

POETIC JUSTICE

Marxists play the capital markets

THE CPI-M, it would appear, no longer has any objections to that transparently capitalist ploy, the mutual fund — it has admitted somewhat sheepishly to investing heavily in US-64 funds, thereby losing a lot of money after US-64 collapsed. Although Somnath Chatterjee has opined that the investment is not against the party's principles, it has to be embarrassing whichever way one looks at it. From the communist end, the Marxists have been led into petty-bourgeois *foibles*. From the capitalist end, it looks as if they don't yet know the first thing about investing. Maybe the party was looking from the Nehruvian mixed-economy "commanding heights" end, which they have been championing of late. That may explain their choice of a public sector mutual fund to invest surplus funds.

The calculation may have been that the government would bail out the fund with crores of taxpayers' money diverted from the social sector. That would have kept the leftists in *good graces*, enabling them to speak eloquently on injustices *inflicted* by the poor — which is what Nehruvian economics is all about. Chatterjee tried to put a virtuous face on the party's losses by arguing that at least the party was on the side of the cheated, like millions of middle-class investors, rather than the industrialists who swindled the UTI. This may be in line with Anil Biswas' new definition of the proletariat as inclusive of the middle class and sections of the upper middle class. Given a little push, it could include select monopolistic industrialists as well, if the company that Jyoti Basu keeps is any indication. Can one now expect the leftists to rethink their commitment to the public sector, used as cash cows by ministerial and other vested interests? Surjeet has called the UTI a government mutual fund, not a racket, but to many the difference is not very marked.

THE STATE

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CAVEAT
CRIRANI

On 1st September 1995 chief minister Jyoti Basu did the right thing to order the Judicial Secretary to Government to enquire into numerous and persistent complaints regarding functioning of Wakf Boards and report within a month. The Judicial Secretary was soon elevated to the High Court Bench and PK Sengupta took his place. His Report dated 20 December 1995, was commended by Basu orally to the then chief secretary, N Krishnamurthy. By 1 July 1996, Basu had done a somersault. In a written statement tabled that day, he called the Report *perverse, misleading and untenable* in one place and *perfunctory, inconsistent and self-contradictory* in another.

The Report is in fact a well-documented and devastating exposé of what went on in the name of Muslim charitable trusts called Wakfs. Each conclusion in the ten-page report is fully corroborated in the detailed Appendices attached and I am impressed by Sengupta's diligence and marshalling of the evidence he has gathered.

Section 7 of the Bengal Wakf Act 1934 required the state government to

appoint, as soon as might be, a Board of Wakf. To say that the Board worked erratically is an understatement. When the going got too hot for certain vested interests, Government by Notification No 16452-3 of 6 September 1995, summarily dissolved the Board and Sengupta notes that it was not re-established. He also notes that Government had no power to *dissolve* the Board, it could only *supersede* it, in which case it was incumbent upon the Government to

appoint an Administrator to perform the Board's functions. As no Administrator was appointed, Sengupta noted that there was a *void in the administration*. A Wakf Commissioner has only limited powers of record. No wonder Sengupta found that the lack of supervision and control over the properties by mutwallis led directly to very lucrative opportunities for promoters and real estate dealers.

Sengupta went into the records in the office of the Wakf Commissioner. He found 160 cases of leases and a few cases of sale of wakf properties in

which there were *serious allegations of nepotism, malpractices and other misdeemeanours*, which he has detailed in Appendix A. He selected seven major properties for a *thorough inquiry* and his findings with supporting evidence are in Appendix B. One Hamimul Hoda, his daughter, sons, brother and other relatives figure prominently in context. He is not alone; there are other people whose names appear repeatedly. Hamimul was a member of the Wakf Board for fifteen years from 1980 till its dissolution in 1995. Sale or lease of wakf property is allowed in case of *legal necessity*. In all the records Sengupta examined, he could not find evidence of the Board having discharged its obligation to establish legal necessity. Proposals for lease and sale by concerned mutwallis were accepted as a matter of routine; no quotations were invited, no public advertisements issued and where, on the few occasions, the Board did ask for advertisements, *this direction was honoured by non-compliance*. With studied understatement, Sengupta concludes that *it appears that everything was done in closed circuit. All these facts have exposed these dealings to charges of nepotism, corruption and malpractices*.

Large sums of money are received by

Wakf Funds. Section 44 of the Wakf Act provides for a mandatory audit of Wakf Funds by an Auditor appointed by the state government. The last audit was done for the years 1978-79 to 1980-81, but reports of previous audits were not produced. When there was a direction to do so, it was flouted. No audits were conducted thereafter.

Wakfs are charitable trusts of a minority community governed by separate law, to ensure that the interests of beneficiaries are protected. Serious misdeemeanours are not excused simply because they are perpetrated by members of the same community; the law is above them all. The Sengupta Report lays bare telling evidence of nepotism, corruption and worse; the complicity of vested interests who have influence in the CPI(M) is plain. There is total abdication by the state government of its responsibilities at law. The proper-
ties are large and valuable. The losers are legitimate beneficiaries of a minority community about whose welfare the CPI(M) cries itself hoarse.

Two issues arise. Why did Jyoti Basu make a U-turn, who was he protecting? By now his reputation for shielding the shady - from his son to his eminently questionable friends - is not in doubt. The new Government must proceed to commission a credible Action Taken Report on Sengupta's findings and meantime it would be both wise and appropriate for the Speaker of the Assembly to step aside and await the outcome of the enquiry. Will Buddhadev act or will he allow himself to be stymied by Jyoti Basu as in the matter of appointing a new Advocate-General? One last question. Does Basu stand by his second thoughts that this exceptionally competent report distinguished by commendable judicial detachment is - *perverse, misleading, untenable and perfunctory, inconsistent and self-contradictory*? Did he understand the meaning of the words he chose in a statement laid on the table of the Assembly or did age not wither him nor custom stale his one point agenda?

Serious misdeemeanours are not excused simply because they are perpetrated by members of the same community; the law is above them all

Wakfs, Basu and you know who!

THE STATESMAN

W/A
C.P.M.

Buddha urges unity among LF partners

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Nov. 9. — The Left Front party is the driving force of the government and differences among Front partners will have to be resolved "without giving any chance to the enemies", Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya stated in a party pamphlet released by the CPI-M today.

There could be internal differences in the Left Front, but the constituents will have to stay united at a time when the "adversaries are trying to forge a common front like *mahajot*," the chief minister remarked.

The Left Front chairman, Mr Biman Bose, who released the pamphlet — "*Unnatatoro Bamfronter shandhane*", asserted, the verge of differences among the partners is being steadily narrowed down since 1977, when the Front was formed, but it has to be minimised to present an "improved LF".



Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya

"It's only natural that the Front partners will have divergent views on any issue and the rank and file of each party may tend to be confused on any particular stand of the state government, but it's the duty of the Front leaders to find a commonality of approach and explain it to the cadres," Mr Biman Bose said. The efforts to strengthen unity

in the LF, begun with the formation of the new government, suffered when the CPI, the RSP and the FB publicly criticised the state cabinet's decision on the Prevention of Organised Crime Ordinance and the order on the use of special attendants and ayahs in the hospitals.

But Mr Bose explained, the state government's decision on special attendants implicates re-stating the patient's rights, while the measures to evict unauthorised settlers and dismantle party offices in hospital complexes were steps in the right direction.

"The CPI-M dismantled its party office in the Calcutta Medical College and Hospital compound. Many other parties have their offices in hospital complexes. No party can be allowed to continue with such a practice," Mr Bose said.

The LF committee, meeting on 14 November, will take up the issue, officials said.

THE STATESMAN

10 NOV 2007

FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE

Buddha takes a bow with far-to-go vow

OUR BUREAU

Calcutta, Nov. 6: A year into chief ministership, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee feels it would have been better for Bengal if some of the "bold steps" he took in the sphere of education and healthcare were adopted 10 years ago. But it's better late than never, he hastens to add.

Talking to reporters at Writers' Buildings, Bhattacharjee (picture right) highlighted the successes of his tenure. New opportunities had been created in information technology, the plastic sector, agro-based industries and the downstream industries of Hal-dia Petro. "We have also been successful to some extent in restoring discipline in government hospitals. There has been some specific progress in higher education, too," he claimed.

Thirty-eight engineering colleges have come up where there were only nine. A university of technology is also on the anvil. "Still, I am not happy. We have far to go. We have to improve the quality of teaching," the chief minister underscored.

Bhattacharjee said his government was striving to bring in cash despite a slowdown across the world.

Speaking on his drive to better the work culture, he said there had been an improvement in attendance at government offices. "But I am not happy. We shall announce some measures next year. Talks are on with the employees' unions," he said.

When told how Left Front cha-



PHOTO: Ravibehari Das

irman Biman Bose had showered praise on health minister Suryakanta Mishra and observed that the previous ministers had done little to improve services, the chief minister said it would be unwise to belittle other ministers. "People are with us. So we can take such bold steps now," he explained.

Bhattacharjee stood by his decision to introduce the Prevention of Organised Crimes Ordinance draft, saying: "I still feel such an Ordinance is necessary to tackle organised crimes like kidnapping."

Trinamul Congress leader Mamata Banerjee responded to the chief minister's achievements in typical style. She accused Bhattacharjee of running a dictatorship in the garb of democracy and gave him zero on a scale of 100.

Mamata said as chief ministers, Jyoti Basu and Bhattacharjee were a class apart. "Jyotibabu had some political stature and at least used to answer our phone calls."

THE TELEGRAPH

7 NOV 2001

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Party blames SF) coterie 64) for sluggish development

MANASH GHOSH *9 P.P. CPI-M*
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Nov. 5. — The CPI-M state committee has blamed "narrow personal loyalty to party coterie and faction and even pure and simple opportunistic individual loyalty for deriving individual and faction-oriented benefits as the main factor inhibiting development activities in the state".

A recent party document, written with the 2003 panchayat elections in mind, states that the problem is preventing the CPI-M from adopting a class-oriented outlook. This has not only affected its work, efficiency and honesty, but has also weakened its organisational set up. And alienation from the people is quickened when corruption and nepotism are added to individual / factional vices. Coterie and factions also aggravate the problem of alienation, the document states. Members have been cautioned against what the document calls "the unsavoury tendency towards centrifugal centralism in the state party". It notes that this "vice went against the stated party directive for decentralisation. This may not only stymie people's initiative but also slow down the pace of development work and alienate the people from such activity".

The document says that the "main reason for our party's weakness lies in its lack of transparency and clarity in political outlook and class consciousness". It reminds

■ See COTERIE: page 8

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BUDDHADEV'S RETREAT

5/ Misfired Ordinance embarrasses CM

STARTING with so much goodwill Buddhadev Bhattacharya seems to be running into one embarrassment after another. The latest is a virtual snub from the party's central committee that has sealed the fate of his government's Prevention of Organized Crime Ordinance. He had turned the Ordinance into a prestige issue after declaring that his government was not obliged to implement the NDA government's "draconian" Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance because law and order was a state subject. The immediate provocation may have been the CID's failure to submit a charge-sheet in the Partha Roy Burman abduction case within the stipulated 90 days as a result of which two of the main accused had to be released on bail. However much the police authorities may claim that they are "on the right track", the facts speak otherwise. Claiming that they had achieved the necessary breakthroughs, they failed at the crucial moment. Buddhadev's Ordinance may ostensibly be meant to combat organized crime but it looks more like an attempt to bail out an inefficient police force. If the existing laws are not strong enough to bring a charge-sheet within 90 days, what guarantee is there that a further detention without trial will be more effective?

Equally pertinent is the question of misuse. If the CPI-M is convinced that the NDA will use its Ordinance to target political rivals, the same argument was used by the Trinamul against the CPI-M and is reinforced by the fact that the measure wasn't endorsed by all Left partners. This is all the more relevant in the context of the state police's unflattering record in handling undertrials and the alarming number of custody deaths recorded. The abject surrender to the ruling party was also cruelly evident in the case of Lakshmi De against whom an FIR is still pending following an assault on the superintendent of the Calcutta Medical College. Yet a simple FIR was good enough for the police to nab Mantu Sanyal, a Trinamul councillor who almost got the better of the CPI-M's environment minister Manab Mukherjee in the last assembly elections at Beliaghata. The anti-rioting laws that apply to Sanyal surely apply to De. Which suggests that the fault does not lie with the law but with those who are required to enforce it. If the CPI-M's central committee has recognised this and has now compelled Buddhadev to retreat, it is ill-concealed in a plan to introduce a "comprehensive" Bill in the next session of the assembly allegedly to fight crime syndicates operating across state borders. In other words, it has done its best to cushion the snub when it cannot be seen to be opposing the Centre's Ordinance and at the same time endorsing a state law largely on the same lines. The lesson Buddhadev may have learnt is not to assume that the CPI-M, despite its mandate, can take the people for a ride.

RE STATES

2 NOV 2001

MCC raids police picket in Dhanbad, massacres 12

Naved Zahir
Topchanchi, October 31

ACTIVISTS OF the banned Maoist Communist Centre stormed a Jharkhand Armed Police picket within the Topchanchi block premises of Dhanbad and massacred 12 policemen, many in their sleep, at noon on Wednesday. A civilian employee was also killed.

The 75-body strong Naxal party had women and children who created panic among the people in the crowded block office with country bombs and caused a stampede. In the ensuing melee, male cadres stormed the police picket and shot and bludgeoned all policemen in sight.

Two JAP jawans retaliated even as they were being shot and effected at least four casualties on the Naxals. Eyewitnesses have seen the Naxals dragging away four of their own while fleeing into a nearby forest.

Naxals looted 14 Self Loading Rifles (SLRs), four 9mm carbines and ammunition. Four constab

bles were seriously injured and are being treated at Dhanbad Central Hospital.

The Naxals had surreptitiously surrounded the block office and the picket under the garb of local visitors to the block office, which was already crowded. The main strike group, totally undetected, waited behind the boundary wall of the block office with police regulation .303 Lee Enfield rifles, machetes and iron rods.

Around 12.10 pm, about a dozen women cadres, young girls and some 9-10 year-old boys created a diversion. The women concealed petrol bombs and wooden clubs in their garment and moved to the entrance of the picket. They lobbed eight to nine country-made bombs in the crowded market, a stone's throw away from the picket.

