

# Snap ties with Ulfa & KLO before talks, CM tells KPP

HT Correspondent  
Siliguri, July 15

CHIEF MINISTER Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today made it clear that the State Government would not hold talks with the Kamtapur People's Party unless it severed all links with the Ulfa and Kamtapur Liberation Organisation. "We will not allow North Bengal to become another Assam," he said.

Speaking at a function organised by the Darjeeling District Left Front on the concluding day of his North Bengal visit, the Chief Minister held the KPP responsible for "inviting the terror of KLO and Ulfa to North Ben-

gal". He alleged the KPP of aiding the KLO in exhortation crimes in North Bengal. KLO activists, who are in Bhutan, are launching attacks in North Bengal with the help of the Ulfa, he said.

Stating that the Government was ready to hold talks with the KPP, Buddhadeb said, "The KPP has to choose between the two — their relationship with the Ulfa and KLO, or talks. There is no point in having talks amidst violence." He however made no mention of KPP's demands for language status and separate Statehood. The Chief Minister held the KPP responsible for the backwardness of the Rajbansis. "The KPP is merely resorting to

violence in the name of developing the Rajbansis," he said.

PTI quotes KPP president, Atul Roy as saying, "The Chief Minister is wrong if he thinks that KPP has relations with the KLO". He said the KPP would talk with the Government if it released the 200 imprisoned KPP leaders.

Switching to the Trinamool Congress accusation that the Assembly polls were rigged, he challenged the Opposition party to even go to the Supreme Court to prove their claim. Without naming Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee, Buddhadeb said the Trinamool had insulted the peoples' verdict by stalling proceedings in the House. After inaugu-

rating a police housing-complex at Dabgram, he asked the police to be friendlier with the people. All policemen would also be brought under life insurance scheme soon, the chief minister announced. He had attended a meeting of the Uttar Banga Unnayan Parishad in Coochbehar yesterday.

He said the State Government would lay emphasis on agro-based industries in North Bengal. Lambasting the Centre for its anti-poor stance, the Chief Minister reiterated that the State Government would continue with ration system even if the Union Government withdraws it.

He promised 600,000 new jobs to the State in the next five years.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Telangana BJP threat over Statehood

HT Correspondent  
Hyderabad, June 10

BJP LEADERS from Telangana are sore over the party president Jana Krishnamurthi's statement ruling out a separate State for their region. Senior leaders, including two MPs and one MLA, have reportedly threatened to quit the party if the high command continued to "ignore the genuine aspirations of the people of Telangana".

Medak MP A Narendra and a senior leader have threatened to form a separate forum to fight for the Telangana cause. He announced that a meeting of senior leaders of the region will be held at Medak on June 14 where they will finalise their stand and the same would be conveyed to the high command. "The State unit is prepared to go against the Central leadership on the issue," he said.

The BJP leaders are worried that there might be an exodus of cadres to the newly-formed Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) as TRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao had given warning signal by saying on Friday that a number of top BJP leaders were in touch with him.

The TRS has already got a



boost as hundreds of workers from various parties, including the BJP, the Congress and the TDP, have joined it.

Taking the party leaders' revolt into consideration, the BJP central leadership has directed national vice-president V Ramarao to pacify the disgruntled leaders.

Meanwhile, the State unit is preparing the ground to sell the changed decision on Telangana to the rank and file. In an article published in the latest issue of "Jana Sandesh" (Telugu), the official mouthpiece, the party admitted for the first time that remaining in power at the Centre was more important than fulfilling the electoral promises made to the Telangana people. "If the

BJP exerts pressure on the Chandrababu Naidu Government for a separate Telangana State, the latter may withdraw support to the NDA Government, resulting in its fall," it argued.

The article further said that Andhra's ruling party was totally opposed to bifurcation of the State and will not think twice before withdrawing support to the Vajpayee Government. The article advised the cadres not to fall prey to the sinister political game of the Congress and the TRS.

In a related move aimed at stemming the separatist agitation, the Naidu Government has decided to strictly implement a 1985 Government order regarding reservation of jobs for the people of Telangana. The order was issued by the then TDP Government, headed by NT Rama Rao, after it was discovered that over 60,000 jobs which should have been given to the people of Telangana were actually given to people from other regions. Non-implementation of the order was one of the main issues of the TRS. TRS leader Chandrasekhar Rao had charged that the people of Telangana lost several lakh jobs as the Government order was never implemented.

# Telengana stir a problem for all parties

HT Correspondent  
Hyderabad, June 19

ALTHOUGH THE ruling TDP remained firmly opposed to the separate State idea and forbade its leaders to talk about it, TDP leaders from the Telengana region admit in private that their cadres are going away to join the TRS. But they cannot speak out for fear of Chandrababu Naidu.

The Congress and BJP seemed to be the most inconveniently placed. BJP president Jana Krishnamurthy's "no" to Telengana has virtually caused a vertical split in the party.

It is faced with a virtual revolt with two of its four MPs from Telengana, A Narendra and A P Jitender Reddy, and two MLAs,

Ravindranath Reddy and Ramakrishna Reddy, threatening to quit the party if the party doesn't concede the Telengana demand.

"They say the party in its election manifesto had promised 'one vote, two States'. Having won the polls, how can it betray the people's trust?"

In a belated attempt to stem the dissent, the State BJP on Saturday sacked senior leader and head of its Govdavari water utilisation cell M Kishan Rao to set an example. But it is unlikely to have any effect.

The Congress, incidentally, was the first to raise the demand for a separate Telengana. Forty-one Congress MLAs from the region submitted a memorandum

dum to Sonia Gandhi in August 2000 demanding in-principle acceptance of the separate Statehood idea. But senior Congress leaders from Telengana including PCC president M Satyanarayana Rao, do not share the MLAs' view. Rao, who played a prominent role in the 1969 uprising and was elected MP, feels that any such move by the Congress will strengthen the TRS. Similarly, CWC member Sarojini Pulla Reddy is opposed to any commitment by the high command as it would boomerang on the party in other regions.

The Congress legislators are, however, adamant and have threatened to form a separate block in the Assembly. The Communist parties too are strongly

opposed to a separate State.

Political leaders cutting across party lines admit in private that Telengana cannot achieve statehood in the foreseeable future given the political situation in the country. The State Government has to recommend such a division, which is absolutely ruled out with Nairitu in power.

Parliament too has to pass such a resolution, which is unthinkable with 29 TDP MPs holding aloft the NDA government in power at Delhi. Will the present movement succeed where others have failed? "Highly unlikely," say Telengana watchers. The region today lacks a charismatic leader like M Chenna Reddy, who could galvanize the masses.

Initial success notwithstanding,

ing, the TRS remains one individual affair. No senior leader worth the name from Telengana has joined the TRS. The complaint against Rao is that he wants to keep the TRS his pocket borough and do not want any leader with more charisma or organising skill to join him.

Secondly, the TRS has been able to attract disgruntled people from other parties. A senior TDP leader told HT that his supporters were using the TRS' name to blackmail him to do certain things. "If I do not agree to do TRS, they threaten," he said. With the panchayat polls scheduled next month, cadres will frequently use such tactics.

(Concluded)

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## POLITICS OF SEPARATISM

Naidu grapples with Telengana

GOVERNMENT order 613, issued by NT Rama Rao in 1985, may prove to be a tricky proposition for Chandrababu Naidu in the context of growing demands for a separate Telengana state. The order apparently pertains to reserving government jobs for people from the region. One can understand why this obscure order that has apparently lain fallow for a number of years should suddenly become an issue now to the extent that Mr Naidu's home minister says it will be implemented without taking his superior into confidence. Separate statehood for Telengana has already seen the emergence of the Telengana Raksha Samiti floated by former TDP deputy speaker K Chandrashekhar Rao and of a Telengana Congress Forum which has 41 MLAs and is putting pressure on Sonia Gandhi. The state unit of the BJP does not need to be converted, Telengana goes along with the philosophy of smaller states that the party has both preached and practised, even though former president Bangaru Laxman, respecting coalition imperatives, asked the state unit to keep its mouth shut for the time being, in return for which Naidu allotted it a piece of prime real estate on which to build its headquarters. However, the bad example is being set by Chandrashekhar Rao who held a reasonably successful rally at Karimnagar last month. A demand for development can easily lead to one for separate statehood.

The difficulties with the order in question are obvious. One, it interferes with the principle of administrative autonomy by placing unreasonable restrictions on recruitment and causing fairly large-scale displacements, two, it creates an atmosphere of exclusion against people who are not from Telengana, which, in turn, is bound to foster separatist sentiments. Mr Naidu is right in putting his foot down. The question of a separate Telengana identity should not be dealt with as long as other political mechanisms can be envisaged. There are the Naxalites, but they are not asking for statehood, they want the rights of agricultural labourers, which goes to show the complexity of the issue. Most of those now calling for a separate state are part of the problem, not the solution. The agitation for the implementation of GO 613 launched by the non-gazetted officers probably has its roots in this fallacy.

THE STATE

# BJP gives up Telengana, takes prime plot

FROM G.S. RADHAKRISHNA

Hyderabad, June 6: In cyberabad, land is still the best bet, at least when it comes to appeasing wayward allies.

The Chandrababu Naidu government has virtually gifted the BJP an acre of prime land in the heart of the city for building its headquarters as a reward for putting on the backburner its demand for a separate state of Telengana.

Piqued by the BJP's support to the Telengana movement, the Cabinet had, two months ago, rejected the party's application for a plot opposite the Congress headquarters, **Candhi Bhavan**. The government instead told the BJP,

which was the only mainstream party without a building for itself, to choose land in either Banjara Hills, Jubilee Hills or in Secunderabad.

The turnaround came after the BJP, in a volte face, decided not to raise the demand and supported the Andhra government's decision that a separate state cannot be carved out.

In return, the chief minister told the Cabinet to ratify the allotment of the 5,000-sq. yard plot opposite the Congress office. The land, whose market value is almost Rs 3 crore, has been leased to the BJP for about Rs 9,000.

The property has been given to the BJP in spite of the fact that the state housing board had already

drawn up a blueprint for constructing a multi-storied office complex on the site. Naidu had rejected the BJP's earlier request citing the board's plans. But the chief minister overturned the decision shortly after returning from Delhi.

Naidu, however, is peeved with the Centre for allowing both All India Radio and Doordarshan to "promote" the statehood movement by describing the region as a smaller state.

In Delhi, the chief minister had met the BJP central leaders as

well as I&B minister Sushma Swaraj and asked them to ensure that the agitation does not get undue publicity.

However, Desam spokesman R. Chandrashekhar Reddy said, there has been no response from the Centre and both media arms

were publicising the rallies and public meetings of Telengana agitationists. Desam sources said the allotment of the land was necessary to tame the Telengana movement which had threatened to snowball given the support from Desam dissidents and the Congress. Though

the Left parties had asserted they were in favour of a united Andhra, they have planned a rally in Hyderabad on Sunday to focus on the state's backwardness. The Congress has been invited to the public meeting.

The BJP central leadership was worried and had urged Naidu to intervene since most party leaders from Telengana, including state vice-president A. Narendra and Lok Sabha member from Mahboobnagar Jitender Reddy had threatened to walk out and join the Telengana Rashtra Samiti launched by the Desam dissidents.

Andhra has also offered to help out the BJP-led government in Uttar Pradesh by providing

onions. The drought in Gujarat has affected onion supply to Uttar Pradesh, which has an annual demand of nearly seven lakh tonnes.

The Assembly poll disaster of 1998 — triggered by the spiralling price of onions — fresh on its mind, the BJP is not taking any chances this time given that Uttar Pradesh goes to elections in March 2002. Andhra, which is expecting a bumper crop of almost 10 lakh tonnes of onion, has offered to supply at least 1.5 lakh tonnes to Uttar Pradesh.

In return, the Centre has promised to air-link Hyderabad with the Gulf and West Asia. Air-India is also starting its service to Dubai from the city on Friday.



Naidu

9. Res. No. 119-15

# Divided on a separation

**T**ELANGANA. THE demand for Statehood for this backward region of Andhra Pradesh has risen once again. There had been a lull for years since the violent agitations of 1969-70 and 1972-73. But the creation of the three new States of Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh and Uttaranchal last year has revived the issue.

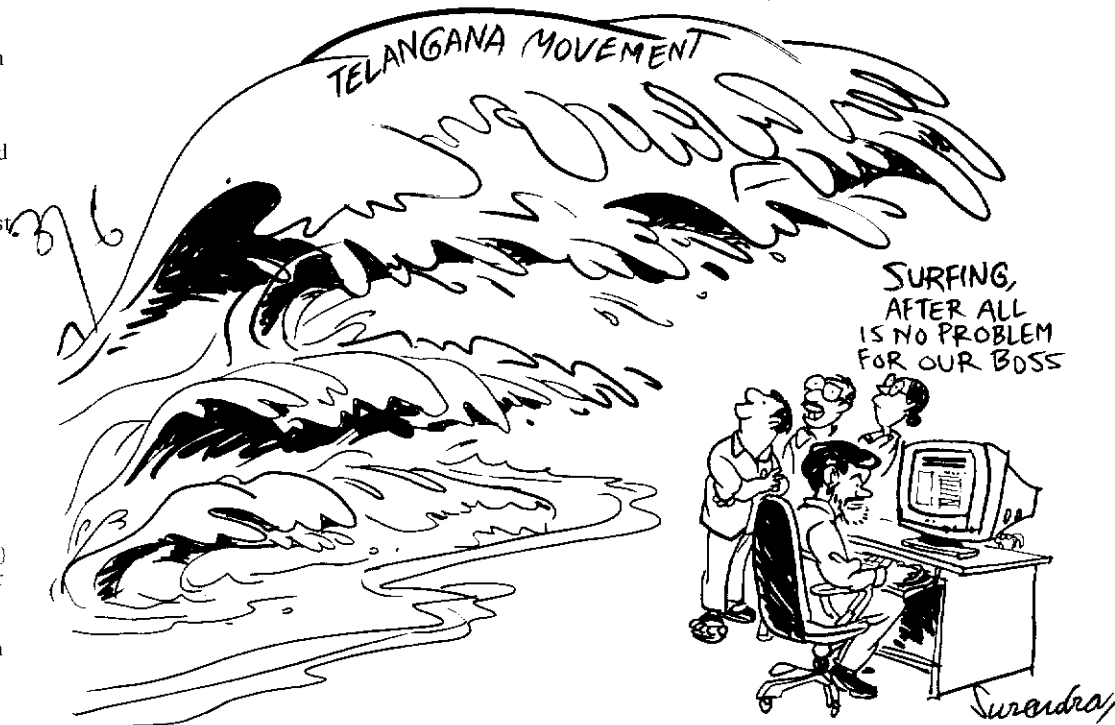
But the political parties in Andhra Pradesh are pulling in different directions. The TDP and the Left have taken a clear stand opposing the State's bifurcation, the Congress(I) is a house divided and the BJP is in a fix as its high command does not approve of the State unit's Kakinada resolution favouring Statehood for Telengana.

The new player is the Telengana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) floated by Mr. K. Chandrasekhar Rao, who resigned as Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. He received a shot in the arm when thousands turned up at a TRS rally at Karimnagar on May 17, forcing sceptics to sit up and take note of his attacks on the Congress(I) and the BJP, whom he describes as villains number one and two, and the TDP Government for doing injustice to Telengana. Sensing his growing popularity, many smaller parties and even a Congress(I) MLA, Mr. R. Papa Rao, have made a beeline for the TRS.

Fearing erosion of their political base, 41 Congress(I) MLAs from the region revived the Telengana Congress(I) Legislators Forum and threatened to sit as a separate bloc in the Assembly if the high command did not endorse their demand. The AICC is, however, in no hurry having appointed a committee headed by Mr. Pranab Mukherjee to look into similar demands for smaller States by various PCCs.

The Telengana MLAs have the tacit support of the APCC president, Mr. M. Satyanarayana Rao, a former leader of the Telengana movement, who has written to the AICC urging it to take an early decision. This will be no easy task as party seniors such as Mr. Kotla Vijayabhaskara Reddy favour an integrated State and would not like the party to renege on the six-point formula, a settlement hammered out by Indira Gandhi and accepted by Congress(I) leaders from both regions.

The TDP is convinced that the issue of separatism has been raked up by out-of-power Congressmen as part of a deep-rooted design to sully the image of the Chief Minister, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu. "The



Congress(I) wakes up to the reality that Telengana is backward only after it loses elections. The party is responsible for the backwardness of Telengana as it has stood to gain politically by keeping people poor and illiterate," Mr. Naidu alleged at the TDP's annual conference, Mahanadu, held at Visakhapatnam from May 27 to 29.

Shedding its initial hesitancy, the TDP Government went into overdrive providing sops for the region. Mr. Naidu announced completion of the Rs. 1,400-crore Sriramsagar irrigation project (Stage-I) within two years, advanced the date of releasing water into the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) to July 31 to irrigate 25,000 to 30,000 acres and stalled the sale of the Nizam Sugar Factory (NSF) to private

parties.

At the Mahanaadu, Mr. Naidu claimed his Government had done more for the backward areas' development in five years than all the Congress(I) regimes in 30 years. It had allocated Rs. 3,320 crores for the World Bank-aided A. P. Economic Restructuring Project (APERP) and Rs. 3,500 crores for the poverty alleviation programme, with most of these funds going to Telengana. "Only the TDP Government is in a position to develop Telengana because of the rapport it has established with the World Bank and the Centre. No other party can get so much money for the State," he added.

But the TRS' contention is that the spirit of the six-point formula has been violated by successive Governments. A Government Order issued by the NTR Government in December 1987 for repatriation of 58,952 Andhra employees from Telangana had not been implemented so far. Mr. Naidu's bias against Telengana is evident from his exertions to get a revival package from the Centre for the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant without showing a similar interest for the Fertilizer Corporation's sick unit in Ramagundam, it alleges.

The TRS says the Andhra region had used more than 600 tmcft of Krishna water compared to its share of 422 tmcft. Yet, some more projects were being built across the Krishna to

benefit the coastal Andhra districts. The reference is to the Pulichintala project, a focal point of the current controversy as the Congress(I) and TRS are demanding that work be stopped. The Government says Pulichintala is a balancing reservoir which will provide 20 tmcft of water to the Bheema project in Telengana besides stabilising the ayacut in the tailend areas of the Nagarjunasagar project. The Congress(I) and the TRS contend that the project is aimed at providing water for the third crop in the Andhra districts while submerging the existing ayacut under the Nagarjunasagar left canal in Telengana.

Recently, four Congress(I) MLAs from Nalgonda led a large group to the project office at Nimalipuri village and destroyed records and maps. In response, other Congress(I) and TDP leaders closed ranks to protest against the politicisation of the project by their counterparts in Telengana.

The Congress(I) is so divided that two MLAs from Telengana exchanged heated words with their party colleagues at the CLP office in full view of television cameras. As for Mr. Naidu, he presides over a well-knit party organisation which elected him as TDP president for the fourth successive term at the Visakhapatnam Mahanaadu where there was no discordant note on Telengana.

*Political parties in Andhra Pradesh are pulling in different directions on the Telengana issue. The TDP has opposed the State's bifurcation while the Congress(I) is a house divided, writes S. Nagesh Kumar.*

# Demand for Telengana State gains momentum

Ashok Das  
Hyderabad, May 25

THE DEMAND for separate statehood for Telengana region is gradually picking up. The Telengana region, which comprises 10 districts including Hyderabad and accounts for 40 per cent of the State's total landmass and population, is one of the most backward regions of the country.

The newly formed Telengana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) is spearheading the movement this time. K Chandrasekhar Rao, a senior Telugu Desam leader and former deputy Speaker in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly, resigned his post to form the TRS with the sole aim of achieving statehood for Telengana.

Rao claims that his organisation has enrolled 18 lakh members in a span of four weeks - a feat for any political outfit. The first public meeting of TRS at Karimnagar was a grand success by all accounts. Rao wants to carry the movement to the other districts by highlighting problems of the region, where farmers have been selling their produce at throwaway prices and some of them have been driven to suicide.

Two major Naxalite groups, the outlawed Peoples War Group (PWG) and the Janashakti, support the separate State demand.

The Naxalites have issued ultimatums to leaders and workers of the TDP and its ally BJP in Telengana districts to resign from their parties. Last week they killed the BJP district unit president of Nizamabad and another senior BJP functionary in Medak.

The TRS has succeeded in attracting people from all political parties. A Congress MLA, Papa Rao, has joined it, daring

his party leadership to take action against him. Many middle-level BJP leaders have joined the TRS.

When K Chandrasekhar Rao resigned to fight for Telengana, no political leader worth his name gave him half a chance. They said the situation was not conducive for a statehood movement and wrote him off politically. But the success of TRS shows the people feel strongly about the issues Rao is talking about, such as injustices to Telengana by successive Governments. Rao calls the Congress and BJP as enemy No. 1 and No. 2 of Telengana.

The ruling TDP is obviously worried. After initially dismissing the TRS as a non-starter, the party is now laboriously trying to rebut the charges made by Rao.

The BJP is facing an internal turmoil with one section demanding a separate State. Party leaders from Telengana, particularly MPs Jitendar Reddy and Narendra, want the party to fulfill its electoral pledge to the Telengana people. Narendra even walked out from the BJP executive meeting protesting against the party's delaying tactics.

Similarly the Congress is a divided house. The PCC president, Satyanarayan Rao, who is from Telengana, has refused to take action against Papa Rao. Congress legislators have met Sonia Gandhi to demand a separate PCC for Telengana, as a prelude to statehood. But senior Congress leaders like CWC member Sarojini Pulla Reddy are firmly against creating a separate PCC for Telengana.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is opposed to dividing Andhra Pradesh.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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# The KPP threat is far from over

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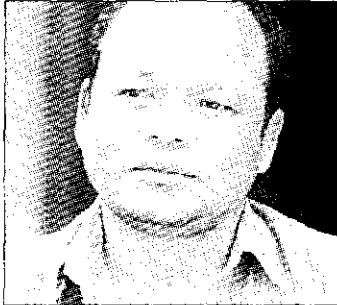
**Kinsuk Basu**  
Kolkata, May 16

IT'S OVER for now. The threat from Kamtapuris has seemingly gone down the Teesta. The KPP, with its claim of being the only platform voicing the 'true' sentiments of the 'people of the land', has drawn a blank and worst still, its leader Atul Roy has lost by a margin of some 20,000 votes.

The 25-0 score line should be satisfying for the Left Front. The Kamtapuri movement, as many would love to believe, has been nipped in the bud.

Not really though. The defeat was aimed at ensuring that North Bengal remained a problem spot -- at least for some time -- with tea planters and traders finding it tougher than before to carry on with their business. The restlessness would ensure Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation militants get the much-desired opportunity to meet the expenses required for training from Ulfa.

The KPP can do little to turn the tables. The KLO top brass believes it brings in the cash to keep the movement ticking and if



ATUL ROY

required, can even oust Roy and send him packing to oblivion.

It has happened in the past, beginning July 1999. KLO men abducted Roshan Lal Garg from Latabari Tea Estate in Central Dooars and returned him in February next year after his family coughed up a huge ransom.

The next to be abducted was Naresh Das, a businessman from Barobhisa in Kumargram. The two successful attempts evidently brought money for the movement besides putting the police in a tizzy.

The button thus pressed found

its worst expression later when KLO members gunned down CPI(M) district committee member Pranesh Pal at Barobhisa and set three houses on fire. The killings continued in parts of Moynaguri, Dhupguri and Kumargram, sending shivers down the spine of the district administration and tea planters, who even planned to bring in a private force for safety.

By then it was clear that the demand for recognition of the Kamtapuri language was a garb for militant activities of those inspired by terrorism. Such attempts at violence did not understandably go down well with most Kamtapuris who sought reprieve from decades of deprivation but could not really trust Roy and his men for an alternative.

The Rajbanshis seemed trifle convinced with the idea of a separate State sans any blueprint for development or economic independence. Their rejection has left the Kamtapuri leadership in a peculiar fix -- whether to succumb to the KLO's words or re-group itself to understand the key issues affecting their people.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 MAY 2001



# SEPARATE TELENGANA

15/5 Refuge of dissident politicians

**L**AUNCHING of the Telengana Rashtra Samiti by the dissident Telugu Desam leader and Deputy Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly, M Chandrasekhar Rao, after resigning his post and membership of the party, is unlikely to set the Krishna or the Godavari on fire. The demand for a separate Telengana state is as old as the formation of the composite Andhra Pradesh in 1956. Of its three regions — Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telengana — the last is the most neglected, which explains why eight of its 10 districts have come under the sway of Naxalites belonging to the People's War Group. Telengana in fact existed as a separate state for four years, though not under that name, till Andhra Pradesh was formed. The Telengana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) with its own rose-coloured flag with a map of Telengana upon it, has provided a platform for faded leaders and disgruntled elements. The BJP, which believes in the principle of smaller states, could not ignore the demand of the people of Telengana but as long as it depends on the support of the Telugu Desam for survival, it dare not encourage the TRS.

Telengana has better claim to statehood than any of the newly created states. Two mighty rivers, the Krishna and the Godavari, flow through its arid districts but successive governments have failed to implement any project to irrigate the region which continues to remain backward. Mari Channa Reddy led two bloody agitations for separate Telengana in the late sixties and early seventies but gave them up on being rehabilitated by Indira Gandhi with gubernatorial posts. More recently, Sonia Gandhi quelled a movement for a separate Telengana Pradesh Congress Committee by appointing its leaders, M Satyanarayana Rao, the APCC president. Chandrasekhar Rao developed love for a separate Telengana only after Chandrababu Naidu dropped him from his Cabinet and made him the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. Telengana deserves better leaders with commitment and determination to the cause they profess.

THE STATESMAN

# Uttaranchal gets special status

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 2. — The Union Cabinet today conferred special status to Uttaranchal, the 11th state to be accorded the status, following the recommendations of the Planning Commission.

With the special status under its belt, the state will become eligible for allocation of larger central assistance on more liberal terms.

Ninety per cent of the central assistance to the state from now will be treated as grant limiting only 10 per cent to that of loan.

Briefing the media after the Cabinet meeting, the parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, said the state has been given special status in accordance with the Gadgil formula, which has laid out guidelines for according such status.

Hilly and difficult terrain, low population density, strategic location, economic and infrastructural backwardness and non-viable nature of state finances are among the criteria for providing special status to a state.

Soon after the state's creation, the chief minister, Mr Nityanand Swami, had been pressing for special status with the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, Mr K C Pant.

After examining the case carefully, Mr Pant had favourably recommended the case to the Cabinet.

The other special category states are Assam, Nagaland, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.

THE STATESMAN

2 MAY 2001

2 MAY 2001

# AP Dy Speaker quits over Telengana State

Ashok Das  
Hyderabad, April 27

K. CHANDRASEKHAR Rao resigned as Deputy Speaker of Andhra Pradesh Assembly today. The dissident Telugu Desam MLA also quit the Assembly and resigned from the TDP.

Rao launched the Telangana Rashtra Samithi for the cause of separate State of Telangana. His resignation, on the eve of panchayat elections, could upset the equations in Telangana.

Former Speaker G. Narayana Rao, former MP M. Narayan Reddy, former MLA N. Narasimha Reddy and former Hyderabad Mayor A. Satyanarayana were among those who joined the Telangana Rashtra Samithi today.

At a public meeting, Rao asserted that only a separate State would ensure the progress of the backward Telangana region which has been neglected by successive Governments, including the Chandrababu Naidu regime.

Chandrasekhar Rao said that the Telangana Rashtra Samithi would mobilise the people of Telangana to achieve separate State for their region. The movement would be a peaceful one and there would be no place for violence, come what may.

He said that the Telangana Rashtra Samithi would seek to pursue its movement in a democratic manner.

The four-term legislator from Siddipet constituency in the backward Medak district lashed



CHANDRABABU NAIDU

out at the present regime for neglecting the problems of the region. He said that the movement for separate Telangana had the backing of a number of political leaders from the region. He was, however, critical of the role of the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party, which were not sincere in their commitment for a separate Telangana State.

Chandrasekhar Rao, Transport Minister during 1996-99, was dropped from the Chandrababu Naidu's ministry after the 1999 Assembly elections. He was made the Deputy Speaker but this could hardly placate him and he turned a dissident over the last one year. He also created ripples by openly criticising the Chief Minister for the unprecedented power tariff hike last June.

# Ghising calls for CBI inquiry

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, April 23: Accusing the government of shielding the actual masterminds of the strike on him, GNLFF chief Subash Ghising has demanded a CBI inquiry into the ambush case.

In a two-page letter faxed to chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on April 18, a copy of which was forwarded to Union home minister L.K. Advani, Ghising, in his capacity as the chairman of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, has requested Bhattacharjee to immediately hand over the case to the CBI.

The chief minister said he had not received any such letter from Ghising. "I have no knowledge of such a letter or demand. I have been on the road campaigning for the past few days and

have not seen the letter, if at all it has been sent. I will only be able to comment after I go through the letter," Bhattacharjee told reporters after an election rally in the evening.

