this can have on an already depressed industrial climate and on inflation in general can be devastating. Also, the BCC says that the CESC's proposal to ask industries that draw less than 75 per cent of their contract demand to pay the shortfall is inequitable since the CESC pays no penalties when it fails to deliver power when needed. Is this the norm for private power suppliers operating in other parts of the country? One knows that the MSEB is under obligation to draw a certain amount of power from the DPC, under pain of penalty, but then MSEB is not the direct consumer, only the distributing agency. Is it fair to penalise industries for not taking the power they do not need? The BCC says this is in response to the decline in the consumption of high tension electricity which, according to the CESC itself, is its principal business segment. The point best taken in the BCC note is about the need for competition in the private power sector. The 16 per cent return on investment guaranteed by the Centre, says the BCC, allows private monopolies, such as the CESC to run their units "the way they like, at the cost they like".

This cannot pass.

THE STATE

JUN 21

# Opp walkout over stadium scandal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 4. — The Trinamul and Congress legislators today staged a walkout after the Speaker, Mr HA Halim, refused to allow an adjournment motion demanding Mr Subhas Chakraborty's removal and a CBI inquiry into the Salt Lake stadium case.

The adjournment motion was moved by the Congress MLA, Mr Abdul Mannan.

He said the arrest of criminals from Salt Lake Stadium had been unprecedented. Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya, in his statement, had said he was not satisfied with the inquiry being conducted and so he had engaged the CID to probe into the matter. The government should engage the CBI to inquire into the incident, Mr Mannan said. He demanded Mr Chakraborty's immediate removal.

The Opposition MLAs shouted slogans de-

manding removal of Mr Chakraborty after Mr Halim refused to allow the adjournment motion. They staged a walkout and again joined the Assembly session after sometime.

The PCC vice-president, Mr Pradip Bhattacharya today said the Congress would intensify agitation against the government on the Salt Lake Stadium issue. The party was demanding a CBI inquiry. "CID inquiries usually drag on and are never heard of after some time," he said. The Congress will organise a major march on the issue after the PCC president, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, returns from Delhi on Thursday, he said.

**Trinamul protests:** Trinamul supporters staged a demonstration at 2-10 p.m. in front of Raj Bhavan's north gate protesting against Mr Chakraborty's alleged nexus with criminals. The demonstration was led by Mr Paresh Pal. Forty-seven persons

were arrested.

**BJP for CBI probe:** The BJP vice-president and West Bengal observer, Mr Kailashpati Mishra, today demanded a CBI inquiry into the Salt Lake Stadium affair. "This has been demanded by many individuals and political parties."

A CBI probe would clear the confusion created by the affair, he said.

Mr Mishra demanded Mr Subhash Chakraborty's resignation.

Mr Chakraborty should stay out of office until the inquiry is completed, the BJP leader said. However, he said, the affair was not such as to require the chief minister's resignation.

Mr Mishra declined to comment on the issue of Miss Mamata Banerjee's return to the NDA.

He admitted he had seen the reports prepared by the state BJP and had also interacted with district units on this issue.

# Tuition fees up four to ten times

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, July 10: For the first time in half a century, tuition fees in state-funded universities and colleges in Bengal are going up.

After getting clearance at last week's meeting of the Left Front education cell, Satyasadhan Chakraborty, the higher education minister, today announced a four to 10 times increase, the fee rising to between Rs 60 and Rs 160 per head per month from the previous range of Rs 12 to Rs 18.

Tuition fees — along with charges in government hospitals

have been a holy cow for successive governments because of the implications of a revision for the middle-class electorate, which benefits far more from low rates than the poor.

While announcing the increase, the government said students coming from poor families will be offered relief.

The government will also announce a uniform fee structure for students of state-aided and private engineering institutions. It is still working on the revised fees for engineering courses, which, Chakraborty said, will be ready shortly.

Now that the tuition fees have been raised, the government will maintain strict vigil on colleges and universities to ensure that they provide better educational facilities.

Universities and colleges will be asked to pay government-stipulated remuneration to part-time teachers. "Drastic ac-

tion will be taken against the institutions if they are found violating the government's rules regarding payment of salaries to part-time teachers," said Chakraborty.

Many colleges as well as departments in some universities have to mainly depend on part-time teachers be-

cause of the government's failure to provide an adequate number of full-timers.

The state higher education department recently fixed a minimum of Rs 2,000 per month for part-time teachers in colleges. But the department received a large number of complaints from part-timers about irregular payment.

The revised tuition fees will be put into effect by the seven state-aided universities and over 340 colleges in the state from the current month.

"We appeal to all sections of students to understand our difficulty. We had to increase the fees

as there was no other option. We have taken the decision in the interest of the students' community," said Chakraborty.

Asim Dasgupta, the finance minister, had announced the decision to raise fees on the floor of the Assembly while presenting the budget two weeks ago.

The higher education minister appealed to students' bodies to extend their cooperation to the government in implementing the new fees.

Even after today's revision, the anomaly of many students paying more for schooling than higher education remains.

DEGREE COST	
M.A. & M.Com	Rs 125
M.Sc	Rs 160
B.A. (Pass)	Rs 50
B.A. (Honours)	Rs 75
B.Com (Pass)	Rs 60
B.Com (Honours)	Rs 85
B.Sc (Pass)	Rs 85
B.Sc (Honours)	Rs 110

All rates per month

# 573 87 Mayor rings Mamata and makes up

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 7. — With a view to clearing all sorts of misunderstandings over the CMC programme issue, mayor Mr Subrata Mukherjee had a long discussion with Miss Mamata Banerjee over telephone in the wee hours of today.

Miss Banerjee declined to comment on the developments saying that she wasn't keeping well.

Mr Mukherjee reportedly told her that he had always been reluctant to organise the programme meant to celebrate the first anniversary of the Trinamul board in CMC.

Mr Mukherjee said he was aware of his accountability to the party and would not indulge in anything that could affect the party's image.

Mr Mukherjee reportedly told Miss Banerjee that rebel leader Mr Ajit Panja had been invited to the programme as a Trinamul MP and that there was no ulterior motive to humiliate Miss Banerjee.

Both of them agreed to go ahead with plans for the 21 July Kolkata rally.

It is learnt that Mr Mukherjee also kept the Trinamul

chief posted on developments within the party relating to the selection of the Public Accounts Committee chairman of the West Bengal Assembly. Mr Mukherjee is a contender for the post.

After his return from Chennai yesterday Mr Mukherjee, today discussed the issue with Mr Rajib Deb, mayor-in-council (drainage), Mr Sovan Chatterjee, mayor-in-council (water supply) and Mr Paresh Pal at his residence.

He told them that the issue should not be allowed to perpetuate and efforts should be made to make the 21 July rally a success.