The girls fired several shots in the air with country pistols and other cadres initiated a stampede among the shoppers and public in the block office.

Before the JAP jawans could

realise what was happening, the waiting assault group entered with some women cadres and began shooting at the policemen.

They headed for the JAP magazine that housed all the armament. There was no resistance here as the police personnel were shot wherever they were. Some were shot while asleep; some others, who were having food, were clubbed to death.

Only two jawans, on their daily rota-wise sentry duty, managed to get off a few shots before being clubbed and mowed down by cadres.

The audacity of the attack has taken everyone by surprise. Not only was the block office packed with people, the site of the attack sits bang on national highway-2, the Grand Trunk Road.

The police were taken unaware despite the fact that the ultras had targeted the particular police picket earlier.

A posse of officers, led by SP A G Mir, is combing the dense forests in search of the cadres.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 1 NOV 2001

SFI activists lathicharged

SFI 25/7
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 24. - Police lathicharged and fired two rounds of tear gas shells on SFI activists demonstrating in front of the American Centre on Jawaharlal Nehru Road around 2.30 p.m. today. Three activists were injured.

The SFI had organised a street corner meeting at 2 p.m. to protest against "USA's imperialist policies". Their agenda was "part of a worldwide movement of which events in Genoa have attracted global attention," Mr Partha Mukherjee, SFI's state secretary, said.

The demonstrators were also "outraged" at the US President for naming his pet cat "India". They sneaked a cat with a "Bush" tag on its neck inside the American Centre.

When police intervened, the demonstrators hurled stones at them and broke a glass of the building. They put up a roadblock for 75 minutes after the lathicharge. All traffic remained suspended on JN Road till 4.30 p.m. Kaushik Sarkar, a reporter of *Ganashakti*, was also allegedly beaten by police though he showed his press card.

The chief minister said a probe had been ordered into the alleged lathi charge on the reporter who has been admitted to SSKM Hospital.

The LF chairman, Mr Biman Bose, arrived on the scene and condemned the police action. He assured a government inquiry into the matter. But police refused to admit that there had been a lathicharge.

Not the end of the road, says Left

HT Correspondent & PTI
New Delhi, July 17

THE LEFT parties reacted guardedly to the collapse of the Agra summit, recording their "disappointment" at the failure to reach an agreement. Agra, however, is not the end of the road, some of them maintained, as they stressed the need to keep the process of dialogue going between the two countries.

Having endorsed the overriding sentiment on the issue, they also slammed the NDA regime. In a statement, the CPI (M) politburo hauled up the Government for not making sufficient preparations for the summit before inviting the Pakistani President and urged it to correct this mistake the next time round.

The CPI alleged that it appears that "there were some at the top level who played their own role" to see that the Indo-Pak summit talks, initiated by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, did not succeed. Asked to elaborate, CPI general secretary A B Bardhan said the Information and Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj "certainly contributed in a small measure by giving a twist". Bardhan was apparently referring to Swaraj's remarks after the first round of talks.

Biman LF chairman

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 13. — Mr Biman Bose, CPI-M politburo member, was today unanimously elected the Left Front chairman.

He succeeds Sailen Dasgupta who died on 10 July.

Mr Anil Biswas, the CPI-M state secretary, said the LF committee, which met during the day on a one-point agenda, had taken a minute to ratify the proposal of the Forward Bloc state general secretary, Mr Ashoke Ghosh, to elect Mr Bose the LF chairman.

Mr Bose, who became a CPI-M member in 1958, represented his party in the LF committee since it came into being in 1977.

His election marks a departure from an LF practice begun since its inception to make the state secretary of the major



Strengthen Left unity and sustain collective work: Biman Bose on Friday. — The Statesman

partner, CPI-M, its chairman. However, Mr Biswas ex-

plained there is no such rule that his party state secretary would automatically become LF chairman.

In fact, when Mr Biswas replaced Sailen Dasgupta as party state secretary, Dasgupta continued as LF chairman.

It was on the cards that Mr Bose would succeed Dasgupta, as he had been looking after LF affairs after the latter fell ill shortly before his death.

Mr Bose said his priorities would be to strengthen unity in the LF and sustain collective work down to the booth level that was begun before the last Assembly polls.

Left MPs will meet LF leaders in Delhi on 21 July to devise their strategy for raising in the Lok Sabha burning issues affecting the state government. The Parliament's session will begin on 23 July.

Basu asks SFI to reach out to the masses

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, July 13

FORMER CHIEF MINISTER and Left Front patriarch Jyoti Basu called upon the Students Federation India, one of its frontal organisations, to "recharge its activities and work towards the popularisation of the tenets of the Left movement among the students of the State".

Basu however addressed the need to "refashion" the functioning of the student wing, stressing that it was "necessary to adopt changes and make the message appealing to people". Basu said, "Performance alone is not enough. The ideological campaign has to be strengthened."

Speaking at the extended two-day convention of the SFI State Committee today, Basu said, "Only politics will not sustain when waves of change are surfaced against us. It is necessary to reach out to people and see what they want." Basu said, "Be open to criticism, even from your rivals. That way you shall know what people want," a clear hint that the SFI imbibe necessary modifications to its working process.

Explaining the State Government's move to hike tuition fees, Basu said, "We had already stretched ourselves as far as we could. What can we do if the Central Government does not provide the 30 per cent share of education funds that it had promised us," Basu said.

Basu also sounded loud and clear the need for harnessing a firmer organisational base. He asked the SFI to try and gain



back severed members of the federation. "Those who have left the federation are not our enemies. Things have to be explained to them and gaps have to be bridged," Basu said.

He expressed satisfaction over the results of the recently concluded college elections. "Out of 377 colleges, 247 college elections have SFI winners, the rest being shared by Congress, Trinamool and other organisations. The DYFI too has nearly 53 lakh supporters; this is an unparalleled achievement," Basu said.

Cataloguing the achievements of SFI, Basu said it was the SFI, which "helped in harnessing discipline in the State colleges". It was also the SFI, which introduced the merit-based admission system in colleges, he said.

INDIA

Sailen Dasgupta dead

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 10. — Mr Sailen Dasgupta (81) died at Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai, around 9.05 p.m. today.

The Left Front chairman and CPI-M politburo member had undergone a bypass surgery on Thursday. The operation was successful, but his condition started deteriorating since Monday afternoon.

Mr Anil Biswas and the state industry minister, Mr Nirupam Sen, had gone to Mumbai this morning to meet Mr Dasgupta. They were scheduled to return in the evening, but decided to stay back after Mr Dasgupta's condition deteriorated further.

The Governor, Mr Viren J Shah, and senior Left Front leaders, including Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Mr Jyoti Basu, and Mr Debabrata Banerjee expressed grief over Mr Dasgupta's death.

Mr Ashok Ghosh (Forward Block) said Mr Dasgupta's death was an "irrevocable loss" for the Left Front. It came at a time when the Left Front was trying to improve its performance, he said.

Mr Manju Majumdar, CPI state secretary, said: "Mr Dasgupta's absence will be felt strongly in these troubled times."

Mr Biman Bose, CPI-M politburo member, is likely to become the new LF chairman. He has been looking after the LF's work ever since Mr Dasgupta was admitted to SSKM Hospital last month.

If Mr Bose succeeds Mr Dasgupta, it'll mean that Promode Dasgupta's three most trusted comrades — Mr Bose, Mr Anil Biswas and Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya — will be at the helm of the LF.

A master at coalition politics

1973 11/2
SAILEN DASGUPTA'S journey began from Barisal, now in Bangladesh. Born into a middle-class family on October 24, 1920, his was a life of unending struggle. From his Anusilan Samity days - he joined the organisation when he was 15 - till his death, Dasgupta remained a man dedicated to the cause of the wronged and the downtrodden.

A man who rose through the ranks, Dasgupta joined the Communist movement in 1939. That was also the year he came to Kolkata in search of a job.

He worked for a number of organisations like the Central Cooperative Credit Society. All this while he remained a party part-timer.

In 1944, he gave up his job to become a party whole-timer. He went underground when the Communist Party of India was proscribed four years later. In 1951, when the ban on the party was lifted, he was attached to



Sainen Dasgupta (extreme right) with Anil Biswas and Biman Bose.

the State party office.

A behind-the-scenes man, Dasgupta led a Spartan life and

was a familiar face at Lakshmi Narayan Colony, Naktala, where he lived. A firm believer

988 CPI(M)
in plain living and high thinking, he was much in the mould of Pramode Dasgupta - another party stalwart.

One of the generation of leaders who remained with the CPI(M) after the 1964 split of the Communist Party of India, he grew to be an ideologue and a stalwart commanding immense respect in Left circles.

So, in 1990, when he rose to become State party secretary and Left Front chairman, the allies welcomed his elevation.

Along with Jyoti Basu, Dasgupta took the Front from strength to strength. It was during his stint as head of the alliance that he proved his mettle as an expert in coalition politics - bringing in greater synergy into the alliance.

In 1991, he was made a Politburo member and he played his part shaping crucial party decisions. A communist and a gentleman, he was the Front's anchor for years.

Subhas gets a warning from party again

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, July 8

ALIMUDDIN STREET has once again asked Subhas Chakrabarty to behave. State CPI(M) secretary Anil Biswas today issued a statement saying ministers from the party should not make statements or agree to television interviews on issues outside their own departments.

The warning, though general, comes in the wake of the confusion over Chakrabarty's reported observation on the stadium muddle. Party insiders believe that it is meant to discipline the minister. The statement also reiterated that the conspiracy theory that the media has attributed to Subhas is false.

In an interview to a private television channel, the minister had reportedly accused a section within his party, the Trinamool and the police, of framing him in the stadium scam while he was away. Party leaders didn't like the mud-slinging against the party and Home (Police) Department, a portfolio that the CM takes care of. Hence the warning.

An unfazed Chakrabarty, however, opened up before the media even today. "I have nothing to hide. Let the investigation go on. Be it by the CID or the CBI or the Interpol. I am innocent," the Sports Minister said after greeting Front patriarch Jyoti Basu on his 88th birthday.

The warning came a day after a gathering in memory of Niren

Ghosh, where Biswas recollected how the veteran communist used to abide by party discipline. "Nirenda didn't flout it till the last. Even during the last State committee meeting, he sought permission to participate in a television talk on the problems before the jute industry."

Biswas's warning has caused a flutter in party circles, particularly because Biswas actually defended the Sports Minister in today's *Ganashakti*.

Biswas has ruled out Chakrabarty's espousing the conspiracy theory. "I and Subhasda watched the report together at Alimuddin Street. The reporter, in his commentary, said Chakrabarty has accused a section of his party of conspiring against him. But

there was no such comment in the voice over. This is not done," he said. Biswas had dismissed the conspiracy theory. "I don't see conspiracies everywhere," he had said a week ago.

Subhas loyalists are at bay. They can't comprehend Biswas's statement. "It doesn't match with what he said in *Ganashakti*," a district leader said.

The Sports Minister reportedly commented on it to his friends in the party. One of them quoted the minister as having said: "Anil Biswas and Alimuddin Street have the power to do such things. I have told the party secretary to let me know about what steps the party is going to take against me. I can, at least, expect this courtesy from my comrades."

THE HINDUSTAN

End of untouchability, Naxalites' lasting gift

Ashok Das
Hyderabad, July 7

EVERY TIME Ramayya, a native of Ramakuppam village in Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's Assembly constituency Kuppam, visits a tea stall he has to pick up a soot-covered glass tumbler, kept separately, wait till the stall owner pours him some tea and then wash the tumbler after he has quenched his thirst.

However, Ramayya's brother-in-law, who lives in more backward and taboo-ridden Telangana, does not have to undergo the same humiliation in the village tea stall. The two-tumbler system is a thing of the past in most parts of North Telangana.

But, the change has come about not because of the Government. What the Government could not deliver in 30 years, the Naxalites have achieved in less than two decades, without even consciously making an effort. People in Telangana say that the end of untouchability is the lasting gift of the Naxalite movement.

Gone are the discriminations such as

TWO NAXALS ARRESTED, WEAPONS SEIZED

TWO NAXALITES of the CPI(ML)'s Janashakti (Rajanna group) were arrested and a huge cache of sophisticated weapons was seized from their dumps in Naxal-infested Medak district last night.

The Naxals were waiting for the CPI(ML)'s Janashakti district secretary D Subhash in Kulcharam Mandal near Pottam Shetty Pally village forest, said deputy inspector general (Hyderabad range), N Sambasiva Rao.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team conducted combing operation in the area and arrested K Chandram alias Srinu, deputy commander of CPI(ML)'s Janashakti (Manjira area squad) and Dalam member C Sailu alias Vonkanna.

Following information revealed by the Naxals during interrogation, the police conducted raids at Appaji Pally village and Kukuria Pally village president M Laxmaiah's house and seized a huge quantity of weapons from their arms dumps, the DIG said.

The seized arms include two carbines, one US-made rifle, four 8 mm rifles, one sten gun, two rifles, one dagger, 700 rounds of ammunition and magazines.

PTI, Sanga Reddy

social boycott, not allowing Schedule Castes to work or earn wages, forcibly taking away their harvest, foisting false police cases and even resorting to rape to "teach" their women a lesson.

the "two tumbler" system is virtually non-existent in North Telangana districts though there could be other subtler forms of discrimination.

Similarly, Dalits face far less discrimination in entering temples. In a recent case, Dalits of Tankara in Mahboobnagar district were fined Rs 5,000 for entering the village temple to commemorate the birth anniversary of Jagajivan Ram. But the Naxalites took up the cause, following which the police arrested the village elders and booked cases under SC/ST Atrocities Act.

Incidentally, Telangana boasts of the first Dalit Priest in Andhra Pradesh. Muttiah has been working as a priest at a Rama temple in Khammam district for the last three decades. The landlords regularly seek his services to conduct family rites.

Paturu Ramaiah, president of Kula Viveksha Vyatireka Porata Samiti (Anti-caste discrimination committee) says that there are about 300 mandals (out of a total of 1,200 mandals) where caste discrimination is practiced.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Buddhadeb to decide Subhas fate: CPM

HT 3
718

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, July 6

CLAIMING INNOCENCE in the Salt Lake Stadium scandal, Subhas Chakrabarty today pleaded for himself in the State Secretariat meeting in response to the show-cause served on him.