Charging the state home department with protecting the culprits, Ghising says in the letter, a copy of which is with The Telegraph: "The state police have been conducting their interrogation in a half-hearted manner. The information gathered from the arrested culprits was not followed up and acted upon. The police are keeping under wraps the names of the main conspirators and masterminds disclosed by the arrested persons during interrogation."

"Directly or indirectly, the authorities are trying to save the real conspirators. Appropriate

penal charges of abetment of crime has deliberately not been filed to save the main conspirators," he added.

Ghising said a CBI probe was necessary because on the day of the attack, "very surprisingly, the Darjeeling district magistrate, superintendent of police, the deputy inspector-general of police (Jalpaiguri range), the inspector-general of police (north Bengal), the circle inspector, Kalimpong, the additional superintendent of police (Kurseong) and the officer-in-charge of Kurseong police station were all absent from duty. This was more than a mere coincidence".

Maintaining that the prime plotters had not been arrested and neither had the sophisticated arms and ammunition been recovered, Ghising accused the

government of failing to take any initiative to break the deadlock. "Neither did the state government engage the three GNLFF branch committees in any kind of official dialogue either at Calcutta or elsewhere nor did they send any competent representatives to Darjeeling to break the impasse," he said.

Ghising said the CBI was the only competent agency to effectively investigate and take action in such cases. "This is necessary because most of the criminals involved in the incident have already taken shelter in neighbouring Nepal. The state police authorities have admitted that liaising with their Nepalese counterparts is a major difficulty. The culprits may in future try and take shelter in either Bangladesh or Bhutan," the letter says.

# 5F9 GNLf calls off 7 Refused to do so 18/4 indefinite bandh

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, April 17. - The GNLf leadership has, "under serious protest", called off the indefinite bandh in the three hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling district from tomorrow. The decision was taken today after the GNLf supremo, Mr Subash Ghisingh, met senior leaders of the party's three branch committees.

Mr Ghisingh announced that as the state government failed to arrest those who had masterminded the 10 February attack on him, the DGHC would now "take up the case".

Party leaders said the DGHC's decision to take up the matter was aimed at putting pressure on the state government to transfer the home department to the council - a demand which has been raised on several occasions.

The impending Assembly poll has apparently prompted the GNLf leadership to call off the bandh. The decision was announced at a public rally in Chowk Bazar here this afternoon. Though the meeting was organised by the party leadership, Mr Ghisingh was absent.

The leaders said bandh was called off to break the deadlock

created by the failure of the state government to arrest those who had masterminded the conspiracy against Mr Ghisingh and also to discharge the constitutional duty of the DGHC.

The decision was taken after Mr Ghisingh appealed to GNLf leaders to call off the strike to assess the present situation in the hills and decide on the next course of action.

Mr Ghisingh reportedly expressed concern over terrorist activities at Tinkataria in Kalimpong in November 2000 and the plot against him in February.

THE STATESMAN

18 APR 2001

# Hill bandh gets 8-hr breather

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, April 14. - The GNLf leadership today announced that the six-day-old hill bandh would continue. However, it would be relaxed from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. tomorrow to enable the people to buy provisions and students and stranded tourists to leave town.

"There will be no further relaxation... in future," the president of GNLf's Darjeeling branch committee, Mr Dipak Gurung, said.

The decision has been taken

on the instructions of party supremo Mr Subash Ghisingh. In a statement released to the press this afternoon, the party's three branch committees - at Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong - said that "most of the main conspirators and culprits (responsible for the attack on Mr Ghisingh on 10 February) are at large, which is most regrettable. However, in view of public inconvenience and for the benefit of stranded tourists and students, it was resolved that the bandh would be relaxed".

Mr Gurung said the bandh would continue till the masterminds behind the attack

were arrested.

Life remained paralysed in the region today. Two ambulances were attacked in Kurseong and an attempt was made to torch a jeep. Bandh supporters claimed that one ambulance was carrying passengers.

## CM PLEA FAILS

DARJEELING, April 14. - The chief minister and the state chief secretary have been requesting Mr Ghisingh over the phone for the past two days to call off the bandh. But their attempts have failed. Lalkuthi sources said here today that Mr Ghisingh had told them that the decision lay with the GNLf's three branch committees who had called the bandh. - SNS

An attempt was made to open shops in Kalimpong market this morning (the weekly market sits on Sundays). But shutters were downed within an hour after bandh supporters demanded that shops be closed.

Mr Gurung denied that party supporters were behind the bomb blast near the Darjeeling Circuit house last night. "Attempts are being made to malign the party by accusing the party of being responsible for the blast," he said.

Two persons who were injured have been admitted to the Darjeeling sadar hospital.

Police patrolling on the streets has intensified and all police stations put on alert, a senior police officer said.

Posters which had appeared on the walls of Chowk Bazar in Darjeeling town over the past two days decrying the bandh call were found ripped off today.

THE STATESMAN

15 APR 2001

## ADVANTAGE GHISINGH

### Aborted attack kills Opposition campaign

IF the GNLF was in the mood to celebrate Gorkhaland Foundation Day with great fanfare, it was not only because their leader was safe after the aborted attack on his life on 10 February but because all opposition to him has been wiped out. It gives Subash Ghisingh all the options in the assembly election — whether to stick with the CPI-M with which he has had a tacit understanding or to move closer to Trinamul purely for tactical reasons. He has kept both Alimuddin Street and Mamata Banerjee guessing. The CPI-M has fielded candidates in the hills only because it is part of an arrangement while Trinamul makes it clear it would rather not upset him in case his support is necessary at a later stage. Which means that while different parties have been trying to make the best use of him for their reasons, in reality Ghisingh has been making the best use of them.

The GNLF leader's skills as a tactician have been proved again and again but this time he has been served with a walk-over mainly on account of the Opposition's misadventure. Chhatre Subba seemed to have wrested the separate Gorkhaland slogan from his former boss with a new burst of militancy till it became clear that the violence that he preached made the Gorkha Liberation Organisation which he started an unlikely choice before the electorate. Unfortunately other opposition parties like the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League and the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists came to be bracketed with him. All that Ghisingh needed to do was to prove that they were thoroughly irresponsible and the more moderate line he has adopted will serve Darjeeling better. The electorate is expected to ignore his own militant past, the excesses of an indefinite bandh as well as all the unfulfilled promises of the Hill Council. If it still believes it has no other choice, it is because Ghisingh has successfully engaged in an extraordinary kind of doublespeak to sustain his total supremacy. This is a game in which he has no rival.

THE STATESMAN

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Gorkha  
Gorkha

# A tangled web over Gorkhaland

**Keshav Pradhan**  
*Darjeeling, April 13*

SINCE THE formation of Chhatra (Gorkha), Jharkhand and Uttarakhand last year, Gorkhaland has been under pressure from other hill parties to revive the fight for a Gorkha homeland that began way back in 1905.

To promote the Statehood cause, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), Revolutionary Marxists (CPRM), a breakaway faction of the CPI(M), the Gorkha League and the National Union of Plantation Workers have floated the Gorkhaland United Front. The Bharatiya Gorkha Janshakti, the Trinamool Congress, the Bharatiya Nepali Vir Gorkha, the CPI, the Congress and the Sikkim Rashtriya Mukti Morcha have launched a forum called the United Democratic Front.

To save themselves from embarrassment, the State leadership of the CPI, the Trinamool and the Congress have clarified

that they have nothing to do with the Gorkhaland protagonists.

Some of these parties accuse Ghising of selling the Gorkhaland demand down the river while signing the 1988 tripartite Darjeeling Accord with the State Government and the Centre that led to the formation of the Council. Besides, they have taken exception to the State Government's failure to make the GNLFF-administered council run in a more transparent manner.

Most of these parties have been lying low ever since GNLFF activists attacked the homes of their leaders soon after the ambush. They are still undecided over taking part in the polls, fearing harassment by both the GNLFF and the police. Some of the key leaders, whom the GNLFF wants the police to arrest, have gone underground.

Another staunch Gorkhaland supporter, the All Gorkha Students' Union (an independent body) has paid dearly for its com-

mitment to the Statehood cause. While its president Roshan Giri escaped an assassination bid, the homes of some of its leaders were damaged soon after the attack on Ghising.

To ward off criticism over his decision to give up the Gorkhaland demand earlier, Ghising has, since last year, been demanding regional autonomy for the Darjeeling hills under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. However, in 1988, he had desisted provisions of the Sixth Schedule, which grants autonomy exclusively to the tribal areas of the North-east, as "arrangements not fit for Gorkhas".

Surprisingly, despite knowing that the Sixth Schedule cannot be extended to Darjeeling, which is not a tribal area, the Left Front Government took up the case with the Centre to have the Gorkha leader on its side before the crucial Assembly polls. This, in a way, gave the State Government a

chance to take action against pro-Gorkhaland parties before they could actually launch a separatist agitation. The hills have been witnessing fresh alignments of political forces since the ambush. Differences have surfaced within the GNLFF itself as its leaders suspect each other of having some connection with the attackers. Prominent GNLFF leader C K Pradhan is on the verge of parting ways with Ghising after the party asked him to clear his name from the list of suspects carried by a Kolkata-based Bengali daily.

Pradhan, who shot into prominence as a militant leader during the 1986-88 Gorkhaland agitation, is likely to float a new party in Kalimpong, his home turf, where the GNLFF has total sway.

Prior to this, GNLFF supporters attacked the residence of K B Rai, another GNLFF strongman from Peshok, within days after the ambush on Ghising. What has come as a big surprise is the

arrest of former GNLFF legislator N T Moktan for his alleged links with the GLO chief. Throughout the Gorkhaland stir, the two were at daggers' drawn, leading to the death of about a dozen GNLFF activists before the signing of the Darjeeling Accord. Despite the presence of CPI nominee Mohan Singh Rai, the CPI(M) had openly campaigned for Moktan, who fell out with Ghising after he refused to endorse the latter's description of Darjeeling as a no-man's land, when he fought as an Independent in the 1996 polls. Later, Moktan joined the RSP.

On the other hand, Ghising never gave any importance to Subba whose party has remained virtually non-existent for almost 10 years. He would often vilify him as "a sarkari leader (a plant of the State government)". Similarly, the Gorkha League and the CPI(M) had together fought the GNLFF during the Nepali language movement in the early Nineties.

(Concluded)



# Strike points to GNLF desperation

Kinsuk Basu  
Darjeeling, April 13

WITH THE indefinite strike into its fifth day in the Hills, it now appears that the GNLF leadership is keener to settle scores with opponents, within and outside the party, than to bring to book the culprits of the February 10 ambush of Subash Ghisingh's convoy.

The result: Darjeeling continues to lose out on revenue from tea and tourism industries as GNLF leaders drag their feet on an issue that has not really cut much ice with the people of this region.

Worse still, not many in the Council seem to be aware of the loss in the tourism sector because the councillor in charge, IN Pradhan, is in Singapore to attend a tourism fair.

More than half of those the GNLF wants arrested are political opponents of the party who, according to police, have no direct link with the conspirators.

Of the 12 odd people listed, two prominent names are those of CPRM leader RB Rai and the ousted GNLF leader C K Pradhan. There are also a few GNLF activists, some of them Gram Panchayat leaders, who sympathised with Chattri Subbah's call for a separate Gorkhaland. There are four shopkeepers and small-time planters from Nagarkata and Jold-naka.

The Special Investigation Team investigating the ambush has said there are no clear charges to arrest the leaders named.

So is the bandh call a sign of desperation in a party scared of losing control in the Hills?

The CPI(M) leadership is too cautious to comment, but hard-liners believe the strike is aimed diverting attention to an issue



A child plays on a bandh-hit Kalimpong street on Friday.

that has been almost settled with the arrest of nearly all the accused. They may not far off the mark.

On Thursday, the few who dared to speak to the media braving the GNLF whip, did not hesitate to admit that dreams have made way for despair. Basic issues such as employment and education, besides corruption of leaders were the common worries.

"The state of primary education has not changed after 1997,

when groups of trained primary teachers went on hunger strike demanding an overhauling of the entire system. That was more than three years ago, but nothing much has changed since then. Even today, all appointments in schools are dictated by the GNLF," said a biology teacher from Kalimpong school on condition of anonymity.

Walking down Nehru Road he described how it felt to be "on leave for no reason at all."

CPRM leader Rai said, "The

GNLF is now keen to ensure that no one questions why they agreed to drop the demand for a separate state while signing the tripartite accord in 1988. But people have not completely lost track of the bloody history that paved the way for Ghisingh's rise to power. In the last 12 years, the DGHC has received more than Rs 700 crore for the development of the region. What happened to that money is anybody's guess. Water is scarce in the Hills as ever."

Rai may be biased, but mur-

mers of disillusion echo through the Hills and are ever louder.

The extravagant life styles of DGHC councillors have not gone down well with the people. But what has mainly destroyed the Council's popularity is its policy of recruiting workers on contract.

More than 1,600 people employed at Laalkuthi are on an annual contract without any promise of security. Besides, at least six tea plantations have closed down in the last two years, rendering thousands jobless.

SUBHENDU GHOSH/HINDUSTAN TIMES

HT EXCLUSIVE

KG-5

18A

# Chhatre links NSCN(I-M) to Nepal Maoists

Kinsuk Basu  
Siliguri, April 12

IN A significant breakthrough, the Special Investigation Team probing the ambush on Subash Ghising has found out that a group of armed Naga militants, belonging to the NSCM (I-M) faction, had been camping in parts of east Nepal, providing extensive military training to MCC activists and coaching them in the use of sophisticated weapons. This was part of the deal with the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) to provide shelter to Chhatre Subbat.

The revelation, the SIT members said, had followed days of intensive investigation and

might bring the already fragile Indo-Nepal relationship under further strain.

Detectives probing the attack are on the look out now for Chiten Sherpa, currently in eastern Nepal, for further details. Chiten, a former GNLFC councillor and close Chhatre associate, is believed to have been a key negotiator between the Nagas and the MCC, with a hand in cementing the deal. While exact details of the deal are still awaited, preliminary information suggests, training was provided in phases across parts of the Ilam, Birta and Kakarbhitta provinces in eastern Nepal, where the MCC was trying to fan out and spread its sphere of influence. The

training was aimed at familiarising the MCC activists with use of advanced artillery, particularly of the AK series, and other sophisticated weapons and thereby facilitate their future "operations" on police outposts across the three provinces of eastern Nepal.

"Since a large majority of the MCC activists are not familiar with the technique of using either AK-56 or AK-47 rifles, these training stints really served them well," a senior SIT member said. The training, according to intelligence reports, could not have come at a better time. The MCC, which has a strong presence in parts of west Nepal, including Rukum, Rolpa

and Sindupalchok, was eager to stretch its base to the east when Chhatre's sympathisers came up with the offer. And that the deal had paid off was evident from the success rate of recent MCC ambushes on at least three police outposts in parts of Ilam and Kakarbhitta. Investigations have also revealed that a section of these Naga militants were present at the camp at Tunkatre where Chhatre had planned a training camp for activists of the Gorkha Liberation Army (GLA), an armed outfit with which he had planned to fight for a separate Gorkha state.

While it is still not certain why or how these militants sympathised with Chhatre after losing

faith in the I-M leadership in Nagaland, the SIT believes Chhatre's Naga wife might have had a key role to play. "He claims these militants came down to him since they felt it was Chhatre who could deliver the promise of a separate Gorkha land. But, on the face of it, there is no reason to believe his admission," said S N Gupta, a member of the SIT in Siliguri.

The team believes nearly 70 percent of the probe into the ambush on Ghising is over and it is just a matter of time before they round up three more people to bring down the curtains on one of the most intriguing attacks on a political leader in the hills in recent times.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 APR 2001

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# Violence and bandh threaten hill ballot battle

9. Resistant B... ✓

Keshav Pradhan  
Darjeeling, April 12

THE GNLF'S relentless campaign over the February 10 ambush on its chief Subash Ghisingh may not allow most of its opponents to freely take part in the Assembly elections.

This may not be the first time the GNLF, whose popularity is on the wane, has deprived the hill people of their right to exercise their franchise since its inception in 1980. Some times, it did so on its own and some times with the CPI(M)'s support.

In August 1993, the GNLF, after an agreement with the CPI(M), boycotted the by-elections to the Darjeeling and Kurseong Assembly seats. Since most voters, mainly non-Left, stayed away from the booths, the Marxists won both seats where they were organisationally weak.

Four months later, the CPI(M) compensated the GNLF by allowing it to win 14 of the 28 Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council seats without any contest.

Prior to this, the GNLF forced hill voters to stay away from Assembly and parliamentary elections in 1982, 1987, 1996, 1998 and 1999 over issues ranging from the Gorkhaland demand to the constitutional status of the Darjeeling hills.

Whatever the GNLF's motives, the Left Front has always gained the most from these boycotts. For instance, in the 1987 Assembly elections, when polling was less than 10 per cent, the Left Front made a clean sweep. It has managed to win the Darjeeling Lok Sabha seats uninterrupted since 1996.

So far, the Left Front has been the only formation to name candidates for all the three hill seats of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong. K B Watar and Tulsi Bhattarai (both from the CPI-M) will contest from Darjeeling and Kurseong respectively. Mohan Singh Rai of the CPI will fight for Kalimpong. Mirik, a major hill segment, falls in the plains constituency of Siliguri. Municipal affairs minister Asok Narayan Bhattacharya is the Marxist candidate here.

The Congress, which has a weak base in the hills, has named Hem Rai and D K Bomzan for



SUBASH GHISINGH

Darjeeling and Kurseong. The party's nominee for Kalimpong may be finalised after talks with the Trinamool Congress.

However, frequent GNLF agitations have slowed down the poll preparations of both the Left Front and the Congress. The party suspects the involvement of leaders of different hill-based parties fighting for Gorkhaland in the ambush in which its party president was seriously injured.

Over the past two months, the volatile hills have already witnessed two rounds of bandhs stretching over a fortnight.

Not satisfied with this, the GNLF has threatened to intensify the stir further, if the State Government does not arrest soon all those involved in the ambush. By doing so, it has kept everyone on tenterhooks about the possibility of its participation in the polls. At the moment, it holds all the three hill seats.

Succumbing to the GNLF's pressure, the State police has already put behind bars a number of hill leaders. Prominent among them are Gorkha League general secretary Amar Lama, former GNLF MLA from Kalimpong N T Muktan, Gorkha Liberation Organisation president Chhatre Subba and Sharan Dewan of the Trinamool.

The Left Front seems keen to comply with the GNLF's demand, for it serves its interests as much as that of Ghisingh.

GNLF supporters block National Highway 55 near Sukhna on the first day of the indefinite bandh. Picture by Abani Ghosh

# Race to beat bandh ends in tragedy

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Siliguri, April 9: At least 12 people, most of them home-bound labourers from Bihar who were trying to beat the hill bandh that began from 6 am, were feared drowned in the Teesta early this morning when the driver of their jeep lost control.

Five children are believed to be among the dead.

Eight labourers working at a construction site in East Sikkim's Pakhrin Bazar and their seven children were returning home to East Champaran in Bihar. They wanted to cross the hills before the GNLFSponsored indefinite Darjeeling

hill bandh started.

The group hired a Trax jeep and left Pakhrin Bazar for Siliguri a little after midnight. The driver lost control of the vehicle and plunged into the Teesta at Likhuvir on National Highway 31A, two km from Teesta Bazar, around 2 am.

Five persons, including two minors and the jeep's helper, escaped. They have been admitted to the Rhambi block primary health centre.

Subdivisional police officer, Kalimpong, Anand said the bodies of three children have been recovered. They have been identified as Jasmin Ansari (6), Rukshana Khatoon (10) and Digu

Ansari (13). "The driver may have, in his effort to avoid the bandh at 6 am, been travelling at a high speed and lost control at Likhuvir, a landslide-prone stretch on NH 31A," Anand said.

"Nine people, including the driver, are still missing. We fear the fast-flowing river may have carried them downstream. There is also no trace of the jeep," he added.

## Hill crippled

Life in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong has skidded to a halt following the bandh.

Darjeeling superintendent of police Sanjay Chander said most of the 70-odd tea gardens re-

mained closed. Liza Hill, Chongtong and Rongmuk gardens functioned as usual while partial work was reported at eight gardens in Mirik, Sonada, Kurseong and Tindharia.

"Work in the six cinchona plantations in Kalimpong was totally affected. The toy train did not run. But there were no reports of untoward incidents. We ensured that Sikkim-bound vehicles plied normally on NH 31A. Mobile units were pressed into service to ensure that bandh supporters do not obstruct traffic between Sikkim and the plains of north Bengal," Chander said.

The higher secondary examination was held as scheduled.

THE TELEGRAPH

10 APR 2001

# GNLF exempts Sikkim from bandh

Gangtok, April 8

THE GNLF has exempted Sikkim from the purview of the proposed indefinite bandh beginning tomorrow in the Darjeeling hills demanding arrest of the "real culprits" behind the February 10 attack on its president Subhash Ghisingh.

Ghisingh, also chairman of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, instructed the three branch committees of his party to exempt Sikkim-bound vehicles carrying essential commodities and passengers from the purview of the bandh.

The decision of exemption came after Sikkim Chief Minister

Pawan Chamling requested Ghisingh to allow Sikkim-bound vehicles along NH-31a during the bandh in Darjeeling hills.

Ghisingh's private secretary BB Thapa conveyed the decision of exemption in a letter to the chiefs of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong branch committees of GNLF. The chief convenor of GNLF Sikkim branch committee KK Chhetri welcomed the decision to keep the NH 31a open. Chamling had earlier supported Ghisingh's demand for a separate Gorkhaland.

GNLF's Darjeeling branch committee president Dipak Gurung said sufficient time had

been given to the district administration and police to seize the arms and bring the masterminds to book but "we cannot wait any more." The bandh, which was scheduled for April 1, had been deferred by a week to give police some more time, Gurung said.

He said the decision of the bandh was taken a week before by all three branch committees of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong. Asked how long the bandh would continue, Gurung said it was likely to continue till May 10, the day of Assembly polls. All educational institutions advanced their Easter holidays from tomorrow following the

bandh call.

The SP said elaborate security arrangements had been made to maintain law and order in the hills at any cost. Besides, District Combat Force and Darjeeling Police, State Armed Police, RAF, CRPF were deployed at all sensitive points. Special mobile units were deployed to ensure security to Sikkim-bound vehicles.

The Sikkim Chief Minister also requested the Centre to find a "permanent solution" of the GNLF agitation. A tri-partite meeting involving the Centre, the State Government and DGHC representatives was also suggested.

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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## Schools declare indefinite holiday

# Threat to shut down hills till poll day

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

**Siliguri, April 8:** The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) has threatened to enforce a bandh, scheduled to begin tomorrow, till the polling day on May 10.

The front is going ahead with the bandh to protest against the alleged failure of the district police in arresting the real masterminds behind the attack on its chief Subash Ghising.

Educational institutions in the hills have declared an indefinite holiday in view of the bandh. Over 100 residential schools in the hills have also advanced their Easter vacation to Monday.

"All outstation students have been sent home and asked to get in touch with the school to know when we will reopen. The suspense and uncertainty over the indefinite bandh has been too much for us. So we decided that the children should return only after the strike is withdrawn," a headmaster of a reputed residential school in Kurseong said.

Posters announcing the bandh have started appearing across the hills, prompting people to stock essentials. "Many have stored grain

to last a week or so hoping that the GNLF will call off the bandh after a week," said a grocer in Darjeeling.

The GNLF's Darjeeling branch committee president and executive councillor of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, Deepak Gurung, said his organisation had given sufficient time to the administration to arrest the plotters and funders of the February 10 attack on Ghising.

"We will go ahead with the indefinite bandh until all the masterminds behind Ghising's attack are apprehended and the weapons seized. The bandh may continue till May 10, the day the state goes to the Assembly polls," he said.

Gurung added that the front's "patience has run out". "There is a limit to our endurance. We gave the police nearly two months to solve the case and bring the actual culprits to book," Gurung said.

Accusing the Darjeeling district administration and the police of "total failure", the GNLF Darjeeling unit chief said: "The three GNLF branch committees of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong had last week given the police a week to arrest the cul-

prits. But they have failed.

"The masterminds and their financiers are moving around freely, armed with sophisticated weapons. But the police are neither willing nor have the inclination to arrest the actual culprits."

The district police have beefed up security on the eve of the bandh. Darjeeling superintendent of police Sanjay Chander said: "We are not taking any chances with law and order during the bandh. Besides the force of the District Armed Police and the State Armed Police, we have made heavy deployment of the CRPF."

The Rapid Action Force and the district's special commando force have also been pressed into service in sensitive areas in the three hill subdivisions.

The GNLF has decided to exempt from the bandh Sikkim-bound vehicles plying on National Highway 31A. However, the police are not taking any chances. "We have deployed several mobile units along the NH 31A. Police pickets have also been set up at several vulnerable spots on the highway," Chander added. The road links the neighbouring Himalayan state and the plains of north Bengal.

THE TELEGRAPH

9 APR 2007

## Ghising dissolves loyalist unit

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Siliguri, April 7:** Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) leader Subash Ghising today dissolved the Kalimpong branch committee headed by C.K. Pradhan, who figured on the party's list of suspects in the assassination attempt case.

GNLF legislator from Kalimpong Gaulon Lepcha has been told to look after the unit until a new committee is formed.

Ghising's decision comes a day after six of the 10 executive committee members put in their papers, raising "doubts" about Pradhan's role in the ambush. Three more executive members — vice-president K.N. Subba and joint secretaries Prem Khawas and Shankarmani Rai — resigned today.

Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council vice-chairman and Kalimpong unit vice-president Hangu Subba could not submit his resignation as he is away in Darjeeling. Hangu Subba is also a central committee member.

Ghising, the GNLF's central committee president, said in a statement that since the majority of the Kalimpong branch committee members had quit, there was no option but to dissolve the panel.

The Kalimpong leaders decided to resign following reports that Pradhan had a role in the February 10 ambush on Ghising. The leaders said they were resigning from all party posts until the "doubts" raised by the reports were cleared.

Though sources at the GNLF headquarters in Darjeeling did not confirm what kind of action the central committee was contemplating against Pradhan, an associate of the leader told **The Telegraph** from Kalimpong that the "resignation drama" was enacted on Ghising's instructions.

"Ever since the attempted ambush on Ghising, a section of the GNLF leadership had launched an all-out campaign to remove CK (as Pradhan is popularly known) as head of the Kalimpong unit. We will stand by our leader CK come what may," the leader said.

# GNLF bent on bandh from tomorrow

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

**Siliguri, April 7:** The GNLF today said it was going ahead with the indefinite hill bandh from Monday as the administration was dragging its feet on arresting the masterminds of the strike on Subash Ghising.

However, vehicles going to and coming from Sikkim will be exempt from the bandh.

The GNLF's Darjeeling branch committee president and executive councillor of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, Deepak Gurung, said: "We had given Darjeeling police sufficient time to arrest all the eight masterminds of the conspiracy to assassinate Ghising and seize the sophisticated weapons that the conspirators and their hired militants had stockpiled in the Darjeeling hills following the Tinkaria shootout between police and Naga militants on November 12 last year."

Accusing the government of dragging its feet even after the arrested plotters, including militant Gorkha leader Chhatray Subba, had revealed the names of the masterminds and the financiers of the plot, Gurung said: "Darjeel-

ing police have utterly failed in nabbing the actual culprits and have arrested some small flies as an eyewash for the public. Whether they are shielding some of the masterminds and the financiers, we do not know. The police have also failed to seize the sophisticated weapons, including AK assault rifles and carbines and ammunition. We have no option but to resort to our bandh call."

The GNLF had said that Subba was number nine on its list of suspects. The party had prepared a list of men who, it said, were the most important conspirators.

Reiterating the demand for the immediate removal of Darjeeling superintendent of police Sanjay Chander and district magistrate Anil Verma, Gurung said: "If the Darjeeling administration is not capable of arresting the actual culprits, they should leave it to the GNLF. We are ready to undertake the investigation."

State minister and local CPM legislator Ashoke Bhattacharya urged the GNLF to withdraw its bandh in the interest of the residents and the hill's fragile economy. Addressing a news conference here, Bhattacharya claimed that

the investigation into the attack on Ghising was being carried out diligently.

"I implore Subash Ghising to call off the indefinite Darjeeling hill bandh. Ghising is a sensible politician who would not like to disrupt the coming tourist season in the hills. Tourism, along with tea, forms the backbone of the hill economy and the GNLF is aware of the bandh's adverse implications," the minister said.

Bhattacharya, who looks after the CPM's north Bengal affairs, praised the investigators. "The special investigation team has done a commendable job by already arresting Chhatray Subba and 11 others. We are on the verge of making a few more arrests. I just don't understand why the GNLF is bent on going ahead with the bandh," he said.