The root of the misunderstanding is said to be Mr Pradip Ghosh, mayor-in-council (slums) Mr Ghosh, after having learnt that Mr Ajit Panja had been invited to the CMC programme, mobilised the support of a few councillors and went to Harish Chatterjee Street to tell Miss Banerjee that the invitation amounted to appeasement of Mr Panja at the cost of Miss Banerjee's image.

Mr Ghosh's ire was also because of the fact that he had been kept out of the three-

member committee that had been set up by the mayor to supervise preparations for the CMC programme.

The committee comprised Mr Rajib Deb, Mr Sovan Chatterjee and Mrs Mala Roy, mayor-in-council (conservancy).

After the committee began functioning, Mr Deb and Mr Chatterjee decided to leave the entire task to Mrs Roy on grounds that she was competent enough to handle the job.

Mrs Roy came to know yesterday night that the programme had been cancelled. She personally went to Mr Amlan Datta, Mrs Ashima Chatterjee and Mrs Sandhya Mukhopadhyay's residence to inform them that the programme had been called off. All the three were to be felicitated by the CMC.

**CM also to blame:** Mr Mukherjee said tomorrow's programme at Rabindra Sadan was called off due to "misunderstandings" in several quarters. This includes the state government, including the chief minister, people within the Trinamul as well as the Opposition in the CMC, he said.

THE STATESMAN

JUL 20 1971

# 'Mandate to fulfil promises and rectify mistakes'

*THE DAY after his first visit to Delhi after taking over as Chief Minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee speaks to Arindam Sarkar on Centre-State relations, his Government's performance and the promises the sixth Left Front Government wishes to fulfil in this term:*

**Q:** How did your meeting with the Prime Minister go?

**A:** I raised some burning issues affecting the State and requested him to help us by not winding up the public distribution system in the country, particularly in Bengal. As long as a large chunk of people continue to be below the poverty line, we have to continue the rationing system and subsidise rice, wheat, sugar, kerosene oil and edible oil among others. We just can't throw these people to the open market. I pointed out to the PM that 56 collieries are being closed down and the Centre is planning to import coal from Australia in the name of globalisation. I also requested him to intervene to prevent the stopping of Aeroflot and Singapore flights from Kolkata. He asked his civil aviation officials to look into the matter.

He appreciated our position and said the State can run the PDS but I pointed out it is not possible without the Centre's help. As for PDS and subsidies, he said he would look into the matter. On closure of mines, he argued that price of coal is cheaper in Australia, but I told him what about the thousands of workers and their families? He said we would have to take a comprehensive view of import and export policy. I told him if we import coal and close our mines, it is not globalisation but one-sided business. At least I convinced him it was a serious problem.

**Q:** Did the topic of rigging come up in your meeting with L K Advani?

**A:** No. We did not discuss anything on elections or the so-called rigging. He wanted to know about the activities of the KLO, PWG and particularly about the security situation in the border districts along Bangladesh. On KLO, I told him the election results showed we have isolated them as we won all the seats where the Rajbanshis are in a majority. For instance, Coochbehar has 48 per cent Rajbanshis, but we won all the seats.

We also did well in Jalpaiguri, where they are in a majority. But the point is, this terrorist outfit is still operating with the help of Ulfa and are taking refuge in southern Bhutan. Advani promised to look into the matter.

**Q:** In your meeting with Petroleum Minister Ram Naik, you asked for the involvement of IOC in Haldia Petrochemicals. How will that help?

**A:** I don't want to elaborate on

**Q:** There seems to have been various points of disagreements on policy matters in your discussion with the PM and other ministers. Will that affect Centre-State relations?

**A:** I don't think so. The discussions were held in a cordial atmosphere. The PM was kind enough and listened patiently. The Home Minister showed a lot of interest in the State's law and order and the Petroleum Minister was also eager to help.

**Q:** Why have you taken a strong exception to the WTO agreement signed by New Delhi?

**A:** Before signing the document, they should have taken the opinion of the States as agriculture is a State Subject. And now we are the ones who are facing the music. What is the point in importing rice? Now the Centre calls a meeting, but this should have been done earlier. I believe there should be a consensus on this. Otherwise, it will create serious problems for all the States, not just Bengal.

**Q:** Why was it necessary to appoint Nirupam Sen as a point-man of the Cabinet?

**A:** (Smiles) To improve our performance and also to include some young leaders from the party in the Cabinet. This has given the Government a new look and a fresh lease of life. As Industries Minister, I think he will do well.

**Q:** It is said that Nirupam Sen will evaluate the performance of other ministers too...

**A:** This is not correct, it's a distortion of facts. Our Budget session starts on June 14 and we are preparing the budget of all departments. The usual practice is that the Finance Minister calls the meeting and all ministers present their budget proposals to him. But since the Planning and Development Ministry has been given to Nirupam Sen, Ashim Dasgupta and he will both meet the ministers and finalise the departmental budgets.

**Q:** Do you believe the evaluation process will improve the Government's performance?

**A:** Certainly. We have told ministers to prepare their programme, budget and action plan in the next financial year. We will monitor and evaluate their performance at least after three months.

**Q:** But why has another ministerial sub-committee been set up?

**A:** No, no. The sub-committee is a party panel and has got nothing to do with the Government. There has been a party sub-committee all these years. I was a convenor of that committee and we discussed and analysed some Government policies. But in the Government, there is only one committee and that is the Cabinet Sub-committee for Industries that will focus only on industries.



party doesn't interfere in our day-to-day work. The party only oversees our work. But ministers should work independently and not be guided only by their allegiance to the party.

**Q:** Two years ago, the State Government appointed McKinsey to look into the activities of the Government and submit a report on how it should improve its performance...

**A:** See, after the Destination Bengal meet, we set up six sub-committees. As far as I remember, one to look into the infrastructure and business prospects of Haldia and one on road development. We have finalised that report and also finalised the North-South Corridor report. The ADB okayed the report on IT and we have formulated our IT policy. As for steps to improve the single-window system of the WBIDC, there are two important parameters. One of them is the creation of a land bank for new investors. We are ensuring that investors get a clear picture of land available from the WBIDC office and don't have to run from pillar to post. We have also announced incentive policies for investors. One hurdle is environment clearance. So we have centralised this system through the pollution control board and have asked them to speed up the cases so that investors are not harassed. It will take some time to improve.

McKinsey has been a great help. We are thinking of engaging them on a permanent basis as consultants. We want to engage them in different projects. For instance, the decision on Kulpri Port has already been finalised and now we are thinking of setting up a Special Economic Zone

fruitful. One of these was the single-window system for industrial development. They correctly identified the loopholes and suggested that if there are separate departments for land, electricity, environment clearance, etc, it creates difficulties for industrialists.