The Chief Minister had announced in the Assembly that he would ask the Sports Minister how criminals made their way into the stadium.

Alimuddin mandarins didn't react to Chakrabarty's version. They left it to Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee to take a decision in tune with the primary findings. Party insiders said a four-member core group of Buddhadeb, Anil Biswas, Biman Bose and Nirupam Sen was overseeing the matter.

Subhas, in his reply, is learnt to have stuck to the conspiracy theory, substantiating it with reports from the Sports Department and Howrah SP Soumen Mitra's knee-jerk comment that the investigating team had chased the anti-socials inside the stadium. The Minister had consulted his party colleague and Housing Minister Gautam Deb before compiling the reply.

But the argument is not likely to cut ice as Buddhadeb has ruled out such a possibility in his Assembly statement. Subhas's detractors, especially in North 24 Parganas, are hoping that the Chief Minister will come down heavily on their arch rival. The Secretariat's decision empowering the CM has fuelled speculation among the Amitava Nandi camp that Buddhadeb might ask Subhas to step down from the Sports Ministry during the CID probe.

Party leaders aren't ready to buy this argument. "Alimuddin Street could have asked him to step down immediately after the incident. Why should a Minister be allowed to continue when he has criminal links? But now it is



late. The Government should wait for the CID inquiry report. Any decision in between would only complicate the situation."

The Sports Minister today held a secret meeting with his peers to chalk out his line of defence. "It is a conspiracy to malign Subhasda before the party conference. We have faith in the Chief Minister. But if he succumbs to pressure, we will avenge our cause," a Subhas loyalist said, hinting at "unholy links" of other party leaders.

But the Subhas camp is apprehensive this time, especially after Tapas Ghosh Dasgupta's arrest. They are taken aback that the Government refused to grant an extension to the Transport Minister's choice, Santanu Goswami, as chairman of the South Bengal Surface Transport Corporation.

INDUSTRIAL

Fate of Subhas hangs in the balance

UDAY BASU
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 5. — Mr Subhas Chakraborty's fate hangs in balance as the CPI-M state secretariat is likely to mull over, at its meeting tomorrow, the stand the party should take on Salt Lake stadium scandal and at its ramifications.

Hectic behind-the-scene activities continued throughout the day with Mr Chakraborty reportedly trying to marshal his loyalists in the party and the government, while Alimuddin Street is cautiously and confidently proceeding to clinch the issue.

The sports minister was seen frequently talking to the chief minister, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya, inside the Assembly.

Asked whether he had submitted to the chief minister his written opinion on how criminals got shelter in the stadium, Mr Chakraborty said he was not supposed to brief the media about it.

Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary, hinted on 3 July that the sports minister would submit his views to the chief minister in a day or two.

Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya told Opposition members during his reply on the Budget grants

of the Home (PAR) department that they had needlessly dragged the stadium issue in their speeches on the Budget as they "will have enough time to speak on the matter".

Much depends on Mr Jyoti Basu's stand and Mr Chakraborty is believed to be relying heavily on the former chief minister, his mentor.

Alimuddin Street is determined to act firmly. The CPI-M state secretary has given a long rope to Mr Chakraborty since the latter revolted against the party leadership before the last Assembly elections.

It was mainly at Mr Biswas' initiative that Subhas Chakraborty loyalists in both North 24-Parganas district and Calcutta District committees were accommodated though they were defeated in organisational elections.

Mr Biswas' judicious handling of the feuding groups helped the party regain cohesion. It also ensured peaceful coexistence of warring factions.

Now that the party is firmly entrenched in its position and the chief minister and the state secretary are working in perfect harmony, it is to be seen to what extent Mr Chakraborty gets Mr Basu's support.

Action may be taken against the minister after the Assembly session is over towards the end of this month so that the Opposition can be denied the opportunity to score points.

Mr Chakraborty may be stripped of the sports portfolio and this will be a big blow for him. For, the two stadia — Salt Lake and Netaji Indoor Stadium — provide enough clout to him to strengthen his support.

'Subhas may not be expelled': Mr Pankaj Banerjee, chairman of the Trinamul policy-making body, feels that the CPI-M is unlikely to expel Mr Subhash Chakraborty. For, "he will certainly hit back." Mr Banerjee said today that the CPI-M was likely to keep Mr Chakraborty under pressure stopping short of expulsion. This, he added, was his personal view.

Some reports, however, said that the Marxists are preparing to expel the Sports Minister as soon as the stadium probe report is made available.

Mr Banerjee referred to Press reports that Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya and Mr Anil Biswas had met Mr Jyoti Basu to inform him that the Sports Minister's expulsion would help clean up the party's image.

Left attacks Centre on decision to recall Beevj

BY OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 1: The Left parties on Sunday termed the Centre's decision to recall the Tamil Nadu governor as a "totally undemocratic and unwarranted step" and warned the Vajpayee government to "desist from any further anti-democratic steps in Tamil Nadu consequent to the NDA team's visit to the state."

"Everyone knows that under the Constitution where there is an elected government, as in Tamil Nadu, the governor has only a nominal role to play. Whatever be the criticism of the manner of arrest of former chief minister Karunanidhi and the subsequent behaviour of the two Union ministers, the governor had not played any role in the decision-making. Such a decision was taken by the state government and executed by the concerned police authorities," the CPI(M) and CPI said in a joint statement issued here on Sunday.

The two Left parties said: "The DMK and the NDA have been demanding the removal of the governor ever since she appointed Ms Jayalalitha as the chief minister after her party won a decisive victory in the elections. The governor has acted and behaved as per the constitutional norms in the present situation."

100-100-100-100

Subhas boasts of party's support

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, June 29. — Defiant in the face of controversy, Mr Subhas Chakraborty today claimed he had the full support of his party and the government.

On his return to Writers' Buildings late this afternoon after discussing with the chief minister and the state CPI-M secretary the controversy about him regarding allegedly harbouring criminals in Salt Lake stadium, the transport minister chose to hit back at the media — he later named *Ananda Bazar Patrika* — which he accused of thurning out concocted stories.

"Why should I tell you what I have told Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya or Mr Anil Biswas," he shot back.

He said the official version of what had transpired at the Salt Lake stadium would be made known in the Assembly by the chief minister. "I've nothing else to say," he said.

He said he had the backing of the party. He went on to accuse a large newspaper house of coming out with "politically mo-

tivated" stories about him.

The Trinamul Congress jumped to seek political mileage from such a story, he said.

Controversy broke out following reports that Mr Chakraborty, who also holds the sports portfolio, had sheltered criminals inside Salt Lake stadium, sixteen of whom were arrested from there on Tuesday night. The reports further said that these criminals were used by Mr Chakraborty to rig the election in his constituency.

The minister said in the run-up to the elections, this newspaper house had predicted his defeat.

He said since the election results proved them wrong, the paper had to come out with such a story to assert that its prediction would have been correct, Mr Chakraborty said.

"This is a violation of journalistic ethics."

When it was pointed out to him that the reports had appeared not just in one newspaper but in almost all the dailies in the town, he said: "I've seen it only in one paper."

Mr Chakraborty was harsh on the entire media. When asked

NO COMMENTS: ANIL

KOLKATA, June 29. — Mr Anil Biswas today declined to make any comment on the Salt Lake stadium affair.

"The chief minister," he said, "will make whatever statement has to be made, on the floor of the Assembly." Referring to Mr Subhas Chakraborty's visit to the state committee office after his return from Delhi, Mr Biswas said

Mr Chakraborty had not been summoned. He had come on his own "as a member of the state committee, to discuss the state committee meeting scheduled for tomorrow." — SNS

who was responsible for the controversy which he repeated was a "politically motivated conspiracy to remove him from government", Mr Chakraborty shot back. "You people, all of you are responsible for bringing out concocted stories."

"I saw a news bulletin on a TV channel in which some of those arrested were being forced to say in front of camera that they

had worked for me during the elections," he alleged. "The CPI-M is not in such a bad shape that it needs the help of these men to win an election." "NO! no!, no!, there is something called courtesy."

Matters came to a head between reporters and the minister soon after the press conference began. The minister reiterated his stand that the police should have sought permission from the stadium authorities before arresting the sixteen men from there. "If they had told me, I would have myself handed them over to the police," he said.

When a reporter pointed out that police have in the past conducted raids and made arrests without informing the authorities of the precinct concerned, he said: "You have been in journalism for so long and are now revealing your ignorance." At this rate, the police will also raid Writers' Buildings, he said.

The raid on the stadium was a routine one. The police were not trying to arrest suspected terrorists or ISI agents; so what prevented them from informing the authorities.

Mr Chakraborty came to Writers' Buildings at around 4.30 p.m. As he stepped out of the lift near the Cabinet room on the second floor, he was hounded by reporters who were

Non-CPM ministers will submit plans to CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, May 28. — Ministers belonging to the CPI-M's partners in the Left Front will submit the plans and programmes of their departments to the chief minister for scrutiny and implementation.

This was decided today at a meeting at Alimuddin Street where most of the ministers and LF leaders sat together to chalk out the strategy and direction the new ministry under Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya will take.

Last week, the CPI-M leadership directed ministers from the party to place the plans and programmes of their departments before Mr Nirupam Sen, minister for planning and development, so that they could be implemented within a specified time frame.

Mr Biman Bose, CPI-M politburo member, later told reporters that there was some confusion because it was thought that all LF ministers would have to submit the schemes of their departments to Mr Sen.

"The question does not arise. Ministers of our party have been directed to interact with Mr Sen who will scrutinise their programmes before forwarding them to the chief minister. As for ministers of our partners, they will coordinate their work with the chief minister. Their parties will also review their performance from time to time," Mr Bose clarified.



Left Front leaders and ministers at the CPI-M headquarters in Kolkata on Monday. — The Statesman

The meeting, attended by Mr Bhattacharya, Mr Jyoti Basu, Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary, and other LF leaders, formulated a guideline on how the ministers should solve their problems.

All ministers have been instructed to refrain from making controversial press statements. If they have any difference of opinion with their Cabinet colleagues or the overall functioning of the Cabinet, they should not air their problems in public, but refer them to the chief min-

ister for proper settlement.

The decision was apparently prompted by the controversial statements, often indicting the state government, made by Mr Subhash Chakraborty and Mr Kshiti Goswami, the transport and PWD ministers of the last government.

Both ministers not only criticised the state, they even praised former railway minister, Miss Mamata Banerjee, for introducing several trains in the state.

The meeting also decided that no new policy decision would be

taken by the ministers without informing the Cabinet.

The LF committee will henceforth meet twice every three months and review the progress of work of the departments at least once a year. In case of any difference of opinion between departments, the problem will be sorted out through bipartite and, if necessary, tripartite talks.

Nine ministers of the CPI-M did not attend the meeting. They had informed the party earlier that they had prior engagements.

THE STATESMAN

29 MAY 2001

CPM puts party above Government

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, May 25

THE CPI(M) has tightened its grip on the State administration. Party ideologue and hardliner Nirupam Sen, who holds the Planning & Development portfolio, will monitor the functioning of all the departments under the 32 other ministers from the CPI(M), including those under Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee.

Party apparatchiks summoned all the 33 ministers to the party headquarters at Alimuddin Street this morning for a meeting to discuss ways and means to improve the Govern-

ment's functioning. The State party secretary, Anil Biswas, moved a motion proposing the introduction of a system to monitor the functioning of all the ministers. The motion, in line with the resolutions of the 19th State conference, was adopted unanimously at the meeting that was presided over by Politburo member Biman Bose and attended by former Chief Minister Jyoti Basu.

Any new policies formulated by the Government will have to be discussed first at the party level, those present at the meeting decided. Three focus areas have been identified — the public distribution system, employ-

ment generation and development of small and cottage industries sectors.

"Employment generation will be the Government's priority area," Biswas said. "The Government will also concentrate on improving the work culture, speed up work and will provide a responsive administration."

Biswas said all the ministers would have to sit with senior officials of their respective departments to prepare an action plan for the year ahead. "This action plan will be submitted to Nirupam Sen. Meanwhile, every six months, the ministers will have to submit an interim report on the achieve-

ments and failings of their departments to Sen, who will review this report and discuss or recommend remedial measures, if case of any failings."

The process will be repeated at the end of the year and a final review of the progress as per the original action plan will be undertaken by Sen. In case a minister has not been able to meet targets even after remedial measures suggested by Sen, the case will be forwarded to the State secretary, who will decide on the future course of action.

Biswas, however, ruled out any punitive action against ministers if they are unable to meet targets.

New Left, old lesson

BY SUNANDO SARKAR

Calcutta, May 25: The party that swears by Marx still rules Bengal's universities, marks don't.

So, what's new? Nothing. Except that Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee took over with the slogan of setting things right where they weren't. In education, for instance.

But one of the first things his party has done even before he has spent the first month in power is to select for the Jadavpur University engineer's post — equivalent to that of a reader — a candidate with inferior academic records to at least seven other applicants. There were 16 applicants and the selected person was the only one who had second-division marks in every examination he wrote.

The selection has created a controversy in the university, recently given a star-grading by the National Assessment Accreditation Council. Despite having a better academic record than most other state-controlled universities in Bengal, Jadavpur, admit officials and teachers, has had a poor record when it comes to "inappropriate selection of candidates".

The selected person is believed

to be close to a powerful CPM minister who was elected from a Calcutta constituency and the vice-chancellor of a university who taught previously at Jadavpur.

The person who landed the job passed his class XII with second-division marks in 1972 before passing his graduation in civil engineering — in 1977, also with a second class. University officials say a person getting a second class in engineering is quite rare. He was working as the university engineer in the Midnapore-based Vidyasagar University and this job now gives him the opportunity to stay in Calcutta.

One of the seven better-qualified candidates whose application was rejected is working in the same university and was even officiating in the post for which applications were invited. He had a first class in his graduation.

Here is a comparison of the qualifications of the candidates.

Selected person: second class in HS and BE. No post-graduation

Rejected persons:

- First class in BE and post-graduation;
- First class in B.Sc (engineering) and in post-graduation from

Colombia University;

- First class in graduation and post-graduation;
- First class in BE, MBA;
- First class in graduation and post-graduation;
- First class in graduation and post-graduation;
- First-class graduate, officiating in same post.

The university's standing committee — comprising the vice-chancellor, registrar and experts — met 15 of the applicants on April 20 and its recommendation came up before the executive council on Wednesday.