Sikkim, which had suffered during the bandh in February, will be spared this time. Ghising, in a letter to Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling, said he had considered his request and agreed to keep National Highway 31A, the state's lifeline, out of the purview of any future bandhs or strikes in the Darjeeling hills.

## Loot cloud on politician

BY A STAFF REPORTER

**Calcutta, April 7:** Seven people, including two Bihar-based criminals, have been arrested on charges of looting a jewellery shop in Baghbazar last month.

A team of detectives went to Bétia district in Bihar and picked up four persons early today.

Police are now looking for a political leader from Bihar who had played a key role in looting the shop. Banibrata Basu, deputy commissioner, detective department, said: "We are not disclosing the name of the leader for the sake of investigation. But we have enough evidence to prove the leader's role in the robbery."

On March 29, nine dacoits, travelling in a Maruti van, broke into the jewellery shop on Baghbazar Street. The criminals looted gold ornaments and precious stones worth Rs 11 lakh.

Police got their first lead when Manoj Jadav, the driver of the van, lodged a complaint with the Posta police station the day after the incident, saying his car had been stolen.

The officials found discrepancies in Jadav's statements. The driver broke down when he was questioned at Lalbazar and confessed that he had driven the van while fleeing. Police recovered the van from Gorachand Road in Park Circus and Jadav was arrested.

He revealed that Kasinath Shaw, a businessman, had hired his vehicle. Shaw was the next to be picked up from Posta area.

During interrogation, Shaw confessed and disclosed the name of Sanjoy Poddar, a contractor of deep-tubewells, who had masterminded the operation.

A team of 10 sleuths went to Bétia district of Bihar and picked up two criminals, identified as Ali Ahmed alias Engineer and Sikandar Ali alias Doctor, from their residences.

On the basis of information provided by the duo, police arrested Badriprasad Shaw, a jewellery shop-owner in Bétia who bought the looted ornaments for Rs 1.82 lakh. One of Badriprasad's employees was arrested for melting the gold. The precious stones were recovered.

THE TELEGRAPH

# GNLF threatens indefinite strike

HT Correspondent  
Siliguri, April 5

OBSERVING ITS 21st Foundation Day, the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) has reiterated its demand to arrest the masterminds behind the attack on its president Subash Ghisingh.

It threatened to call an indefinite strike from April 9 if its demand was not met.

Addressing a public meeting in Darjeeling on Thursday, the eve of its foundation day, the GNLF leaders came down heavily upon the opposition leaders who according to them are the conspirators behind the ambush on February 10.

The GNLF leaders are demanding the arrest of opposition leaders like RB Rai, the general secretary of Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists (CPRM).

The GNLF leaders criticised the local administration for the

alleged failure to arrest the masterminds of the February 10 ambush.

They were also demanding seizure of the arms that were used in the ambush.

Last year on this very day the GNLF had revived the demand for the separate State of Gorkhaland after keeping quiet for many years.

The decision of the Centre to create three new states of Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh had forced the GNLF to revive its long-standing demand.

On Thursday the GNLF leaders seemed interested to capitalise politically from the Ghisingh ambush case.

Though the leaders claimed that they had not given up the demand for Gorkhaland, they spent their allotted time either criticising the Opposition parties or threatening bloodshed in case Ghisingh's attackers are not arrested.

The GNLF leaders also asked the West Bengal Government to recall the superintendent of police and District Magistrate from Darjeeling and saying they would manage on their own. They also said during the indefinite strike, election campaign on motors would not be allowed.

The GNLF has not made its stand clear on the ensuing elections.

The party has reportedly threatened boycotting the elections.

Ghisingh, however, was not present in the meeting to comment on this issue.

CK Pradhan, the president of the GNLF Kalimpong branch committee, was not allowed to speak in the meeting.

The controversial leader is considered to be one of the conspirators of the February 10 ambush. Pradhan was not allowed to climb up the dais when he tried doing so.



Subash Ghisingh



# Hill Opposition leader on suspect list

## FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, April 2: Investigators claim to have stumbled upon vital clues on the involvement of a senior hill Opposition leader in the assassination attempt on Gorkha National Liberation Front leader Subash Ghising.

An official connected with the special investigation team said that the arrested militant leader, Chhatray Subba, has disclosed during interrogation that the Opposition leader belonging to the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists a breakaway group of the CPM was part of the conspiracy.

Subba, the leader of the Gorkhaland Liberation Organisation, has also disclosed that the assailants received arms training from Naga militants.

"Subba has revealed that a se-

nior Opposition leader of the breakaway hill Marxist group, the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist (CPRM), had attended a series of meetings with other conspirators at Birtamod in eastern Nepal. The meeting had taken place immediately after the November 12 shootout between suspected Naga militants and the police in the Tinkalaria jungles in Kalimpong," the official said.

An SIT team has been sent to Nagaland to follow up on the attackers' involvement with Naga militants. The operation has been codenamed "Operation Monkey-eaters".

The team will also investigate the role of Subba's co-conspirator: former GNLFF militant leader and acting president of the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (ABGL), Tseten Sherpa.

"While Subba has strong fami-



Chhatray Subba

ly links in Nagaland, Tseten Sherpa had also spent over a decade in the northeastern state. Sherpa left Nagaland to join the Ghising-led GNLFF in the mid-1980s. Subba's first wife (of Nepali origin), his son and daughter still live in Nagaland. Sherpa, too, has strong links with Nagaland," the official said.

"Another team of the SIT will

also visit Nagaland to look into the NSCN(IM)'s possible connection with extremists in Nepal. Both Subba and Tseten Sherpa were instrumental in acquiring arms training from the NSCN (IM). We are also probing if arms had been procured from the Naga outfit as claimed by the GLO chief. Another team will visit Nepal on a follow-up mission. We have information that Tseten Sherpa is being sheltered by a prominent ruling party member in Kathmandu," the official added.

Political observers in Darjeeling hills have raised doubts over the way the SIT investigation is being conducted. They have questioned the GNLFF's repeated decisions to defer the indefinite bandh.

"Initially, the GNLFF leadership had claimed that Subba was the prime suspect. However, after

his arrest the GNLFF leadership has repeatedly pointed out that he was only the ninth-ranking member. They are now trying to implicate the entire Opposition. Subba's reported confessions too smack of being tailored to suit the GNLFF's whims and fancies. Now the GNLFF is using the investigation to implicate political opponents," a political analyst said.

The SIT's disclosures have come under fire from the Opposition. "Earlier they arrested two prominent ABGL leaders on the strength of a confessional statement made by Gunje Lama, an arrested conspirator, in front of the sub-divisional judicial magistrate, Kurseong. Now they are trying to implicate other Opposition bigwigs on the basis of Subba's revelations," said an Opposition leader who did not wish to be

named.

# GNLF defers bandh again

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, March 31. — Once again — thrice over the past fortnight — the GNLF leadership has deferred by a week its call for an indefinite bandh in the Darjeeling hills.

The bandh, to have begun on 2 April, had been called in protest against the alleged failure of the administration to arrest those responsible for the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh on Pankhabari Road near Kurseong on 10 February.

On two other occasions bandhs called by the party which were to have begun first on 19 March and then on 26 March were similarly deferred — the decision coming on the eve of the bandhs.

The reason cited for doing so this time was the same as that given earlier — satisfaction over the progress of investigations into the attack on Mr Ghisingh, notwithstanding the misgivings GNLF leaders have been ex-



Mr Subash Ghisingh

pressing over the past few days on the matter.

The decision to call off the bandh was taken today by the party's Darjeeling branch committee president Mr Dipak Gurung on behalf of the party's three branch committees of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong.

In a press released issued here today Mr Gurung said: "The GNLF's three branch

committees had expressed satisfaction over the progress made by the Darjeeling police administration (in the case). However, it was felt that the terrorists involved in the attack and the masterminds of the conspiracy are yet to be arrested".

The party "has given another seven days to the police administration till 8 April to arrest all the terrorists...If the police fails to do so the three branches of the party will be compelled to call an indefinite bandh from 9 April", the release said.

Over the past few days different leaders of the party have been making statements criticising the police for failing to arrest the "masterminds" behind the attack. Till yesterday they had also been iterating that the bandh would begin from Monday next. This had sent harassed residents of the hills rushing to stores to buy provisions to see them through the bandh.

THE STATESMAN

- 1 APR 2001

# Rival stars on GNLF blacklist

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, March 29: Seven prominent hill Opposition leaders figure on the GNLF's list of most-wanted people it wants arrested for last month's ambush on its boss Subash Ghising.

Not satisfied with the arrest of militant Gorkha leader and Ghising denigrator Chhatray Subba, the GNLF has now launched a campaign demanding the arrest of pro-Gorkhaland leaders.

The GNLF had said after Subba's arrest last week that he was "number nine" on its list of conspirators and had urged the administration to get the prime plotters at the earliest.

The party had set a deadline of April 1 for the special investigation team to arrest the eight people it says are the masterminds of the February 10 strike on their leader. If they are not, the GNLF threatened, it will call an indefi-

nite hill bandh from next Monday.

The GNLF has furnished to the police a list of Opposition leaders who, the party claims, hatched the conspiracy against Ghising.

Confirming that the special investigation team had received such a list, an official connected with the inquiry told

**The Telegraph** that the GNLF had been pressuring the police to arrest some Opposition leaders in the hills. A senior GNLF leader also figures on the list.

"The GNLF has handed us a list of prominent Opposition leaders who it suspects had masterminded the attack on the Ghising. Among them are the two leaders of the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists (a breakaway group of the CPM), R.B. Rai and D.S. Bomzan," the official said.



Ghising

He added that the other leaders named in the list are the convener of the United Democratic Front and president of the Bharatiya Gorkha Janashakti, C.R. Rai, Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (ABGL) acting president Tseten Sherpa, former Congress legislator and president of

the National Union of Plantation Workers Dawa Narbula.

"The surprise inclusion is that of the GNLF's Kalimpong branch president and executive councillor, C.K. Pradhan. The GNLF list also includes the names of two contractors, who allegedly financed the operation," the official revealed.

Darjeeling superintendent of police Sanjay Chander, however, denied that any such list was handed over to the SIT by the

GNLF. "The GNLF may have made some demands of their own. We are verifying some names revealed by the persons arrested in the case," he said.

Asked if the names match those on the GNLF's most-wanted list, Chander said: "We are on the look out for Tseten Sherpa as we have concrete leads on his involvement. We are not being pressured in any way by the GNLF."

An Opposition leader, who did not wish to be named, described the GNLF's efforts as an effort to snuff out its rivals before the Assembly elections. "The GNLF is pressuring the police to implicate all prominent Opposition leaders as it wants to wipe out all opposition before the polls," he said.

Pradhan denied having any hand behind the attack on Ghising. "How can a son plan to assassinate his own father? Subash Ghising is my father and I'm his son," he said.

THE TELEGRAPH

30 MAR 2001

## 'We used Darjeeling Hills to store arms for Naga rebels'

BY RAHUL DAS

### SPOTLIGHT

**Kolkata, March 26:** Gorkha Liberation Organisation chief Chattré Subba used Darjeeling Hills for storing arms for the Naga militants.

"Ever since the ceasefire between the Army and the NSCN, Naga militants were finding it difficult to hide their arms. So I helped them. In return, they helped us in our operations," Chattré told the police on Monday.

Police officers have also learnt that Chattré had taken shelter in Vijay Chettri's house at Kakarbitta in Nepal, after the Tinkataria incident on November 12. "Vijay knew Chattré well and so had rented

his house for Rs 400," IG (North Bengal) N. R. Das said. Vijay, however, but did not know that Chattré was wanted by the police.

Police sources said Chattré was arrested after a GLO member tipped them. "We caught a man who told us that he would be in Kalimpong for a secret meeting with some GLO financiers. Accordingly, a trap was laid in Mirik," Mr Das added. Chattré had three armed guards with him when they pounced on him. His security guards escaped. The GLO activist was, however, released after the arrests were made.

This was the fifth time Chattré had crossed the border since the shootout at Tinkataria.

The police has also learnt that Chattré has quite a few sympathisers in North Bengal. "These men paid us anything between Rs 5,000 and 10,000 per month to help our cause," Chattré said. He, however, refused to name his financiers. But the police believes there are about 20 to 30 people who gave financial support. A hunt has been launched to trace them.

The police admitted Operation Deer to track Chattré had failed earlier. "Initially we had information that he was hiding in Ilam district in Nepal," the officer said. Ilam is said to be the base of MCC rebels.

THE ASIAN AGE

22 MAR 2001

27 MAR 2001

# G.N.L.F. puts bandh off till April 1

HT Correspondent  
Siliguri, March 25

THE G.N.L.F. on Sunday extended till April 1 the deadline it set for the Government to arrest the masterminds behind the attack on Subash Ghisingh, or face an indefinite bandh.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Front's three branch committees, presided over by the Kurseong Branch Committee president, I N Pradhan. The G.N.L.F. leaders praised the police for Chhatre Subba's prompt arrest, but demanded the arrest of the G.L.O. leader's eight financiers. Insiders, however, said Subba had surrendered himself.

The G.N.L.F. also demanded the arrest of CPRM general secretary, R B Rai, accusing him of involvement in the attack on Ghisingh. Rai expressed faith in the legal system and hoped that police would not work under political pressure. He alleged that some G.N.L.F. leaders too had a hand in the attack.

**Subba aide held:** N T Moktan, aide of the G.L.O. chief Chhatre Subba, was today arrested in 16th Mile, Kalimpong. The former G.N.L.F. MLA had gone underground with Subba after the Tinkatharey shootout on November 12.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 MAR 2001

# Chhatre Subba nabbed in midnight swoop

HT Correspondents  
Siliguri/Kolkata, March 24

CHHATRE SUBBA was arrested from Sukiapokhari on this side of the India-Nepal border early today. Around 1 am, police swooped on the GLO chief's hideout near the Fourth Mile Pashupati-nath check post. The police seized an AK-47 from Subba.

There were two other persons, one of them was a Naga, in the hideout with Subba but both managed to escape, the I-G

(North Bengal), N R Das, told a press conference at the Siliguri Circuit House.

Subba was produced at the Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate's court in Kurseong amid tight security. SDJM Subrato Chowdhary remanded Subba in 14 days' police custody. He will be kept at Matigara police station. The IG said Subba has admitted to having masterminded the February 10 ambush that nearly killed Subash Ghisingh. He disclosed his links with the

NSCN (IM), some of whom were with his boys during the November 12 attempt on Ghisingh's life at Tinkatare.

Das said the arrest of Subba is a great achievement. The police had been working under pressure as the GNLF had threatened to call an indefinite bandh if the culprit was not arrested by March 25. The police are now working on the clues, verifying the information Subba has given during interrogation and trying to work out the

source of the GLO's funds. A possible ISI angle is also being explored.

Subba had been on the run since the Tinkatare ambush, led by Paul who is a confirmed NSCN (IM) ultra. A Nepalese called Suman Rai had been killed in the shootout.

The GLO leader had been hiding in Nepal, Darjeeling SP Sanjay Chander said. He had tried to enter Kalimpong on one occasion but ultimately gave up the idea. Subba, who earlier had a

long beard, became clean-shaven in an attempt to evade the police.

The attack on Ghisingh was planned in Darjeeling in end of January. Several of Subba's close lieutenants—Mohan Sharma, Sharan Dewan, Gunje Lama, Norden Lama, Gunje Dewan, Chipen Sherpa, Dhiren Dewan and Deven Gurung—attended the meet but Subba was absent. All except the last three are in police custody.

The strike was initially planned for February 5, the day

Ghisingh was to leave for New Delhi. The Hill Cart Road at Sonada or Kurseong would have been the spot. But the plan did not work out and the would-be assassins had to wait another five days, till Ghisingh returned. Of the core group chosen to carry out the operation, Kamal Thapa was killed in the retaliatory fire from Ghisingh's bodyguards. Mohan Gurung and Kishen Chhetri are absconding.

● On Page 5: GNLF to meet today to decide on bandh

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 MAR 2001

## Hill Opposition at peace

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, March 24. - Leaders of Opposition parties in the hills breathed a sigh of relief with the arrest of prime suspect Mr Chhatre Subba this morning.

They had been on tenterhooks since the police crackdown on a section of the All Bhartiya Gorkha League leadership for their alleged involvement in the attack on GNLF chief Mr Subash Ghisingh on 10 February.

Accusing fingers had been pointed at some Opposition leaders by the GNLF ever since the attack on Mr Ghisingh. GNLF activists had even threatened to take the law in their own hands if the police administration failed to identify and arrest the culprits.

Mr Subba's arrest today seems to have dispelled fears within the Opposition that they will be the next to be targeted either by police or the GNLF workers themselves.

The district Congress unit president, Mr PP Rai, said here today that the administration had kept its word and had arrested the prime suspect.

It was now time for the GNLF leaders to keep to their promise and call off the proposed bandh from Monday, he added.

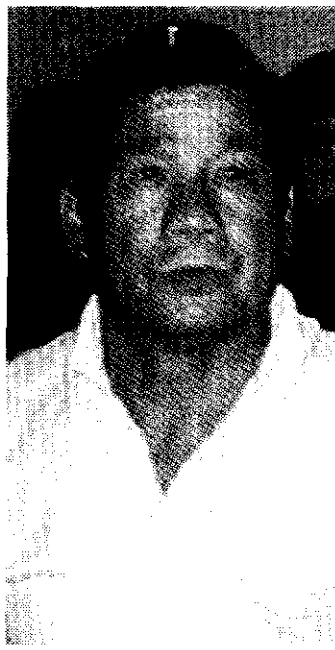
# Subba arrest leads to indefinite bandh call review

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, March 24. - Now that Mr Chhatre Subba, a prime suspect, has been arrested in connection with the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh on 10 February, leaders of the GNLF's three branch committees have decided to meet tomorrow to review their earlier decision to call an indefinite bandh in the Darjeeling hills from Monday.

The bandh call had been given earlier this week by the leaders demanding the speedy arrest of those responsible for the attack on Mr Ghisingh. This despite a meeting between DGHC councillors belonging to the GNLF and Mr Subash Ghisingh on 15 March where the latter reportedly expressed satisfaction with the progress in investigations related to the case.

While party sources said that tomorrow's meeting could decide on calling off the proposed bandh, president of the Darjeeling branch committee of GNLF, Mr Dipak Gurung, said here today that though he appreciated the police action, "the mastermind"



Chhatre Subba after his arrest. - The Statesman

behind the attack and those who had "provided the finances" would have to be arrested. Unless this is done "our stand on the matter (the bandh call) stands till date", he said.

## Arrest uncovers accomplices

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, March 24. - The arrest of GLO chief Mr Chhatre Subba has exposed the sinister roles played by his co-conspirators in their attempt to assassinate Mr Ghisingh.

From what the IGP, North Bengal and the SP, Darjeeling said the conspiracy to kill Mr Ghisingh seems to have been hatched jointly by the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League and GLO. The name of a former hardcore GNLF activist turned Trinamul supporter, Mr Saran Dewan also figures prominently. A small time contractor and his wife (both from Siliguri), the names of a few school teachers from Nepal and the presence of Naga militants with NSCN (Issac Mui-vah) affiliation complete the list of conspirators.

Police officials are not saying if anyone from the GNLF camp was involved in the plot or not. "We are not saying anything now since it would upset the course of investigation," said the IGP and the SP, Darjeeling.

The names that have emerged as most significant after Mr Subba are those of the former GNLF warlord from Manebhanjang Mr Cheten Sherpa, the ABGL vice-president, the party's secretary Mr Amar Lama and Kalimpong branch president Mr Norden Lama.

MAR 25 2001

Chhatre

Subba  
arrested

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, March 24. — The Gorkha Liberation Organisation chief, Mr Chhatre Subba, who allegedly "masterminded" the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh, was arrested today, 40 days after the incident and just a day before the GNLFF deadline for an indefinite bandh in Darjeeling hills was to expire.

The North Bengal IGP said Mr Subba was picked up from his hide-out at 4th Mile, Pashupati, near the Nepal border around 1 a.m. Two other persons with Mr Subba, a Naga militant and an unidentified man, however, escaped.

Mr Subba was produced in Kurseong SDJM's court today and remanded in police custody for 14 days.

The Darjeeling SP said Mr Subba had hatched a conspiracy with the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League vice-president, Mr Cheten Sherpa, and senior ABGL leaders, Mr Norden Lama and Mr Amar Lama (the last two are in police custody), to eliminate Mr Ghisingh on 27 January.

THE STATESMAN

25 MAR 2001



# Course must run its course

IT is no mystery what the Gorkha National Liberation Front meant when it exhorted its supporters at a recent public rally to take "necessary action" against all political activities of the Opposition. Simply put, the GNLF has asked its goons to take to the streets, priming the hills for an orgy of self-destruction.

In a week marked by three political murders and a crying need for order, the GNLF was expected to be wiser. The call not only exposed the political primitiveness of the GNLF but more unacceptably, its proclivity to subvert democracy every time it is under a threat. For a party born in violence, it comes as no surprise.

The silence of the state government, responsible for maintaining law and order, is baffling. The GNLF's statement is shockingly irresponsible. The call to violence, coming from the ruling party, reflects the political anarchy in the hills. But then, the GNLF has made violence a way of life in the hills. The hill people, numbed by long exposure to such volatility and violations in public life, can do little more than pray for respite. Because the only authority which could have helped — the state government — has turned a blind eye, mindful only of its political gains.

The GNLF's hegemony is neither by chance nor credit. Had it not been for the blessings of the CPI(M)-controlled Writers' Buildings, the GNLF's writ would never have lasted so long, or at least never have been so oppressive. It would never have had the temerity to make such calls to violence. The recent indefinite strike called by the GNLF after the assassination attempt on Subash Ghisingh caused untold misery in the hills. Called without any notice, it was a galling exposure of the party's hubris: the GNLF would not hesitate to hold its own people to ransom if it served its end. It was a nightmare for eight days — for the people and the tourists alike.

There was no succour; the state government was pleading with the GNLF to withdraw the strike. Sikkim's suffering was considered only incidental in the scheme of affairs. The close, "illicit" ties between Writers' and Lalkuthi are also reflected in the frantic manner in which the police have been trying to meet the 18 March deadline set by the GNLF to nab those who ambushed Mr Ghisingh in February. Apart from picking up some suspects, including a housewife earlier, they managed to mysteriously arrest two "prized suspects" last week.

Police claim they caught the two men while they were sneaking across from Nepal, where they had taken shelter. This, after a couple of aborted, but much publicised, hunt missions in Nepal undertaken by the Darjeeling police. Talk of the prime suspect, the Gorkha Liberation Organisation chief, Chattré Subba's plans to surrender are also doing rounds.

Smacks of favouritism when police have arrested 11 people the murder of two CPI-Mers by supporters of the Communist Party of Revolu-

<sup>5-9 12/3</sup>  
The GNLF has made violence a way of life in the Darjeeling Hills and the CPI-M enjoys a closet relationship with it. Ghisingh's party has indicated it is ready to muscle its way through as usual by urging its supporters to take on the Opposition. And the common man, who has lost his trust and the right to a dignified existence in this orgy of self-destruction, is stocking rations for the bandh's second phase, writes NIRAJ LAMA

tionary Marxists last Saturday, while none so far on the killing of another CPI-M worker, Narain Rai, soon after. Rai was reportedly killed by GNLF supporters on Monday. Evidently, the CPI-M and the GNLF are even ready to compromise their supporters' lives to maintain their relationship.

It is this immorality, which both the parties recognise in their liaison, that inhibits them from coming overboard together. Otherwise, in times of "unprincipled alliances" nation-wide, such a task would have been facile.

The CPI-M staged a protest rally in Siliguri a day after the ambush on Mr Ghisingh, raising many eyebrows. Imagine what those CPI-M cadres suffered when they were brutalised, when they lost their relatives and were hounded out of the hills by the GNLF during the Gorkhaland agitation of the 1980s.

Many of these cadres still live like refugees in Siliguri. All this, just to buy peace (no Gorkhaland demand) and the lone parliamentary seat. The GNLF, however, continues to pretend that the West Bengal government — and by derivation the CPI-M — is still its enemy. It wants Gorkhaland and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule in the same breath.

Deviously, it raises outlandish issues and beguiles the simple hill polity into boycotting elections, furtively offering the advantage to the CPI-M. The joke is always on the common man. It is no mystery how the bandh call by the CPI-M in parts of the hills after the murder of its two supporters was so successful. As quid pro quo, the GNLF has been offered a veritable *carte blanche* on local affairs, and more significantly on financial matters.

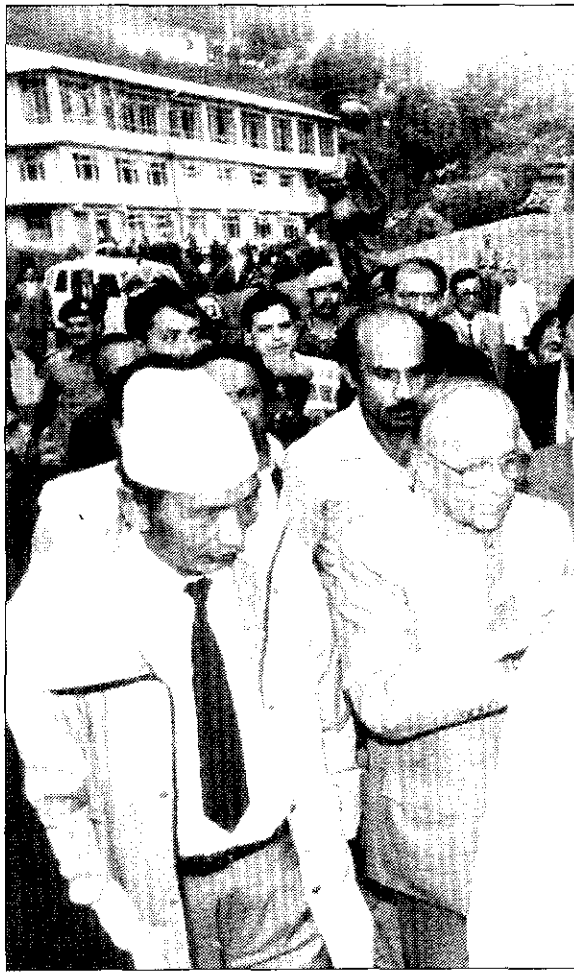
The councillors can freely misuse public money, and they have. With the appeasement policy adopted by the state government towards the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, the Accountant-General's efforts to expose the latter's malfeasance have been in vain. Besides development, the biggest casualty of the closet relationship between the GNLF

and the CPI-M has been the common people. Peace and security in the hills are precarious.

With the Left Front government inducing a feeling of invincibility into the GNLF, it has ruled the hills in a cavalier fashion. It has denied voting rights to the people and the obligatory two-tier panchayats — perhaps this is the only part of the country where a single-tier panchayat exists and for two consecutive terms at that.

The Opposition has been prevented from raising the Gorkhaland issue — now, even normal activities — has denied its own partymen the right to differ (recall the life threats publicly given by GNLF leader CK Pradhan to councillors if they backed out from the Gorkhaland demand) and even jobs to its people (the appointments of School Service Commission-selected teachers have been held up for four months now by the DGHC, demanding that the statutory body be brought under its purview). The people have been barred from worshipping idols! The last was again Mr Pradhan's doing.

These are just some of the recent examples. Such blatant authoritarianism of the whimsical kind would never



THE LALKUTHI-WRITERS' CONNECTION: Former Chief Minister Jyoti Basu with DGHC chairman and GNLF leader Subash Ghisingh in Darjeeling. — The Statesman (File photo).

have been possible had not Kolkata backed the GNLF.

That Mr Ghisingh is the best bet for both Kolkata and New Delhi is unquestionable; he has accepted their proposition to drop the statehood demand. But for this deal, which the Centre and Kolkata have struck with the GNLF, the hill people are having to pay a heavy price. Apart from forfeiting constitutional rights, under the dictatorial GNLF, the common man's life is shrouded in fear.

Opposition is never tolerated — the party goons ensure that. Intimidation has become an everyday reality, with the people expressing their anger at the GNLF only within the confines of their homes. The brood of goons has become so prolific in the hills that they are even borrowed by political parties in neighbouring Sikkim during elections. So much for the famed Gorkha mercenary!

Pushed to the wall by economic deprivation and lack of responsive political leadership, a whole generation has gone to waste. A senior state BJP leader had once said to this correspondent that what grieves him about the hills is the "criminalisation of the society" post-agitation. "You can not trust anyone anymore in the hills," he had said. The remark was made more than two years ago and still holds.

The hill people are yet to recover from the interecine bloodshed of the agitation and mistrust is rife. Sadly, the GNLF, instead of healing the wounds, reopens them, finding it a rather nice place to roost. The February ambush was just symptomatic of a violent political milieu whose roots have struck deep, shattering permanently the innocence intrinsic to the highlander. This is a loss which no government statistics will ever show, but will have to pay for sooner or later.