**Q:** You have met several industry captains. What has been their response to your Government's industrial policies?

**A:** Yes, I have met almost all the

chambers leaders and major industry captains. The response has been very positive and they are all happy to see us back in Writers'. They are also eager to help us and invest in Bengal. In the last one month, we have worked on our programmes, identified the areas of concentration from micro to macro level.

**Q:** How much investment has been made in real terms after you started talking about industrial rejuvenation?

**A:** In the last one month, Ambuja Cement has come up with investment proposals and over 400 plastic industries are interested to invest, including Neel Kamal Group. The Bantala leather project is coming up very fast. Since the announcement of our industrial policy, we have attracted investment of over Rs 20,000 crore in various sectors. IT sector is emerging very rapidly. As for joint ventures, we are thinking of joining hands with big players in food processing. Cincona is another area since we have Cincona plantations but have failed to make use of it. We are looking for a player interested in pharmaceutical industries. Another thrust area is mining. We have the resources. We would like to make commercial use of these resources by entering into joint ventures with private companies. Our Mineral Development Corporation is performing very poorly.

MNCs like Siemens, Philips, ITC, Mitsubishi and Videocon are already there. Videocon wants to expand. We are now attracting IBM and they have tied up with Webel to set up a distance-learning system. Now they are interested in providing computer training in schools. I have spoken with Azim Premji of Wipro. He wanted 12 acres, we gave him that. When he asked for more, we allotted him 30 acres.

**Q:** After so many years of neglect, do you think the new Government can usher in an industrial revolution?

**A:** Look, we have to move very

ing my best to attract fresh investment.

**Q:** What are your plans on IT?

**A:** One thrust area is the setting up of software-based IT industries. We are encouraging small and big IT firms to invest here. Already in two sectors at Salt Lake, 20 companies are functioning, employing over 14,000 people. The second thrust area is training. Now we are thinking of setting up IT training centres at Siliguri, Durgapur and Haldia. We have approached Microsoft for setting up training institutes for IT teachers. Now I am waiting for Bill Gates's response. Another area is e-governance. We are trying to introduce IT in important Government departments like land revenue, finance, police and home. We are also tying up with district administrations.

**Q:** Health system is another area that is in a very poor condition. What is your Government doing about it?

**A:** We have already started a health project with World Bank to improve the health system network in rural areas. We have a good network of health services throughout the State, but the main problem lies elsewhere: health administration. The problem is with Group D staff and some unwilling doctors. Unless they are made accountable for their duties, things cannot improve.

The education system also needs to be improved. We have primary schools, but the quality of teachers and teaching tech-

that is not true. Jadavpur University received an award as institute of excellence and Calcutta University recently got the five-star status. However, we have to change the orientation of higher education. We need to give more emphasis on science and technology and set up more technical institutes and engineering colleges.

**Q:** Your Government seems to be more corporo in nature and you appear to be the new CEO...

**A:** (Laughs) No, no. I am not trying to follow the Chandrababu model. I am doing it my own way. I believe just hi-tech and computers cannot improve living condition of the teeming millions. Science and technology should be blended with the ground realities. Man and machine should work together for optimum result. The main thing is to create job opportunities for the younger generation in Bengal.

In agriculture, we have to consolidate our achievement and sustain it. Now we should create more job opportunities in traditional small-scale sectors like leather, handlooms, hosiery, agro-based industries, chemicals and plastics. My aim is to improve the living condition of the 25 per cent below the poverty line and to strengthen the PDS. One should not forget that in this election, the mandate was for the Left Front to fulfil its promises and rectify its mistakes.

**Q:** What about Mamata Banerjee, who is complaining that the Left rigged the elections?

**A:** (Laughs) This is a democratic country. Everybody has the freedom of speech.

**HTC**

THE HINDUSTAN

4 JUN 2001

# 'Mandate to fulfil promises and rectify mistakes'

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We also did well in Jalpaiguri, where they are in a majority. But the point is, this terrorist outfit is still operating with the help of Ulfa and are taking refuge in southern Bhutan. Advani promised to look into the matter.

**Q:** In your meeting with Petroleum Minister Ram Naik, you asked for the involvement of IOC in Haldia Petrochemicals. How will that help?

**A:** I don't want to elaborate on that but the main thing is we want the IOC to join us in HP. We have sent our proposal. Funds and the modalities of joining are being discussed at the official level. We need Central assistance and a partner to run Haldia Petrochemicals. It will be a joint venture.

**Q:** There seems to have been various points of disagreements on policy matters in your discussion with the PM and other ministers. Will that affect Centre-State relations?

**A:** I don't think so. The discussions were held in a cordial atmosphere. The PM was kind enough and listened patiently. The Home Minister showed a lot of interest in the State's law and order and the Petroleum Minister was also eager to help.

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**A:** Certainly. We have told ministers to prepare their programme, budget and action plan in the next financial year. We will monitor and evaluate their performance at least after three months.

**Q:** But why has another ministerial sub-committee been set up?

**A:** No, no. The sub-committee is a party panel and has got nothing to do with the Government. There has been a party sub-committee all these years. I was a convenor of that committee and we discussed and analysed some Government policies. But in the Government, there is only one committee and that is the Cabinet Sub-committee for Industries that will focus only on industries.

**Q:** There is a general feeling that the party is trying to establish its grip over Writers'.

**A:** That's wrong. Ours is party-based democracy, so we formulate policies in the party to run the Government. The Front formulates the broad policies. The



party doesn't interfere in our day-to-day work. The party only oversees our work. But ministers should work independently and not be guided only by their allegiance to the party.

**Q:** Two years ago, the State Government appointed McKinsey to look into the activities of the Government and submit a report on how it should improve its performance...

**A:** See, after the Destination Bengal meet, we set up six sub-committees. As far as I remember, one to look into the infrastructure and business prospects of Haldia and one on road development. We have finalised that report and also finalised the North-South Corridor report. The ADB okayed the report on IT and we have formulated our IT policy. As for steps to improve the single-window system of the WBIDC, there are two important parameters. One of them is the creation of a land bank for new investors. We are ensuring that investors get a clear picture of land available from the WBIDC office and don't have to run from pillar to post. We have also announced incentive policies for investors. One hurdle is environment clearance. So we have centralised this system through the pollution control board and have asked them to speed up the cases so that investors are not harassed. It will take some time to improve.

McKinsey has been a great help. We are thinking of engaging them on a permanent basis as consultants. We want to engage them in different projects. For instance, the decision on Kulpi Port has already been finalised and now we are thinking of setting up a Special Economic Zone in this prestigious private port. For that, we would like to take McKinsey's assistance. Again, on the North-South corridor, we would like McKinsey's help to improve the roads. So we are seriously thinking of engaging McKinsey on a regular basis.