The council meeting, on seeing the recommendation, turned stormy. But it was passed by a vote — most council members are also members of various CPM-controlled teachers' and non-teaching staff fronts — despite several notes of dissent.

Higher education minister Satyasadhan Chakraborty refused comment, referring the matter to vice-chancellor Ashok Nath Basu. But Basu said: "I don't comment on these issues. Please ask the university registrar." Registrar Rajat Bandyopadhyay was not available.

THE TELEGRAPH

Alimuddin heavies rub shoulders wit

Our Kolkata Bureau

KOLKATA 20 MAY

EARLY DAYS yet. But the mind-over-body syndrome is becoming so apparent already that if these indications are in any way suggestive of things to come, West Bengal for the umpteenth time could threaten to be as industrially rejuvenated as any other in the country.

Imagine the CII dinner hosted by Sanjiv Goenka, the new president on Sunday evening. Guess who could be there in person to grace the occasion and rub shoulders with the local stars of the industry?

Anil Biswas and Biman Basu. All smiles, humbly so. Enjoying every bit of the attention they commanded.

Two of the heaviest weights at Alimuddin Street and hardcore communists both, the presence of the duo — one, CPI(M)'s WB state secretary and the other, a member of the state secretariat and the politburo — created a stir of sorts at the Oberoi Grand ballroom.

First time ever? That was what industrialist after industrialist or executive after executive wondered. Never before, they suspected, was Anil Biswas seen at such a gathering. Or Biman Basu. Somnath Chatterjee was there too. But then he's "an old friend", the chairman of the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation.

What's up, mate? One thing was absolutely sure, however. Alimuddin Street was determined to call the shots once again at Writers Buildings as it has done in the past 24 years. But this time like never before.

A seasoned chartered accountant, not quite prone to propaganda said: "I think, I am smelling something new this time. Maybe they have realised that they have their back to the wall and therefore, it has to be one huge effort to

pull the state back into the mainstream."

"I am told they do not ever come to gatherings like this, and if that's so, I must say the party is giving sufficient indications of the seriousness of its intent" said a top CII office bearer.

Sanjiv Goenka was gushing ofcourse. "We had this meeting in the morning and it was just superb," he said, alternately greeting guests and trying to re-live those moments that the CII had with chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya and industry minister Nirupam Sen at the party headquarters on Sunday morning.

But why did the CII meet the chief minister at Alimuddin Street? "Well that was where the meeting was fixed, so that was that" Goenka said.

"There is no harm in meeting a CII delegation at the party headquarters. They are all known to us. They had wanted to meet us here and we thought why not. After all they wanted to discuss issues relating to state's industrial development" was what the CM had told newsmen after the meeting.

But frankly, the camaraderie at the CII dinner surprised even those within the government machinery. Like a high-profile corporate executive wondered aloud: "It may still be too early to say correctly what's going to happen. But, for once in many, many years, everybody seems to be doing the most politically correct things that need to be done in order to spread a general message".

And the message is clear: In this renewed effort of the West Bengal government to improve the quality of life — socially, infrastructurally and industrially — the CPI(M) party headquarters is going to back Buddhadev Bhattacharya and his cabinet to the hilt.

The rest is action, which needs to be followed up on.

CII plunges into grov Team Buddha, focu

Our Kolkata Bureau

KOLKATA 20 MAY

CII DIRECTOR general Tarun Das was effusive about the morning meeting at Alimuddin Street. He was particularly appreciative about Mr Nirupam Sen, new industry minister. "He had a very open mind, asked the right questions, and gave the most correct replies" Mr Das said. Briefed brilliantly, one would say. But Mr Das was certain (as he normally is) that the new team at Writers would be able to give a new dimension to the state's development.

Discussion for the morning meeting had hovered around the need for an economic development programme, improving IT penetration in the state and encouraging self employment. "Besides, we spoke about the need to revitalise the joint taskforce of the CII and the West Bengal government, which has been in a limbo since its inception," said Sanjiv Mr Goenka.

Mr Goenka believed that the eastern region of CII would make best efforts to market West Bengal so that the state received its rightful share of investments from outside. The state, he felt, was best equipped to attract knowledge-based industries like information technology and biotechnology. At the dinner in the evening, Mr Tarun Das felt that the infrastructure needed to be "properly developed" first, for if that was done, investments would follow. He did not feel there was that much need for marketing the state per se.

On generation of self employment for youth who are intelligent



THE NEW VANGUARDS: Chi Sanjiv Goenka and i prospects for West Beng

but lack the financial resources to start their business, Mr Goenka said the chamber proposed to open the West Bengal chapter of Bhartiya Yuva Shakti Trust. "A wing of CII, the Trust has provided financial assistance to more than 800 people for their businesses. It has already recovered 91 per cent of their loan from these people." Mr Goenka pointed out.

The taskforce is expected to convene a meeting within the next 4 to 6 weeks. The meeting will be chaired by Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya and Mr Goenka and

Ideologue Nirupam Sen gets big package to revitalise inc

Hawk turns new-age messiah

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, May 19: From the iron curtains at Alimuddin Street to boardroom sessions with business barons, Nirupam Sen's new avatar could well be the first litmus test — as much for himself as for chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and the CPM. He has so far been the ideologue steeped in party rhetoric. He now has to transform himself into talking — and doing — business, with people who would have otherwise found him a usual suspect.

The importance of Nirupam Sen in Bhattacharjee's — or the CPM's — scheme of things is evident in the portfolio bag he will be carrying. Not only has he been given commerce and industry, he also has industrial reconstruction, public undertakings and planning and development. The four departments together make his charge the biggest agent for economic development in the state because these will involve some basic policy changes.

While in the planning and development department he is expected to outline the overall development and growth strategies, his handling of industrial reconstruction and public undertakings will show if he presides over the old legacy of loss-making state units or ushers in change by getting these burdens off the government's shoulder. The policies in these areas will show the govern-



Nirupam Sen

ment's promised new priorities, which, in turn, may go a long way to attract private capital in the state.

His first task would be to be-cast the West Bengal Industrial

Industry cheers

Industry has pinned its hopes on Nirupam Sen.

Roopen Roy, executive director of PricewaterhouseCoopers, said: "The government has shown a pragmatic step by bringing in industry, industrial reconstruction, public undertakings and planning & development under one ministry. Structurally it sounds excellent. But Sen has to create an investor-friendly environment. It is said that honeybees go where the flower garden is. Sen has to create that flower garden."

Sanjiv Goenka, president, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), said: "Sen will have to take steps so that Bengal can top the industrial map of India. As CII president, I will meet chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee tomorrow with our agenda for rapid industrialisation of the state." Harsh Neotia of Bengal Ambuja is also upbeat about Sen's choice as industry minister. "We are hopeful that he will take the industrial resurgence of West Bengal ahead."

Development Corporation, in which he has to find a successor to Somnath Chatterjee as chairman and, more important, set the pace for the government's new agenda.

In propping up Sen's profile,

the party has thought nothing of clipping the wings of finance minister Asim Dasgupta, who is divested of planning and development. Mrinal Banerjee, who held the departments of public reconstruction and industrial reconstruction in the earlier ministry, has also been downsized to make room for Sen's big package.

All this and more for Sen for two basic reasons. Industrial regeneration remains Bhattacharjee's topmost priority. And the party puts one of its most trusted lieutenants to execute it. This, however, could cut either way, as his choice for the all-important task of the state's economic facelift would raise a question about the party's control over the government. "We make no secret that our party — strictly speaking, the Left Front committee — outlines the government's priorities," said a senior CPM leader.

Sen's stature in the new Left Front government is matched by his steady rise in the party hierarchy. The 55-year Marxist took CPM membership in 1964, the year the party was born of the split in the CPI, became state committee member in 1984, Burdwan district secretary in 1989, state secretariat member in 1994 and central committee member in 1998. Before this time, he contested the Assembly polls only once — in 1987 — and was noted as a good speaker. Thereafter, he withdrew into the party shell.

STAGE & SCREEN

RELEASING FRIDAY

Industry □ CPM goes back on promise to Forward Bloc

BUDDHA'S BRIGADE FOR THE NEW DAWN

CABINET MINISTERS

Uddhadeb Bhattacharjee: Home (police), information & culture, science & technology

Prupam Sen: Industry, planning & development, public undertakings & industrial reconstruction

Suryakanta Mishra: Health & family welfare, rural development, anchayat

Id Amin: Labour

Sim Dasgupta: Finance

Abhas Chakraborty: Transport, ports, Hooghly River Bridge Commission

Id Salim: Minorities development & welfare, self-employment scheme for urban unemployed, youth services, technical education

Kamal Guha: Agriculture

Swanath Chowdhury: Social welfare & jails

Madan Mohan Bhattacharya: Small irrigation, water investigation, development

Manmoy Nanda: Fisheries, aquaculture & aquatic resource, harbour

Prabodh Sinha: Parliamentary affairs, rise

Abul Kalam Azad: Food & supplies

Harish Choudhury: Public works

Goutam Deb: Housing & public health engineering

Kanti Biswas: School education, mass media

Naren De: Cooperation & consumer affairs

Manabendra Mukherjee: Information technology, environment

Ashoke Bhattacharya: Municipal affairs, urban development & town & country planning

Dinesh Datta: Tourism

Sailen Sarkar: Food processing & horticulture

Satya Sadhan Chakraborty: Higher education

Amalendra Lal Roy: Irrigation & waterways

Abdur Rezzak Mollah: Land & land reforms

Minal Banerjee: Power

Bansagopal Chowdhury: Cottage & small scale industry

Nisith Adhikari: Law & judicial dept.

Upen Kisku: Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes & other backward class welfare

Anisur Rahman: Animal resources development

Jogesh Chandra Barman: Forests

Nemai Mal: Library services

Nandarami Dal: Mass education

Chhaya Ghosh: Agriculture marketing

Hafiz Alam Sairani: Relief

MINISTERS OF STATE

Pratim Chatterjee: Fire services

Dhiren Sen: Land & land reforms, panchayats & rural development

Sushanta Ghosh: Labour, employment exchange and employees' state insurance

Dasarath Tirkey: Public works dept.

Maheswar Murnu: Paschimanchal development, forests

Anju Kar: Municipal affairs

Bilasibala Sahis: SC/ST, OBC

Ganesh Chandra Manda: Irrigation & Waterways

Sreekumar Mukherjee: Civil defence

Kanti Ganguly: Sunderbans development

Pratyush Mukherjee: Health & family welfare

Narayan Biswas: Transport

Nayan Sarkar: Refugees rehabilitation

Iva De: School education

Partner sees red at berth U-turn

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Calcutta, May 19: The Forward Bloc's request for two new ministries — forest and tourism — was today turned down by the CPM, which did a volte-face on the issue and decided to retain both the portfolios in the new Left Front Cabinet.

Instead, the Forward Bloc was offered the cooperation portfolio, which the party had held in the previous governments as well.

Observers said the CPM's stand indicated its "big brotherly" attitude towards smaller partners though the party has lost its absolute majority in the Assembly. The Forward Bloc staked its claim to the two departments in lieu of cooperation after its tally increased from 21 to 25. The CPM, on the other hand, lost seven seats and ended up with 143, five short of the majority mark.

The Forward Bloc had to reallocate the portfolios among its nominees at the last moment. State party secretary Ashok Ghosh announced this afternoon that according to fresh arrangements, its MLA from Dinhata, Kamal Guha, who was earlier promised the departments of forests and tourism, would get agriculture. Naren De, the legislator from Chinsurah, will be minister in the cooperation department.

The CPM had earlier promised to hand over the forests and tourism ministries to the Forward Bloc leadership after it agreed to concede cooperation.

"But today it is a loss of face for us as the CPM has gone back on its promise and taken away the two departments," Ghosh said this evening. He said he was summoned to the CPM office last evening by Jyoti Basu and politburo member Biman Bose and informed about the changes.

"We were left with no option but to agree when both Basu and Biman pleaded that they could not part with the two departments due to protests by party functionaries," Ghosh said, adding that he could not but oblige "when leaders like Basu regretted the change in the party's decision".

Caught unawares, Guha, who was summoned to the party office, said he did not know anything about the portfolio changes. "Till yesterday, I was under the impression that I will have to head forest and tourism," he said.

Brother chides Panja, calls for peace talks

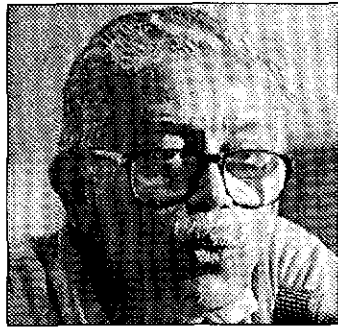
BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Calcutta, May 19: Ranjit Panja called for immediate talks between Ajit Panja and Mamata Banerjee to sort out the problem that arose after his younger brother revolted against the family leader.

But the Trinamul MP felt his brother should not have broken party discipline. "Ajit did not do the right thing by attending the inauguration ceremony when our party decided to boycott it," he said.

Ajit is one of the founders of the party and his advances need to be addressed. "He is one of us. There may have been some misunderstandings with him, but this can be resolved once a proper dialogue is established with him," Ranjit Panja said.

Sources said Mamata was non-committal about Ranjit Panja's proposal but does not support it out completely. The elder Panja, who attended a meeting of Trinamul MPs at Krishna Bose's south Calcutta



Ranjit Panja.

Picture by Kishor Roychowdhury

residence last night, ruled out a split in the party and pledged his loyalty to Mamata despite her poll debacle. "I am with Mamata. There is no question of my deserting the party. If I really decide to leave Trinamul I will quit politics and go back to my professional work," Ranjit Panja, a noted skin specialist, said.

He felt it would be wrong to blame Mamata alone for the party's electoral defeat. "We are also part of the whole show and must share the responsibility," he said.

He felt several factors, including wrong selection of candidates, lack of funds and proper planning, and the presence of BJP candidates, sealed the fate of Trinamul nominees in 54 Assembly constituencies.

He conceded that his brother's acts and utterances on the eve of the election affected the party's prospects in some areas falling in his constituency, Calcutta Northeast. "Mamata toiled a lot, but did not get the desired result," he said.