Delhi and Kolkata should know

that militants like Chattré Subba are being hailed by the ordinary people as messiahs. If the GNLF roars the wits out of the hill people, the Opposition keeps sniping irritably at its sides. The established Opposition parties in the hills cannot pretend to be saints. That they have not held bloodstained *khukris* more often is for the simple reason that they cannot measure up to the GNLF's brawn.

It is disappointing to see these parties — including the CPRM, considered a responsible party — which accuse the GNLF of adopting undemocratic measures rally like enthusiastic school children around Subba, who said he would not hesitate to seek the ISI's help to form Gorkhaland. The Opposition parties are seldom seen or heard but only on the eve of elections. Not surprisingly, the indolent leaders smelled a vicarious victory when Subba made his dramatic re-entry into hill politics with a police encounter involving the death of a Home Guard. It was crass opportunism.

One reason why the GNLF, though so popularly disliked, sweeps the polls every time, is because the people were never convinced about the Opposition's sincerity. If the Opposition believes in its case, let them undertake the long treks to the villages, and not make those futile, frequent trips to Delhi.

With the foreboding pre-election rumblings reverberating in the hills, the hustings are bound to be rivetting. For the GNLF, the stakes have risen after the attempt on Mr Ghisingh. They cannot afford to appear to be supporting the Left Front at this point — a bypass or a boycott of the polls is unlikely. The Marxists, on the other hand, need all the deals they can muster to face the Trinamul Congress's mounting challenge.

The Trinamul ascendancy cannot be lost on the GNLF. It has rebuffed Trinamul overtures in the past, but this time it has to exercise extreme caution. The Trinamul has announced an "understanding" with the GNLF. The GNLF is expected to come up with a "no-comments" response. But the GNLF has prepared its pitch. By exhorting its supporters to take to the streets, the party has indicated it is ready to muscle its way through as usual. Be it boycott or otherwise. As for the common people, they are busy stocking rations for the second phase of the bandh, expected once the GNLF-imposed 18 March deadline for the police expires.

The man on the street has lost trust in everyone — the GNLF, the Opposition, the Centre and Kolkata, all having abused his right to lead a dignified existence.

(The author is on the staff of The Statesman, Siliguri.)

# KPP calls 3-day bandh

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, March 10. - Three pro-Kamtapur organisations - the All Kamtapur Students' Union, the Kamtapur Women's Rights' Forum and the Kamtapur Bhasa Sahitya Parishad have called a 72-hour North Bengal bandh from 14 March.

Leaders of the parties said, the bandh has been called in demand of the release of 300 odd Kamtapur activists detained in different jails of North Bengal.

The activists were arrested in a police raid throughout North Bengal on 27 Novem-

ber.

The Pro-Kamtapur organisations have also demanded a CBI inquiry into the death of three KLO activists in the jungles of Kumargram adjacent to Bhutan and Assam border in December last year. The recovery of around 44 spent cartridges of AK series rifle from the spot made the police suggest that the incident was a case of infighting among the militants.

The leaders, including the KPP president, Mr Atul Roy, alleged that the undertrials are being rearrested on "imaginary charges when they are on the verge of being released

after 90 days" detention. "The ploy has effectively left us short of leaders before the election," he added.

Mr Roy, who left for Kolkata today, has decided to file a writ petition against the state government on the "illegal detention of his partymen and that of other Kamtapur supporters."

Mr Roy said he was expecting for Trinamul leaders to call him and thrash out the matter of alliance and seat adjustment.

The Trinamul has offered six Assembly seats to the KPP, which is "not acceptable" to the latter.

THE STATESMAN

11 MAR 2011

# Police trace Ghising strike blueprint

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, March 7: Investigators today claimed that the masterminds of the strike on Subash Ghising had given finishing touches to the February 10 ambush that very morning at Dimple Dewan's residence here.

Present at Dimple's Pradhan Nagar house that day were the key conspirators — Vijay Dewan alias Dhiren Rai, Deven Gurung alias Dipendra Rai and the slain militant, Kamal Thapa alias Thapa Bhai.

Logistics of dual strikes, one on Pankhabari Road and another on the Hill Cart Road or along National Highway 51 were given final shape, police claimed.

An official connected with the special investigation team told *The Telegraph* that Dimple, among the first to be arrested, has been "squealing" in a phased manner. "We have now been able to piece together the plot from information gathered in bits and pieces from the seven suspects arrested so far. Though Dimple has been singing in a phased manner, she given us some vital leads," he said.

According to the official, Gurung is now in the custody of Nepal police and he could also shed light on the conspiracy to eliminate the Gorkhaland leader.

The official said both Dimple and Sharan Dewan, who, the police claim, is one of the brains behind the ambush, had confirmed during interrogation that the three key conspirators had met at Dimple's house in Siliguri on the morning of February 10.

"Once Ghising's arrival was confirmed, the logistics of the

ambush — codenamed Operation Pankhabari — was given its final shape. While Vijay and Gurung left for an undisclosed destination, Kamal Thapa joined the strike unit at Phankabari. Both units were kept informed about Ghising's movement over cellphones," the official said.

Gurung, a resident of Mirik in Kurseong, is a dealer of precious Tibetan stones and gems. Vijay, Dimple's husband, and he had drawn up the blueprint of the ambush. Both hold dual citizenship of India and Nepal. While Vijay holds a Nepal citizenship in the name of Dhiren Rai, Gurung goes by the name of Dipendra Rai in the kingdom," the official said.

He admitted that the dual citizenship issue has now become a stumbling block become the SIT. "The Nepal police are touchy about handing over any of its subjects. However, a SIT unit will reach Nepal's Ilam district tomorrow to take charge of Gurung. We hope to piece together the remaining missing links in the ambush," the investigator added.

Confirming that militant Gorkha leader Chhatray Subba was still being sheltered by Naxalite guerrillas in their hill hide-outs in Nam, the official said: "Though we had made initial contacts with the GLO chief, we have not been able to bring him overground. We have time and again been discouraged by our Nepal counterparts to venture into the MCC-dominated region where Subba is holed up. The Nepalese police themselves do not dare venture into these areas, where the Maoists virtually run a parallel government."

THE TELEGRAPH

8 MAR 2001

# 'Ghisingh attackers hiding in Nepal'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, March 6. - Even as the local police has sought the assistance of the Nepal police administration in tracking down those responsible for the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh on 10 February, investigating agencies have received reports that do not rule out the possibility of an inner-party feud that might have resulted in the attack on the GNLF supremo.

Rumours have been doing the rounds since last evening that the leader of the Gorkha Liberation Organisation, Mr Chhatrey Subba, a prime suspect in the case, will be surrendering to the police. He is believed to be in hiding in the Elam district of east Nepal. There are also reports that an extremist Maoist group of Nepal is providing shelter to Subba and his associates.

The recent arrest of two persons from Nepal in connection with the incident has only confirmed suspicions that Mr Ghisingh's attackers are sheltered in that country. So far eight persons have been arrested in connection with the assassination attempt.

The GNLF leadership, which has threatened an indefinite bandh from 19 March, unless those responsible for the attack on Mr Ghisingh by then are arrested will be holding a public rally tomorrow at Chowk Bazar where party leaders are expected to decide their next plan of action.

Leaders of the Darjeeling branch committee of the party met here today to discuss tomorrow's meeting. They expect a large turn-out with party workers from all the DGHC's 28 constituencies scheduled to come to attend the rally.

THE STATESMAN

- 7 MAR 2001

# SUBBA HIRED NEPAL MILITANTS

By RAHUL DAS

**Kolkata, March 5:** It was Chhaire Subba's brain. The means were his two colleagues and Nepalese militants. The end would have been GNLFC chief Subhas Ghising's death.

North Bengal police on Monday said Subba's men Vijay Dewan and Saran Dewan led the murderous attempt on Ghising on February 10. The special investigating team probing the attack has arrested Saran Dewan and accomplice Arjun Lama. Saran Dewan has confessed to the attack, Inspector General, North Bengal N.R. Das said.

Saran Dewan is spilling the

beans. He told the police Subba took the help of two Nepalese militants Kamal Thapa and Mohan Guram to kill Mr Ghising. Mr Das said. These two are still absconding and so is Vijay Dewan.

"But I don't know all of them. Subba had asked Vijay Dewan to hire the men from Nepal. I was a co-ordinator between Vijay and the Nepalese men," he told the police. The police has already picked up Saran Dewan and Dimple Dewan, after the mobile recovered from the killed militant flashed the Dewan residence number.

Police officers claimed they told Inspector General, Nepal, 10 days

ago that Subba and his men hiding in Nepal. "Officers of the Matang police intercepted these two Dewans from a cowshed at Kekabari in Chainpur district. We provided the Nepal police with their photographs," a senior officer of the special investigating team said.

Chainpur falls under Nepal's Koshi area which is about 100 kilometres from the Indian border. The police claimed both men had taken shelter in makeshift camps after fleeing from India. Immediately after they were detained, Mr N.R. Das was informed. Both governments chalked out a plan that these men would be pushed into India where

the Indian police would lie in wait.

A team led by superintendent of railway police, Siliguri, S.N. Gupta waited on the other side of the border. "Both of them were arrested the moment they entered into Indian territory," an officer said.

Saran Dewan and Arjun Lama are former members of the GNLFC's militant outfit Gorkha Voluntary Cell, then led by Chhaire Subba. During the Gorkha liberation movement, the two had been staunch GNLFC supporters. Dewan, a resident of Singhell Tea Estate, had even been a member of Mr Ghising's security team for some time. He

also led the Kurseong branch of the GVC, sources said. When the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was formed in 1988, Dewan remained actively involved in GVC even though Chhaire Subba walked out and formed the Gorkha Liberation Organisation. Dewan had once led an ambush on the then additional superintendent of police, Kurseong, Ranjit Pachmandi. He had been injured in the crossfire that followed. He also served a nine-month jail term for the firing. He left the GNLFC in 1991 when he was refused a ticket by the DGHC for the Assembly elections. He contested the election as an independent candidate with Congress support.

THE ASIAN AGE

- 6 MAR 2001

## Two held for attack on Ghisingh

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, March 4. — Darjeeling police arrested Saran Dewan and Arjun Tamang from Lohagarh, adjacent to the Nepal border, last night in connection with the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh on 10 February.

The Darjeeling SP said the two were produced before the Kurseong court today. They were remanded in police custody. The two gave "important leads".

Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya, who was here, didn't make any statement.

He ruled out the possibility of the involvement of the Trinamul or the KLO in the attack.

Dewan and Tamang, who took refuge in Nepal after the attack, were earlier arrested by Nepal police. Since there is no extradition treaty between Nepal and India, Nepal police reportedly sent them back to India. Prior to that, an inquiry team from Darjeeling district had gone to Nepal and identified the two persons.

**THE STATESMAN**

• 5 MAR 2001

# Police remand for Ghisingh attackers

HT Correspondent  
Siliguri, March 4

SARAN DEWAN and his aide, Arjun Lama, key accused in the February 10 bid on Subash Ghisingh's life, have been arrested.

Last night, Nepal Police handed them over to their West Bengal counterparts. Today, the two accused were given police remand for 10 days. The arrests apparently took place five days ago.

Dewan, a former chief of the Gorkha Volunteer Cell's Kurseong Committee, is now with the Trinamool Congress. His associate is a contractor.

Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who was here today, refused to comment on the arrests. The Gorkha National Volunteer Force has threatened to call an indefinite bandh in the Hills unless the culprits are behind bars.

Asked whether he would grant the GNLFF's demand for a special force directly under the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, he said he would consider the matter.

He said there was an urgent need to reconsider the terms of the Indo-Nepal Treaty, for the border between the two countries had turned into a hotbed of ISI activity. "The area needs better policing," he said.

Bhattacharjee said he would ask the Prime Minister to look into the demand on the treaty. Flights between Kolkata and Kathmandu ought to be treated as international and not domestic, as it is now. This will allow better screening of passengers and more stringent security checks.

Asked if he would request the Nepal Government to hand over Gorkha Liberation Organisation leader Chhatre Subba to India, he said this was for the Governments of India and Nepal to discuss.

"Nonetheless, I will ask the Centre to put pressure on the Government of Nepal."

**Buddha visits patients:** The



Subash Ghisingh

Chief Minister today visited patients of the mystery killer disease undergoing treatment at the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital. Subsequently, he met health officials. Subsequently, he told reporters that things were well under control and no new cases had been reported. Today, one more victim of the killer fever died at the hospital, taking the toll to 37. He urged people of North Bengal to take their patients to the North Bengal Medical College, not elsewhere.

**Buddha attends CPM meet:** The Chief Minister ruled out a creation of a separate Kamtapur State. Addressing party workers here, he said the Trinamool Congress, that has joined hands with the Kamtapur People's Party, has no morality. Asked whether his party was open to entering into an alliance with the KPP, he said: "Such a move would be suicidal." The KPP leader recently said his party was open to forming an alliance with any political outfit.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 MAR 2001

# Nepal snag in Ghising attack probe

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

**Siliguri, March 3:** Police on the trail of Subash Ghising's attackers have returned empty-handed yet again from Nepal, raising doubts about the manner in which the entire operation has been handed.

Nepal police had claimed to have arrested two persons suspected to be the masterminds of the strike on the Gorkhaland leader and were to have handed them over to the team from West Bengal. But, criticised by the media for the manner in which the entire operation has been carried out, the Nepal police developed cold feet and are now reluctant to comply with the SIT's request.

"Certain diplomatic problems have cropped up. We are not getting any cooperation from our Nepal counterparts. The SIT team which went to Dharan in eastern Nepal yesterday to bring back the two arrested persons have returned empty-handed," an SIT official said today.

The operation in Nepal — codenamed Deer — was the third since the attempt on Ghising's life on February 10.

Reports yesterday had suggested that the Nepal police had handed over two of the alleged conspirators — Sharan Dewan and Arjun Chettri — to the SIT. Also, militant Gorkha leader Chhatray Subba was believed to have sent feelers to the SIT through the Nepal police that he was willing to surrender.

Faced with strong public criticism, the Nepalese authorities seem to have "backtracked" on handing over the suspects.

"The entire matter is now being dealt with at the highest level between Delhi and Kathmandu. Though there is no formal extradition treaty between the two

countries, there have been instances in the past when some criminals have been handed over," the SIT official said.

The media in Nepal have even questioned the manner in which the arrests were made and wondered how only Sharan and Arjun were taken into custody while two other suspects — Pradeep Benjamin and Harke Bahadur — managed to give the police a slip.

The SIT believes that both Harke and Pradeep could be members of the strike force that carried out the ambush.

The GNLF, too, have questioned the way the district police have handled the investigations. "We are not too happy with the manner in which police are conducting the investigations. Time is running out on our deadline on the arrests. We want the masterminds and the attackers arrested by March 18," GNLF's Kurseong branch committee chief Indra Narayan Pradhan said.

Pradhan refused to comment on the reported arrests of the two suspects. "Unless we see with our own eyes that the masterminds are arrested, we will not make any comments. Police could as well be on a wild-goose chase for all we know. They may even be trying to hoodwink the people by arresting some small fish," Pradhan said.

## Kurseong bandh today

Two CPM activists were killed and five others injured when alleged activists of the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists attacked them in Darjeeling last night.

The Kurseong zonal committee of the CPM has called a 12-hour bandh in Kurseong tomorrow, in protest against the murders at Rongmuk-Cider tea estate under Jorebunglow police station.

THE TELEGRAPH

4 MAR 2001 - 4 MAR 2001

4 MAR 2001



# Hitmen in net, Subba in surrender signal

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

**Siliguri, March 2:** Investigators on the trail of Subash Ghising's attackers today claimed they had nabbed two prime suspects and are on the verge of getting militant Gorkha leader Chhatray Subba in their net shortly.

While two of the masterminds of the strike on Ghising were handed over to the special investigation team (SIT), Subba has sent feelers through Nepal police that he is willing to give himself up to the West Bengal police.

The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) has alleged that Subba, who heads the Gorkha Liberation Organisation (GLO), had hatched the conspiracy to assassinate Ghising.

The SIT, which is in its fourth mission to Nepal as part of Operation Deer, is desperate for results because the GNLF has threatened to resume the indefinite hill bandh from March 19 if the assailants are not arrested.

An official with the SIT told **The Telegraph** that the Nepal police handed over two of the suspected conspirators — Sharan Dewan and Arjun Chettri — to the team at Morang in the eastern hill district of Ilam. Dewan is said to be the second most important person in the GLO hierarchy.

The official disclosed that



Chhatray Subba

Subba had indicated he is ready to surrender. "We have also made contacts with Subba, who has expressed his willingness to surrender himself to us. The matter is being discussed between us and our Nepal counterparts," he said.

Both Sharan and Arjun were arrested by Nepal police at Chayanpur a week ago. Investigators said that the blueprint of the ambush was primarily drawn up by Sharan and Vijay Dewan, husband of Dimple Dewan — the housewife who was among the first to be arrested after the Febru-

ary 10 ambush.

Subba's son, Santosh alias Gorey Subba, had arranged for the supply of arms and ammunition. O.R. Kothwal, who was arrested along with Dimple, was the main conduit for the arms supply. Police are now on the lookout for Vijay and Santosh.

"We have managed to trace Subba by tracking calls made from Siliguri and Kurseong to his cellphone. We got his mobile phone numbers from the five people arrested. We traced him to a particular spot in eastern Nepal," the official said.

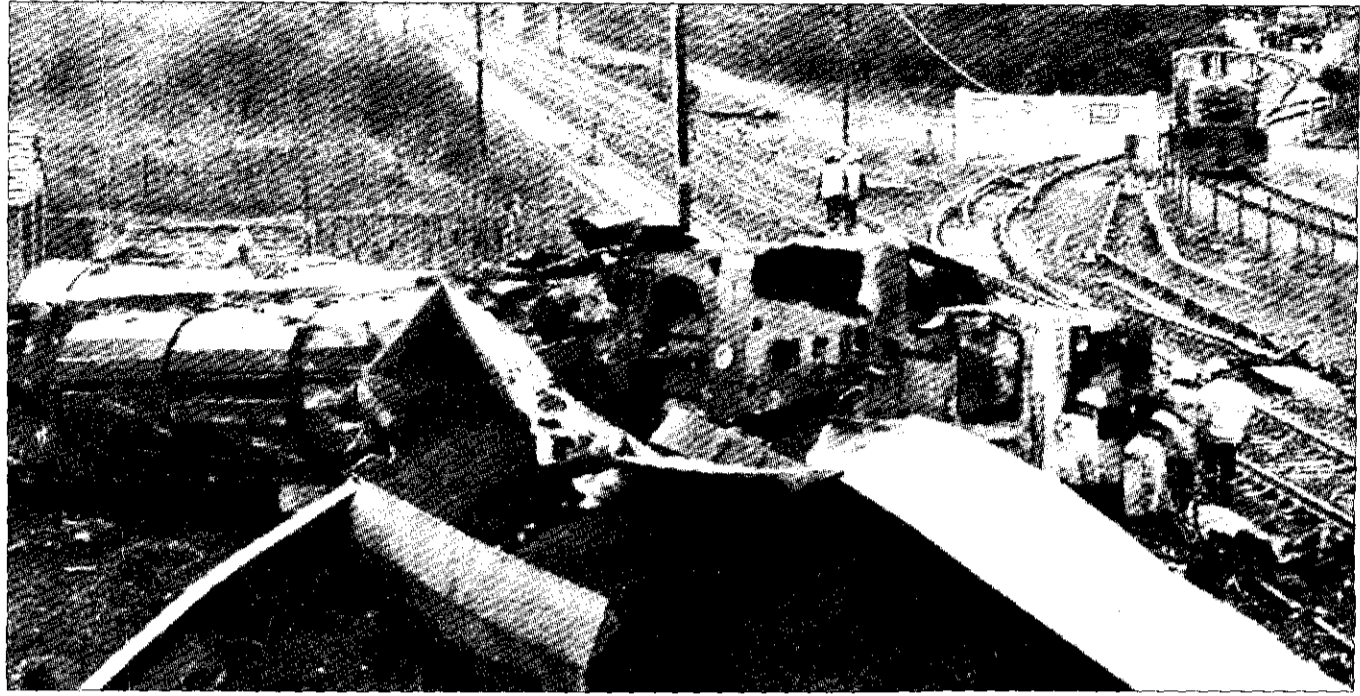
The two detainees were brought to the Morang police station from Chayanpur on Tuesday.

The assailants' trail led to Nepal after Dimple squealed during sustained interrogation.

Dimple, a housewife, and Kothwal, a drug dealer-cum-car-hijacker, were picked up for questioning on the basis of records of calls made to the cellphone recovered from the attacker killed during the ambush.

Though Arjun was picked up by the SIT for questioning, he was set free after a couple of days. Sharan and Arjun had headed the Kurseong and Gayabari units of the Subba-led Gorkha Volunteer Cell — the GNLF militant wing — during the statehood agitation in the mid-eighties.

THE TELEGRAPH



AP PHOTO  
Police examining the damage of two vehicles at the scene of a train collision at Great Heck near Selby in England on Wednesday. At least 13 people were killed when a high-speed passenger train collided with a freight train.

## UN, Iraq to meet again on ending stalemate

United Nations, February 28

THE UNITED Nations and Iraq concluded the first high-level negotiations in over two years on bridging an impasse regarding UN sanctions and weapons inspectors.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed Al-Sabhaf to consider two dates for resuming the "dialogue". Iraq had requested to end the stalemate. Al-Sabhaf would not give details but said the next round would probably be held in New York "within a few weeks". The meeting is likely to be held after an Arab Summit in Amman, Jordan at the end of March.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell has said he hoped the proposed revisions to UN sanctions could be completed before the Arab meeting. At the same time, military sanctions on Baghdad should remain strict, Powell added.

## 2 Trinamool members held in Nepal for Ghisingh ambush link

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, February 28

NEPAL HAS neither admitted nor denied newspaper reports about the arrest of two alleged Trinamool Congress activists by its police suspecting their involvement in the February 10 ambush on Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) supremo Subhas Ghisingh.

Spokesman of the Nepalese Home Ministry, GB Pandey told Hindustan Times on Wednesday that the reports were still being verified by the department.

On the contrary, two prominent Kathmandu-based dailies today reported that a police team headed by Sub-inspector Devi Pokhrel arrested the Trinamool men from near Chainpur in eastern Nepal on Friday.

Though the papers claimed that the arrested persons hailed from Kurseong in Darjeeling district, they did not identify the arrested. Reports only said that the police was trying to ascertain if the Trinamool men had any hand in the ambush.

According to the dailies, the arrested persons during interrogation told police that they left home after the GNLF attacked their party workers following the ambush. The detainees were forwarded to the Morang district police on Tuesday.

Their arrest has come as a surprise as the West Bengal Government has been claiming from the beginning that the Gorkha Liberation Organisation (a breakaway GNLF faction) is involved in the ambush.

It has further alleged that GLO

chief Chattr Singh Subba has not only forged links with radical Nepalese Communists, but is also at present in hiding in eastern Nepal.

A police team from Darjeeling visited some eastern Nepalese villages soon after the ambush.

GNLF workers had attacked and damaged houses and property of a number of leaders belonging to the GLO, the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League, the Bharatiya Gorkha Jan Shakti, and the All-Gorkha Students' Union (an independent organisation), all organisations that have stuck to the Gorkha land demand.

Ghisingh had given up the demand while signing the tripartite agreement with the West Bengal Government and the Union Government in 1988.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 MAR 2001

# Sleuths see Nepal party hand in Ghisingh attack

Kinsuk Basu  
Kolkata, February 21

INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES and the Special Investigation Team of the State police probing into the attack on GNL's chief Subhas Ghisingh have stumbled upon a new finding which suggests the hand of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) behind the ambush.

Back from Nepal, the team now believes that apart from the MCC, Chhatre Subba received support — both arms and men — from CPN. It was while groping for CPN support in Nepal's Jhapa district that Chhatre befriended some MCC members who were

then trying to forge an alliance with this Communist outfit for geo-strategic control over the area. The MCC had then promised to help Chhatre.

It was in late December weeks after Chhatre resurfaced in Nepal — that he heard from some CPN central committee members. The meeting took place at Bhudhabari early January.

While it's still not clear what exactly transpired at the meeting, preliminary findings suggest Chhatre sought arms and men from the CPN, which has left the Koirala government in jitters.

Intelligence agencies are now certain that besides arms, the entire planning of the Ghisingh

attack was worked out in consonance with the CPN. The attack was chalked out at a place from where the culprits could easily cross over to Nepal. SIT members are unanimous that the AK-56 used in the ambush was supplied by the CPN.

Banned in Nepal, the CPN has of late spread its tentacles fast from western to eastern Nepal, settling up new bases in the bordering areas of Dhamak, Jhapa and Hum. Besides masterminding serial dacoities, bank robberies and murders across Nepal, the outfit, say intelligence reports, was clearly involved in the recent looting of a police outpost in a border village, barely 55

km from the India border. Chhatre decided to seek aid from the CPN after the Tinkatre attempt failed. The SIT has learnt that he was eager for a second alternative after trying a

hand with Naga militants, most of whom were disgruntled members of the NSCN's IM and Khaplang factions. While Darjeeling police failed to make any breakthrough in the case, Chhatre and his sympathisers decided to seek external help to realise their dream of ousting Ghisingh. Intelligence reports suggest that a meeting to choose the 'right' alternatives was held in New Delhi early December when Chhatre was staying at the house

of Mani Kumar Subba, a Congress leader from Assam.

A key member of the anti-Ghisingh camp, Mani Kumar, says reports, maintained a close relationship with Chhatre and others who in turn banked on him for financial support. Some SIT members now believe the funding for the Tinkatre training was partly provided by Mani Kumar. Intelligence agencies are now keen to pick up more information on some key MCC members from North Bihar keen to strike a deal with the CPN. Reports suggest that the PWG wants to tie up with the MCC in Nepal though no details of the plan has reached the SIT team yet.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 FEB 2001

# Send combat force or face bandh: GNLF

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, Feb. 19. — The GNLF has set yet another condition for calling off the indefinite strike after the 30-day suspension — the creation of a separate combat force under the DGHC.

The front yesterday gave the state a month to arrest those responsible for the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh.

The GNLF leaders have, for long, been demanding the transfer of the police department under the council — a demand ignored by the state administration.

Despite stepped-up pressure, the state does not seem inclined to consider the new demand for a separate force.

## FRONT DEMANDS SECURITY BOOST

DARJEELING, Feb. 19. — The GNLF has called for tightening of security along Pankhabari Road where Mr Subash Ghisingh's convoy was attacked.

The front has demanded that the police out-post in Dhudia be upgraded to a police station.

Mr IN Pradhan today stressed the need for better security arrangement along Hill Cart Road.

**Border security:** Mr Asok Bhattacharya today said the Centre would soon post a task force along the Indo-Nepal border to check infiltration.

The municipal affairs and urban development minister said infiltration from Nepal and Bhutan into the region was changing demographic pattern of North Bengal. — SNS

The chief minister feels the state police is capable enough to handle militancy in the Darjeeling Hills and arrest the GNLF leader's attackers.

That the state government is against creating such a visit Kolkata and, if necessary, to have toughened the GNLF's stand. Mr Ghisingh will discuss the matter with the Centre or the state government or both during his scheduled visit to Kolkata and, if necessary,

ty, New Delhi. Doctors have advised Mr Ghisingh to rest for around 10 days before travelling. He'll place an "official" demand, for so far it has only been verbal, GNLF's Kurseong branch president, Mr IN Pradhan, said.

The GNLF seems convinced of Mr Chhatre Subba's role in the attack on Mr Ghisingh.

The front members have not spared the Opposition leaders and the Agsu, who had backed Mr Subba's demand for the resignations of DGHC councillors.

Asked why the GNLF had not pressured the state for Mr Subba's arrest after the violence at Tinkataria in November, a GNLF admitted that the front "had not taken him seriously".

THE STATESMAN

70 FEB 2001

# GNLF leader demands CBI probe

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, February 20

21/2  
K-5  
THERE WOULD be an indefinite bandh in the Darjeeling hills from March 19 if the culprits involved in the assassination bid on Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) chief Subash Ghisingh were not arrested by that time, GNLF MLA Shanta Chhetri told the Assembly today.

Speaking during Mention Hour in the House, Chhetri made it clear that the GNLF would not settle for anything short of a CBI probe into the incident. She said that GNLF MLAs would sit on dharna outside the Writers'

Buildings if the State Government did not concede the demand. She proposed to meet the Chief Minister tomorrow and take up the issue.

The GNLF legislator echoed the party's demand to raise a combat force in the hills to tackle terrorism and said the GNLF chief would soon discuss the issue with the State Government. She stuck to the party stand that the police force in the hills be placed under the control of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). "People are panicky and have lost faith in the police. It is time one does something in this regard," she said amidst cheers

from a handful of Congress MLAs present in the House.