Its advice has so far been very

fruitful. One of these was the single-window system for industrial development. They correctly identified the loopholes and suggested that if there are separate departments for land, electricity, environment clearance, etc, it creates difficulties for industrialists.

**Q:** You have met several industry captains. What has been their response to your Government's industrial policies?

**A:** Yes, I have met almost all the

chambers leaders and major industry captains. The response has been very positive and they are all happy to see us back in Writers'. They are also eager to help us and invest in Bengal. In the last one month, we have worked on our programmes, identified the areas of concentration from micro to macro level.

**Q:** How much investment has been made in real terms after you started talking about industrial rejuvenation?

**A:** In the last one month, Ambuja Cement has come up with investment proposals and over 400 plastic industries are interested to invest, including Neel Kamal Group. The Bantala leather project is coming up very fast. Since the announcement of our industrial policy, we have attracted investment of over Rs 20,000 crore in various sectors. IT sector is emerging very rapidly. As for joint ventures, we are thinking of joining hands with big players in food processing. Cincona is another area since we have Cincona plantations but have failed to make use of it. We are looking for a player interested in pharmaceutical industries. Another thrust area is mining. We have the resources. We would like to make commercial use of these resources by entering into joint ventures with private companies. Our Mineral Development Corporation is performing very poorly.

MNCs like Siemens, Philips, ITC, Mitsubishi and Videocon are already there. Videocon wants to expand. We are now attracting IBM and they have tied up with Webel to set up a distance-learning system. Now they are interested in providing computer training in schools. I have spoken with Azim Premji of Wipro. He wanted 12 acres, we gave him that. When he asked for more, we allotted him 30 acres.

**Q:** After so many years of neglect, do you think the new Government can usher in an industrial revolution?

**A:** Look, we have to move ver-

ing my best to attract fresh investment.

**Q:** What are your plans on IT?

**A:** One thrust area is the setting up of software-based IT industries. We are encouraging small and big IT firms to invest here. Already in two sectors at Salt Lake, 20 companies are functioning, employing over 14,000 people. The second thrust area is training. Now we are thinking of setting up IT training centres at Siliguri, Durgapur and Haldia. We have approached Microsoft for setting up training institutes for IT teachers. Now I am waiting for Bill Gates's response. Another area is e-governance. We are trying to introduce IT in important Government departments like land revenue, finance, police and home. We are also tying up with district administrations.

**Q:** Health system is another area that is in a very poor condition. What is your Government doing about it?

**A:** We have already started a health project with World Bank to improve the health system network in rural areas. We have a good network of health services throughout the State, but the main problem lies elsewhere: health administration. The problem is with Group D staff and some unwilling doctors. Unless they are made accountable for their duties, things cannot improve.

The education system also needs to be improved. We have primary schools, but the quality of teachers and teaching tech-

that is not true. Jadavpur University received an award as institute of excellence and Calcutta University recently got the five-star status. However, we have to change the orientation of higher education. We need to give more emphasis on science and technology and set up more technical institutes and engineering colleges.

**Q:** Your Government seems to be more corpo in nature and you appear to be the new CEO...

**A:** (Laughs) No, no. I am not trying to follow the Chandrababu model. I am doing it my own way. I believe just hi-tech and computers cannot improve living condition of the teeming millions. Science and technology should be blended with the ground realities. Man and machine should work together for optimum result. The main thing is to create job opportunities for the younger generation in Bengal.

In agriculture, we have to consolidate our achievement and sustain it. Now we should create more job opportunities in traditional small-scale sectors like leather, handlooms, hosiery, agro-based industries, chemicals and plastics. My aim is to improve the living condition of the 25 per cent below the poverty line and to strengthen the PDS. One should not forget that in this election, the mandate was for the Left Front to fulfil its promises and rectify its mistakes.

**Q:** What about Mamata Banerjee, who is complaining that the Left rigged the elections?

**A:** (Laughs) This is a democratic country. Everybody has the freedom of speech.

HTC

THE INDUSTRY

4 JUN 2001

# Law will take its course in stadium case: Anil

9-8 MB

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 3. — The law will take its course in the Salt Lake Stadium arrests case and the CPI-M will decide on the action to be taken after the CID submits its report, the party's state secretary, said today.

The arrests of armed criminals from the stadium has embarrassed the government and the CPI-M. The stadium falls under the sports minister, Mr Subhas Chakraborty's department.

Mr Anil Biswas, told the Statesman: "Let the real truth come out and the law will take its course. We don't believe in any witch-hunting and action will be taken on the basis of the CID probe report."

Mr Chakraborty is expected to submit his report to the chief minister in a day or two. Yesterday, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya told the Assembly that he had asked Mr Chakraborty to explain how the criminals had entered the stadium.

Mr Biswas said he didn't know much about the arrangements at the stadium. "I had no idea about the accommodation... I've only heard armed criminals were arrested from the complex. The CID inquiry will reveal who these criminals are and what their connections are and why and for how long they had been staying there," Mr Biswas said.

Doesn't the whole incident suitly the "clean image" of the new government? Mr Biswas said: "It's certainly an unfortunate

## SUBHAS HINTS AT QUITTING

KOLKATA, July 3. — Mr Subhas Chakraborty has hinted that he may resign from the ministry if the CPI-M divests him of the sports portfolio as a fall-out of the Salt Lake Stadium scandal. Losing the sports department would be too great a humiliation for him, he reportedly told close associates. He's willing to face any action short of losing the sports portfolio. "I've suffered enough in the party. This is nothing new to me", he reportedly told party colleagues. But the sports and transport minister reportedly said he would not oblige those within and outside the CPI-M by quitting the party. For, that would make those who conspired to malign and victimise him happy. — SNS

incident and it does cause some difficulty for the government and the party. But we want to know the truth first and only then we can go to the people with the whole story."

Will the wings of Mr Chakraborty be clipped? Mr Biswas said: "Well, we don't believe in

witch-hunting. Mere allegations are not enough. We'll act on the basis of the government report."

Hadn't Mr Chakraborty given the party enough trouble before the last Assembly polls by criticising party policies and hinting at joining forces with Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury? Mr

Mr Biswas said: "By no means. Mr Basu is an asset to the party. He set an example in the country's political culture by stepping down as chief minister on his own after repeatedly requesting the party to relieve him of his government responsibilities. For, it was not physically possible for him to perform the onerous task of heading a government at the age 87."

"In fact, tomorrow we'll announce the action we've taken against errant partymen, including those in the North 24-Parganas who tried to sabotage the party's poll prospects in May," he said.