"She should have consulted the party conveners in all the 42 Lok Sabha constituencies over selection of candidates before finalising the list. We lost both Bongaon and Deganga to the CPM due to wrong selection of candidates. Besides, Congress workers did not help us in many areas in my Lok Sabha constituency (Barasat)," he said.

Trinamul MPs, who met at Krishna Bose's residence last night, condemned Ajit Panja for defying Mamata's directive and issuing statements against the party's interests before and after the elections.

Asim for

CPM decides to oppose BJP, Congress

Politburo okays Buddhadeb as West Bengal chief minister

By SHAHID FARIDI

New Delhi, May 16: The CPI(M) on Wednesday decided to position itself as an anti-Congress and anti-BJP force and declared its resolve to oppose the Congress at the Centre. The idea clearly being to wean away some of the NDA partners from the BJP.

"Our policy towards the Congress would be tit-for-tat. We would do to them what they did to us in the just-concluded Assembly elections." CPI(M) general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet said after the first post-election meeting of the party's politburo here on Wednesday. Predicting an early disintegration of the NDA, which is ruling at the Centre, Mr Surjeet said, "The partners of the BJP should see the writing on the wall and leave the company of the party that has been rejected by the people. The NDA partners would affect their own poll prospects if they do not take a fresh look at their alliance with the BJP."

He said that the Peoples' Front would soon emerge as a new national political alternative. The front would soon launch a mass struggle against the anti-people policies of the NDA government, Mr Surjeet added. The politburo put its seal of confirmation on the continuation of Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee as the chief minister of West Bengal. Mr Bhattacharjee

is all set to take oath on Friday.

The highest policy-making body of the CPI(M) also discussed the possibility of some of the Left Front partners seeking more Cabinet berths in West Bengal in the light of the CPI(M) not winning a majority on its own.

"The details of ministry formation will be discussed at the Left Front meeting in Kolkata on Thursday," a senior CPI(M) leader said. Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee outlined the priority of his new government in the state by saying that he would lay emphasis on providing primary education, health and better roads to the people of the state. The meeting was attended by Mr Surjeet, Mr Bhattacharjee, Mr Jyoti Basu, Tripura chief minister Manik Sarkar, former Kerala chief minister E.K. Nayanar, Mr Sitaram Yechuri, Mr Prakash Karat, Mr Anil Biswas and Mr Bimon Basu. The party discussed the Assembly elections and said that the victory of the Left Front in West Bengal had attracted national and international attention. "It is a confirmation of the relevance of Left policies and a fiasco for the opportunist policies of anti-Marxist alliance indulged in by the Trinamul Congress and Congress combine."

Mr Surjeet said that the Congress should understand that coalition politics in the country was here to stay.



NEW WAVE: West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee talks to senior party leader Jyoti Basu while Harkishan Singh Surjeet looks on during the politburo meeting of the CPI(M) in New Delhi on Wednesday. A photograph by G.N. Jha

THE ASIAN AGE

10 MAY 1997

Poll results reflect popular resentment: Politburo

Rethink support, CPM to NDA allies

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 16. — The CPI-M Politburo today asked BJP's allies to reconsider their support to the NDA government because the Assembly election results have "reflected the popular resentment against its anti-poor, anti-worker economic policies".

At the end of its one-day session that discussed the poll results, the Politburo said: "The BJP's electoral performance shows that its economic policies, with naked appeasement of big business and MNCs and the series of corruption scandals, in particular the Tehelka exposure, have incurred strong disapproval. It is for the allies of the BJP to realise that association with such a party is affecting their own mass-base and harming their prospects."

The Politburo, while reiterating its commitment to "fight against the policies of the

BUDDHA INVITED

KOLKATA, May 16. — The West Bengal Governor, Mr Viren J Shah, today invited Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya to form the government. — SNS

■ Industry captains to attend swearing-in: page 3
■ Photograph on page 6

Centre, including the surrender to the USA on the missile defence plan", called upon all secular forces to strengthen the People's Front.

Asked about the party's attitude towards the Congress, Mr Jyoti Basu said: "Everything will be decided at the coming central committee meeting".

The Politburo expressed satisfaction at the fact that the BJP has been routed in all the five states that had gone to polls. In Kerala and West

Bengal, it couldn't win a single seat.

In West Bengal, where the LF has won 199 seats and got 49 per cent votes, the results had vindicated the state government's policies, it said.

Mr Basu, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya and other politburo members from West Bengal left for Kolkata this evening. The CPI-M state committee will meet tomorrow to finalise the list of ministers who will be sworn in on Friday.

The otherwise tightlipped Mr Bhattacharya said the new government's priority will be primary education, infrastructure, industry and health.

The CPI-M accused the Congress of forming a secret alliance with the RSS-BJP and Muslim fundamentalists in Kerala to defeat the Left Democratic Front.

The Politburo, however, underlined the need for a "self-critical examination" of the setback.

THE STATESMAN

17 MAY 2001

(From left) Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and Jyoti Basu during the CPI(M) Politburo meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday.

ARVIND YADAV/HINDUSTAN TIMES

Media-shy Buddha says little

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 16

THE CPI(M)'S Politburo members, who met here today, were reticent about the composition of the Government Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee is about to form in Bengal, but indicated that the party intends to keep an open mind on its relations with the Congress.

General-secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet, who had warned the Congress against forming an anti-communist front, said today that the CPI(M)'s relations with the party would depend on the latter's attitude. He added that the CPI(M) would strive to develop and strengthen the People's Front.

BUDDHA INVITED TO FORM GOVT

Governor Viren J Shah on Wednesday formally appointed Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee as the Chief Minister of West Bengal and invited him to form the new Left Front Government. **PTI, Kolkata**

The only hint that Buddhadeb would drop about his new ministry was that it wouldn't be bigger than the previous one. Buddhadeb, perceived as the main architect of the Left's victory in Bengal, generally stayed clear of the media during his brief visit to Delhi. He will be in Kolkata tomorrow for meetings of the CPI(M) State committee and Left Front part-

ners, where the composition of his ministry will be finalised.

All he would say to journalists was what he has been saying ever since he replaced Jyoti Basu as Bengal's Chief Minister: that he would focus on health, primary education, roads and infrastructure. And no, he would not comment on Mamata Banerjee.

Buddhadeb gave interviews to party newspapers only during the visit. An extended interaction with the media was reserved for later, when the Politburo and central committee meet on May 29-June 1 to scrutinise the results of the West Bengal and Kerala polls. By that time, the State committees will have sent their reports.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 MAY 2001

Graceful in victory, CPM thanks people

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, May 13. — The CPI-M today greeted the Left Front's "historic" victory for the sixth consecutive time with euphoria and a sense of "deep gratitude" to the people.

Mr. Anil Biswas and Mr. Jyoti Basu said the victory not only brought joy to the party but filled it with a sense of "deep gratitude and enormous responsibility" towards the people.

Mr. Buddhadev Bhattacharya said at the CPI-M's state headquarters that the verdict was more than the people's faith in maintaining the status quo. "The people did clamour for a change, but certainly they didn't want to entrust the Congress-Trinamul with the task for the simple reason that the alliance is devoid of any programme or ideology and is essentially opportunistic."

The Left Front would now try to convince those who had voted for the Opposition that the government is ready to understand and solve their problems, he said. "We also expect the Opposition to play a constructive role." It would have been better if more Opposition candidates had won, he said.

The chief minister urged his partymen to show "utmost restraint and maintain peace" during this hour of victory which has bestowed on them greater responsibilities for the state's development.

"I would also like to point out the failures of this government. There were some lapses especially in health, police and education departments."

Mr. Bhattacharya, who came to the returning officer's office around 5.05 p.m. to receive his winning certificate, looked relaxed. He posed for the photographers again and again.

His daughter Suchetana, who accompanied Mr. Bhattacharya to the RO office, said: "The victory has proved that people of the state like my father."

The CPI-M state secretary said he had predicted that the LF would get a comfortable majority, "but the final tally shows it's a very comfortable majority."

According to Mr. Basu, the state's "politically conscious people" has proved the "unscientific" exit poll absurd. An impression had been created, especially after the exit poll results were announced, that "we've been defeated". Mr. Biswas wants the exit poll to be stopped, "as it not only creates confusion and unnecessary tension, but also other problems with its bogus predictions."

Mr. Basu said the new government would try to sustain the achievements of the past 24 years of Left rule, open up new frontiers and overcome the shortcomings. He hailed the BJP's failure to win a single seat as "a good development".

BJP YES TO TRINAMUL, NO TO MAMATA

KOLKATA, May 13. — The BJP may tie-up with the Trinamul once again, "but not with Miss Mamata Banerjee," Mr. Tapan Sikdar said today. "The party has suffered oppression and repression at her hands." He said Miss Banerjee might not be able to retain her position in the Trinamul after its electoral debacle. — SNS

He said he had not received any police report about violence in Midnapore on the poll day.

He admitted there has been a "severe erosion" in the CPI-M's base in South 24 Parganas. "We had apprehended the reverses we had suffered there."

Why did four ministers lose the polls? "We had failed to convince the voters in their constituencies that the government had done some good work," Mr. Bhattacharya said.

Talking about his future plans, he said he would focus on industries, overhaul and sensitise the administration and steer the agriculture sector in the right direction. He promised more jobs and strong steps to curb corruption in the administration.

THE STATESMAN

14 MAY 2001

'I am not alone in this battle'

THE CAMPAIGN heat has tanned him. That is it; Buddha is far from tired. The Chief Minister has just kicked off Left Front campaign against Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool and will win the whole hog. Unconvinced people would vote in an unstable regime for the next five years, Bhat-acharjee says the next Left Front Government would be focused only on development and lay special stress on industrialisation. "We have been in power for 24 years because of the people of Bengal, and we will remain in power with their support", he tells Arindam Sarkar in an interview. Excerpts:

Now that the Left Front campaign hinges so much on you, do you feel burdened?

No. I am not alone in this battle. My colleagues and party workers are campaigning too. Jyoti Basu himself is leading from the front. Leaders of the other three front allies too have joined the campaign. It is not just my party, it is the Left Front as a whole fighting the Opposition.

But you are the selling point of this campaign?

(Laughs) Buddha leads Bengal to polls? That's a wrong way of looking at it. Individuals matter very little. We are more concerned with our programmes, policies and what we would do in the future. We are going to the polls on the basis of our programmes, not with any individual as our USP.

How would you rate your performance as CM so far?

How can I judge my performance? It is for the people and the media to judge. In fact, this has been too short a period, and I am not at all fully satisfied. I am trying work and improve things in my own way. I am not trying to step into Jyoti Basu's shoes, because they would be too big for me (laughs). But I can assure you, I am getting support from all quarters: from common people, from party cadres, leaders, from the chambers of commerce as also from the media. So my hunch is that we are comfortably placed and will win again handsomely.

Have you made an effort to correct the obvious mistakes that the Government committed?

Yes. We are trying to critically analyse our mistakes and have identified the areas where we made mistakes. Education, health, police, industry are the areas where we have failed. We have set up primary schools in all villages, but have not been able to ensure good teachers. Health is another area. We have a large network comprising everything from primary health centres to hospitals, but health administration in the State has so far been very weak. We must improve the conditions of the centres and the quality of service. As for police, I am telling officials to behave and be polite with people. Personally, I am trying to reach out to the man in the street.

I am trying to do a few things about the system. It is difficult,

because it is part of our colonial legacy. Policemen tend to think they are superior to people. But they should realise that they too are part of society.

We are also trying to accelerate the process of industrialisation. But infrastructure in the State is still in a bad shape. We have enough power, but the roads are appalling. We need good roads and highways linking all areas of industrial growth. Say from Kolkata to Falta, from Kolkata to Uluberia, from Kolkata to Haldia, and the North-South Corridor. We have formulated some programmes, but this remains a major headache for us. You must also consider the Centre's step-motherly attitude, the License Raj, the attitude of the banks towards this Government for 15 long years before you judge our performance. They were major hurdles to industrialisation. Take Haldia, it was pending for 12 years. Then we roped in Ratan Tata and Purnendu Chatterjee to put it together. But this is not to deny that we were late starters. But since 1994, investors are coming in to Bengal, with Rs 20,000 crore already invested and Rs 48,000 crore in the pipeline. This is without taking the MoUs into account.

Do you think land reforms in Bengal have hit a plateau?

Yes. I think we have completed the process except in a few lakh plots of land, some of which are under litigation. After this we have to move into what you might call the second agrarian campaign. Here we must concentrate on diversification of crops. We shouldn't produce just rice. We must also encourage production of oil seeds, vegetables, fruits and so on. Floriculture and Horticulture too should get their due importance.

The Government, frankly, is trying to do better in all spheres and sending circulars and orders. But mere Government initiative won't do. Without organised movements in all spheres of life, things cannot improve. People won't suffer this.

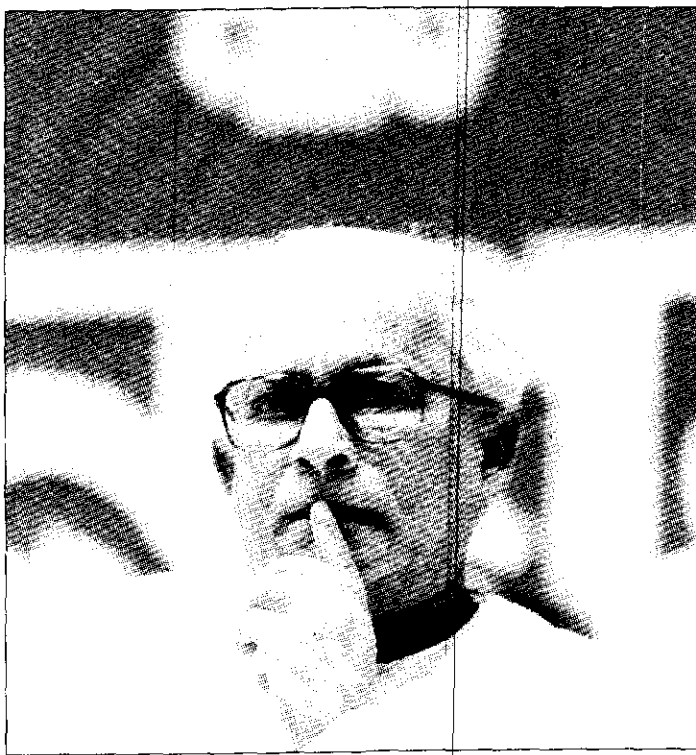
Is Jyoti Basu to blame for the mistakes of the past 24 years? Why? I too was part of the Government. We all were. It's always collective responsibility.