Chhetri was bitterly critical of the police and administration for allowing the assassination attempt on a mass leader like Ghisingh. "It is strange that on the day the incident happened all senior police officials of Darjeeling district, including like police superintendent and even the district magistrate were absent. I wonder how that happened on the very day when our leader was attacked."

Talking to reporters later, the GNLF MLA said that the absence of a whole lot of senior officials on the day of attack on Ghisingh

needed to be inquired. She did not rule out the complicity of a section of administration and police in the assassination attempt on Ghisingh, but refused to elaborate further on the issue.

She parried questions as to whether the GNLF demand for a CBI inquiry denoted their total lack of faith on the police and the CID wing of the State police, which has now been entrusted with the inquiry into the bid on Ghisingh's life.

"We have made our demand in a certain context and that need not be explained," Chhetri added.

Police lob teargas **Encephalitis toll rises**

Dowry claims

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 FEB 2001

# GNLF mulls cadre force to maintain peace

5/1  
2/12

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING/CALCUTTA, Feb. 20. - The GNLF is reportedly considering reviving the Gorkha Volunteer Cell to maintain peace in the hills.

The party has little faith in police, 10 of whose 22 outposts in the hills are virtually defunct, it has emerged after the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh. The GNLF believes the state government has neither the inclination nor the wherewithal to counter violence.

The GVC, which comprised militant activists of the front, was set up during the Gorkhaland agitation of the 1980s. It was disbanded after the signing of the DGHC Accord in 1998. Its members, including women, surrendered

their arms that year.

GNLF leaders said in Darjeeling today that once the GVC was re-activated, it won't take long to find out the culprits behind the attack on Mr Ghisingh on 10 February.

"We have no faith in the investigating agencies of the state," GNLF's Darjeeling branch president, Mr Dipak Gurung, said. He demanded that the Centre investigate and nab the aides of GLO leader Mr Chhatrey Subba, suspected to have masterminded the attack.

The GNLF leadership reiterated its demand that the home department be handed over to the DGHC. The state government refused to transfer the home department to the DGHC though the demand

was raised soon after the setting up of the council in 1988.

Mr Gurung said the the bandh, called off yesterday, would be resumed on 19 March unless the culprits behind the attack were arrested and a special combat force created under the DGHC. Only the HS examinations will be exempted from the bandh.

The Gorkha National Women's Organisation has called for a bullet-proof car and Z-category security for Mr Ghisingh. If the demands are not met "we will be compelled to call an indefinite strike from 19 March and the administration will be fully responsible for any untoward incident," said the women's wing president, Mrs Gopi Maya Gurung. GNLF MLA Mrs Shanta

■ See GNLF: page 4

GNLF:  
(Continued from page 1)

Chhetri said in the Assembly today. "It is not mere coincidence that on the day of the attack top district officials, including the DM and SP, were away from the hills.

The attack could be engineered because of administrative lapse and intelligence failure," Mrs Chhetri said.

The GNLF legislator threatened that her party would stage a dharna in front of Writers' Buildings if the case was not handed over to the CBI.

"An inquiry by the state government cannot be impartial since the incident has exposed its failure," she said.

Two GNLF MLAs plan to meet Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya tomorrow.

A police official in Darjeeling said all out-posts in the hill would be shortly modernised and provided with more armed policemen. A sub-inspector, an assistant inspector, a havildar and 10 constables will man an out-post.

Additional forces will be posted in camps near Nepal border - close to Mirik Pasupathi and Mandbhanjan the official said.

THE STATESMAN

23 FEB 2001

23 FEB 2001

# GNLF puts off strike for a month

HT Correspondent  
Siliguri, February 18

THE GORKHA National Liberation Front has put on hold its indefinite strike for a month after a police assurance that those involved in the ambush of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council chief Subash Ghisingh would be arrested within this period.

Ghisingh, who was admitted to a nursing home in Siliguri on February 10 in a critical condition with bullet injuries, was released today. He reached Darjeeling under a tight security cover and will not meet visitors for the next couple of days.

Leaders of the GNLFF's three

branch committees—Kalinpong, Kurseong and Darjeeling—took the decision on the strike at a meeting in Darjeeling today. IN Pradhan, president of the Darjeeling committee, has made it clear that the strike has been postponed and not called off. "The SP of Darjeeling has assured us that the attackers would be under arrest within a month. The administration has made a similar request," said Pradhan.

Life in the district is expected to return to normal from tomorrow after eight days of the crippling strike. Not only West Bengal, but the neighbouring State of Sikkim too has been badly hit by the strike. Shutters were downed on

educational institutions, business establishments, tea gardens, banks and other institutions for the past week. Vehicles stayed off the roads with Sikkim-bound traffic stranded at many places. GNLFF supporters damaged and set ablaze some vehicles. Prices of essential commodities have skyrocketed.

Yesterday, students of the North Bengal University took out a procession in Siliguri demanding immediate withdrawal of the bandh. It was the first show of protest against the bandh. School students were apprehensive that they would miss crucial board examinations scheduled to start at the end of this month. The GNLFF decision is expected to defuse the

mounting resentment among common people against the strike and pressure from the administration. The GNLFF has been baying for blood since the attack on the DGHC president on February 10 at Saathgumti, Kurseong district, with fingers pointing at militants of the Gorkhaland Liberation Organisation.

One policeman, a civilian driver and a militant were killed in the attack. With the GNLFF putting off the strike for a month, pressure mounts on the special investigation team to track down the culprits. So far, the team has uncovered some important clues leading to the mastermind of Operation Pankhabari.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 FEB 2001

# GNLF suspends hill bandh for a month

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Feb. 18. - The GNLf has suspended the bandh in hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong by a month from 6 a.m. tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Mr Subash Ghisingh was released from a private nursing home here today and he left for Darjeeling.

GNLF's Kurseong branch president Mr IN Pradhan said today: "We have given the authorities a month's time to arrest those responsible for the attack on Mr Ghisingh and recover the arms used in the ambush.

"If the authorities fail to show results within a month, we shall be compelled to enforce the bandh."

The suspension indication came yesterday when the GNLf chief said he had asked party's branch presidents to consider relaxing the bandh for tea and cinchona plantations.

The doctors attending on Mr Ghisingh said the DGHC chairman had recovered from



Mr Subash Ghisingh waves at supporters as he walks out of a Siliguri nursing home on Sunday after his discharge. - The Statesman

injuries. Mr Ghisingh was admitted with bullet wounds on his head and ear on 10 February.

Mr Ghisingh walked down the stairs of the nursing home around 10 a.m. and left for Darjeeling in a 15-car convoy.

No pilot van escorted the GNLf leader's motorcade in the town area for security reasons. The motorcade avoided the Pankhabari road where he was shot at and made for Darjeeling via Hill Cart Road (NH 55) amid tight security. A huge crowd welcomed Mr Ghisingh at his Jalapahar residence in Darjeeling.

Prices of essentials have shot up in the Hills. So also in Sikkim since the NH 55, lifeline to the state, runs through Kalimpong sub-division.

People went on a buying spree after the bandh was relaxed for a few hours on 15 February and this led to shortage of goods since there was no supply. Traders feared that the people, without realising the shortage, might ransack their shops.

Residents, however, complained of hoarding and artificial price rise. Drains in the Hills were overflowing, raising the fear of spread of some disease.

■ Editorial: Back to violence, page 6

THE STATESMAN

19 FEB 2001



## BACK TO VIOLENCE

Ghisingh can't monopolise use of force

BY suggesting that he be allowed to set up a "combat force" to tackle militants responsible for the attack on him, Subash Ghisingh implies a function of the state police. It has long been his demand that law and order be transferred to the Hill Council. If the Left Front despite its tacit understanding with him on matters relating to the solitary parliamentary and three assembly seats has resisted that demand, there are good reasons for it. The GNLF has persistently used force to get things done. Even now Ghisingh's ploy is to hold out threats of renewed violence should the Centre and the state not concede his demands for more powers and funds, not to speak of statehood which he hasn't removed from his agenda. To concede the demand for a "combat force" would amount to sanction for crushing his political adversaries. That would be a dangerous signal since the Gorkha Liberation Organisation is as passionately committed to the use of force to wrest power from Ghisingh. Besides, the GNLF is a divided house as factional wars before and after the last Hill Council elections confirmed. Armed workers of the GNLF can only create panic, especially among uninvolved residents and tourists. If the GNLF can hold Darjeeling to ransom with an indefinite bandh, there can be little to choose between the GNLF and GLO: they use the same methods and Ghisingh merely claims a monopoly in the use of force. This is clearly unacceptable.

Left leaders who stand by Ghisingh for purely selfish reasons — he has withdrawn the GNLF from assembly elections to suit the CPI-M — may recall that it is Ghisingh who created the monsters now spreading terror in the hills. While power, position and plenty prompted him to change tactics and speak in different voices, he has never officially abjured the path of violence or renounced the demand for statehood. To that extent he has been a victim of his own games with ominous signals of further strikes and counter-strikes. While the state police have thoroughly disgraced themselves, it is beyond all logic that the bandh in Darjeeling should continue indefinitely till the assailants are nabbed. Buddhadev Bhattacharya cannot escape administrative responsibility merely because Ghisingh is a convenient tool in the CPI-M's hands. He must act to save Darjeeling from further bloodshed — and fast.

THE STATESMAN

19 FEB 2001

HD 15  
1992

# Thunder in the hills

**W**EST BENGAL'S picturesque Darjeeling hills, which witnessed a bloody ethnic movement for a Gorkha homeland a little over 15 years ago, are once again showing signs of getting caught in the throes of violence. This at a time when the Left Front Government in West Bengal is finding itself stretched preparing for a likely bruising electoral showdown in two months' time.

At the root of the current convulsion in the hills is an assassination bid on Mr. Subash Ghising, chairman of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). As the unchallenged supremo of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), Mr. Ghising had set the hills aflame by authoring the Gorkhaland movement which in 1986 forced New Delhi and Kolkata to grant him the council, a halfway house of sorts.

On February 9, Mr. Ghising's convoy, bound for Darjeeling — "my capital", in his words — from Siliguri was attacked on a narrow and winding mountain road by militants armed with sophisticated rifles and grenades. Showing great presence of mind and courage, Mr. Ghising, bleeding from wounds in the neck and

*The Darjeeling hills are once again showing signs of getting caught in the throes of violence.*

**MALABIKA BHATTACHARYA on the recent attack on Subhash Ghising.**

shoulders, crouched on the floor and, moving away from the door on the gunmen's side, rolled out through the opposite one into a ditch below. After about half hour, a blood-soaked Mr. Ghising was rescued by his associates. On his way to hospital, Mr. Ghising gave a clear plan of action to his men on how to deal with the situation at various levels.

The attack on Mr. Ghising, widely believed to be the handiwork of Mr. Chhatre Subba, a one-time Ghising protege who has turned against the GNLF supremo for his purported betrayal of the Gorkhaland cause, is fraught with political implications. Mr. Subba and his band of supporters, long suspected to be

in cahoots with various guerilla outfits active in the northeast, are believed to be hiding in sanctuaries in Nepal.

The West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, barely four months into the job, has told the State Assembly that his police have almost got to the bottom of the ambush as they have identified the masterminds, their political affiliations, their travel and money routes over the past few months. Among the masterminds is Mr. Subba who can be flushed out of his sanctuary only with assistance from the Centre, Mr. Bhattacharjee says. It is apparent that Mr. Bhattacharjee does not want to take any rash step when it involves Nepal, because he, too, is aware of how a nasty rumour involving the actor, Mr. Hrithik Roshan, very nearly spoilt relations between the two countries. Mr. Bhattacharjee also hinted in the Assembly that he had decided to hold back crucial information in the overall interest of the current investigation.

For the ruling Leftists what comes as a rude shock is the revelation of the existence of a terror network which Mr. Subba has put in place in North Bengal with assistance from militant

outfits such as the NSCN. Ironically, when Mr. Subba openly issued a threat to Mr. Ghising and his DGHC councillors a few months ago and asked them to give up office for realising "Gorkhaland", no one took him seriously. His chilling line: "I will have Ghising and his councillors killed if they did not quit by January 31," was greeted with titters.

The reason for the Leftists' growing anxiety is not difficult to comprehend. With the elections round the corner, West Bengal is increasingly getting scarred with political violence. Thanks to Ms. Mamata Banerjee's aggressive politics and the Leftists' matching response, parts of Midnapore are already tense. In the plains of North Bengal, the ethnic Kamtapur movement is fast snowballing into a volatile issue with support from the Trinamool Congress and a few other Opposition parties.

Against this background, if Mr. Subba covertly ties up with the protagonists of Kamtapur and resurrects the Gorkhaland movement, the Government will find itself in a jam before the elections. For Ms. Banerjee's Trinamool Congress, which is a relatively weak force in North Bengal, such a situation will be tempting to exploit.

As far as Mr. Ghising is concerned, the ambush portends shaky times ahead because it shows up Mr. Subba's effective penetration of his inner circle without whose — at least a part of it — complicity the attack could not have taken place. Already, the police are putting under the microscope a few Gorkhaland councillors who have lately become high spenders.

But what is causing concern to the GNLF is the realisation that the attack is also a pointer to popular disillusionment with the DGHC and, also to some extent, with Mr. Ghising who rode to power selling to the people — most of whom are poor — the dream of "Gorkhaland". Rising poverty, unemployment and diminution in life appear to be forcing a large number of Mr. Ghising's voters to suspect the DGHC to be a letdown, a betrayal of the cause. Mr. Subba, the breakaways from the CPI(M) and the GNLF and other detractors of Mr. Ghising, who have been lying low all these days, are now showing signs of going for the jugular because they think their time has finally come.



...by... along... & pro... economic...

Subhash Ghising speaks to the press from his hospital bed... unchallenged no more.

# Why attack on Ghisingh isn't a big deal in Nepal

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, February 17 1812

NEPAL CONTINUES to downplay last week's abortive bid on the life of Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) supremo Subhas Ghisingh. This, despite the fact that Indian security agencies firmly believe that Nepal is being used as the main shelter for Ghisingh's assailants.

Speaking to *The Hindustan Times* yesterday, Nepalese Home Ministry spokesman G.B. Pandey said: "We have no knowledge of any militant outfit using our territory to carry out any attack on Mr Ghisingh. However, we will certainly take action if anything like this comes to our notice. At the moment though, the situation in the border region is normal."

On the other hand, Indian newspaper reports, based on information provided by the intelligence agencies, claimed that the prime suspect, Gorkha Liberation Organisation (GLO) chief Chhatra Singh Subba, was holed up in eastern Nepal. They further revealed that Subba, had held a meeting with Communist extremists from Bihar in eastern Nepal prior to the ambush.

The Nepalese media, which hailed Ghisingh as a crusader of the Gorkha cause in the Eighties, is lukewarm in their coverage of the ambush and its aftermath. Only a handful of dailies and weeklies carried reports about the attack. Compared to this, Pakistan TV, which is quite popular in the kingdom, gave the incident a lot of importance. Explaining the phe-

nomena, a senior Nepalese journalist said: "Mr Ghisingh does not make news here because he is no longer considered a fighter of the Gorkha cause."

Nepal may easily refute allegations of being a conduit for Pakistan's ISI agents, but it cannot convincingly deny the presence of militant elements from the Darjeeling hills. What further weakened its position was the arrest of Dilip Bhujel, a former Kalimpong-based GNLF activist, on March 31 last year, by the CBI in connection with the IA hijack case. This apart, Nepal's claims that its Maoist insurgents were setting up links with Indian outfits like the UIFA, MCC, PWG etc may help Indian investigators get clues about militant activity in eastern Nepal bordering the narrow

Islampur-Siliguri corridor.

The Nepalese Maoists, whose

rebellion for turning the kingdom into a Republic entered the sixth year on February 12, are said to have formed a parallel government in a number of western Nepal districts bordering Tibet.

Another factor that has made Indian intelligence agencies focus on the Nepal angle is the fact that GNLF's arms training camps were present in the eastern Nepalese districts of Ilam and Jhapa during the Ghisingh-led Gorkhaland agitation. Most of the major operations against security forces, including the December 10, 1987 ambush on the then Darjeeling DIG R. K. Handa, were carried out from these camps. Besides, the GLO had also initially set up its underground camps in Ilam.

**Behind The News**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 FEB 2001

# Ghising hitmen trail leads to Naxalite camp

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, Feb. 17: The crack team of investigators, which is in Nepal to hunt down the assailants of Gorkhaland leader Subash Ghising, is closing in on the militants holed up at Chandaguri in Jhapa district.

The mission, codenamed Operation Deer, has zoomed in on a Naxalite Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) hideout in the Terai area where the attackers have taken shelter, an officer of the special investigating team (SIT) said.

"We expect the team to keep a close watch on the militants and at the appropriate moment, we intend to nab them," he said.

The SIT has set up a "control room" at Matigara police station on the outskirts of Siliguri to monitor Operation Deer. The police station has been turned into an interrogation centre, where officers of the Intelligence Bureau, CID and the Central Subsidiary Intelligence Branch are questioning suspects round the clock.

Four strongrooms on the first floor of the double-storeyed building have been converted into interrogation cells, where prime suspects Dimple Dewan, Om Raj Kothwal, Kumar Chhettri, and Shyam Thapa are being questioned separately. Chhettri and Thapa were arrested on Thursday, three days after the 30-year-old housewife and the carjacker-cum-drug dealer were held.

Only members of the SIT have access to the floor, which is being guarded by 10 armed policemen.

Vijay Chhettri, a fifth conspirator arrested along with Kumar Chhettri and Thapa, is being interrogated at an undisclosed location. "Vijay is being used by the SIT to identify and locate other suspects," an official said.

The hunt for Dimple's "contractor" husband, Vijay Rai, is on. Vijay is suspected to be the main

link between the masterminds and the executors of the ambush.

Investigators have managed to break Dimple and Kothwal and identified the slain militant as Kamal Thapa, a resident of Manakamana in Kalimpong. "We have managed to ascertain the identity of the slain militant, earlier identified as R.B. Singh of Manipur. A relative was brought in from Kalimpong today who identified the slain militant," the official said.

The investigators suspect that MCC rebels were part of the

## Sikkim reprieve

Gangtok, Feb. 17 (PTI): Sikkim, cut off for the seventh day today because of the GNLF bandh, got a reprieve with vehicles being allowed to enter and leave the state.

The relaxation came after Sikkim Governor Chaudhury Randhir Singh and chief secretary S.W. Tenzing met Subash Ghising yesterday in Siliguri.

Sources said GNLF agitators "allowed" eight state buses and trucks carrying passengers and essential commodities to and from the state along NH 31A, the state's lifeline that passes through DGHC area.

team that ambushed Ghising's convoy.

"The operation was divided into three wings — planners, spotters and executioners. We still have to piece together some vital missing links about the identity of the masterminds. Apart from that, we are on the right track.

"The strike force may have had some logistics support from across the border, where they are now hiding. Though Chandaguri is a hub of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, we are not certain if they were involved," the official said.

THE TELEGRAPH

18 FEB 2001

# KPP to sue state for detaining leaders

SUDIPTA CHANDA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Feb. 17. — The Kamtapur Peoples' Party president Mr Atul Roy said KPP would file a writ petition in Calcutta High Court against the state government and police for arresting and detaining its leaders following a police raid on 27 November. Mr Atul Roy told **The Statesman** today the party was planning to hold talks with the state Congress leadership with an aim to form an

anti-Left front for the forthcoming Assembly elections.

Refusing to divulge the details of the outcome of the party's central committee meeting recently held in Dhupguri, Mr Roy, however, did not rule a possible alliance with the Trinamul Congress.

He "only wants to explore the possibility of an electoral understanding with the Congress" as some PCC leadership has "approached him for talks."

The raid on 27 November led to arrest of prominent KPP

leaders and key members of the All Kamtapur Students' Union, including the outfit's vice-president Mr Kedar Sinha and general secretary Mr Bishnumohan Patoari.

Charges of anti-national activity, extortion, kidnapping and violence were brought against 88 KPP activists.

"The charges against them are false. They were framed to thwart the Kamtapuri movement," Mr Roy said.

The arrest of the KPP and Aksu leaders came as a severe blow for the Kamtapuri move-

ment. Ever since the detention of its top-brass, the KPP movement had been restricted to a rally and three joint programmes with the JMM.

While admitting that the party's prime objective now is to get the detained leaders out of jail, Mr Roy said: "It is important from the organisation's point of view. Once free, the leaders will be able to mobilise support which is important in view of the forthcoming Assembly elections."

THE STATESMAN

18 FEB 2001

# Nepal mission for Ghising hit men

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

*Regional Probe*

Siliguri, Feb. 16: A team of investigators is leaving for Nepal tomorrow to track down Gorkhali leader Subash Ghising's assailants who are believed to have taken shelter there.

An officer connected with the case told **The Telegraph** that hand-picked personnel, chosen from the special investigation team that was set up in the aftermath of last Saturday's ambush, will leave for the neighbouring kingdom to hunt down the militants who are learnt to be hiding in Chandaguri area of Nepal's Jhapa district.

"We have information that the assailants are holed up in a hide-out near Chandaguri in Jhapa dis-

trict of eastern Nepal. A team will leave for Nepal tomorrow and will be assisted by our Nepal counterparts. Though we had information that the attackers had sneaked into the neighbouring country, our hands were tied due to diplomatic hurdles," the official said.

Security has been tightened around Ghising after a bomb threat call was made to the Siliguri nursing home where he is recovering. (See Page 11)

The investigators claimed to have succeeded in getting Dimple Dewan, the 32-year-old housewife whose house near Siliguri was allegedly used by the conspirators as a control room, to talk.

Information revealed by Dimple has given the police vital clues

on the plot to eliminate Ghising.

The investigators who were working on the evidence found from the killed militant, including a cellphone and a diary, said they had managed to crack the coded entries.

"We have managed to decipher the coded entries in the diary found on the slain militant. Entries in the diary had codenames with a set of numbers against them. Dimple, who had initially proved a tough nut to crack, has started singing now. She is not divulging much and is only giving us information we already knew. She is very shrewd but with time, we expect to break her completely," the official said.

According to the investigators, Dimple was given the codename

"kangaroo" while Om Raj Kothwal, the car-hijacker-turned-drug dealer, was known as "Gangu".

"While we've managed to piece together Dimple's role in the conspiracy, the part played by Kothwal is not very clear. Calls recorded on the cellphone recovered from the slain militant were made from both Dimple's landline, which has been sealed, and Kothwal's mobile. But we're still not sure to what extent Kothwal was involved in the conspiracy," the official said.

Sources said that Kothwal, an ex-armyman from Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, had settled down in Darjeeling district in 1992. He also claims to be the Shiv Sena's Darjeeling district vice-president.

THE TELEGRAPH

17 FEB 2001

# 'Adamant' GNLF sticks to CBI probe demand

HT Correspondent  
Siliguri, February 16

**HIGH DRAMA** — albeit short-lived — stray violence and little sign of withdrawal of the indefinite bandh called by the "adamant" GNLF supporters marked the sixth consecutive day of the shutdown.

As normal life remained paralysed in the Darjeeling hills today, it took a couple of calls about a bomb call being planted at the private nursing home here, where the DGHC Chairman Subash Ghisingh is recuperating, for the police to press the panic button. Sniffer dogs were rushed to the spot and the security was tightened. Later on, the call turned out to be a hoax.

Violence — the overriding common denominator in the hill bandhs — was once more evident today when a section of the GNLF supporters set ablaze a jeep near Longview tea estate at Simulbari in Kurseong subdivision.

Even though the rest of the Darjeeling hills remained by and large peaceful and Sikkim continued to remain cut-off from the rest of the country, the GNLF supporters were busy drumming up support for immediate arrest of their supremo's assailants.

Party workers brought out processions in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong demanding a CBI probe into the incident.

Displaying the party's overwhelming support among the rank and file in the hills, the Gorkha National Women's Organisation (GNWO) — the women wing of the GNLF — has threatened to go on

an indefinite hunger strike if the culprits are not nabbed within the next three days.

But, the GNLF's one-point agenda has failed to deflect the growing inconvenience caused to the common people owing to the indefinite bandh call — scarcity of essential commodities have started to affect their lives, especially the daily wage earners.

However, Ghisingh, who met the reporters here today, refused to look into the problems and refrained from giving any deadline when it would be withdrawn.

The GNLF supremo, who ruled out about his next visit to Delhi, was more forthcoming about his future course of action. He plans to visit Kolkata shortly to discuss with the State Government about the setting up of the Special Combat Force to deal with the militants. Earlier, his demand to bring the Force under the purview of the DGHC was rejected by the State Government.

Meanwhile, in a desperate bid to put an end to the bandh, the State minister for urban development and hill affairs, Asok Bhattacharya, today told the newsmen that the persistence with the strike would ultimately go against the GNLF's interest.

Urging that the Indo-Nepal treaty of 1950 should be reviewed, he added that the State Government has already asked the Centre to hold talks with Nepal for expediting the extradition of the chief of Gorkha Liberation Organisation, Chattri Subba, widely believed to be the mastermind behind last Saturday's ambush.



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 FEB 2001

# Special status mooted for Uttaranchal

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, February 16

THE PLANNING Commission has come out in favour of giving special category status to Uttaranchal and will be seeking Cabinet clearance shortly for the proposal.

Planning Commission deputy chairman K.C. Pant apprised Uttaranchal Chief Minister Nityanand Swami of this development at a meeting here today.

Mr Pant told newsmen, "We have examined the needs of the state and are supportive of their demand to be given special category status. We will shortly move a Cabinet note on this."

Speaking to reporters prior to his meeting with Pant, the Chief Minister said the state had

been demanding special category status as 10 of its 13 districts were highly backward hill districts. He said, "when the state was formed out of Uttar Pradesh, we came with a deficit burden

**Special category status states get 90 per cent grant and 10 per cent soft loans, while other states get 30 per cent grant and 70 per cent loans**

of Rs 1,800 crore per year for five years. The Central Government should give the state Rs 1,800 crore per year for a five-year period to bridge the gap."

Mr Swami said even when Uttaranchal was part of Uttar Pradesh, the Central assistance was around Rs 470 crore while Himachal Pradesh, which is much smaller in size, got much more.

Since the government has given special category status to all the backward hill districts like Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and the states of the north-east there is no reason to deny this status to Uttaranchal, he added.

"If we are granted the special category status we will get 90 per cent grant and 10 per cent soft loans while other states get 30 per cent grant and 70 per cent loans," he said.

The state had approached the planning commission for special category status immediately after coming into being. The hill districts account for about 90 per cent of the total area.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 FEB 2001



# Special team to review law and order in Darjeeling

HT Correspondent  
Siliguri, February 12

AT A meeting of senior State Government officials here today, it was decided that a special investigating team would be set up to review law and order in the Darjeeling hills. The team will comprise officers from the CID, IB, SIB and district police officials and will be monitored by North Bengal IG N R Das and additional DGP Shymal Kumar Dutta.

Ghisingh's security will be beefed up immediately and security of other DGHC councillors will soon be reviewed, it was decided.

Urban Development Minister Asok Bhattacharya, State Home Secretary Sourin Roy and DG Deepak Sanyal held a meeting with the divisional commissioner, district magistrate, IG (North Bengal), DIG and intelligence officials to take stock of the situation in North Bengal after the attack.

Later, Roy said a multi-disciplinary investigating team had been formed. He revealed that of the 15 people police had detained in connection with the assassination bid on Ghisingh, two have been arrested. Authorities have got hold of several clues, he said. But he refused to comment about who or which organisation was behind the attack on Ghisingh.

Roy said an attack of such magnitude—where assault rifles and grenades were used—was the first of its kind in West Bengal.

He reasoned that Ghisingh's security was not inadequate at all because police in North Bengal had been given weapons such as AK-47 rifles and SLRs.

● More reports on Page 4

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 FEB 1987

# Hit men trail spills out of state

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, Feb. 12: As a backlash gathered momentum in the hills of Darjeeling, investigators on the hunt for Subash Ghising's attackers today traced the trail beyond Bengal's boundaries.

Intelligence sources today identified the militant killed in the shootout on Saturday as R.B. Singh, a mercenary from Manipur and a former member of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah).

The sources said the strike-force was made up of five former NSCN(IM) rebels and a couple of Maoist guerrillas who were helped by two functionaries of the Chhatray Subba-led militant Gorkhaland Liberation Organisation (GLO).

The men are believed to have escaped to Nepal, where Subba is said to be hiding.

Though police refused to disclose information on the slain guerrilla, they claimed to have made an important breakthrough with the arrests of two people — Dimple Dewan and O.R. Kothwal — who were among the 15 rounded up for questioning.

Police sources said that Dimple, a housewife from Malaguri on Siliguri's outskirts, and Kothwal, who has been arrested several times for crimes ranging from car-hijacking to drug peddling, were taken into custody on the basis of records of calls made to the mobile phone recovered from the ambush site. Kothwal was picked up from his hideout in Karibari, near Siliguri.

The assailants apparently used the cellphone to keep track of the route being taken by Ghising.