Mr Biswas denied that the scandal was a fall-out of the party's North 24-Parganas unit infighting.

The "so-called" factional feud is "a pure fabrication". And it's not true that the party has tolerated Mr Chakraborty for a long time because of Mr Jyoti Basu's reported support to him. "...it's a media distortion. Mr Basu loves all partymen."

But has Mr Basu become a liability for the CPI-M? Mr

More reports on page 4  
 Editorial: Buddha makes a move, page 6

# Reminiscences of the Emergency

**I**f only Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee respected the unanimously passed resolution of the state unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party to recall Tamil Nadu governor Fathima Beevi, and a similar resolution by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, leader of the National Democratic Alliance in the state, for showing scant regard to the spirit of the Constitution and democratic norms in inviting J Jayalalitha of the AIADMK — a criminal convicted thrice over and sentenced to varying jail terms but out on bail granted by Madras High Court — to form the government, the nation could have been spared the ignominy of having in the Indian Union a banana republic where jungle raj prevails.

Even if Miss Beevi pleads ignorance of the nuances of the Constitution, she should have known that when a criminal is elevated to the post of chief minister, the rule of law will be the first casualty. And that is exactly what has been happening in Tamil Nadu from the day Miss Jayalalitha was sworn in as chief minister by Miss Beevi. During her campaign for the Assembly election in April-May, Miss Jayalalitha told the electorate that if voted to power her first priority would be to put DMK president and former chief minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi and members of his family behind bars. She also boasted that Mr Karunanidhi would be locked up in the same cell in Chennai Central Jail in which she was detained, quite legally, for a few days in 1996 during the DMK regime.

For starters, Miss Jayalalitha wanted the 25-year-old Sarkaria Commission report dusted and prosecution launched against Mr Karunanidhi. The Sarkaria Commission itself was part of the emergency excess of Indira Gandhi and the CBI had failed to establish any of the charges contained therein in a court of law. It was given a quiet burial.

During her first visit to New Delhi after becoming a probationary chief minister on 14 May, Miss Jayalalitha wanted Mr Vajpayee to instruct the CBI to relaunch prosecution against Mr Karunanidhi based on the Sarkaria Commission report. The Prime Minister brushed aside her request. On her return, Miss Jayalalitha gave Director-General of Police R Rajagopalan a virtual ultimatum to get Mr Karunanidhi and MK Stalin, his political heir-apparent son and mayor of Chennai, arrested, preferably on or before 3 June, the 78th birthday of the former chief minister. Though a Jayalalitha loyalist, Mr Rajagopalan failed to fulfil her desire.

Finding time running out as her six-month probation ends on 13 November, by which date she has to get elected to the Assembly, and realising the inability of her cabinet colleagues to dig up any tangible evidence to nail the DMK government, Miss Jayalalitha on 25 June gave one hour's notice to Mr Rajagopalan to vacate his seat and appointed A Ravindranath the new DGP on the understanding that he would succeed where his predecessor had failed. Two days later, Miss Jayalalitha appointed JT Acharyalu, IAS — an accused in



**WITHOUT A SHRED OF EVIDENCE:** The arrests of M Karunanidhi (above), MK Stalin (left) and several other DMK supporters were ordered by J Jayalalitha (seen above with Fathima Beevi, who has since resigned as Tamil Nadu governor) in contravention of constitutional rules. — AP/PTI.

the multi-crore-rupee Jawahar Rozgar Yojana Scheme scam during her earlier regime and placed under suspension by the DMK government — the Chennai Corporation commissioner. He is the third commissioner of Chennai since Miss Jayalalitha's return to power six weeks ago and he was happy to carry out any instruction from the chief minister but none from the mayor. He even boycotted the corporation council meeting last week to please his mentor.

Within two days of assuming office, Mr Acharyalu "discovered"

that Mr Stalin, Mr Karunanidhi, former local administration minister Ko Si Mani, former transport minister K Ponnudi, former chief secretaries KA Nambiar and AP Muthusamy, and a few officials who gave evidence against Miss Jayalalitha, had, between them, made Rs 12 crore in the construction of 10 flyovers in Chennai at the cost of Rs 115.50 crore. Without a shred of documentary evidence, he registered a case with the revamped Crime Branch CID on Friday evening and the police swung into action with midnight

knocks, reminiscent of the Emergency days, on the residences of Mr Karunanidhi, Mr Stalin and others, not even bothering to obtain arrest warrants from any court of law.

When Mr Karunanidhi asked the police who broke into his home at 1.30 am whether they had a warrant of arrest, they told him they had an arrest card. An arrest card is prepared after arrest and remand in custody and not before. The Supreme Court, in the DK Basu vs the State of Rajasthan case in 1997, laid down a 11-point procedure which should be followed

Even if Fathima Beevi pleads ignorance of the nuances of the Constitution, she should have known that when a criminal is elevated to the post of chief minister, the rule of law will be the first casualty. **SAM RAJAPPA** makes a case for an amendment which would ensure that a person disqualified from contesting election to the legislature does not end up as chief minister, making a mockery of the Constitution

in all cases of arrest. They are:

1. The person carrying out the arrest and handling the interrogation of the arrestee should wear accurate, visible and clear identification and name tags of their designation; the particulars of all other personnel who handle the interrogation must be recorded in a report.
2. The arresting officer should prepare a memo of arrest at the time of the arrest, which should be attested by a family member or respected person from the locality. It should be countersigned by the arrestee and should contain the time and date of arrest.
3. A person detained or interrogated in a police station or any other centre is entitled to have a friend or relative being informed as soon as practicable of the person's arrest and of his being detained in a particular place.
4. The time and place of arrest or venue of custody must be notified by the police to a relative or friend, if he lives

outside the town, through the legal aid organisation in the district and the police station of the area concerned telegraphically within 12 hours of the arrest.

5. The arrestee must be made aware of his right that someone be informed of his detention immediately after the arrest or detention.

6. An entry must be made in the diary at the place of the detention on the arrest of the person. It should also contain the name of the friend/relative who is informed of the arrest, and the names and particulars of the police officials in whose custody the arrestee is.

7. If the arrestee wishes, any injuries on his/her body must be recorded during arrest. The inspection memo must be signed by both the arrestee and the officer effecting the arrest and a copy provided to the arrestee.

8. The arrestee should be examined by doctors every 48 hours during detention.

9. The copies of all documents including the memo of arrest should be sent to the magistrate.

10. The arrestee may be permitted to meet his lawyer during interrogation, though not throughout.

11. A police control room should be provided in all districts and State headquarters to provide information on the arrestee and the place of his/her custody, within 12 hours of the arrest. The information should be displayed on conspicuous notice boards.