Will industry enjoy top priority if you return to power?

Definitely. That will be our thrust area. We have made significant strides in agriculture. It's been a success story. Our emphasis this time will be on bringing about industrialisation in Bengal. My top priority. We are past the take-off stage, now we have to fly and fly right.

There are rumours that your own party men are out to engineer your defeat? Do you see that happening in Jadavpur?

Absurd! I don't believe this. There could be sections with the odd grievance, but I have full confidence in my partymen who are conducting the elections. I don't see any serious problem for me.



With Samir Putatunda your principal opponent in Jadavpur, do you think he can make the going tough for you?

I don't think Samir Putatunda will make a difference to my prospects in Jadavpur. I am the CPI(M) candidate there and Putatunda has run into a blind alley. People would prefer me to him.

People have accepted you, but don't you think an anti-incumbency factor will work against the Left Front and the CPI(M) in particular?

I am a partyman and I believe in the party's ideology and programmes. I cannot wish away a certain anti-incumbency factor. That's bound to be there because we have been in Government for the past 24 years. So I am telling the people 'I understand your problems, your grievances, but please bear with us. We are now correcting ourselves.'

Mamata Banerjee is no longer with the BJP, the party you have always said is communal. She is also not in the Union Government anymore. So you have lost all your slam-the-Centre planks. What will be your campaign point against her?

I am not fighting her. I am fighting her party. The Trinamool Congress has no ideology. It is basically like the Congress, but had joined hands with Nathuram Godse's successors (The BJP) for political gains. Where is ideology gone? Gandhism and Godse? What concoction! Her statements are all negative. She is responsible for all Central decisions taken over the past 17 months: closing down of mines, factories and destroying our public distribution system. The greatest crime the Trinamool committed is that it encouraged the BJP to grow in Bengal.

How do you look at the new Trinamool-Congress alliance? They were always together in Parliament, Vidhan Sabha and

in the panchayats. Now a broken glass has been glued back into shape. Let's see what happens.

Are we going to see another whitewash of the CPI(M) in the city?

I don't think so. You have to differentiate between Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and corporation elections. In 1996, I won with a margin of 36,000 votes in the Assembly polls. In the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, we were defeated in Jadavpur by a 6,000-vote margin. In the corporation election people gave us a huge lead in my constituency. So people do understand that they are going to elect a State Government. They have to choose between a Left Front Government and an alternative. Between development and peace and complete anarchy.

Have the urban classes failed to accept the Left even after 25 years? Where have you gone wrong?

I accept this position that a substantial section of the urban middle class votes against us. But, people from academics and the cultural field wholeheartedly support us. We have the largest support base among students. It is the neo-rich middle class voters, who believe in liberalisation and globalisation. They do not vote for us. They love foreign cars, chocolates and cosmetics. They are not with us.

The Opposition alleges that the CPI(M) wins elections riding on its rigging machinery. Will it be same game this time?

Whenever they are defeated or fear defeat, they talk such rubbish.

Are the Opposition fears true that Bengal will witness the bloodiest election this time?

We have problems only in some areas. Of the 447 police stations, only seven or eight are volatile. We will deploy huge police

forces there and I have asked the administration to be on its toes. I can assure you that polls this time in Bengal will be totally peaceful. My administration will remain neutral.

Will the people see mellow, humbler party workers if you win the polls? Because villagers complain that middle-level CPI(M) leaders have become a bit too arrogant.

Yes. We have some problems like that. It is a problem of growth. When we started in 1977 we had 37,000 party members. Now we have more than two lakh. We have a mechanism whereby we orient our party workers to behave and go to the people like communists. But it will take some time.

Does the rise of the PDS symbolise the protest of the humble in your party against hardliners?

There are no hardliners or liberals. After our special party conference, we unanimously adopted a party programme. We had no differences. I discussed their problems. I tried to persuade them, but failed. And they have taken a wrong decision. As for their coming back, they have to accept and understand our party programme.

If you win, what will the new Bengal you lead look like? How different will it be from what it was?

(Laughs) It won't be Buddha's Bengal. It will be our Bengal. We are facing a tremendous economic crisis in the country. The GDP is coming down. Industry and agriculture are stagnating. But in Bengal, I will try my best to change the life of people. I will improve the lives of those below the poverty line. Give the young generation new avenues in IT, biotechnology, genetic engineering and all modern sciences. And of course the industrial scenario will see a sea change. I don't subscribe to Chandrababu Naidu's views that only technology and high-tech will make the State prosper. We have to take Bengal's social environment, its desires and needs into account.

Since the Opposition forces have come together will the Left vote-share fall?

Look, they have not come together. The BJP has gone in one direction. The Congress and the Trinamool are trying to merge, but there are a lot of differences between them. Also, in the 1996 Assembly polls, when they were united, we won handsomely. So we see no difference this time. Just the merger of the two Congresses won't make any difference. You should understand that politics is not simple arithmetic. One plus one makes two. But in politics it can also make a zero.

Do you think the CPI(M) will return with a simple majority by itself or will it come down below 148?

Yes. I firmly believe the CPI(M) will retain its majority in the House.

Saifuddin blasts CPM for attack

9-8 P 805
OUR BUREAU 7-8

April 8: A day after he was allegedly attacked by CPM supporters in Burdwan, Saifuddin Chowdhury said he was ashamed of having been a member of the party for over 20 years.

Addressing a protest rally in the town this afternoon, the CPM rebel and chief of the Party for Democratic Socialism (PDS) said: "It was beyond my imagination that the workers of the party with which I was closely associated for the past 20 years could attack me."

Coming down heavily on the CPM, he said the party had lost the support of the common people and was now trying to win the Assembly poll on muscle power.

Chowdhury was attacked yesterday, reportedly by CPM activists, at Islampur in Nadanghat Assembly constituency, from where he is contesting the polls. The CPM's Burdwan district secretary Madan Ghosh has, however, denied the involvement of his party workers in the attack.

Chowdhury attended another election rally at Kalna before reaching Calcutta tonight. He will lodge a complaint with the state election department tomorrow.

Chief electoral officer Sabyasachi Sen said he had asked the Burdwan district magistrate to submit a report on the incident. Sen said Chowdhury had lodged an FIR with the Purbasthali police station. The election department

9/4
has also asked the district police to initiate action against those involved in the incident.

Blaming CPM supporters for the attack on his party chief, PDS general secretary Samir Putatunda demanded a "public apology" from the Marxists. Putatunda alleged that CPM central committee member Nirupam Sen, along with party leaders from Burdwan, had masterminded the attack.

He said 70 per cent of the CPM leaders did not want any attack on their political rivals, but such things were being organised at the behest of the rest.

Putatunda said Chowdhury's car was damaged in the attack. "Chowdhury had to leave without addressing the meeting (in Islampur) and we will observe a protest day tomorrow throughout the state to condemn the incident."

The CPM Burdwan district secretary denied any attack on Chowdhury by CPM cadre. Ghosh said neither was Chowdhury assaulted, nor his car damaged.

Ghosh said Chowdhury was supposed to address a rally in Islampur at 4 pm yesterday, though the PDS did not have police permission. The CPM, too, had organised a rally there. Chowdhury reached at 8 pm and was moving towards the venue when one of his associates passed some filthy comments at CPM supporters.

Ghosh said senior CPM leaders intervened and the tense situation was brought under control.

THE TELEGRAPH

9 APR 2001

CPM men held for attack on Saifuddin

HT Correspondents
Burdwan, Kolkata, April 8

POLICE TODAY arrested Sk Saifuddin, a CPI(M) panchayat member, and Lahu and Pintu Mondal, two other party workers, from Nandghat on charges of attacking PDS chief Saifuddin Chowdhury's car near Islampur yesterday.

Four men had led the attack. Of them, Bagbul Ismail, Saifuddin's brother, was still absconding. Burdwan ASP Ajay Rande said.

The CPI(M) denied that Saifuddin had been assaulted at all or his car stoned. Burdwan MP and district secretariat member Nikhilananda Sar said the party would hold a separate inquiry. "As far as we know, Saifuddin was not attacked at all", he added.

Saifuddin was on his way to Islampur village yesterday to address a rally when his vehicle was stopped and stoned, allegedly by a mob of CPI(M) supporters.

His polling agent in the Madanghat constituency Sandip Mondal was roughed up in the melee. Saifuddin later lodged a complaint with Purbasthali police station against four CPI(M) workers.

The incident has raised political heat in the State and started a war of words between the two parties, with the PDS observing "Black Day" tomorrow to protest the "assault" on its leader. It is also planning to take the complaint to the Election Commission.

If things get worse, the party will consider going even with the

Prinamool Congress to fight what it has termed "Red Terror".

But before that, PDS workers will hold protest meetings at Sealdah, Dhakuria, Behala, Jadavpur and Garia in the city. The CPI(M)'s Burdwan unit secretary Madan Ghosh, however, denied any such incident had happened.

He blamed the PDS for fomenting trouble in the run-up to the polls.

"There was tension at Islampur when a Saifuddin associate rode past in a motorcycle and hurled abuses at our men. Tension subsided only after local party leaders had intervened. The PDS is trying to make up a case for itself," he said. State

CPI(M) secretary Anil Biswas and Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee were tight-lipped

but generally endorsed this version.

PDS spokesperson Tapas Basu, however, claimed that Ghosh had been mobilising anti-social elements at Nadanghat. Saifuddin Chowdhury's was contesting.

The CPI(M) workers' arrest, however, have come as a shot in the arm for the PDS. "Ghosh is used to such doublepeak.

The other day, he promised to take his cadres to task when Saifuddin Chowdhury had objected to the CPI(M)'s pressure tactics against PDS candidates in Burdwan. It is he who master-minded the move the following day," PDS secretary Samir Putatunda said.

Putatunda stressed that yesterday's "attack" on Saifuddin was part of a "simister plan" drawn up by the mandarins at

Alimuddin Street. "Rafiqul Islam who led the attack happens to be the gram pradhan. He did it at the behest of Madan Ghosh. We have similar experiences in other parts of the State such as Canning, Kasba, Behala where PDS activists are feeling the "Red Pressure".

Alimuddin Street is aware of it. Senior leaders like Nirupam Sen are involved. They won't allow Saifuddin to meet the electorate," he said.

The PDS secretary also recalled incidents in Behala and Jadavpur where local CPI(M) "thugs" made sure that the new outfit didn't get space on rent.

"Even those willing to rent out a part of their premise to the PDS, succumbed to the CPI(M)'s pressure tactics," he said.

BUDDHA: I won't allow violence to continue

(Continued from page 1)

after long years we are turning around. We already have our success stories in agriculture, land reforms, local government, panchayat and education. But the Centre didn't allow us for a decade and a half to set up any industrial unit - by refusing licences to those keen on investing in our state.

The banks behaved in a similar fashion. The credit-deposit ratio for our state was deliberately kept at about 50 per cent against 70 per cent in other states. All this created industrial stagnation in West Bengal, though it had the pride of place at the time of Independence. On the other hand, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh surged ahead.

But, the so-called liberalisation in the 1990s ended the licence raj and we decided to take the bull by the horns. Two sectors of information technology have been set up at Salt Lake by national and international market leaders and in just three years we have exported Rs 700 crore worth of software.

We have a large pool of young engineers, computer scientists and bio-technologists who are also making this turnaround possible. As for the health care system,

Our universities continue to get laurels. For example, Jadavpur University has received the award of excellence. The latest National Eligibility Test results show the candidates from our state top the rate of success.

Q. Coming back to the most sensitive topic of the day, law and order. Trinamul Congress has showcased Kespur as exemplifying "red terror" in the state. It has accused the police administration of being most partisan. The CBI had to step in to inquire into alleged killings at Chhoto Anguria village in Midnapore. There are reports it has got evidence of torture by CPI-M cadres. Is the Trinamul hue and cry about violence justified?

A. Of the 447 police station areas in the state there has been some trouble only in eight, mainly at Kespur. The farmers there had been living a peaceful life and their living standard was improving all these years. But trouble erupted soon after the Trinamul came into being and adopted its so-called Panskura line. Who is responsible for the outbreak of violence?

I will not allow violence to continue. I invited Trinamul leaders several times to sort out the problem across the table. But there was no response. Let me assure you, the Assembly poll will be totally free and fair.

The CBI stepped in following a High Court order. I have no comment to make on this. We have filed an appeal before the Supreme Court, as we believe asking the CBI to inquire, bypassing the state government, is overstepping into state matters.

As far as we know, the CBI has not filed any report on finding any evidence of torture by CPI-M cadres.

Q. When the police force is tainted with corruption and has a persecuting mind-set, doesn't your scheme of organising football matches among the police and such public relations exercises sound idealistic?

A. No, I am not a Utopian sort of an idealist. I am a realist and a Marxist. I want the police to shed its colonial mind-set and be friendly with the people. This is a difficult task and I will have to do it.



BE BETTER INFORMED: Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya reads a newspaper. — The Statesman

things are really bad, though 70 per cent of the state's middle-class and weaker sections are covered by the state health centres. Yet, there's no denying the condition of the health centres and state hospitals is bad. We have to improve the health administration. It's true some students are seeking admission for higher studies outside the state. But, this is not the general trend. We had only nine engineering colleges till two years ago. Now we have 30.

THE STATESMAN

10 MAY 2001

'LET ME BE KNOWN THAT I'M ONE OF YOU... AND LET THAT BE MY FINAL IDENTITY'

We don't want to hide our wrongs: Buddha

Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya is one of two persons likely to be the West Bengal chief minister this time next week. He is the incumbent, has been in office for six months and has, in equal parts, been a beneficiary of his party's long stint in office and a victim of the less savoury aspects of its record over 24 years.

The general impression is that he has played a cameo innings as chief minister with his gentle, persuasive style and no-nonsense way of doing things. If next week's election boils down to a clash between personalities, Mr Bhattacharya does not compare unfavourably with the other contender for the job, Miss Mamata Banerjee (who, incidentally, was approached similarly for an exclusive interview but has so far claimed she is preoccupied).

In an hour-long, no-holds-barred talk with **UDAY BASU**, Mr Bhattacharya explains the challenges to his government and his goals as chief minister if the Left Front comes to power in the toughest of elections since 1977.