Dimple, who doesn't have any criminal record, denied that she had a hand in the ambush. "I don't know what crime I have

Dimple Dewan on her way to court and Ghising in the nursing home. Pictures by Abani Ghosh

committed that they have been interrogating me for the past two days," she told **The Telegraph**.

Ghising, who met reporters briefly at the Paramount nursing home, said he was recovering from the attack. "I'm fine and making good progress here. I'm satisfied with the doctors who have done an excellent job. I'm more concerned about the condition of the six securitymen who displayed exemplary bravery in fighting the assailants. I would like to appeal to all my supporters in the hills and elsewhere to maintain peace at all costs," Ghising said.

But angry GNLf supporters ignored the appeal for peace and went on the rampage in Kalimpong. They ransacked and damaged Subba's house at Raushi Bazar on the outskirts of

Kalimpong town and torched a jeep parked outside.

Another group allegedly fired shots and damaged the house of the Opposition Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (ABGL)'s Kalimpong branch committee president, Norden Lama.

The GNLf workers pelted stones at Lama's house, shouted anti-CPM slogans and threatened DYFI leader Tara Sundas.

A mob set ablaze an old jeep outside Subba's residence and damaged his house. ABGL leader Norden Lama's house was also damaged by a mob, which tried to set ablaze two motorcycles parked outside. But there are no reports of shots being fired. The situation in the town is tense but under control," a police official said.

Subba has openly challenged

Ghising's authority and had set a deadline of December 31 for the GNLf chief to pull his councillors out of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council or face "dire consequences". The GNLf suspects Subba to be behind the attempt on Ghising's life.

Promising to bring the culprits to book "as early as possible", the government has constituted a special investigating team to probe the attack on Ghising.

Bengal home secretary Sourin Roy said: "We reviewed the situation in the Darjeeling hills and have decided to form a special investigation team comprising officers from the CID, the Darjeeling district police and the Central Subsidary Intelligence Bureau. The team will be monitored by inspector-general (north Bengal)

N.R. Das and the additional director-general (IB)," Roy said. He, however, ruled out a CBI inquiry as demanded by the GNLf.

The home secretary refused to name any group suspected to be behind the ambush.

"We have shortlisted a number of outfits on the suspect list. A mobile phone recovered from the site has given us vital clues about the identities of those involved," Roy said.

Asked if there was a foreign hand in the attack, the officer added: "We have specific information on certain foreign forces suspected to be behind the incident. They are helping a local militant outfit in the region and are operating from their hideouts in a neighbouring country."

■ Another report on Page 11

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13 FEB 2001

# Violence mars GNLF bandh

*General*  
*Bandh*

**SILIGURI, FEB. 11.** Sporadic arson and violence marred the start of an "indefinite hill-bandh" today, called by the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) to protest the attack on the party chief, Mr. Subhas Ghising. The bandh paralysed normal life across Darjeeling district of West Bengal, police said.

The Inspector-General of police, North Bengal, Mr. N.R. Das, said that bandh supporters set on fire an office of the All Gorkha Students' Union (AGSU) in Darjeeling this morning.

Pro-bandh activists stoned the house of Mr. C.R. Rai, president of the Bharatiya Gorkha Janashakti (BGJ), and set ablaze three cars two of which belonged to Mr. Rai. Both the AGSU and the BGJ are political rivals of the GNLF. Describing the bandh as total, Mr. Das said all modes of transport went off the roads and shops and markets remained closed. Altogether 15 people were held for interrogation, he added. Mr. Das said the police were "almost sure" that Saturday's ambush was a Gorkha Liberation Organisation (GLO)'s plot. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, today

assured, Mr. Subhas Ghising, that the culprits would be apprehended soon. He spoke to Mr. Ghising over phone from Ahmedabad and wished him a speedy recovery.

The Trinamool Congress chief and Railway Minister, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, today joined the GNLF in demanding a CBI probe into the attack on Mr. Ghising.

Speaking to newsmen at Kolkata, Ms. Banerjee said the incident had vindicated her party's position that West Bengal's law and order situation had reached its nadir.

Terming the incident as "unfortunate", she said "if a leader of the stature of Mr. Ghising can be prone to such attacks, you can well imagine the plight of the common people".

The West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, today asserted that Saturday's attack on the GNLF chief, Mr. Subhas Ghising, at Pankhabari had no connection with the "Gorkhaland issue".

Meanwhile, Dr. Malay Chakraborty, the neuro-surgeon who operated on Mr. Ghising, said he was out of danger.— PTL, UNI

THE HINDU

12 FEB 2001

## Violence in the hills

GORKHA LEADER Subhash Ghising's providential escape from a murderous attack will be hailed with great relief by the people of West Bengal and especially those living in the Darjeeling area. Even now, the hilly region is facing widespread disturbances, which can become worse as more information comes to light about the nature of the attack and those who perpetrated it. The belief that a rival Gorkha organisation is behind the dastardly attack is fraught with dangerous consequences because of the grim possibility of the two outfits confronting each other all over the region. Such a turn of events will be beyond the capability of even an efficient police force to contain. Given the reputation of the West Bengal police, which has singularly failed to check incidents of violence indulged in by political activists in various districts, the chances of normalcy being restored in Darjeeling will not be rated too high.

Although Mr Ghising's popularity has been waning, he still remains the tallest among the Gorkha leaders. It was inevitable that the gradual decline in his status will lead to the appearance of splinter outfits advocating an extremist line. The so-called Gorkha Liberation Organisation, which is suspected to be responsible for the attack, is one such group. As the word, liberation, in its name suggests, it is aiming at something more than the autonomous council which Mr Ghising extracted from a reluctant West Bengal Government. But what is worrisome is the possibility of the GLO receiving help from other insurgent outfits in the north-east.

It is not only in Darjeeling that the state Government has to contend with such disgruntled elements. In the plains of north Bengal, too, it has had to face the rebels of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation, who want a separate state for the Rajbanshis living in the region. Not long ago, the state Government had suspected links between this outfit and the ULFA. What these developments show is that apart from the CPI(M) and Trinamool Congress, which are battling each other mainly in the southern parts of the state, there are other organisations which pose an even more serious threat to the law and order situation. West Bengal may not be in as dismal a situation as Bihar is, but it is not far behind.

## Death traps

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 3 20 2011

# Two held for attack o

## State sets up special probe team

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Feb. 12. — Even as fingers point at the GLO for its alleged role in Saturday's attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh, a theory fast gaining ground is that the attack could have been the ploy of some 'disgruntled' people.

Two persons, including a woman, have been arrested in connection with the attack. Police are looking into the new theory and working on some definite clues.

The state home secretary, Mr Sourin Roy, and the DGP, Mr Dipak Sanyal, today said the possibilities are many, including the involvement of a students' front.

But the two refused to confirm whether the attack was political. All they would say is that the incident was a case of extremist violence, the first of its kind in the state.

The state government has set up a multi-disciplinary special investigating team comprising the state IB, CID, police and the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau. The last, a Central government agency, is probably an alternative to the GNLf's demand for a CBI inquiry.

Mr Roy and Mr Sanyal, who reached here today on the chief minister's advice, said a Chinese grenade, a rosary and an AK-56 rifle were seized from the militant killed in the shootout. He was carrying a diary, a wallet with money and papers, a rucksack and two magazines with 13 live AK series ammunition.

But police are counting on a mobile phone found at the spot as their best bet. Calls to several numbers had been made from the cellphone.

While rejecting the allegation of some GNLf leaders that Mr Ghisingh was not given adequate security, Mr Roy and Mr Sanyal said the state government has now decided to arrange for more security for the GNLf chief. Mobile patrol in

the Hills will also be increased. A special task force will soon be set up for the 140-km Nepal-West Bengal border. "The Centre gave the green signal a fortnight ago. The force would be formed from the existing resources," he said.

led a rally here to condemn the attack on the GNLf chief. The protesters demanded that the guilty should be arrested soon. CPI-M leaders, including Mr Asok Bhattacharya have called on Mr Ghisingh. Congress and Trinamul leaders too have visited him.

Violence  
Subb



The woman arrested for suspected involvement in the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh. At Siliguri police station on Monday. — Salil Bera

### I AM FINE, SAYS GNLf CHIEF

SILIGURI, Feb. 12. — He is down but not out. Talking to reporters for the first time since the attack on him on Saturday, Mr Subash Ghisingh said, "Mo thik chhu, (I am fine), Malai kei bhako chhaina (nothing has happened to me)."

The GNLf chief was speaking to the journalists, sitting on his nursing home bed. Only the sticking plaster on the back of his head reminded the journalists that he had escaped death narrowly, only two days ago. Mr Ghisingh appears to be in control.

'Don't worry,' he told the anxious faces surrounding him, 'I shall recover within a day or two and return to Darjeeling.' He also expressed satisfaction with the treatment of the doctors and hospitality of the locals. — SNS

- More reports on page 4
- Editorial: Attempt on Ghisingh, page 6

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, Feb. 12. — Violence in Kalimpong and there was rest of the Darjeeling hills to indefinite bandh called by the its second day.

The bandh was called demand of those responsible for the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh on Saturday.

The GNLf leaders said the bandh called off only after the arrest in Kalimpong, the house of the Gorkha League leader Mr. M. was ransacked by GNLf men was set ablaze.

A vehicle of Mr Chhatre was torched. Mr Subba's GLO is suspected to be behind the attacks appeared in Kalimpong threatened the "lackeys" of Mr Ghisingh warned those who opposed Mr Ghisingh.

In Darjeeling, a large number of porters gathered near Chowringhee morning where the bodies of the guards of Mr Ghisingh were kept before they were taken to the crematorium.

Slogans demanding the arrest of the GLO and Aghsu workers of the GLO and blamed the state government.



Two porters sit idle in front of closed

THE STATESMAN

13 FEB 2007

# in Ghisingh

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ment for failing

to provide adequate security to Mr Ghisingh.  
Rallies and processions were organised in  
Kalimpong, Kurseong and Mirik too.

Security was tightened in the district and  
policemen were deployed outside the houses  
of Opposition leaders including those of Mr  
CR Rai of the United Democratic Front. Po-  
licemen were also posted outside the house of  
the Agsu president Mr Roshan Giri, whose of-  
fice was ransacked yesterday.

The indefinite bandh called by the GNLFF  
paralysed life in the hills. Stranded tourists  
were huddled into buses leaving Darjeeling for  
Siliguri with police escort around 3.30 a.m.  
Except for occasional police jeeps no traffic  
plied between the hills and the plains.

GNLFF leaders accused the Opposition par-  
ties of being in league with the GLO. They al-  
so charged the government of turning a blind  
eye to the violent activities of the GLO. A  
GNLFF leader wondered why Mr Subba and  
his associates were not arrested after the Tinka-  
taria violence on 12 November.

At a rally at Kalimpong, GNLFF leaders  
accused the state government of shielding Mr  
Subba.

**Chamling condemns attack:** The Sikkim  
chief minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling  
condemned the "dastardly attack" on Mr Ghi-  
singh and urged his West Bengal counterpart  
to take "immediate and appropriate steps to  
apprehend the culprits".



shops in Kurseong on Monday, the second day of the bandh. — The Statesman

## ATTEMPT ON GHISINGH

576 Hoodwinking hill people too long (8)

LAST Saturday's attempt on the life of Subash Ghisingh is the most serious incident to have happened in the Darjeeling hills since the signing of the DGHC accord in 1988. The attack has not only left Ghisingh, his party the GNLF and the state administration badly rattled but it also marks the beginning of a new political era in the north Bengal hills where the supremacy of Ghisingh's leadership will not go unchallenged. There is little doubt that the attack was masterminded by Ghisingh's one-time militant lieutenant, Chhatre Subba, who hasn't forgiven him for suspending the demand for a separate state for the Darjeeling hills. The irony is that Ghisingh himself has become a victim of violence which he had once practised widely in the hills. Subba says Ghisingh willingly abandoned the statehood demand to become an appendage of the state's Marxists. Subba recently floated the Gorkha Liberation Organisation with the one-point programme of securing statehood. "Armed action" to him is the only way of securing his demand. Last November he issued an ultimatum to DGHC councillors to resign by 31 December or "face dire consequences". He acted on his threat by ambushing the convoy of the Council Chairman himself. This has caused panic not only among the GNLF Councillors but also those connected with trade and industry in the Darjeeling hills, besides the hill populace. Many view this incident as the beginning of yet another phase of mindless violence. Subba had made known his intentions in November last when his armed men fought a gun duel with police near Kalimpong. His links with Naga militants and other extremist groups operating from Bhutan are well known.

The concern for renewed violence in Darjeeling is because Subba's statehood demand finds favour with both the disgruntled section of the GNLF as well regional opposition parties and apolitical groups. Monumental corruption by Ghisingh and his coterie in the GNLF and their failure to fulfil promises made during the bloody Gorkhaland movement have begun to disillusion people. They are turning to elements like Subba for redressal. Their frustration stems from the fact that there is no visible sign of development in the hills although over Rs 600 crores have passed through Ghisingh's hands since the formation of DGHC. The ruling Marxists have compounded the situation by aiding and abetting Ghisingh's corrupt practices. This is part of a political deal they have struck with him by which the control of DGHC and other local bodies remained in Ghisingh's hand in return for the solitary Lok Sabha seat for the Marxists. Renewed violence in the hills is because of Ghisingh's refusal to be accountable to anybody and his attempts at hoodwinking both his rivals and the hill people alike. The situation is too dangerous and cannot be met by rhetoric and dishonesty.

THE STATESMAN

13 FEB 2001

Ghisingh to discuss law and order with Govt

HT Correspondent  
Siliguri, February 13

DGHC CHAIRMAN Subash Ghisingh will visit Kolkata soon to discuss law and order in the hills with the State Government.

Talking to reporters here at the private nursing home where he is recuperating, Ghisingh said he was not sure about when the bandh in the hills would be withdrawn. "It is difficult to understand mob psychology. If I force them to withdraw the strike now, it could be dangerous."

The GNLF chief denied that he had asked for Z-category security. "I am being provided Z-category security because of the threat to my life." Ghisingh refused to comment when asked if he had demanded that the Home Department be handed over to the DGHC. Some newspaper reports had quoted Ghisingh as asking Urban Development Minister Asok Bhattacharya, State chief secretary Souren Roy and DG Deepak Sanyal to ask the Government to hand over the Department to the DGHC.

Asked if he could have averted the ambush had he taken the Hill Cart Road instead of Pankhabari Road, the DGHC chairman replied that he had travelled through Pankhabari Road about 20 times in January. "Anyway people with an evil intention will succeed anywhere," he said.

Today the King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, and Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee called up Ghisingh to wish him well.

More reports on Page 4 & 9



# I-T sleuths search Basu son's office

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, February 13

INCOME TAX officers have reportedly seized four files on export duty violations by former Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's son Chandan. A team of IT officers went to Chandan's Bondel Road office here late this afternoon and conducted the search and seizure operations.

The 'operation' against Chandan was said to be part of nationwide IT raids on S K Todi's business empire. Todi, who owns engineering units in a few states, is a major seafood exporter and is a key player in the stock markets. Chandan is reportedly Todi's partner in cultivation of shrimps and seafood export as well as securities trading. The raids on Todi's office in the city as well as in Delhi and Mumbai commenced early Monday morning, IT source said.

The sources said three teams of IT sleuths arrived at Todi Mansions—headquarters of the Todi Group—in central Kolkata early last morning. Since the offices were closed, another IT team went to his residence. Apart from income tax violations, Todi and Basu are also alleged to be involved in dodging export duties on seafood exports. Specific intelligence inputs on such violations by Todi were also received from the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). The sleuths are examining documents to find out if Todi and Chandan were involved in any violations of stock market regulations.

Incriminating documents on tax

and export duty violations were seized from Todi's residence, sources said. Bank lockers in the name of the tycoon and his companies have been sealed and bank accounts frozen. The sources said that while going through the files, documents and computer floppies seized from Todi's office and residence and after interrogating him, a firm link with Chandan in export duty violations was established. It was then that a team of IT officers visited Chandan's office and seized more files and documents.

While family members refused to comment on the raids, access to Todi has been blocked by IT officers. A few senior executives of the group are also being interrogated. IT sources said that a review meeting on the investigations would be

## 'Todi Connection'

held tomorrow to examine the magnitude of the tax and export duty violations following which a decision on freezing or seizing Todi's assets will be taken. It is learnt that due to the sensitive nature of the 'operations' on Chandan, senior investigation and assessment wing officers of the IT department will scrutinise the files seized from his office.

The IT department did not issue any formal statement on the raids. Senior officers also refused to go on record on the raids that are expected to continue tomorrow. When contacted late this evening, Chandan denied that any IT officer visited his office today. "And what if anyone did? I am a businessman and I can be raided or IT officials can examine or take away files from my office. It's perfectly normal," he told *The Hindustan Times*. He also denied any links with Todi.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 FEB 2001



# New twist to Gorkhaland struggle

Ghisingh fast losing support even as factionalism within GNLF grows

Keshav Pradhan

14/2  
HF-9

**T**HE ATTEMPT on the life of Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) supremo Subhas Ghisingh near Kurseong in West Bengal on Saturday may give a new twist to the century-old struggle for a Gorkha homeland. The incident occurred when Ghisingh was returning from Delhi after participating in a tripartite meet with the Centre and the West Bengal Government for re-strengthening the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council.

The council, of which Ghisingh is the chairman, came into being after he signed an agreement with the West Bengal Government and the Centre on August 22, 1988, ending the GNLF-led 28-month turbulent Gorkhaland stir.

Last week's meeting was held in the backdrop of the growing restlessness among pro-Gorkhaland parties following the creation of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chattisgarh. However, these parties have not been able to launch a full-fledged agitation because of strong opposition from the GNLF, which still holds sway over most of the Darjeeling hills.

Not only this, Ghisingh, a soldier-turned-novelist-turned-politician, has also refused to join hands with the leaders of the Kamtapur and Bodoland agitations, despite having met them a number of times.

Nevertheless, Ghisingh, in order to retain his stranglehold over the region, has indirectly sought the creation of Gorkhaland by way of incorporating Darjeeling and Kalimpong into the Indian Union as in the cases of Goa and Sikkim. He claims that the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty has made the inclusion of Darjeeling in India illegal. He describes Kalimpong as a territory leased out to India by Bhutan on the basis of the Bhutan-British Treaty of 1865 and the Indo-Bhutan Treaty of 1949.

Ghisingh's arguments over Darjeeling's status have failed to impress his detractors, who accuse him of working at the behest of Kolkata.



Ghisingh talks to reporters at a nursing home in Siliguri. Photo: PTI

November last was the first time, ever since Ghisingh and his close lieutenants snatched away the leadership of the Gorkhaland movement from moderate organisations like the Pranta Parishad in 1986, that the Gorkha Liberation Organisation (GLO) issues threats of physical elimination. The GLO, which was defunct for about 10 years, was set up by Chhatra Singh Subba, who revolted against Ghisingh's decision to accept the council. Till 1992, the rebel, who headed the GNLF's police wing -- the Gorkha Volunteers' Cell during the 1986-88 Gorkhaland stir, ran his underground camps in eastern Nepal.

What first alarmed the GNLF and the West

Bengal Government was the death of a home guard and an alleged supporter of Subba in a shootout, in the Dooars bordering Bhutan, on November 12, 2000. Since then reports about the GLO chief -- a former soldier who had spent a number of years in Nagaland before and after the GNLF-led statehood movement-forging links with the Naga militants, had been reaching Darjeeling. He is suspected to be hiding either in Nepal or in Nagaland.

So far, no organisation has claimed responsibility for the ambush. And though, the needle of suspicion points to Subba, many, including the police, suspect that the attack could be a fallout of factionalism within the GNLF.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 FEB 2001

# Baba held for abusing, killing disciple in AP

Ashok Das

Hyderabad, February 13

DATTA BHAGWAN was the most sought after *baba* for Hyderabad's upwardly mobile class just a few weeks ago. His posh ashram on the city outskirts, his fleet of cars and his lavish lifestyle was everybody's envy. His long list of disciples included several VIPs and a central minister.

But today, Datta Bhagwan finds himself behind bars. He was arrested by Rangareddy district police on Sunday for sexually exploiting and killing a lady disciple. The self-styled *baba* had been absconding since the murder.

The so-called godman admitted during interrogation that he murdered Sreedevi on the intervening night of January 20-21. The lady was found dead in the ashram at the DK Enclave, Miyapur, on January 21. Sreedevi, a divorcee, was an ardent devotee of the *baba* and was residing in the ashram for quite some time.

Superintendent of Police N V Surender Babu said that with the arrest of Sreenivas (Datta) Bhagavan on Sunday, the murder of Sreedevi has been solved.

Initially, the police registered a suspicious suicidal death by hanging case, as his family members had tried to mislead the police by stating that it was a suicide case.

However, after receipt of the post-mortem report on January 29, it came to light that Ms Sreedevi died due to strangulation and the investigation took a new turn. The *baba* absconded, while his family

members insisted that he was not present at the ashram on the night when Sreedevi allegedly hung herself to death.

Police said the 43-year-old Datta has confessed that he was a fake godman. He seduced female devotees and pressurised them to fulfil his sexual desires by taking advantage of their problems and psychological disorders, the police said.

Investigations revealed that the accused was having sexual relations with Sreedevi for the past four years and had promised her to pay Rs 4,000 per month for her services in the ashram. But he never kept his promise and sometimes paid a meagre amount to her.

Recently, Sreedevi started pressuring the *baba* to give her the amount of Rs 2 lakh he owed her, but the *baba* rejected her request. Sreedevi then reportedly threatened to expose his misdeeds.

There was a tussle and when Sreedevi tried to run away, the *baba* strangled her.

Thereafter he informed his brother Ravindranath Tagore, his wife Ms Laxmi and his sister Anuradha. The trio hatched a plan and tried to create the impression that the lady had committed suicide. They also helped the *baba* escape from the ashram.

The fake *baba* hails from a poor family in Guntur district and initially eked out living by running a tailoring shop. But financial difficulties forced him to close the shop.

He then shifted to Hyderabad and metamorphosed into a godman.

# Don't use force on bandh supporters: Ghisingh

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING/SILIGURI, Feb. 13. — Stray violence was reported in parts of Darjeeling and essential commodities remained in short supply today, the third day of the bandh, even as the GNLF dismissed rumours of a two-hour relaxation.

Supporters of the bandh ransacked a meat shop in Judge Bazar around 12.30 p.m. today when the owner tried to open the shop. At Melli on NH-31A, a tourist vehicle was held up. It was allowed to pass after police intervention.

The motor vehicles department and police are making arrangements for the return of tourists. About 300 tourists were sent back by five buses and a lorry. Women and children, who could not be accommodated in these vehicles, were put up for the night at the sadar police station.

Bharatiya Gorkha Janashakti president, Mr CR Rai, and Mr MG Subba (CPI-M), have filed an FIR against bandh supporters, for violence.

Mr Subash Ghisingh today advised the state government not to use force against the bandh supporters. He said the mob fury could intensify if the authorities try to "apply the brakes". "It may take some time, but it will cool down by itself."

The GNF chief said he will go to Kolkata once he recovers to "discuss security in the Darjeeling Hills with the chief minister".

GNLF executive councillor, Mr I N Pradhan,

said: "The bandh will continue till the men who attacked Mr Ghisingh are arrested."

The GNLF's Darjeeling branch held a secret meeting today. But the meeting remained inconclusive and some leaders left for Siliguri to meet the party supremo and take a decision to on the bandh.

The GNLF's Kalimpong branch president, Mr CK Pradhan, today said the bandh may be relaxed in the town tomorrow for tourists and students. But he did not say for how long.

The state government will urge the Centre to upgrade Mr Ghisingh's security to 'Z' category and give him a bullet-proof vehicle. Till such arrangements are made, the state government will provide maximum security, the state urban development minister Mr Asok Bhattacharya, said.

Mr Jyoti Basu, the King of Bhutan and Miss Mamata Banerjee today wished Mr Ghisingh speedy recovery.

Police have identified the militant who died in the shootout as one Ram Barar Singh (33) from Manipur.

The telephone number of one Vijay Dewan has been sealed. The phone was allegedly used to contact the cell phone recovered from the dead militant. Dewan is absconding and his wife, Dimple, is in police custody.

■ Another report on page 4

THE STATESMAN

# Ghisingh seeks combat force to tackle militants

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Feb. 14. - Mr Subash Ghisingh today said he would prefer to handle the home department himself in the Darjeeling hills. As an alternative, he has asked for a combat force to tackle militants.

Suggesting that the Pankhabari road should be treated as a VIP thoroughfare, Mr Ghisingh said he would not interfere with the investigation process being conducted by the state government regarding the attack on him. He, however, indicated that intervention could become necessary if official methods failed to discourage the militants.

A routine investigation will not help to solve the case as "some major powers, not just the Gorkha Liberation Organisation, are behind Saturday evening's incident. The case needs special handling, and I know how," the GNLF president claimed.

Unless tackled properly and immediately, many more important personalities may lose their lives, Mr Ghisingh cautioned.

Alleging that the GLO chief, Mr Chhatre Subba, who is believed to be behind the assault, had "betrayed him even during the period of the movement", Mr Ghisingh said it is up to Mr Subba to allow himself to get used.

Meanwhile, police arrested three persons from Kalimpong today and picked up a fourth from a hotel in Siliguri for questioning in connection with the attack on Mr Ghisingh. The arrested persons are Kumar Chhetri, Shyam Thapa and Vijay Chhetri.

This takes the number of arrests to five.

## 'GNLF attacking soft targets'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Feb. 14. - The GNLF is attacking "soft targets" in Darjeeling hills to avenge the attempt on Mr Subash Ghisingh, said Mr Norden Lama, president of the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League's Kalimpong unit.

Mr Lama has filed an FIR after a mob damaged his house in Kalimpong and set ablaze a motorcycle of World Vision, a Christian missionary group which has rented a part of Mr Lama's house.

Condemning the attack on Mr Ghisingh, the ABGL leader said: "We're a democratic organisation. We don't believe in bloodshed. But by attacking us, the GNLF has proved it doesn't want democratic organisations in the hills."

The ABGL, a constituent of the pro-Gorkhaland Gorkha Sanjukta Morcha, had supported the GLO leader Mr Chhatre Subba's call for the revival of the statehood demand. Mr Subba is believed to be behind the attack on Mr Ghisingh.

Mr Lama said the ABGL would "reconsider" its support to the GLO.

THE STATESMAN

15 FEB 2001

## GNLF relaxes strike for eight hours today

HT Correspondent  
Siliguri, February 14

THE INDEFINITE strike called by the GNLFF will be relaxed between 8 am and 4 pm tomorrow for passenger vehicles to ply on National Highway 31 A, Tourism councillor I N Pradhan said today.

As the strike entered its fourth day today, more than a thousand stranded passengers were taken to Sikkim under tight security. Hungry and penniless, these passengers, on the road since Sunday, blocked Hill Cart Road for three hours. The blockade was lifted after Sikkim transport officials and the State West Bengal police promised to make alternative arrangements for them.

Bandh supporters stopped the convoy of five Sikkim Nationalised Transport and 12 private buses at Kalijhora in Kalimpong sub-division. GNLFF Kalimpong branch committee president, however, denied the allegation.

In Siliguri, GNLFF chief Subash Ghisingh stressed the need to recruit additional combat forces to counter militancy in Darjeeling. But, these must operate under the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, he told reporters at a Siliguri nursing home where he is recuperating from bullet injuries.

Ghisingh refused to comment on when the indefinite strike would end. "The party (GNLFF) will decide on it."

Reports of vandalism, however, kept pouring in from different parts of Darjeeling today.

In Darjeeling subdivision, bandh supporters set ablaze houses of two All Gorkha Students' Union (AGSU) leaders, Dipen Maley and Umesh Rai, at Pokhriapong.

"The house of another of our members, Rabin Goley, was also vandalised. The AGSU plans to observe a two-day hunger strike to protest against the attack on their members," said AGSU chief Roshan Giri.

In another incident, bandh supporters, on their way home after submitting a deputation to the Additional District Magistrate, damaged five vehicles in Darjeeling. Some also shattered the windowpanes of the court-house.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 FEB 2001

# Seek Nepal help to track Subba, state to Centre

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & UNITED PRESS

KOLKATA, Feb. 15. — The GLO, led by Mr Chhatre Subba, seems to be the prime suspect in the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya told the Assembly today.

Mr Subba and his aides may have taken refuge in Nepal, the chief minister said. So the state government has urged the Centre to negotiate with Nepal and track them down.

"We have information that Mr Subba, the prime suspect behind the attack on the GNLF leader, is hiding in that country and the Centre has been informed on the matter," Mr Bhattacharya said.

He did not rule out the possibility of the involvement of other organisations, but refused to take any names.

The chief minister was replying to a call-attention notice by Mr Sudhir Bhattacharya, Mr Sougata Roy, Mr

Ashok Deb and Mr Abdul Mannan — all Congress MLAs.