In the case of the arrest of Mr Karunanidhi and more than 30,000 DMK workers throughout the state, the police have flouted all these procedures and they invite contempt of the highest court in the country. One of the raiding police party, Murugesan, was placed under suspension by the previous government. Miss Jayalalitha promoted him and included him in the elite team.

While there is a sigh of relief that Miss Fathima Beevi, the sinner, has been ejected from the Guindy Raj Bhavan in Chennai, the sin she has committed continues to haunt Tamil Nadu. To prevent any future governor from committing a similar sin, the Vajpayee government, which has appointed a Constitution Review Commission, should consider introducing a minor amendment to Article 163 relating to the appointment of the chief minister and his council of ministers to include Section (c) of Articles 58(1) and 66 (30). Section (c) of Article 58(1) stipulates that no person shall be eligible for election of President of India unless he "is qualified for election as a member of the House of the People". Section (c) of Article 66(30) says that no person shall be eligible for election as Vice-President unless he is qualified for election as a member of the Council of States. Such an amendment would ensure that a person disqualified from contesting election to the legislature does not end up as chief minister, making a mockery of the Constitution.

*(The author is a veteran journalist who retired from The Statesman and is based in Chennai.)*



# Opp cries foul but makes no dent

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, July 2

THERE WAS a lot of noise and little of substance in the Assembly today. The Opposition demanded a CBI probe into Tuesday's raids, ripped up copies of the Chief Minister's statement and walked out. However, they did not use parliamentary procedures to put their views on record effectively.

The Leader of the Opposition subsequently referred to Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's statement in the House as a piece of toilet paper—a strong statement by all means—but of little use. Especially since the Opposition did little to punch holes into the Chief Minister's report.

And how could they? Neither the Trinamool nor the Congress moved a calling attention motion demanding a statement from the Chief Minister. Even if senior Congress MLA Abdul Mannan had done so some days ago, he wasn't even present in the House to pursue the matter. An opportunity to put the Government on the mat was clearly missed.

Instead, unruly Trinamool Congress revelled in thumping desks and raising a din—so much so, that the SUCI's Debasard Sarkar who had moved the calling attention motion could not even ask his question. The din proved clearly counter-productive. As the Opposition members raised hell, the Chief Minister—who was originally supposed to read out his statement—quietly laid it on the table of the House and walked away unchallenged.

Senior Opposition legislators such as Shobhandeb Chattopadhyay and Saugata Roy were no exceptions. They called Transport Minister Subhas Chakrabarty's attention on the misappropriation of CSTC funds. Instead of asking questions on



Trinamool Congress MLAs walk out during the Chief Minister's speech on Monday.

ASHOK NATH DEV/HINDUSTAN TIMES

the subject, they too digressed to the stadium muddle.

As if to lampoon the sports minister, Trinamool MLA Sonali Guha came in a hat and raised slogans such as "Subhasher khelaghore criminalra khela kore". Guha and her followers stomped the secretary's desk. Soon enough, Chattopadhyay and Pankaj Banerjee tried to force their way to the Speaker's seat and a Trinamool MLA vented his spleen on a hapless

Assembly staff keeping minutes of House proceedings.

Chattopadhyay returned to his seat only after the Speaker sternly asked him to ask his question.

"I am asking you for the last time to ask your question to the Sports Minister." The Trinamool MLAs, bent on losing an advantage that was theirs, continued hollering even when the Chief Minister rose to speak. His voice was drowned

and he didn't make an effort to be heard. He tabled his statement and cleared out. Later, the Trinamool and the Congress walked out of the House demanding the Sports Minister's resignation.

Later, Banerjee literally ate his own words when he described the Chief Minister's statement as a piece of toilet paper and yet demanded a discussion on it.

"We urged the Speaker to let

us ask our questions before the Chief Minister made his speech. But he behaved like a loyal CPI(M) cadre and denied us the opportunity," Banerjee said. Both the Trinamool and the Congress sought a CBI probe. "The CID is part of the State police. We don't have faith in it. We have therefore sought a CBI probe. And when the inquiry is on, Chakrabarty must remain out of the ministry," Banerjee said.

## Subhas loyalists see party hand in stadium slur More arrests in the offing

Arindam Sarkar  
Kolkata, July 2

LOYALISTS OF Subhas Chakrabarty believe that elements within the CPI(M) — worried by the recent narrowing down of differences between the Minister and Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee — stage-managed Tuesday night's arrests from Salt Lake and Howrah.

Chakrabarty, putting up a brave front insisting his party is behind him, himself believes that some people within the organisation had set it all up to humiliate him, his camp followers say.

It's virtually impossible for such a massive raid to be carried out without either the Chief Minister or the party top brass knowing of it, Chakrabarty is learnt to have told his confidants.

"I would like to believe that I enjoy the party's support. All I can say is that those who don't like me are behind this. Such mischief won't pay off. They can never tarnish my image. They can't turn the people against me," Chakrabarty told *Hindustan Times*.

There could be two motives behind the frame-up bid. The party leadership, his

camp believes, did not take his pre-poll tantrums kindly and was itching to get back at him. Hence, the police action. Chakrabarty's plain-speaking had pushed the party to the brink of a crisis. Only after he gave the likes of Anil Biswas and Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee some sleepless nights, did he agree to contest the polls from Belgachia East.

But it's the other thesis that Chakrabarty loyalists find more plausible. Top-party leaders, uneasy at the new bonhomie between Bhattacharjee and the minister, took this step to paint the minister in poor light.

Subhas-baiters such as Anil Biswas, Biman Bose, Nirupam Sen, Surya Kanta Mishra, Asim Dasgupta, Amitava Basu and Amitava Nandi were all in it, they believe.

These men saw the rise of the Buddha-Subhas combine as a direct challenge to the party's stranglehold over the administration. The "expose" would not just malign Chakrabarty, it would also embarrass the Chief Minister. The destabilisation it would cause would land Bhattacharjee in a crisis.

Biswas, however, dis-

missed these theories as sheer bunkum: "I don't see conspiracies everywhere. The party is backing Buddhadeb to the hilt. And, it will continue to do so."

Equally strong was Nirupam Sen's rebuttal. "This is ridiculous. How can one even think of playing such a dangerous game? Subhas is a senior Cabinet member and a party colleague. If the police claims that Tapash Ghosh — arrested for harbouring goons inside the stadium — is known to Subhas, it's just as true that the Chief Minister, CPI(M) State secretary, Home Secretary, DGP and I didn't have any knowledge of the first police raid."

Sen insisted that the Opposition, instead of boycotting the House, should agree to a discussion. "Only then will the truth be known." Perhaps, he was hinting at some evidence of Trinamool involvement in the episode gathered by the police.