The Centre has also been requested to discuss the matter with the North-eastern states, for several militant outfits are reportedly supporting the GLO, Mr Bhattacharya said.

He said the investigation has made some progress with the arrest of five persons.

A special investigation team, comprising the IB, CID and district police, has been set up. The probe will be monitored by the IGP, North Bengal and additional director general, IB, Mr Ghisingh's security will also be upgraded.

Rejecting the Opposition for a CBI inquiry, Mr Bhattacharya said the Subsidiary Intelligence Branch, Central agency, has been asked to help in the investigation as the case may involve Indo-Nepal border issues.



Passengers jostle to board a bus on Thursday, the first day of relaxation in the GNLF bandh in the Hills. — The Statesman

■ See SUBBA: page 4

# MCC might have helped Ghising

Kinsuk Basu  
Kolkata, February 15

THE GORKHA Liberation Organisation in Nepal and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) helped in executing the strike against the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council chairman, preliminary investigations suggest.

The Maoist outfit has set up a camp at Jhapa, Eastern Nepal. Intelligence agencies believe that there is a definite link between GLO leader Chhatre Subba resurfacing in Nepal and the MCC activating its cadres in that country to fan out in the North Bengal hills.

With the elections drawing close, these agencies are trying to figure out if dissident GNLFF members have been taking MCC help for their political vendetta against Ghising.

While there are definite reports about Subba's presence in Nepal, intelligence

officers in Darjeeling and Siliguri are convinced that even NT Moktan, a key dissident leader from Kalimpong, too is holed up across the border.

Since December, when Subba was last seen in Nepal, intelligence agencies claimed they had been receiving inputs suggesting that the MCC was trying to plant its men in Siliguri, Kalimpong and the hills.

Five days after the attack that left Darjeeling crippled, efforts are on to track down those whose names have figured in the telephone diary recovered from the ambush site along with the blood-drenched mobile phone.

Of the two people whose names were scrawled on a chit of paper found at the ambush site, the police have learnt that Dimple Dewan, a Siliguri resident since her marriage to Bijo Rai, is a Subba sympathizer. But the extent of her husband's

involvement with the GLO isn't clear. While Dimple's involvement hasn't created much flutter, the identity of Omraj, a Shiv Sena activist from Khoribari, remains a mystery. The Sena hasn't much of a base in the hills.

Kalimpong's only Sena leader of any merit, Ratan Gazmer, is known to be a Subba supporter, but he has gone missing since November. Investigating officers

don't seem interested in probing a possible Sena link. Instead, they are trying to track down the numbers called from the mobile phone.

"It appears for certain that the attack was meticulously planned out. Calls made from the mobile lasted between 60 seconds and 120 seconds, but we won't comment on them," said Ajay Kumar, additional superintendent of police (Siliguri). Five persons have been arrested in the case.

While no political organisation has

claimed responsibility for the ambush, some posters have appeared at Rausaabazar, Kalimpong, saying that those who didn't support Subba were opposed to the Gorkhaland demand.

**GNLF to take on KLO-GLO in the hills:** GNLFF MLA Narbahadur Chetri today declared that his party would "politically counter" the KLO and GLO in the Darjeeling hills.

At the Writers' Buildings after his meeting with Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, Chetri claimed that since only the GNLFF has the necessary strength to suppress rising militant activities in the hills, the State Government must extend all possible help to it.

Chetri, a close aide of Ghising, urged the Chief Minister to agree to the long-standing demand for a separate police force under the Darjeeling Hill Council's control. The State police forces' recent failure to provide security to Ghising has buttressed this demand, he asserted.

**ON PAGE 4**  
**Mystery hand in Ghising attack: CM**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 FEB 2001

# Bandh to be relaxed from today

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI/DARJEELING, Feb. 14. — The GNLF has said the bandh in the Hills will be relaxed for a fixed period from tomorrow even as its supporters damaged the District Magistrate's office in Darjeeling today.

Tension ran high in Darjeeling after GNLF supporters damaged the DM's office and torched two vehicles in front of the office.

They also gheraoed the ADM's office for an hour, demanding the arrest of Mr Subash Ghisingh's attackers.

A mob set ablaze the house of Agsu local unit's president at Pokhriabong and ransacked a two-storeyed house of an Agsu supporter at Tarzan Basti.

GNLF leaders and supporters started a procession from Chowk Bazar today. The procession was led by executive councillors, Mr NK Kumai and Mr K B Gurung.

The protesters demanded the immediate arrest of the culprits and threatened that the situation could go out of hand otherwise.

The DGHC executive councillor from Kurseong, Mr IN Pradhan, said the bandh will be relaxed only for passenger traffic between 8a.m. and 4p.m. from tomorrow.

But offices, shops, plantations, educational institutions and the railways will still remain under the purview of the bandh.

"Only buses, taxis and private



Stranded foreign tourists at the SNT bus terminus on Wednesday. — The Statesman

vehicles carrying passengers will be allowed to operate during the stipulated time from tomorrow.

The bandh will automatically come into effect after 4 p.m.," Mr Pradhan said.

Criticising the state government and the police for their failure to arrest any of Mr Subash Ghisingh's attackers, he said the bandh will continue till the authorities come up with some tangible results.

The DGP Sikkim, Mr RK Handa, met Mr Ghisingh this evening and urged him to allow Sikkim-bound vehicles to cross the bandh-hit areas.

Thousands of people headed for Sikkim and Darjeeling, including some foreigners, have been stranded here since Sunday. The bandh has cut off Sikkim, for part of the NH-31A runs through the Kalimpong sub-division.

Sikkim Nationalised Trans-

port joint general manager, Mr Tashi Bhutia, said the West Bengal government today provided 13 buses with security. Three of the buses could go to Sikkim, while the others were forced to return as bandh supporters put up a blockade at Kalijhora.

Police escorted 350 passengers, including tourists, from Darjeeling to Siliguri last night.

■ More reports on page 3

THE STATESMAN

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# Bajrang Dal up in arms against cow slaughter

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, Feb. 14. - The Bajrang Dal plans to go in for aggressive campaigning against cow slaughter in Uttar Pradesh. Their campaign starts from 6 March, which coincides with Bakri Id.

Last December the RSS, in its month long campaign had demanded a ban on cow slaughter and distributed booklets pointing out the reasons for protection of cows. It had demanded that the ban on cow slaughter be incorporated in the Fundamental Rights of the Constitution. Its inclusion in the Directive Principles of State Police was not good enough.

Mr Ved Prakash Sachan, the state coordinator of the Bajrang Dal said, the decision had been

taken following the resolution at the Dharam Sansad organised by the VHP at the Kumbh in Allahabad. It plans to constitute teams to check the illegal slaughter of cows in the state.

Mr Sachan, however, said that their campaign was not directed towards any particular community and was not going to cause any communal tension in the state because of its timing. "The volunteers will not aim at any particular community, but keep a vigil", he declared. The Bajrang Dal plans to take help of the District Administration to make the campaign a success.

Mr Sachan said, the Bajrang Dal was against slaughtering of animals in public places which was against the rules framed by the various municipi-

pal corporations.

Incidentally, cow slaughter in the state had been banned. The state had constituted a Cow Protection Commission in April 1999, when Mr Kalyan Singh was the Chief Minister, at the request of the VHP chief, Mr Ashok Singhal. Its chairman was Mr Parmanand Mittal. Apart from a vice chairman, the Commission had eight official members and fifteen non-government members.

There were allegations that the functioning of the Commission had been taken to further a particular lobby of the saffron bridge. It had been set up ostensibly to protect, preserve and improve the breed of indigenous cows. Another of its aims was to save cows being smuggled to the slaughter houses.

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# lor heckles cop

52-9  
167  
SUBBA:

(Continued from page 1)

Mr Bhattacharya rejected press reports that Mr Ghisingh's convoy had been diverted on the day of the attack. He said the GNLf chief himself had chosen the route.

Mr Ghisingh may ask the state government for a special force under the DGHC's control to combat terrorism and secessionist movements in the hills, GNLf MLA, Mr Narbahadur Chhetri, said today.

Mr Chhetri met the chief minister at Writers' Buildings.

But Mr Asok Bhattacharya said the state police is capable enough to combat terrorism in the region. There is no need for a separate force. Mr Chhetri said Mr Ghisingh, who may be released from the nursing home tomorrow, will soon visit Kolkata. The GNLf chief will discuss with Mr Bhattacharya the law and order in the hills.

The GNLf would politically take on the secessionist and terrorist forces like GLO and KLO in North Bengal, Mr Chhetri said.

The MLA demanded that the state government pay Rs 1 lakh to the kin of the two persons killed in the attack on Mr Ghisingh.

THE STATESMAN

16 FEB 2001

# Violence, arson mar Da

## Ghisingh stable, say doctors

SUDIPTA CHANDA & RABIN GIRI  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI/DARJEELING, Feb. 11. - Agitated GNLf supporters today torched offices of Opposition parties, set vehicles on fire and threw stones on some houses in Darjeeling today - the first day of the indefinite strike called by the party in protest against the attack on Mr Subash Ghisingh.

Doctors today said the GNLf supremo's condition is stable.

Mr Ghisingh's bodyguard Subman Chhetri and Pasang Bhutia, driver of another vehicle in the convoy, were killed in the attack at Chilaunidura near Kurseong last evening. One of the assailants also died in the cross-fire, according to latest reports. Five injured policemen have been admitted to a local nursing home today. The condition of one is stated to be serious.

The GNLf has called an indefinite bandh condemning the attack and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits. On the first day of the bandh today, life came to a halt in the hill subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong. Except police cars, no vehicle plied between the hills and plains. Stranded tourists huddled for safety in the local police station.

The IGP North Bengal, Mr NR Das and the state urban development minister Mr Asok Bhattacharya held the Gorkha Liberation Organisation responsible for the attack on Mr Ghisingh. The DGP and the chief

secretary would reach here tomorrow to take stock of the situation, Mr Bhattacharya said.

The district administration has sealed the India-Nepal border to check transborder movement of militants who might have been involved in yesterday's attack. The IGP said police and CRPF are combing the hills. Fifteen people have been detained for interrogation. A mobile telephone recovered from the spot may also provide further information about the attackers' identity, police said.

In Darjeeling, tension ran high since last night following attack on the GNLf chief. Hundreds of GNLf supporters went out on the streets shouting slogans against the state government's failure to provide adequate protection to Mr Ghisingh and demanding immedi-

ate arrest of the attackers.

This morning, people gathered at Chowk Bazar at the insistence of local GNLf leaders to express solidarity with Mr Ghisingh. A group of angry party workers then went to the SD Lama Road house of the United Democratic Front chief Mr C Rai. They pelted stones at the house and torched three vehicles.

Another group left the Chowk Bazar gathering and marched towards Agsu office, also on SD Lama Road. They ransacked the furniture and set papers on fire. Fire tenders were prevented by the agitated mob from going there till police intervened and lathicharged the crowd.

Yet another group of GNLf supporters went to the ABGL office on Laden La Road. They ransacked the office, hurled documents and furniture onto

the road and set them on fire. The house of CPI-M leader Mr MG Subba at Singamari Phatak was attacked. Some cars outside the house were damaged.

In another incident, GNLf supporters attacked the Jalapahar house of the ASP. They gheraoed the sadar police station for about 30 minutes in protest against the failure of police to provide adequate security to GNLf leaders.

The three branch presidents of the GNLf Darjeeling committee have demanded a CBI enquiry into the incident with specific allegation against the absence of the SP, DM and ASP, Kurseong during the attack on Mr Ghisingh.

There was tension in Kurseong where a procession led by the local MLA Mrs Shanta Chhetri headed for the Kur-



Mr Ananda Pathak, veteran CPI-M leader, meets Mr Subash Ghisingh at the nursing home in Siliguri on Sunday. - The Statesman (More photographs on page 4)

THE STATESMAN

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# Arjeeling bandh

## An attack on GNLF chief's supremacy

g railway station. Local  
y leaders condemned the  
e government's failure to  
ect Mr Ghisingh.

nsion ran high in Kalim-  
z, GLO leader Mr Chhatre  
ba's hometown. No unto-  
d incident was reported.

Agsu, which had issued  
ats against the GNLF re-  
ly, called off a public meet-  
which was to be held at Ka-  
ong today.

**Medical board:** A nine-mem-  
medical board including the  
is of SSKM and RG Kar  
ical colleges' medicine de-  
ments has been set up to  
itor the physical condition  
r Ghisingh.

team includes neurology  
ENT specialists. According  
e doctors, the GNLF chief's  
ition is stable. He took  
l twice today.

tors removed five linear  
iters from the Mr Ghising-  
read. The shrapnel, which  
ibly came from the grenade  
l not make any dent in the  
l. According to scan re-  
s, no foreign body is pres-  
n Mr Ghisingh's skull.

res of GNLF supporters  
nged the nursing home  
re Mr Ghisingh is admit-  
They waited anxiously to  
v about his health. Leaders  
arious parties also visited  
GNLF chief during the day.

Ghisingh bled profusely  
ugh his right ear and nose  
external injuries. The doc-  
confirmed that he was suf-  
g from firearm trauma.  
erday, he himself signed  
ond for his operation when  
the closest of his partymen  
relatives refused to do so.

Ghisingh's son Mohan and  
F executive councillor Mr  
radhan visited him in the  
ing. Mr LK Advani called  
inquire about his health.

MARCUS DAM  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Feb. 11. — Mr Subash Ghisingh may have survived  
the attack at Chilaunidura near Kurseong last evening, but nev-  
er before has there been a more definite threat to his supremacy  
in Darjeeling Hills.

The very first bid on the GNLF's life has opened up a turbu-  
lent new chapter in the history of a region where sub-nation-  
alist sentiments have been re-ordering political priorities  
since the Gorkhaland movement in the mid-eighties. Peace  
seems to be shattered in the politically volatile Hills.

The survival of most parties in the region now depends on  
the statehood demand. With the GNLF's call for the revival of  
the statehood campaign last April, there began a struggle to  
give impetus to a movement in which most regional Opposi-  
tion parties have pitched in.

So did the more militant section of an erstwhile GNLF which  
had, over the years, fallen out with Mr Ghisingh.

Last November, the opposition to Mr Ghisingh's "moderate  
views on Gorkhaland" gained fresh impetus with the revival of  
the Gorkha Liberation Organisation led by Mr Ghisingh's one-  
time aide, Mr Chhatre Subba.

While an Opposition, which had hung onto the Gorkhaland  
demand, cut out an agenda based on the failure of DGHC —  
under Mr Ghisingh — to fulfil "people's aspirations", the GLO  
took a militant step forward, bouncing back into the political  
scenario in a bid to wrest from the GNLF the flag-pole of the  
statehood campaign.

Mr Subba's battle cries were reminiscent of those of the  
GNLF's during the Gorkhaland movement of the eighties. But  
with a difference. The "political enemy" this time was not state  
administration but Mr Ghisingh himself and his coterie with-  
in the GNLF.

There followed a war of words with threats to Mr Ghisingh  
and his councillors of "dire consequences" unless they relin-  
quished their positions of power, for Mr Subba saw the DGHC  
as nothing but an appendage of the state government.

Mr Subba's challenge seemed to find favour among those dis-  
gruntled within the GNLF itself as well as apolitical bodies

another report on page 4

■ See ATTACK: page 4

**T**HE police firing at Tapakara on 2 February in Jharkhand has further tarnished the image of the Babulal Marandi government. In the two and a half months that it has been in power, massacres have been commonplace and peace a rarity.

Loss of lives in police firings and the numerous attacks by Naxalite outfits have exposed the hollowness of the belief that the salubrious climate of Jharkhand will also bring peace with the creation of a new state.

According to the latest reports, the police firing at Tapakara, about 60 km from Ranchi, cost nine lives. A police outpost and police jeeps were set ablaze by the local people, protesting against the erection of a 710-MW hydel power project over the Koel and the Karo rivers.

This was the third firing, several rounds of it, by the Jharkhand police in their short stint. The trauma of the Jharkhandis after five people died in Ranchi in January was still fresh on their minds when the second incident took place at Tapakara. Five people died on the spot. Four of the injured died in the Rajendra Medical College Hospital. Twelve people, including policemen, were battling with their lives at the hospital.

One person was killed in Bokaro in December, when the police fired on a crowd. Many villagers have been killed by ultra-Left outfits in Palamau and Chatra.

The block development officer of Giddho in Chatra was abducted, his hands and head severed and thrown in a jungle. Earlier, the Superintendent of Police of Lohardaga, Ajay Kumar, was gunned down in a Naxalite hideout at Peshrar near the district headquarters and then the wife of the Deputy Commissioner of Hazaribagh was shot dead by the Maoist Communist Centre a few

# Peace eludes a fledgling state

The tribals of Jharkhand had a bitter experience when they allowed the government to acquire their land for setting up mega industrial units and power projects. They lost their land and in return got humiliation and hunger. In the case of the Koel Karo project they refuse to make the same mistake, says VP SHARAN

days later. The most shameful incident was the rape of inmates of St Anne's Convent at Bokaro, which had triggered widespread condemnation.

Inquiries were conducted and attempts made by the ruling coalition to deny the incident. But it had to admit later that the inmates had been raped and molested. The police are yet to book the culprit.

The rapidity with which such incidents have taken place in Jharkhand has raised questions, whether the Intelligence agencies had failed to do their work. On the contrary, Intelligence officials told **The Statesman** that the state government had been kept informed.



Jharkhand chief minister Babulal Marandi: A disappointment?

In the case of Tapakara, the police had apparently been warned about the consequences of beating up a villager and breaking the barricades put up by the local people.

Intelligence Branch officials said that fearing further trouble, they reached the Tapakara outpost the next day. But the police and government officials had failed to act promptly.

The bureaucracy and the political leadership's casual approach to escalating violence in the state seems to have worsened the situation. Neither the ministers nor senior police officers have ever visited strife-torn areas to quell mob fury, they alleged. Jharkhand today reverberates with

land). The Tapakara incident proves the tribals' determination.

Tapakara and its adjoining areas where the proposed hydel power project is to come up is inhabited by the Mundas, a warrior class. It is the land of Birsa Munda, a demigod to the Jharkhand tribals. His place of birth is a few kilometres from the spot where the trouble took place. Birsa Munda's followers have been resisting the setting up of the mega hydel project since 1973.

Since the project would displace at least 15,000 families living between Lohajimi and Basia where the dams are to be built along side a huge reservoir, the affected people are determined not to allow the government or its National Hydroelectric Power Corporation to accomplish their task.

The government is dragging its feet over the rehabilitation package for the affected families.

The antecedents of such rehabilitation packages for similar projects in Jharkhand prove these are often anti-people.

The tribal inhabitants had a bitter experience when they allowed the government to acquire their land for setting up mega industrial units such as Heavy Engineering Corporation, the erstwhile Hindustan Steel Limited, Bokaro Steel Plant, many coal projects, besides the Damodar Valley Corporation. They lost their land and in return got humiliation and hunger.

They are determined not to let that happen in case of the Koel Karo project.

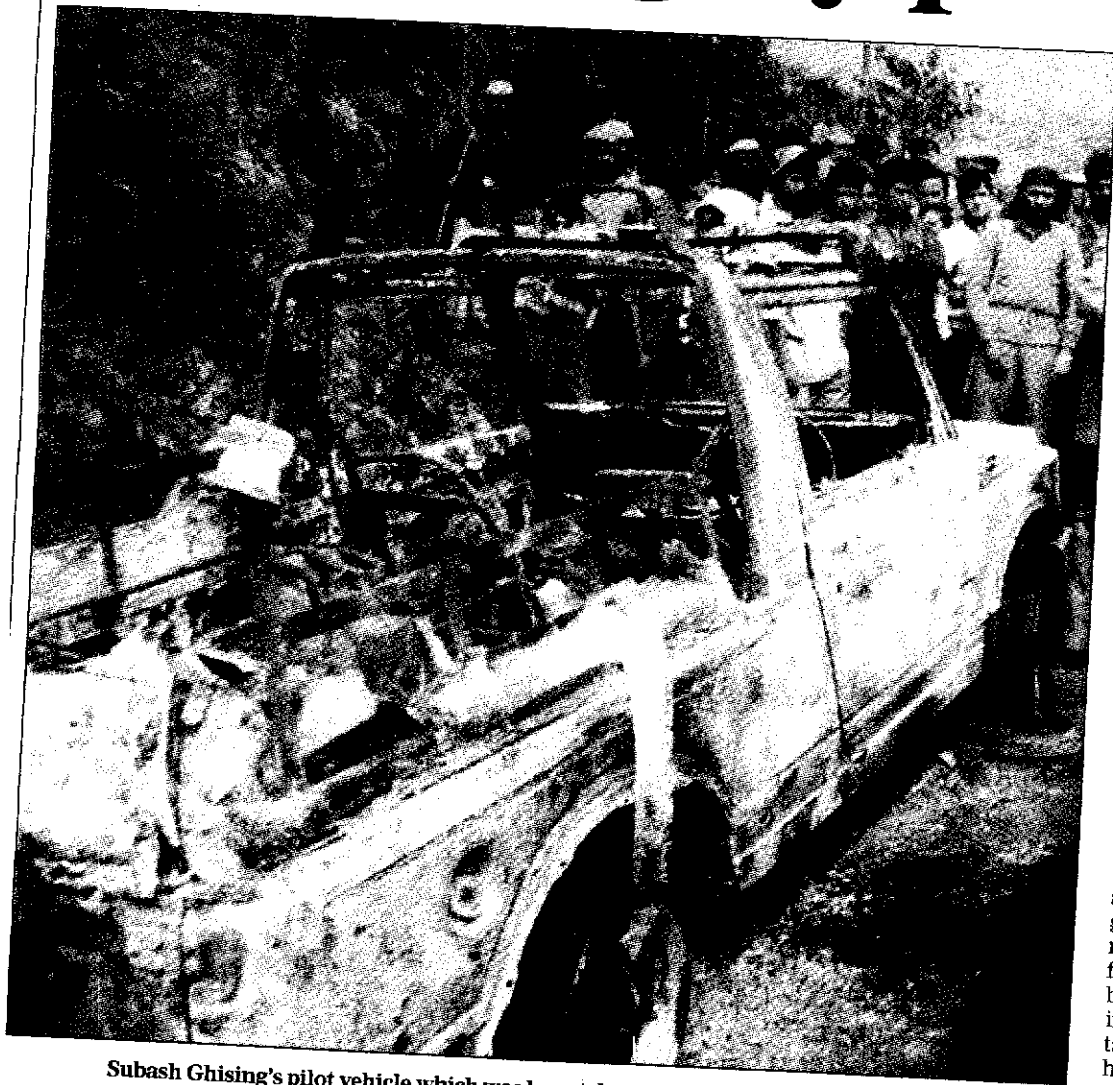
To prevent government functionaries from moving into the area, a "janta curfew" has been clamped by the local people.

(The author is The Statesman's Ranchi-based correspondent.)

THE STATESMAN

12 FEB 2001

# Pellet surgery pulls Ghis



Subash Ghising's pilot vehicle which was burnt during the attack. Picture by Abani Ghosh

FROM IOBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, Feb. 11: Five grenade pellets hit pierced Subash Ghising's scalp and two lodged in his neck were extracted last night by surgeons who said today that the Gorkhaland movement spearhead was "out of danger".

Neurosurgeon Maloy Chakraborty, who operated upon Ghising after finding initial resistance from his loyalists, told *The Telegraph* "His state is stable now and he is out of danger. But he is extremely weak and pale due to excessive loss of blood."

The Gorkha National Liberation Front chief was wounded on the right side of his scalp in a militant strike on his convoy on Saturday. He also suffered gunshot wounds "one at the entry point and the other at the exit point behind his right ear".

This morning, the GNLF chief told partners visiting him in Paramour nursing home he was well and did not wish to be taken to Delhi. There was confusion last night with loyalists demanding that he be shifted to the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences. "I am feeling fine and I would like to go home tomorrow. Convey the message to my people that I am safe and sound, there is nothing to be worried about. Ask them to maintain peace in the hills at all costs," Ghising said, as he lay in his hospital bed swathed in bandages.

No one has yet claimed responsibility for the strike, but all fingers are pointed at the rival Gorkhala Liberation Organisation led by Phatraj Subba. Police said the ridiculous execution of

THE TELEGRAPH

12 FEB 2001

# ing through



Ghising at the nursing home. Telegraph picture

the attack and the type of arms used suggested a well-trained group is behind the operation.

Some suspect the hand of an "insider" as Ghising had changed his travel plans at the last moment. He was initially slated to put up at Pintail resort on the outskirts of Siliguri for the night, but decided to skip the stopover.

Besides, only an insider would know that Ghising — who prefers taking the longer Hill Cart road for security reasons — would opt for the Pankhabari road. The ambush site and the cellphone found on the person of a slain militant indicate that the assailants were being intimidated at every step.

Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said it was improper to comment on the attack mastermind at this stage. "All I can say is that police have recovered an AK-47, a cellphone and a few grenades from one of the dead, which

will help us get a picture in the days ahead."

An indefinite bandh demanding the attackers' arrest began in Darjeeling today. Stray violence was reported with loyalists torching the offices of pro-Gorkhaland outfits. A GNLFF leader said: "Workers agitated over the murder bid will go further out of control if Ghising goes hundreds of miles away from the hills."

Ghising's surgeon today said the leader had lost a great deal of blood in the attack and had to be given two bottles. "We had to give him 13 stitches to stop the bleeding. Around 1.30 am, we did a CT scan to check if there were more foreign bodies. He regained consciousness around 5 am," he said.

Ghising was given light tea in the morning and "soft rice" for lunch, Chakraborty said. "He is unwilling to be shifted anywhere. He wants to go home as soon as possible."

The GNLFF chief was rushed to the nursing home last evening by Kurseong branch committee chief I.N. Pradhan. Police cordoned off the area, fearing more strikes. Crack Greyhound commandos also moved in, turning the hospital into a fortress. But this did not deter hundreds of his loyalists, who prayed outside as the operation began at 10.30 pm.

The Bengal government is not taking any chances with Ghising's treatment. Urban development minister Ashok Bhattacharya, who spoke to him for 15 minutes, said an air force plane was on stand-by at Hashimara. Two specialists are being flown in from Calcutta.

■ More reports on Page 11

# Cautious KPP weighs Trinamul tie-up

SUDIPTA CHANDA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Feb. 10. — The Trinamul Congress-BJP combine may ally with the KPP in the next Assembly polls. The Trinamul and the BJP have already backed the Kamtapuri organisations' demand for the recognition of Kamtapuri language.

The KPP leadership, though keen on the proposed alliance, is in no mood to "allow the larger two organisations to use it for their electoral gains."

The Congress has also sought the KPP's support, party president Mr Atul Roy said. "We would like to watch and learn what exactly these parties have in mind for us," he said. Mr Roy is aware of the fact that his party's closeness to the JMM would tempt many. Association with the KPP could help parties earn Jharkhandi electorates' support in Purulia, Bankura and Midnapore.

What remains to be seen is whether the other Kamtapuri organisations would accept the proposed alliance.

With most All Kamtapur Students' Union leaders behind bars since November, it's not clear whether the union would go ahead with the arrangement.

Miss Mamata Banerjee has reportedly agreed to speak to

## CPM PINS MOVEMENT ON LANDLORDS

KOLKATA, Feb. 10. — The Kamtapur movement is but a smokescreen of big land owners trying to regain land lost under the land ceiling Act and the Trinamul Congress is instigating them to strengthen its base in North Bengal.

This is the main contention of a booklet the CPI-M has brought out to "expose the unholy forces out to divide the state and create terror".

The CPI-M has underscored the need for a sustained campaign against the Kamtapur movement, especially, in view of the meeting between Miss Mamata Banerjee and the Kamtapuri People's Party leader, Mr Atul Roy, at Rail Bhavan in Delhi early this week.

The three striking features of the movement, the booklet explains, are its timing, the Trinamul's support to it and the sprouting of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation whose cadres are armed with sophisticated weapons.

The Kamtapur movement didn't rise its head during the long Congress rule in the state. But when the Left Front government started recovering surplus land and distributed it among the poor - Rajbanshis, scheduled castes and tribes people and the minorities - the movement surfaced, the booklet says. The vested interests had earlier tried to re-group and demand a separate Uttaranchal state, but the North Bengal people jointly foiled the "design". — SNS

the Union home minister about the detention of the KPP and AKSU leaders.

The Trinamul and the BJP have drawn the line on the statehood claim. Miss Banerjee has said 'Kamtapuris don't want a separate state.'

This might leave the KPP with no other choice but to intensify its demand for reservation of land for Kamtapuri peasants. The KPP raised the land reservation demand recently during the formation of

its peasants' wing, Kamtapur Halua Sangathan.

Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya has said the government "didn't have any such plan since it was not a practical solution."