"It's known that most of the hoodlums nabbed worked for Howrah Trinamool leaders. The investigation will unearth who they really worked for. I'm sure Subhas had nothing to do with these men," said CPI(M) MLA Kanika Ganguly.

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, July 2

THE CHIEF Minister may still not be "satisfied" with the progress of investigations into the Salt Lake Stadium scandal, but if feelers within the police are any indication, there should be more arrests in the offing.

At least four people had already been identified along with Tapash Ghosh for harbouring criminals at the stadium, and a massive manhunt was underway for them, insiders said.

The police are curious to know what exactly had prompted them to harbour the criminals rounded up from the stadium.

"We are not interested in political affiliations of the offender. Because, law does not discriminate on such grounds. We'd like to know why these youths had been provided shelter, and we will try to ascertain the motive," a senior officer heading the investigating team told the *Hindustan Times* today.

Besides Tapash Ghosh, the other man prominent on the "wanted" list is Beliaghata heavy-weight Gobindo Dey. Denying claims of his arrest, the sleuths said today that they were still on the lookout for the absconding man. They refused to name the others on the "wanted" list.

That the cops were in no mood to let the investigation lose any of its bite was apparent today when they urged the court not let Tapash Ghosh get out on bail. The

plea was granted and Ghosh was sent to judicial custody for 14 days for an ordinarily bailable offence.

But while such moves might leave no room for doubt that the cops this time mean business, but why Ghosh was arrested five days after the criminals had been rounded up from Salt Lake and their confessions were heard, is still far from clear.

Police, on their part, are claiming that their primary motive was to know where the gang was heading for and not who provided them shelter. But not many citizens are convinced.

While the district police are gearing up to flush out a few more crooks, the CID sitting up and taking a serious note of the Presidency Range DIG's report on the stadium scandal. Additional director-general of police (CID) KK Mondal has been entrusted with the task of setting up teams to carry the investigation forward.

According to a section of senior CID officers, the primary of the police would be to look into the details of the criminal motive of the arrested gang and then proceed to find out the objective of those who had provided them shelter. So far, only Rabindra Nath Mondal has been retained in police custody but questions are being asked as to why Dick and Toton were allowed judicial custody even though the police were aware of the depth of their involvement in criminal activities in Howrah and parts of Dum Dum and Lake Town.

# Explain criminals' stay at stadium: CM to Subhas

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 2. — The chief minister today asked Mr Subhas Chakraborty to explain how the criminals entered Yuba Bharati Krirangan and decided to order a CID probe into their arrests at the stadium and Howrah.

Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya told the Assembly that he was not "satisfied with the manner in which the inquiry is being made". Hence, "considering the seriousness of the crime, I've decided to order a CID probe."

(But the sports and transport minister has denied having being sought an explanation. See report on page 4)

Trinamul MLAs walked out of the House soon after Mr Bhattacharya's statement was distributed.

Amid protests bordering on pandemonium, Mr Bhattacharya rose to read out his statement on the arrest of 11 criminals. But he wasn't allowed to do so by Trinamul members who rushed to the well and shouted slogans demanding the sports and transport minister's ouster.

A perplexed Mr Chakraborty was sitting in front of the chief minister.

Immediately after the session began, Mr Saugata Roy (Trinamul) entered the House, pointed at Mr Chakraborty and said: "Ei



Mr Lakshmi Dey and Mr Subhas Chakraborty in the Assembly on Monday. — The Statesman

to, dakaat mantri boshe acche (The dacoit minister is sitting there)". The Opposition leader, Mr Pankaj Banerjee, said: "Tapash aar Gobindar por third ashaami Subhas Chakraborty ke ekhoni arrest karoon (Arrest Subhas Chakraborty, the third accused after Tapash and Gobinda)". Treasury bench members, however, didn't react.

The proceedings began with Mr Abdul Mannan's question on the government's decision to allot liquor licences. His question was punctuated by Trinamul members' slogans ilke "Subhas-er khelaghare criminal ra khela

kare (Criminals play in Subhas Chakraborty's stadium)".

After the excise minister, Mr Prabodh Sinha, replied to Mr Mannan's question, the higher education minister, Mr Satyashan Chakraborty, rose to reply to the queries of Mr Subrata Bakshi on the scrapping of higher secondary courses in 86 schools. Mr Chakraborty could speak but not in full because Trinamul members had again started demanding Mr Chakraborty's removal.

Pandemonium reached its peak at 11.55 p.m. when the chief minister entered the House. Mr Saugata Roy and Mr

Sovandeb Chattopadhyay asked the sports minister whether he had allowed criminals to stay in the Salt Lake stadium.

As soon as Mr Bhattacharya took his seat, Trinamul members rushed towards the Speaker demanding immediate suspension of all activities to discuss the statement Mr Bhattacharya was scheduled to make.

The members also tried to rush towards the chief minister demanding Mr Chakraborty's immediate arrest but were prevented by the securitymen.

Mr Jyotipriya Mallick and Mrs Sonali Guha (Trinamul) stood on a table to protest against Mr Chakraborty continuing as minister. Their colleagues banged desks, tore Mr Bhattacharya's statement into pieces and threw around booklets.

At this point, Mr Bhattacharya walked up to the Speaker and whispered something into his ears. The Speaker then announced that it wouldn't be possible for the chief minister to read out his statement and, hence, it would be laid on the table. Trinamul members then walked out.

Mr Bhattacharya's statement says police, acting on a tip-off, raided a place near Panchanantala Shishu Udyan, Howrah, on Tuesday night

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SUBHAS:

(Continued from page 1)

(26 June) and arrested seven persons who were planning a dacoity. Two revolvers and five single-shooters were seized from them. They told police that some of their associates were hiding in Salt Lake stadium. Police then raided the stadium and rounded up 16 people, of whom four were identified by the seven arrested earlier as members of their gang. Of the 16, the four identified were arrested and the rest released. Nineteen rounds of ammunition were seized from the four. A case under Section 399/402 of the IPC and 25/27/35 of the Arms Act was lodged on 27 June.

The statement says that those arrested are "dreaded criminals" who were active in Howrah and adjoining districts. Police have come to know that one Palash Das is the gang leader. He is absconding. It was also found that the names of those arrested from the stadium didn't figure in the accommodation register of the stadium's youth hostel.

THE STATESMAN

## Trinamool lifts House boycott

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, July 1

THE TRINAMOOL Congress Legislative Party lifted its House boycott today and made it clear that it would not give the Government a walkover when Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee makes a statement on the stadium scandal tomorrow.

"We will demand a discussion on the Chief Minister's statement in the Assembly," Opposition leader Pankaj Banerjee said. The Congress is likely to follow suit as senior party MLA Abdul Mannan had earlier moved an adjournment motion on the deteriorating law and order in the State.

Trinamool MLAs also plan to use the Question Hour tomorrow, in which Subhas Chakrabarty is slated to answer questions.

The leader of the Opposition took the decision of lifting the boycott after some of his party MLAs, including Saugata Roy and freshers like Arunava Ghosh and Partha Chatterjee, urged him to reconsider continuing the boycott till Tuesday and instead use the House session to embarrass the Government.

Banerjee has also requested Congress MLAs to participate in the Assembly proceedings tomorrow. "I have urged Mannan to convey the decision to his MLAs."

## STADIUM SCANDAL

# Subhas loyalist in police net

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, July 1

IN A surprise swoop, the North 24-Parganas police today arrested Transport Minister Subhas Chakrabarty's Man Friday Tapash Ghosh on charges of harbouring criminals at the Salt Lake stadium.

Forty-five-year-old Ghosh was arrested after two criminals, Digbijoy Moitra alias Dick and his associate Tarun Chakrabarty alias Toton, identified him as the man who had sanctioned their stay inside the stadium compound for more than a month.

Apart from Ghosh, party member Gobindo Dey's name too figured on the list of those identified by the criminals.

The arrest, which comes barely four days after the Howrah Police rounded up a gang of 16 criminals from the stadium, is likely to give a new twist to the raging controversy over the politician-criminal nexus in the State.

The arrest will be a shot in the arm for the Opposition, which will certainly try to nail Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee when the latter makes his statement in the Assembly tomorrow.

Within hours after news broke



WILL HE HAVE THE LAST LAUGH?

of the arrest, Subhas Chakrabarty rushed to meet former Chief Minister and his mentor Jyoti Basu at the latter's Salt Lake residence. He was not available for comments till late in the evening.

Chakrabarty's visit followed Chief Minister Bhattacharjee's visit to Basu. In fact, Bhattacharjee met him twice during the day.

The arrest was the culmination of a perfect operation. Earlier in the day, the police called Ghosh from his Baguihati residence for his reaction to the claims made by two notorious criminals from Howrah. When Ghosh denied any involvement,

he was picked up and taken to Howrah for cross verification. "Once Ghosh was brought face to face with Dick and Toton, the two immediately identified him. Ghosh was arrested thereafter on charges of harbouring criminals," the superintendent of North 24-Parganas police Kuldeep Singh said.

A joint secretary of the Friends of the Stadium and a member of the Sports Council, Ghosh was a key lieutenant of the Transport Minister, always playing a crucial role whenever function were organised at the stadium.

Police investigations revealed that both Toton and Dick were hardened criminals from the Lake Town and Dum Dum areas, who had joined hands with two notorious gangsters, Buro Khoka of Shibpur and Palash Das of Bally, to spread their spheres of influence beyond North 24-Parganas and into Howrah.

Ghosh's links with these two rattled a section of the police and political leaders.

Trinamool Policy Making Body chairman Pankaj Banerjee reacting to the news of the arrest, with a demand for immediate resignation of the Transport Minister and prompt booking of the stadium's caretaker.

Bosses blow hot and cold on former rebel

# Party gag on Subhas detractors at meet

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'Sabotage' chapter opened

BY A STAFF REPORTER

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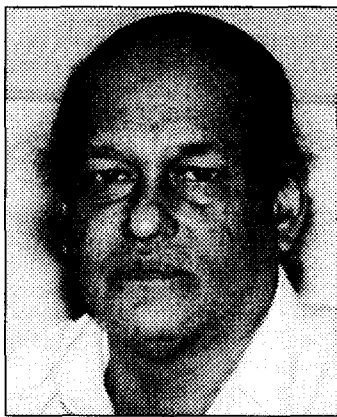
Calcutta, June 30: Known detractors of Subhas Chakraborty in the CPM, Amitava Bose and Shanti Ghatak, were not allowed to raise the Salt Lake stadium issue during the first day of the two-day CPM state committee meeting today.

State CPM secretary Anil Biswas and politburo member Biman Bose told the meeting that no discussion will be allowed even within the party forum till Monday when chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee will make a statement in the Assembly.

The CPM state secretariat, which met yesterday, had decided not to discuss the issue during the state committee meeting. Party leaders also instructed Chakraborty not to get "provoked" if any member tried to raise the issue during today's meeting.

"We have called the state committee meeting to review our poll performance and not discuss the Salt Lake stadium issue and we have made this clear to all our members," Biswas said.

It is learnt that despite this, Amitava Bose tried to raise the issue at the meeting but was firmly put down by Biswas and others.



Subhas Chakraborty

However, those close to the transport minister tried to impress upon the other members to treat the entire issue as a "closed chapter" much like how the party tried to handle Jyoti Basu's reference to the "historic blunder" of not joining the Union government.

It is learnt that Bhattacharjee has already instructed the police to look into the allegation by Chakraborty that Trinamul Congress had masterminded the stadium episode with help from Sujit Bose, a Trinamul councillor from South Dum Dum, who was once

close to Chakraborty.

Sources said the CPM leadership is not going to take any stern action against Chakraborty as the budget session is on. Sources in the CPM also hinted that though no immediate step will be initiated against Chakraborty, the sports portfolio might be taken away from him at a later date.

Though the stadium issue was not raised, party leaders from Burdwan, Malda, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar mentioned that a number of CPM candidates in these districts had to face defeat during the May 10 Assembly polls because of "intra-party feuds".

Party leaders from Burdwan complained that the CPM nominee in Durgapur II Assembly seat, Debabrata Banerjee, was defeated due to "conspiracy by a section of party leaders in the district". The CPM candidate in Hirapur Assembly segment had to face defeat for the same "intra-party rivalry", district leaders mentioned during the meeting.

Representatives from Malda, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, however, told the party leaders that alliance between the Trinamul and Congress had given the CPM an edge, helping many of its candidates to win.

Calcutta, June 30: Though the Alimuddin Street bosses declared the Salt Lake stadium controversy a "closed chapter", they today ratified recommendations from the party's North 24-Parganas district unit to set up a commission to probe the alleged "sabotage" by Chakraborty and his associates leading to the electoral debacle in the four Assembly segments in the district.

The issue came up at a marathon meeting of the state committee where former chief minister Jyoti Basu was among those present.

Chakraborty's detractors from the district alleged that the transport minister had played a role in ensuring the defeat of party nominees in Panihati, Habra, Rajarhat and Dum Dum Assembly seats.

The district committee had set up the commission headed by Gourisankar Bose, a district committee member, to probe the allegations of "sabotage" by senior district CPM leaders like Amitava Nandy, who had contested from Habra and lost.

Another important party leader was former chief whip in the Assembly, Rabin Mondal, who lost from Rajarhat.