**Anil slams Mamata:** Mr Anil Biswas said here today: "By expressing open support towards Kamtapuris, Miss Mamata Banerjee has exposed that the Trinamul is behind the rise of separatist organisations in North Bengal."

THE STATESMAN

11 FEB 2001



# Ghisingh shot at, 2 killed

571 11/2  
9. Regimental Postman

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Feb. 10. — Mr Subash Ghisingh was shot in the neck and the back of the head by some people who ambushed his convoy near Kurseong this evening, barely an hour after he left Siliguri for Darjeeling laughing off death threats against him and other GNLFF leaders.

Doctors have said the DGHC chairman is out of danger.

But his bodyguard, Mr Suman Chhetri, was killed in the 30-minute shootout between the attackers and securitymen. One of the assailants, a suspected Gorkha Liberation Organisation activist, too died. Five policemen were injured and have been admitted to a Kurseong hospital.

The assailants fired from AK-47 ri-

fles on the convoy at Chilaunidural on Pankhabari Road, 30 km from Siliguri, around 6 p.m. They fled into the hills after the attack.

Though injured, Mr Ghisingh managed to scramble out of his white Ambassador car when securitymen were firing in retaliation. The assailants had thrown a grenade at his car after spraying it with bullets.

Later, a bodyguard rang up a GNLFF councillor, Mr IN Pradhan, in Kurseong who rushed Mr Ghisingh to a nursing home in Siliguri. The attackers had set fire to the jeep leading the convoy. But it was doused and used to carry Mr Ghisingh. Three other vehicles too were damaged.

Mr Ghisingh will be shifted to AIIMS, Delhi, tomorrow, Mr Pradhan said.

Police later recovered a grenade and

an AK-47 rifle from the ambush spot. The violence coincides with the hotting up of political passions in the Darjeeling hills after the revival of GLO.

The outfit is led by one-time Ghisingh lieutenant Mr Chhatre Subba. Late last year, Mr Subba had threatened Mr Ghisingh and his councillors with "dire consequences" if they didn't resign from the DGHC and joined the Gorkhaland movement.

Before leaving for the hills today, the GNLFF chief had told reporters at Pintail village here: "I'm keeping my men on a leash in the face of such threats. If I let them go our adversaries will disappear." He described the death threats as "hollow and of no consequence".

He returned today after meeting the Prime Minister and home minister in Delhi on Wednesday.

His adversaries include the GLO. Most non-GNLFF opposition hill parties have criticised Mr Ghisingh for not backing the movement for a separate Gorkha state. The GNLFF, instead, has been demanding that the hills be brought under the 6th Schedule. At the tripartite talks in Delhi, Mr Ghisingh had told Central and state officials that the DGHC needed more powers.

**Bandh:** The GNLFF has called a bandh from 6 a.m. tomorrow. Mr Pradhan said the bandh would continue till the attackers were arrested.

**Buddha condemns attack:** The chief minister condemned attack on Mr Ghisingh. Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya wished the DGHC chairman a speedy recovery. He asked police to arrest the attackers and mourned the death of Mr Ghisingh's bodyguard.

THE STATESMAN

11 FEB 2001

# Land, not tongue, behind Kamtapur stir, says CPM

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, February 9

THE AGITATION for recognition of the Kamtapuri language is only an alibi to mobilise support for the struggle for a separate State. Or, so believes the CPI(M).

Party leaders say the agitation in North Bengal is being fanned by the Rajbongshis, Muslims and Bhatiya jotedars, who were vested of their land.

North Bengal is going the Nanoor, Keshpur and Garbeta way and Trinamool Congress is trying to seize the chance to get a foothold by tying up with the jotedars and their political outfit Kamtapuri People's Party (KPP). "In the late Sixties, the Rajbongshi jotedars mobilised people in the name of Uttarakhand movement in North Bengal. They were then aided by the Congress to destabilise the Left movement. It failed. This subterfuge too will fail," CPI(M) State secretary Anil Biswas said. He will address a public meeting at Siliguri with central committee member

Nirupam Sen tomorrow.

The KPP claim that people from East Bengal (Bhatiyas) had taken away land belonging to the Rajbongshis is false.

"After the Left Front Government came to power, acres of land belonging to the jotedars were vested and distributed among the landless peasants, including

## Anil speak

Rajbongshis, Muslims, Bhatiyas and backward caste," said Nirupam Sen, the party's troubleshooter in North Bengal. "It is a lie that the Bhatiyas have confiscated the lands of the Rajbongshis. It's the jotedars' attempt to fan the Kamtapuri movement."

Vested interest groups are behind the language demand to garner

public support, says Biswas. Their claim that the Rajbongshis are not Bengalis and that Kamtapuri is a separate language is "ridiculous". Linguists Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay and Sukumar Sen and respected Rajbongshi intellectuals Thakur Panchanan and Upendra Nath Barman have referred to Kamtapuri dialect as Bengali. Even Rani of Cooch Behar Gayatri Devi described the language spoken in this region as Bengali," said Biswas.

Riding piggyback on the language demand, the Kamtapuri stir has assumed full-blown proportions. The KPP is now a formidable organisation in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Siliguri districts. All-Kamtapuri Students' Union and the militant outfit Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation have become a serious threat to the LF before the polls.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 FEB 2001

# Rebel leaders blame CPM for Kamtapuri unrest

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

MALDA, Feb. 6. — Rebel CPI-M leaders planning to set up the district unit of Mr Saifuddin Choudhury's Jana Chetana Mancha have blamed the party's "autocratic and dictatorial attitude" for the Kamtapuri movement.

They accused CPI-M leaders and supporters from Habibpur-Bamongola and Gazole of actively supporting the KPP leader, Mr Subash Burman.

Mr Pradip Bagchi, a member of the CPI-M's English Bazar zonal committee and a Mancha supporter, said several CPI-M workers have been noticed at recent KPP meetings.

The district CPI-M leadership's "ideological derailment" is the primary cause of rising sep-

aratist and communal forces, he said.

The Mancha is opposed to CPI-M's policy of using the police to counter the KPP movement. The movement should be resisted politically, he said.

The district unit of the Mancha will be set up after 14 February when Mr Choudhury visits the area.

He said several CPI-M leaders are disgusted with the corruption and malpractice within the party and the lack of inner party democracy in the district unit.

## Mamata-KPP talks

Union railway minister and Trinamul Congress chief Miss Mamata Banerjee met the KPP chief, Mr Atul Roy, at her Rail

Bhawan office today, SNS adds from New Delhi.

The railway minister wasn't available for comment but sources close to her said the meeting was the fallout of Miss Banerjee's recent visit to Siliguri where she expressed "moral support" to the Kamtapur People Party's struggle for North Bengal's development. In a statement issued after the meeting, Mr Roy said

The Union railway minister, Mrs Miss Banerjee and he discussed issues concerning North Bengal, including urgent steps for the development of the region, and "the atrocities" being committed by the Left Front.

Mr Roy said his party would carry on with their agitation within the constitutional framework.

THE STATESMAN

- 7 FEB 2001

Chisingh attends  
key review meeting in Delhi

New Delhi, February 7

DARJEELING GORKHA Hill Council chairman Subash Ghisingh attended a key meeting with Union and State Government officers here today. The conclave was held to review the implementation of the 1988 Darjeeling Accord.

Special Secretary in the Home Ministry Mukund Bihari Kaushal, Joint Secretary in charge of the North-East G K Pillai and other senior officers represented the Centre. Manish Gupta, West Bengal Chief Secretary and Hill Affairs Department Secretary P K Pradhan were present.

Ghisingh's party, the GNLF, has in the recent past stepped up its campaign for a separate State. The home ministry had last month invited Ghisingh for the meet. The GNLF chief, has over the past few years been pressing for such a conference. The Trinamool has been backing this demand. Reports say it was Mamata Banerjee who persuaded L K Advani to convene such a meeting.

(PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

FEB 7 2001

## Centre, Ghising review Darjeeling accord

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Senior officials of the Union home ministry and the West Bengal government and Gorkha Hill Council leader Subhash Ghising met here on Wednesday to review the implementation of the 1988 Darjeeling accord.

The meeting comes in the backdrop of a memorandum submitted to the council about two years ago,

in which certain crucial demands required a decision at the level of the central government.

The council had come into being after the 1988 accord between the Left Front government of West Bengal and Mr Ghising following an initiative by the then prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi.

The home ministry was represented by special secretary Mukund Bihari Kaushal, joint

secretary in charge of the North-East G.K. Pillai and other senior officials. The state government was represented by chief secretary Manish Gupta and hill affairs department secretary P.K. Pradhan.

Besides Mr Ghising, other leaders of the council who attended the meeting were executive councillor N.B. Pradhan and principal secretary of the council Prashant.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

- 8 FEB 2001

# Ghisingh in Delhi for tripartite meet

HT Correspondent  
Siliguri, February 5

A FIVE-MEMBER team headed by Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council chairman Subash Ghisingh left for Delhi today to take part in a tripartite meeting called by the Centre to discuss DGHS demands. The meeting will be held on February 7. The team will meet the Home Minister and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission KC Pant.

Ghisingh said the meeting will discuss the review of the DGHC accord signed in 1988 which the Gorkha National Liberation Front, the ruling party of the DGHC, has been demanding for quite some time. He said the DGHC had

already discussed the review of DGHC accord with the State Government. The GNLF is demanding amendment of the accord that was signed after a 28-

month long Gorkhaland movement, he said.

However, Ghisingh refused to comment when asked whether he will raise the issues of a separate

Regional Movement Gorkhaland and Sixth Schedule status for DGHC at the meeting.

On Sunday, Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said the State Government has no objection to Ghisingh's demand for Sixth Schedule status for DGHC.

Principal secretary of the DGHC, who is accompanying Ghisingh, said besides review of the accord, the meeting will discuss such issues as more autonomy for DGHC and Constitutional safeguards of the Hill Council. The team will meet the Deputy Chair-man of the Planning Commission to seek plan assistance for the DFHC. The team does not include three DGHC branch presidents Deepak Gurung, I N Pradhan and C K Pradhan, known to be fervent supporters of the Statehood demand.

## Twin issues mark Siliguri bandh

CONTRARY TO their recent political posturing, both the Congress and the Trinamool have called for a 12-hour bandh of the sub-division on Tuesday in protest against the State health authorities' failure to prevent three encephalitis deaths at the local Sadar hospital today. The death of a senior district Congress leader, Kalidas Ghosh, at a private nursing home in police custody today also figures in tomorrow's bandh agenda.

Secretary of the Darjeeling Congress district committee, Shankar Malakar, said, "The negligence of the local health authorities led to this three deaths." Mystery shrouds the death of 72-year old Ghosh, who was arrested along with his son, Saibal, on January 12 following the "unnatural death" of their maid-servant. Post mortem of the deceased, who had jumped out from a four-storeyed building, said she was raped.

Ghosh was shifted to a nursing home yesterday and he died early this morning in police custody.

HTC, Siliguri

THE HINDUSTAN TR

- 6 FEB 2001

## KAMTAPURI MOVES

Mamata influences scaling down of demands

THE support that Mamata Banerjee has garnered in North Bengal, not just in the areas dominated by Kamtapuris, has given the CPI-M the jitters. It is expressed by Ashok Bhattacharya, who combines his concern for urban development with active pursuit of his own ambitions in Siliguri. That he should have tried and failed to interfere with the distribution of The Statesman in Siliguri should have taught him some lessons. If the Trinamul is making serious inroads into his turf, he himself is responsible. Unless he scales down his mad ambition of coming to the aid of the Basu Parivar and presuming to influence this newspaper's professional judgment he will come a cropper and we will help to see that this happens. While Mamata has reason to be satisfied that there is a general atmosphere of disaffection with the CPI-M in North Bengal, it is all to the good that the Kamtapuris, badly neglected over the years, appear to have scaled down their demands for separate statehood and official recognition of their language. A large percentage of the population in the area working in tea gardens consists of Jharkhandis, which is why they may have considered it appropriate to invite Siby Soren to one of their rallies. Inspiration may have also come from Subash Ghisingh who has extracted his benefits from the Centre and the state mainly by threatening a violent flare-up in the hills. But the Kamtapuris would do well to learn that Soren and Ghisingh are examples of how not to conduct an agitation: both have prospered individually at the expense of the people they claimed to represent.

It is a healthy sign that the militant wing of the Kamtapuris has retired to the background and the leadership is in the hands of a more moderate section which has responded meaningfully to Mamata Banerjee at her rally in Siliguri. She made it clear that she couldn't be associated with any separatist movement but did hold out hope of a concerted development programme. The North Bengal Development Council has existed on paper largely because it is starved of funds and witnesses a power struggle within the Left Front with the Forward Bloc wanting to restrain the CPI-M from eating into its base. The electorate has every reason to hope that Mamata will live up to her promise of including a separate programme for North Bengal in her party's election manifesto. The Kamtapuri Peoples' Party's new demand for reservation of land for locals signifies a clear shift from the statehood demand. Even if it is a means of soothing the feelings of the agrarian community which has experienced grinding poverty because land reforms have meant nothing to them, it confirms that the movement is now concerned with practical rather than emotional issues. This is to be welcomed. Mamata has every reason to try to make amends for the failures of the Left. If, consequently, Ashok Bhattacharya feels seriously threatened, he can blame his party and himself.

THE STATESMAN

5 FEB 2001

# Ghisingh heads for New Delhi

Pramod Giri  
Darjeeling, February 2

A FIVE-MEMBER team headed by Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) chairman Subash Ghisingh will leave for Delhi on February 5 to take part in a tripartite meeting to discuss DGHC demands.

The demands include amendment of the DGHC Act 1988 and inclusion of the entire DGHC area in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Outfits in the hills have reacted negatively to the demand arguing that Ghisingh was demanding tribal status for an area where a major section of the people are non-tribal.

The GNLF, that had spearheaded the 28-month long Gorkhaland movement between 1986-88, has been tightlipped over the Gorkhaland issue for quite some time. As such, Ghisingh's participation in the proposed meeting on February 7 has been criticised by all parties, except the CPI(M), as a political gimmick meant to suppress the genuine forces involved in the Gorkhaland demand. The general secretary of the Communist Party of

Revolutionary Marxists (CPRM) R B Rai said Ghisingh has been 'backtracking from the real issue'. Militant Gorkha leader Chhatre Subba has condemned the meeting. Subba has termed Ghisingh's move as an attempt to sabotage the Gorkhaland movement and has threatened agitation. Meanwhile, the All Gorkha Student's Union (AGSU) has called a bandh in Darjeeling on February 12 demanding a separate State. The Gorkha National

Liberation Front (GNLF) and the CPI(M) have opposed the strike.

A senior DGHC councilor, N B Pradhan, has demanded ban on AGSU for its political association. According to him AGSU had earlier claimed to be a non-political organisation.

AGSU president Roshan Giri has charged that the leaders of GNLF who are demanding a ban on AGSU have vested interests and have made the 'holy' issue of Gorkhaland an election issue. Roshan Giri has threatened an agitation if AGSU's demand was not met. The tiff between GNLF and AGSU might have serious implications in the future, Giri stressed.

The demands include amendment of the DGHC Act 1988 and inclusion of the DGHC area in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 FEB 2001



# KPP cry for land quota

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, Jan. 31: Encouraged by Mamata Banerjee's words of support, the Kamtapur Peoples' Party (KPP) has for the first time raised the demand for reservation of land for the Rajbanshis of north Bengal.

The KPP has begun mobilising the largely agrarian community in the region to counter the CPM's influence in rural pockets. The KPP has formed a farmers' organisation on the lines of the CPM Kisan Sabha, called the Kamtapur Halua (farmers') Sangathan.

Having failed to make inroads into the primarily Jharkhandi-dominated trade unions in the tea gardens, the KPP leadership hopes that the support extended by both the Trinamul Congress and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha will help it get a positive response from the farming community

dominated by the Rajbanshis.

KPP leaders, however, were evasive when asked whether their agrarian movement would ultimately water down the party's demand for a separate state.

KPP president Atul Roy said: "Our fight for a separate state will continue. The prime objective of the formation of the KHS is to safeguard the interest of the Rajbanshi community."

Spelling out the objectives of the farmers' wing, Roy said: "A nine-member committee with representatives drawn from the party and the All-Kamtapur Students' Union will serve as the core committee of the KHS. The front has prepared a nine-point charter of demands to safeguard the interests of the Rajbanshis."

Blaming the incessant influx from neighbouring countries for the condition of the Kamtapuris, Roy said: "Influx from Bangla-

desh, Nepal and Bhutan and the apathy of successive state governments to safeguard the interest of Kamtapuris are the main reasons behind the present condition."

The KPP chief alleged that the alienation of the Rajbanshis and the lack of job opportunities stemming from the under-development of the region were the main reasons behind the political movement in the restive region.

"The Kamtapuris, who are the sons-of-the-soil of north Bengal, are today mostly landless. Under these circumstances, the Kamtapuri people cannot even fall back on their prime occupation — agriculture — due to land shrinkage. Reservation of land for the Kamtapuri people is the only remedy to this problem," Roy added.

Incidentally, the Santosh Rana faction of the Naxalites and the Sayatta Sashan Sangram Manch, an umbrella organisation of eight re-

gional parties seeking total autonomy for north Bengal — have also been demanding reservation of land for the region's ethnic people.

Roy was, however, guarded in his response when asked whether the KPP would enter into an electoral alliance with the Trinamul.

"We have adopted a 'wait-and-watch' strategy. It is still not clear whether it (the Trinamul) is truly sympathetic to the Rajbanshis. We have to ascertain if it just wants to use the KPP for their own political gains in north Bengal or not," he said.

The CPM has alleged that the Trinamul's proximity to the Kamtapur outfits has exposed its "true colours". Urban development minister Ashoke Bhattacharya said: "By extending support to the Kamtapur cause, the Trinamul has exposed its true colours. It will only alienate the party from the people of north Bengal."

THE TELEGRAPH

1 FEB 2001

# KPP wants land reservation in North Bengal

SUDIPTA CHANDA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Jan. 30. — The Kamtapur Peoples' Party has for the first time raised the demand of reservation of land for Kamtapuri people in North Bengal. The question of whether the demand was raised to ultimately water down the claim of a separate state was however avoided by the KPP leaders.

Interestingly, the Naxalites (Santosh Rana) faction and later the Sayatta Sashan Sangram Mancha, which is an association of eight regional political organisations seeking autonomy for North Bengal, are the only two organisations who have been demanding reservation of land for the Kamtapuri people.

Boosted by the clean chit given to them by Miss Banerjee, the KPP has started to mobilise the agrarian community of North Bengal with an aim to compete with the CPI-M in the rural areas.

It has formed a farmers' organisation called the "Kamtapur Halua Sangathan" in the mould of the CPI-M's Krishak Sabha. Incidentally the "hal" (plough) is also the KPP's official emblem.

Apparently having failed to penetrate the trade union movement in the predominantly Jharkhandi community dominated tea plantations of North Bengal, the KPP leadership is hopeful that the KHS will succeed in

generating positive response from the agrarian community of the region dominated by people of the Rajbanshi (Kamtapuri) stock.

According to the KPP president Mr Atul Roy, a nine-member committee with representatives drawn from his party and the Aksu will serve as the core committee of the KHS.

The newly formed organisation has prepared a 9-point charter of demand to safeguard the interests of the region's agrarian community.

Prime among the demands is the claim of reservation of land for the Kamtapuri population of North Bengal.

Mr Roy said the Kamtapuris, who are the indigenous people of North Bengal, are mostly landless at present.

He blamed the influx from Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan and the apathy of successive state governments to safeguard the interest of the Kamtapuris as the reasons behind the present condition.

**Minister blasts Mamata:** "By expressing support towards the Kamtapur cause, the Trinamul has exposed its true colours. It will only serve to alienate them from the people of North Bengal," CPI-M leader and urban development minister, Mr Asok Bhattacharya said.

Miss Mamata Banerjee's speech here on 27 January was a giveaway. It substantiates our earlier allegations about Trinamul's proximity with the Kamtapuri organisations, he added.

THE STATESMAN

31 JAN 2001

## CLOUDED TALKS

Ghisingh must first abjure statehood

NO one except Subash Ghisingh himself has complained that Darjeeling's plight is due to inadequate powers for the GNLF. Or that Ghisingh might have worked wonders if the Gorkhas were to acquire the status accorded to scheduled tribes and be entitled to special benefits. Yet this is the case the GNLF leader will be taking to Delhi on 5 February during the proposed tripartite meeting. Nothing can be accomplished without involving the Centre which is party to the tripartite Hill Council accord signed in 1988 but that would have made sense had Ghisingh been engaged in hectic development activity in the hills. The latest demands become meaningless when he has failed to live up to expectations over the last 12 years. Before talking about constitutional amendments, more powers and allocations, New Delhi has every reason to ask Ghisingh to account for the money he has squandered.

There could be another, more plausible, reason for rushing to Delhi. Ghisingh's ally, the CPI-M, is in deep distress and the GNLF leader is surrounded by adversaries. The strongest among them, Chhattrre Subba, has raised the banner of statehood for which he has enlisted the support of Naga militants. Ghisingh cannot afford to let the statehood issue pass from his hands. Which is why he may have decided to opt for talks with Delhi as a means of reassuring the hill population. The point is that his credibility is at its lowest ebb. It will take a great deal to convince his electorate that he means business against the popular perception that his main concern is to ensure that his rivals don't get the upper hand. Proof of his sincerity would be an unqualified declaration that separate statehood is not on his agenda. He cannot convincingly ask for more powers and funds and, at the same time, reserve the option of demanding statehood. The ambivalence puts a cloud over the talks and helps Ghisingh to hoodwink the hill population — not for the first time. //

# KPP resists R-Day boycott

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Siliguri, Jan. 18:** In an effort to distance itself from the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) has decided to resist any attempt to disrupt the Republic Day celebrations and will instead observe the day as *Ekta* (unity) *Diwas*.

The KLO, along with most of the Northeast militant groups, has given a call to boycott the January 26 celebrations.

Criticising the threat issued by the militant groups, KPP chief Atul Roy said: "We will resist any attempt to disrupt the party's programmes on Republic Day, which the KPP will observe as *Ekta Diwas*."

"Party activists have been instructed to ensure that no one disrupts the celebration in the name of Kamtapuris."

Some 14 militant organisations of the Northeast along with the KLO have issued a "solidarity statement" to boycott the Republic Day functions. The groups are distributing leaflets in the Kamtapuri hub of Kumargramduar in Jalpaiguri district, on the Assam border, urging people to stay away from the celebrations and "ob-

serve a general strike" in protest against the "illegal occupation of their region".

Apart from the KLO and Ufa, militant organisations such as the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB), National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) have given the boycott call.

"To all the people in our respective regions, these are events that symbolises their (read Indian) colonial bondage under the repressive Indian occupation," the leaflets say.

Urging the people to shun the boycott call, Roy said: "The KPP will also observe the day to promote harmony and amity. The party activists in north Bengal have been instructed to observe Republic Day at all KPP offices in their respective areas."

Reiterating that the KPP is a democratic organisation striving for the development of the region and the sons-of-the soil of north Bengal, Roy rubbished the allegation that his group was disowning the KLO to gain political mileage.

"I have challenged the state government and the police administration to establish our alleged links with the militant KLO."

THE TELEGRAPH

19 JAN 2001

Intelligence calls for dialogue to end Kamtapur strife

# Talks, not force, key to peace

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, Jan. 16: The Left Front government continues its onslaught to contain the separatist Kamtapur movement, but intelligence sources believe the problem should be solved through talks.

In his report after a fact-finding mission to north Bengal districts last week, the state director-general, IB, Debabrata Banerjee, has suggested "dialogue" — rather than the use of force — with the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) as the method of achieving peace.

Disregarding intelligence reports, the state government is persisting with "Operation Kamtapur" launched towards the end of November last year. The district police authorities in Darjeeling, Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar have so far rounded up over 172 top-level and middle-level Kamtapuri leaders.

Barring the party's central committee president, Atul Roy, his deputy Nikhil Roy, women's leader Mitali Roy and Kamtapur Women's Rights Forum president

Bharati Das, all other front-ranking leaders are behind bars. So are hardliners of the All Kamtapur Students' Union (Aksu).

Aksu, which the district police suspect to have links with the elusive militant Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), has been the hardest hit by Operation Kamtapur. The organisation is leaderless following the arrest of president Srinivas Das, vice-president Kedarnath Singha and general secretary Bishumoni Patwari.

Most of them were arrested during the night-long police sweep in north Bengal on November 29. The majority were picked up from Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.

Last month alone, over 30 other middle-ranking KPP and Aksu leaders were arrested on charges varying from murder to sedition.

During his three-day trip, the IB chief assessed the situation after the mass arrests of Kamtapuri leaders. District police officials told him that mere arrest of top Kamtapuri leaders would not end or contain militancy.

Banerjee, who extensively toured the Kamtapuri hub in Jalpaiguri district's Kumargram Duar under Alipurduar sub-division, was told by district police officials that the government should try to get Kamtapur leaders to sit across the table.

Senior police officials expressed reservations about the continuing police action.

"The Kamtapuri leadership is willing to hold dialogue with the state government provided ongoing operations are aborted and innocent Rajbonshi people are not harassed by the government and the CPM leadership," a senior police officer said.

"To regain the confidence of the Rajbonshi community and the Kamtapur activists, most arrested KPP leaders and activists be released. Only those with suspected links with the militant outfit be kept behind bars," the officer said.

Sources said the IB chief expressed his unhappiness with the increasing number of complaints of police high-handedness while carrying out arrests.

Initially, the Jalpaiguri police

had restrained themselves from arresting most frontline Kamtapur leaders. But several arrests were made under "pressure" from the state government.

Disclosing the rift between the intelligence branch and Writers' Buildings, a police officer said: "The entire Operation Kamtapur was remote-controlled from Calcutta. We were only asked to execute and were not included in its conception stage."

Political observers here believe the government is trying to distance the Kamtapuri hardliners from the central leadership. "There are signs of the CPM softening towards KPP president Atul Roy while vice-president Nikhil Roy, known for his hardline stance, is being kept on the run," they said.

The district police have not been able to pin down the elusive KLO. Several arrests have been made of suspected KLO activists, but no substantial evidence has been produced against most of the so-called militant cadre arrested in north Bengal in the past few months, the observers said.

THE TELEGRAPH

17 JAN 2001

JMM extends hand and guns to statehood agitation

## Solidarity cry for Kamtapur

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, Jan. 10: Promising AK-47s by the "thousands", the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) today said it would extend all help and support to the agitation for a separate state of Kamtapur.

Addressing a rally organised by the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) here, JMM president Shibu Soren -- who spoke in fluent Bengali -- said: "The Kamtapuri demand for a separate state for themselves is the outcome of total neglect and the imposition of an alien culture on the Rajbanshi sons-of-the-soil in north Bengal. Sons of the soil across the country have realised that they have been deprived for too long. The Kamtapuris, too, are justified in raising the demand for a separate state.

"The CPM rulers will not be able to stop the Kamtapuris from

fulfilling their aspirations. The Left Front government cannot suppress such a genuine demand by calling it a separatist and anti-national movement."

Whipping up passions in an already surcharged atmosphere at the Medical More grounds, JMM state president Ajit Prasad Mahato pledged armed support to the Kamtapuris, if need be. "The ruling front in Bengal has often accused the JMM of supplying arms to the KPP. We are indeed ready to supply AK-47 rifles in thousands in case the need arises for an armed struggle," Mahato told the crowd which had waited for nearly four hours on a wintry afternoon for the JMM leaders to arrive.

Mahato urged the younger generation of Rajbanshis to lead a revolution. "What is better than AK-47s is that every Kamtapuri

youth becomes a revolutionary. These youths can be more effective than a thousand AK-47s. We are ready to provide moral and physical support to our Rajbanshi brothers and sisters in their fight against the colonial rulers of Bengal (read CPM)," the JMM leader said.

Mahato warned the CPM against opposing the statehood demand. "North Bengal is not Jyoti Basu's ancestral property that he will not allow its division. Neither is West Bengal his personal land holding. These people who sit in Calcutta should beware if they dare oppose the Kamtapuri movement," the firebrand JMM leader thundered.

Taking up from where Mahato left off, the KPP leadership lashed out at the ruling communists for trying to destroy the society and culture of the Rajbanshis.

Describing the CPM leadership as a "Bengali dinosaur", KPP central committee president Atul Roy said: "This Bengali dinosaur has gobbled up the Kamtapuri culture and is trying to thrust an alien one on the Rajbanshis. We will no longer bow to the Bengali colonialists. Kamtapuris will no longer be servants of the Bengali babus. Instead, the time has come for the Rajbanshi people to be the babus of their own land."

Speaking to reporters earlier, Soren scoffed at allegations of animosity between the Jharkhandis and the Rajbanshis living in north Bengal. "The Jharkhandi Adivasis and the Rajbanshis in north Bengal have been co-existing peacefully for decades. The Jharkhandis in the region fully support the KPP demand for a separate state as they did for Jharkhand," the JMM chief said.

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