Here are excerpts from the interview.

Q. What will you do, if you lose the elections?

A. I don't know whether I will win or not. That is not the question. The question is whether West Bengal will move forward or will be destroyed by some thoughtless, unscrupulous, unprincipled, opportunistic power-seekers.

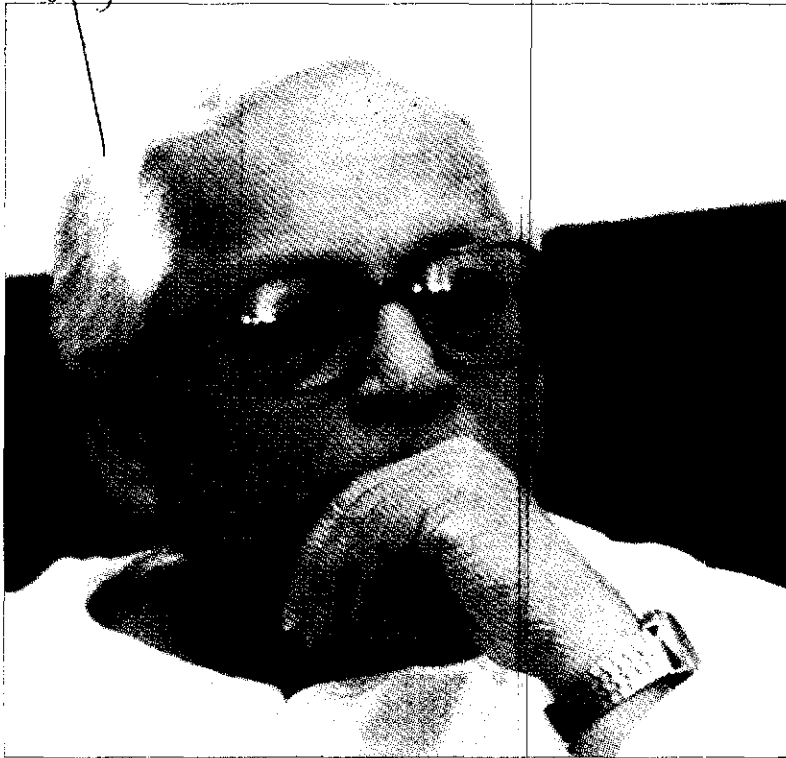
Q. You have, so long, been dealing with one woman adversary, Miss Mamata Banerjee. Now you have two with Mrs Sonia Gandhi on the scene. How will you deal with two women?

A. Well, I do believe in the empowerment of women. But I am also convinced that the two women you refer to have not the power to dislodge us from power.

Q. Miss Banerjee claims she achieved in 17 months as railway minister what the Left Front couldn't do in 24 years. How do you respond to that?

A. People know everything. They are mature enough to compare and contrast. They will judge what we have done and what Miss Banerjee is claiming. They will respond accordingly on 10 May.

Q. Why is it that you are concen-



Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya at the interview. — Shyamal Maitra

trating so hard on your constituency, meeting people in a way you never did before? The word is you are imitating the Trinamul chief's style of functioning. Will you remain the same after you are returned to power?

A. I am a common man and my motto is to live up to the Tagorean ideal: "Let me be known that I am one of you, no more than that and let that be my final identity." The media is following my every movement now that I am the chief minister and people tend to believe it's something new I am doing.

I have no role model here. I have been in politics for the past 39 years and gone to every corner of the state meeting people of every walk of life in my own way.

The media has forgotten that I was the first to reach the flood-hit areas of Ghatal in 1978, faced the flood-victims' wrath and got beaten up. But I had the satisfaction of being the first to take food to them. Later, the attackers regretted their action. I was also with the riot-hit people of Katra in Murshidabad.

Q. Is your selection as chief minister an attempt to whitewash the

"failures" of the Left Front government over the past 24 years?

A. In the first place, how can an individual undertake such a whitewashing job?

People know what we have achieved which explains why they have voted us to power for the past five consecutive terms.

We have no intention to hide or whitewash any wrongs. Of course, we have our shortcomings and the people will judge us for our successes and failures.

Q. Your main motto and the key campaign slogan is "We are turning around". You're repeating the phrase at almost every poll rally. Isn't it an admission that all was not well all these years? You are now talking about industrialisation, information technology and restoring work culture. What had you been doing for over two decades? The health care system has collapsed and many students are forced to seek admission in medical and engineering colleges in other states. Isn't it an indictment of your government?

A. I have been telling people that

■ See BUDDHA: page 7

THE STATESMAN

- 6 MAY 2001

FRIENDS TURNED FOES

CPI-M's bid to check exodus to PDS

THE nervousness of the Marxists over the launch of the PDS by Saifuddin Chowdhury and Samir Putatunda comes loud and clear from Monday's utterances of top CPI-M leaders who short of outright abuse, have used all the choicest expletives to run down the new party and its leadership. That Jyoti Basu, Buddhadev Bhattacharya and Anil Biswas could brand the two PDS leaders traitors and say openly that the PDS was a "bogus" party founded without any ideology, for scoring personal gains and hatching a conspiracy to split their party, shows the level of concern that has gripped them after the formation of the new organisation. They held a meeting with party activists in Jadavpur as it fears large-scale sabotage by party workers and sympathisers which may seal Buddhadev's fate in this constituency. The fear is understandable since in the 1999 parliamentary poll Krishna Bose, the Trinamool Congress candidate, had a lead of over 6000 votes over her CPI-M rival from the Jadavpur segment. Having never cared to nurture the Jadavpur seat, the scene, both Buddhadev and other fellow Marxists fear, will get worse with Putatunda, who was the secretary of the party's south 24 Parganas unit, joining the PDS with his followers. The message is not difficult to follow when Anil Biswas says that there are a number of party members in south 24 Parganas who are sitting on the fence. There are at least two MPs from the area, close to Putatunda and many other key party functionaries still busy assessing the implications of joining the PDS. Their going over would be disastrous for the CPI-M. What is ironic is Jyoti Basu calling Saifuddin a traitor; last year he personally acknowledged his guilt for not having protested against the injustices that the PDS leader was subjected to while he was in the party. The Marxists, apparently have different responses to different situations.

What bothers the Marxists is the factional feud, mutual mistrust and hatred that have gripped the party not only in south 24 Parganas but also in other districts. The leaders are unable to predict who at what level will sabotage the party's prospects. The large-scale sabotage that was resorted to by party cadres in 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha polls in Dum Dum was subsequently repeated in the Salt Lake and Hooghly municipal polls. The Frankenstein monsters they created for rigging elections appear to have turned against them.

THE GUARDIAN

MAY 2001

Basu warns party of rebel raid on votes

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, March 5: With Assembly elections knocking on Bengal's doors, Jyoti Basu today conceded that the new party floated by Saifuddin Chowdhury and Samir Putatunda would cut into the CPM's vote bank.

Basu's admission — made at a closed-door meeting of party workers from South 24-Parganas at the Jadavpur stadium — is in sharp contrast with his public speech two weeks ago when he had said the new outfit "will not affect the CPM's poll prospects".

CPM state secretary Anil Biswas, too, had insisted that the new party will not make any difference to the CPM in the elections.

Amid the reassessment, the CPM won a breather today with transport minister Subhas Chakraborty pledging to contest

the Assembly elections.

Chakraborty told reporters at a function at Sealdah railway station he attended with Mamata Banerjee that he had "no problems now in contesting the elections" as the three conditions he had placed before the party leadership were "being looked into".

However, Chakraborty, who had been keeping the CPM on tenterhooks on his future course of action, left the door ajar, saying he would reconsider his decision if the party violated any of the conditions.

He again ignored the party diktat of not praising Mamata publicly, saying she "had done a lot for the betterment of Calcutta". Mamata, on her part, turned to "Subhasda" for help to start the Digha-Tamluk train service before the polls. Chakraborty assured her all help. (See Page 10)

The two had gone to Sealdah to

inaugurate a subway. However, Congress MLA from Sealdah, Somen Mitra, who had shared the dais with Mamata on earlier occasions, did not turn up today, the day after eight Congress legislators led by Sougata Roy joined Trinamul.

To prevent a Congress-like situation, the CPM leadership is doing its best to instil confidence in its workers. Basu's meeting today was intended to be a morale-boosting exercise for the party's South 24-Parganas workers, who were associated with Putatunda.

Basu spoke of the rebel duo — Chowdhury and Putatunda — in scathing terms, saying they "committed a heinous crime by forming a new party".

"They will definitely cut into our vote bank.... It is beyond my imagination that such senior leaders can quit the party without any valid reason. But the party they

have floated is bogus and has no concrete agenda on how to serve the people," Basu said. He urged his partymen to get ready for the "most serious electoral battle".

Basu said that Putatunda, the former South 24-Parganas district secretary, had not returned the car the party had given him three years ago.

Reacting to Basu's charge later, Putatunda refused to return the car and the mobile phone that the party had given him. "Nor will I return the party documents lying with me... come what may," he said.

Biswas alerted party workers against a "divisive force" trying hard to weaken the organisation before the Assembly elections.

Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said Putatunda had attacked the party when it was "facing challenges from Trinamul Congress".

THE TELEGRAM

6 MAR 2011

Samir a cheat, says Basu

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, March 5

JYOTI BASU today called Samir Putatunda, who left the CPI-M just before the polls, a "traitor" and a "cheat".

"Is this the time to leave? If he was determined to sever ties he could have done it months ago. He agreed to continue as district secretary only a week ago. What could have happened in a matter of days that he had to opt out?" Basu said at a party general body meeting at the Jadavpur Stadium.

Basu was angry also over the way Putatunda refused to return party property. "He is a cheat. He has stolen party property too. What if they were in his name? Did he buy them on his own? I too have two party cars in my name. Should I usurp them?"

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

6 MAR 2001

FIRST PERSON

SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHURY

Why I left the CPM

WHY DID I leave the CPI (M)? Anyone can ask me this because I grew with the party during the last 30 years. It is a long account. I will touch upon the primary reasons that finally led to this separation.

The process had started much earlier. I was removed from the party central committee in 1995 for a reason that is not clear to me till date. When I asked the party to come clear on the removal, it mentioned in a central committee note that the reason was "political." Does it confirm the party's claim for democracy within? Would anyone ever dare to note his political difference?

Later, I came to know that the party had removed me because I opposed its decision to move the "no confidence" against the Congress Government after the Babri Masjid demolition. I still stand by my opinion. I felt that the BJP was gaining grounds and was posing danger even if it was not in power. I feared that the no confidence would create trouble for the Congress and the other secular forces in the ensuing Assembly polls. The Congress, though in power, had become weak by then and communalism was on the rise.

I chose to wait because I didn't feel it was healthy to take a political debate to the streets immediately. I withstood the pressure within but could feel the suffocating centralism devoid of democracy. I am not the first to point it out. The party has noted this problem

even before me. I, therefore, demanded that the party should do away with the organisational principle of democratic centralism. It does not guarantee the transparency people expect from us, especially when the party is participating in the democratic process.

The world outside had witnessed a sea change by then. The collapse of socialism in many countries along with the stagnation in communist movement called for a review of the entire situation and building up a new socialist model. The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat was also brought under the scanner. Many countries thought of rebuilding a pluralistic socialism that has place for other views.

Keeping this in mind, we were debating the CPI (M)'s participation in the Central Government that communists had not thought of earlier. The party rejected the view in 1996 but swallowed the proposal later. Was it not a blunder? It weakened the Third Front and landed the CPI (M) in splendid isolation. I thought it right to ventilate all these issues through the media.

It met with a flutter within the organisation. Members started raising their voices against the authoritarian clauses like serving an expulsion order without a show cause on the accused. I hoped that all these demands would be taken care in the Special Party Congress.



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2001

CPM expels Putatunda

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, March 2. - The CPI-M state committee today expelled from the party Mr Samir Putatunda, former South 24-Parganas district committee secretary for "serious" violation of party discipline.

Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary, said today the district secretariat had informed the state committee that Mr Putatunda had kept in his possession minutes of party meetings, important documents and letters, a computer machine, a mobile phone and a jeep. Nor did Mr Putatunda submit to the district unit accounts of expenditure incurred during his Cuddalore tour.

The district secretariat wrote to Mr Putatunda on 24 February requesting him to return the things by 28 February.

However, the district secretary informed the state committee on 1 March that Mr Putatunda had neither sent any reply nor returned the articles.

This, Mr Biswas said, entailed serious violation of party discipline and the state secretariat, which was authorised to take action, decided to expel him according to relevant provisions of the party constitution.

Mr Putatunda told the Press on 1 March that he needed those documents and articles for his political activities as much as the CPI-M needed them. Mr Biswas said Mr Putatunda's act of retaining in his

possession party property even after leaving the party was highly immoral.

Putatunda's reaction: Mr Putatunda rejected Mr Biswas's charge that he had committed an immoral act by not returning the documents to the party.

"When the CPI-M was formed out of the CPI, there were

POLLS IN APRIL

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, March 2. - The chief election commissioner today indicated that the Assembly polls in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam and the Union Territory of Pondicherry would be held in the second half of April.

Mr MS Gill made it clear that no one could vote without photo-identity cards and warned against attempts to forge the cards. - UNI

many instances of bitter wrangling over party documents and property. If that was not immoral, how can my action be termed immoral?" Mr Putatunda asked.

He said he had nothing to say on expulsion since he was no

longer in the party. "I am not using the party documents and other articles in my name for any business purpose. I have made them available to a political party for political activities. Hence, my actions are beyond reproach," he said.

LF candidates: The Left Front today announced names of six more candidates for the Assembly polls.

Mr Anil Biswas said four of the candidates are from the CPI-M and one each from Socialist Samaj Party and Biplabi Bangla Congress. The LF has conceded two seats to the RJD and one to Janata Dal (S). The RSP and the Socialist Party will also get one and two more seats respectively.

■ Pranab meets Mamata: page 3

THE STATESMAN

- 3 MAR 2001

4 ministers off LF list

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Feb. 25.—The Left Front today released its list of candidates for the coming Assembly polls, dropping four ministers of the outgoing Cabinet and bringing in 93 new faces.

The decision to field fresh candidates is aimed at infusing new blood into the ministry, if the Left Front is returned to power.

"Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya can form his team with new faces, while many of the freshers will have greater exposure to the parliamentary system," Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary, said.

The list sets at rest speculations regarding whether the transport minister, Mr Subhash Chakraborty, will leave the party. The minister, along with some of his close associates, are in the fray.

The list reveals Alimuddin Street's deft handling in strik-

ing a balance between rival factions of North 24-Parganas.

If the CPI-M leadership has accommodated the transport minister's nominees, including Mr Ajit Chowdhury and athlete Ms Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, it has also fielded his detractors like Mr Amitava Nandi and Mr Manas Mukherjee.

Likewise, some of the close associates of Mr Samir Putatunda, the party's former South 24-Parganas district secretary who quit the party to join forces with Mr Saifuddin Choudhury, have also been fielded.

Among the notable new faces are Mr Nirupam Sen, state secretariat member, from Bardhaman South. Mr Gokul Bairagi from Mr Jyoti Basu's constituency, Satgachia and Mr Lakshmi De from Vidyasagar.

The list contains names of 282 candidates out of a total of 294 seats. Four seats would be given to LF's national allies, including the RJD and

the Janata Dal (S).

Candidates for eight other seats will be named later.

There are 29 women candidates, including 27 belonging to the CPI-M. Mr Biswas said his party plans to field women candidates in 15 per cent seats.

The four dropped ministers are Mr Shanti Ghatak, Mr Proloy Talukdar of the CPI-M, Mr Debabrata Bandyopadhyay of the RSP and Mr Bhakti Bhusan Mondal of the FB.

Mr Bandyopadhyay's exclusion was a foregone conclusion, as he is already the state secretary of the RSP. There has been widespread resentment in his party, especially in Murshidabad district, as he continues to hold twin posts violating the principle of one-man one-post.

The CPI-M has retained 27 candidates who are contesting more than three terms. The party's central committee directive is that a candidate can contest a maximum of three

terms. However, it has authorised the state committee to make certain exceptions.

Mr Subhas Chakraborty had questioned the logic behind the directive. He, however, told reporters today that he would abide by the party's decision and seek re-election from the Belgachia East.

Mr Biswas said the state committee, which met during the day, authorised the state secretariat to take action against Mr Putatunda.

The South 24-Parganas district secretary has written to Mr Putatunda seeking explanations for "certain matters". The state secretariat will announce its decision on the action to be taken against Mr Putatunda within a week on the basis of his reply. The Front's poll manifesto will be released on 1 March.

■ Photograph, another report on page 3

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BIRTH OF A PARTY

Bengal may witness more pluralism soon

THE formation of a new party by CPI-M dissidents Saifuddin Chowdhury and Samir Putatunda is a sign of growing cracks in the CPI-M which could lead to new combinations. Putatunda is a prize catch for Saifuddin, but he has been aggrieved by Alimuddin Street which passed over many of his nominees for Bengal's forthcoming Assembly polls. A split in a Communist party is always pregnant with ideological significance. The last time the CPI-M split it was to give birth to the even more extremist CPI-ML, an index of the revolutionary ardour of the 1960s. Reflecting changing times, the issues are different now; the new party has dropped "Communist" and substituted "Democratic" in its nomenclature, and Putatunda calls for a less regimented and dogmatic party. By declaring itself against dictatorship in all forms, including "dictatorship of the proletariat", the PDS shows signs of being inspired more by European-style liberal and social democratic ideals rather than Chinese Maoism. This would be a welcome addition to the spectrum of ideologies available to the people who currently have to choose between the sterile dogmatism of the CPI-M, the charisma driven politics of Trinamul, and Congress which has a passing and rapidly diminishing interest in the state.

The dissidents' diagnosis of what ails the CPI-M is an acute one — it harbours a bunker mentality, the "he who is not with me is against me" syndrome which may be suited to authoritarian times but is out of place in a democratic society. Secondly, it is in "ideological quarantine", developments in economy, society and technology of the last 20 years having passed it by. Thirdly, apart from having implemented land reform and panchayati raj, it has run out of ideas about how to bring about the state's development. But PDS still seems to be enamoured of some of the old leftist slogans, such as fighting against US hegemony, when given Bengal's current state it is difficult to see why foreigners should want to exercise hegemony at all. Assuming that Subhas Chakrabarty shakes off his masochistic turn — he has claimed he will not leave the party unless "beaten with a stick and driven out" — and launches his own outfit, the state's political landscape will be opened up in interesting ways. Asim Chatterjee, another leftist dissident, is critical of the PDS on the ground that hasn't distanced itself sufficiently from communist orthodoxy. The real issue is whether the new parties will align with the Left or with Trinamul. It is conceivable that the next assembly election will yield a coalition government with no single party having an absolute majority — even if it is a Left Front government, the relationship between the CPI-M and other constituents will be altered. All of which will be a prelude to further churning, bringing to an end the era of CPI-M dominance.

THE STATESMAN

26 FEB 2001

Subhas stalls for time on CPM ticket bait

OUR BUREAU

Calcutta, Feb. 25: The CPM has nominated transport minister Subhas Chakraborty from Belgachia East, but the leadership is not sure of retaining him.

The Chakraborty camp's discomfiture with the list was evident from the manner in which the transport minister reacted.

"I believe as a party soldier I have got to go by the candidates' list, regardless of whether I like it or not. But I must hasten to say that I will take my decision on entering the fray in a day or two," he told reporters.

The Left Front has kept 12 seats vacant, many of which will be given to the parties of Laloo Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav.

The CPM has nominated two state secretariat members - Nirupam Sen and Shyamal Chakraborty - who are expected to be inducted in the Cabinet if the Left Front returns to power.

Sen will contest from Burdwan South and Shyamal Chakraborty from Manicktala.

The party has only three secretariat members in the Cabinet - Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, Surya Kanta Mishra and Mohammed Amin. As such, the leadership intends to induct more key functionaries into the Cabinet.

"With both Jyoti Basu and Shanti Ghatak opting out of the fray this time, we intend to bring

in more key party functionaries into the Cabinet. This will help in effective governance as well as better co-ordination with the party," said CPM politburo member Sailen Dasgupta.

In South 24 Parganas, where district secretary Samir Putatunda quit the party to join Saifuddin Chowdhury's new outfit, the CPM has nominated seven Putatundaloyalists, including Rishi Halder and Rathin Sarkar in an obvious move to rope them in.

In Nadia, the CPM has nominated athlete Jyotirmoyee Sikdar for the Ranaghat West Assembly seat. The Congress holds the seat now.

Former Lok Sabha member Asim Bala, who lost to BJP nominee Satyabrata Mukherjee in the last polls, has been given a ticket for the Ranaghat East constituency.

In Calcutta, the CPM-led Left Front has re-nominated some old guards. These include a Rajya Sabha member and two sitting councillors.

Two Front councillors - Sudhanshu Sil and Chanchal Ghosh - have been nominated for Jorabagan and Sealdah Assembly segments respectively.

The Front has also re-nominated city-based businessman Salyanarayan Bajaj for the Jorasanko Assembly seat. Bajaj lost the seat last time as a Forward Bloc candidate.

The CPM has changed seven

candidates in North 24 Parganas district. Amitava Nandy, a member of the CPM's North 24-Parganas district secretariat and leader of the anti-Subhas Chakraborty faction in the district, is contesting from Habra.

After the CPM, it is the Forward Bloc which has changed the maximum number (11) of candidates this time. The RSP has fielded six new candidates and the CPI five. The Revolutionary Communist Party Of India (RCP), a minor constituent of the front, has changed one candidate this time.

The CPM has not changed any of the sitting MLAs in disturbed areas like Garbeta and Keshpur. Minister of state for transport Sushanta Ghosh, will again contest from Garbeta East. In Keshpur, sitting MLA Nandaran Dal is still in the fray.

The CPM was reluctant to take any risk in Keshpur and Garbeta as the Trinamul Congress is trying to make an inroad there over the past few years.

In Panskura East, the CPM candidate was defeated in the 1996 polls. This time, the CPM has opted for the seat but has not yet announced the name of the candidate.

It is learnt that the Midnapore district leadership had again recommended Sisir Sarkar, the candidate in 1996, but the leadership has not approved the nomination.



CPM leaders announcing the candidates' list in Calcutta. Picture by Aranya Sen

CPM picks new faces & Subhas

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Feb. 25: Staring at the toughest Assembly election in 24 years, the ruling Left Front today unveiled a list of candidates that seeks to accommodate dissidents and propel new faces into the House.

One of the big surprises on the 290-strong list, predictably dominated by Front overlord CPM with 208 seats, was the unparalleled decision to shed 42 sitting legislators — 35 of them from the CPM alone.

Among the dropped were four ministers, Shanti Ghatak, Proloy Talukdar (both CPM), Debabrata Bandyopadhyay (RSP) and Bhaktibhusan Mondal (Forward Bloc).

The list focuses on three objectives: create space for the upward mobility of young functionaries, prevent the dissidents from teaming up with axed rebel Saifuddin Chowdhury and correct the public perception of corruption in the organisation. It mirrored the CPM leadership's tightrope walk to prevent one of its biggest headaches, Subhas Chakraborty from doing a Samir Putatunda before the polls. Putatunda had walked out of the party to join Chowdhury's new outfit.

ROLL-CALL

- 70 new CPM faces, 10 from South 24-Parganas where the party is fractured after Samir Putatunda's departure
- Subhas given Belgachia East again, though he wanted to switch seats. But many of his nominees accommodated
- Buddhadeb to seek re-election from Jadavpur, a Trinamul stronghold
- In clash-scarred Midnapore, most sitting MLAs, including Sushanta Ghosh, have been renominated

Alimuddin Street accommodated six of the nine supporters Chakraborty had recommended for tickets but fielded him again in Belgachia East, rejecting his plea for Dum Dum, a safer constituency. The leadership reckons that Chakraborty's supporters will not leave the party if they manage to win. Chakraborty said he would accept the list but added a rider: "I will take a final decision on entering the fray in a day or two."

Another striking feature is the CPM's decision to project as many as 70 new nominees, including athlete Jyotirmoyee Sikdar. Several new candidates will contest

from South 24-Parganas, where Putatunda's departure could make a dent.

Other Front partners together fielded 23 new candidates. "No party will dare field so many new faces in an election. We can do it because we are known for our capacity to experiment," said Anil Biswas, state CPM secretary.

However, the move to pack such a large number of newcomers is being seen as an attempt to tighten the party's grip on the government if the Front returns to power again.

The list also ended speculation that chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee will either shift to a safer constituency or contest from two seats simultaneously. Bhattacharjee will seek re-election from Jadavpur, considered a bastion of the Trinamul Congress.

Like Chakraborty, finance minister Asim Dasgupta and PWD minister Kshiti Goswami — who are facing daunting electoral battles — and their Cabinet colleagues have been renominated to existing constituencies.

Satgachia, having lost much of its glory with the retirement of Jyoti Basu, got a new candidate in Gokul Bairagi, who used to manage the patriarch's poll affairs.

■ See Page 8

THE NEWSPAPER

26 FEB 2001

Putatunda resigns from CPM

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, February 19

SAMIR PUTATUNDA has finally gone for the big break. Today, he sent his resignation letter to Alimuddin Street.

Ashis Chatterjee, member of the CPI(M) Kolkata committee and CPI leader from Nadia, Suprabhat Siddhanta, too quit their respective parties today.

Before coming to the Press Club to announce his decision, Putatunda paid his last visit to the CPI(M) South 24-Parganas district office.

On February 21, he will attend the "preparatory conference" to launch the Party for Democratic Socialism. Putatunda is the first district secretary to sever ties with the CPI(M) on political and ideological grounds.

Asked what had prompted him to take the precipitate step when he had some days ago said he would remain with the CPI(M), Putatunda said: "I have been for the last few years trying to resolve my differences with the party. But nothing has worked. My leaders and comrades insisted that I raise my grievances within the party forum only. I attended the party general body meeting at Jadavpur and met party comrades elsewhere at a working unity. But the effort proved one-sided. I was district secretary. I couldn't come out in

the open with my problems."

Putatunda apparently decided to take the plunge after his peace efforts at a Diamond Harbour party meeting drew a blank. District leaders questioned his credibility as party secretary and called him a traitor at a district committee meeting on February 13. An apology for his activities was forcefully extracted from him.

"I realised they wouldn't let me function. The party kept stonewalling me. Relations between me and my comrades soured," Putatunda said. "There are many comrades in South 24-Parganas who endorse my views, but would like

To Join Saifuddin

to sort out matters internally. Let me see how they react to my decision," he added.

Hardliners simply rubbished the renegade's claims. Anyway, Putatunda was committed to joining Saifuddin Chowdhury, they argued.

Putatunda held his ground, however. He harped on political differences, that he believed hadn't been addressed in the CPI(M) programme. "Most party members still maintain they are participating in the elections only for the time being. They are waiting for a situation when they will resort to an armed revolution. Such thinking undermines the concept of devel-

opment work with mass participation. It is a wrong concept without which we could have done much more for people than we did during the Left Front Government. The party programme has done nothing to change the attitude. It has instead made some cosmetic changes like party's participation in the Central Government that doesn't go with the overall spirit."

Like Saifuddin, Putatunda would strive to chart out a middle path between the Left and the reactionary Right. "The present day Left policies can't attract young minds. There is a lack of transparency everywhere. The corrupt and the decadent thus get the upper hand. There are many in West Bengal who uphold Left, democratic and secular values. We should work to nourish them."

Putatunda believes the effort would strengthen the Left forces, if not the Left Front. "The next Government will be a Left Government. But I don't know whether the same Left Front would return to power."

He has no sympathy for the "communal" forces and the Trinamool Congress. "The Trinamool-BJP combine is the main enemy of the Left under the present conditions. In the fight against communalism, Congress is our natural ally."

* Related reports and photograph on Page 3

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 FEB 2001

SESSION ENDS / OPPOSITION BOYCOTTS FELICITATION

Jyoti Basu bids adieu

By Malabika Bhattacharya

CALCUTTA, FEB. 24. The former Chief Minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu, 87, bowed out after attending the last session of the current West Bengal Assembly ending his 55-year-career in electoral politics.

Mr. Basu, who symbolises the fading generation that founded the Indian Communist Movement, bade farewell to fellow legislators on the last day of the session. The only jarring note was a boycott of the occasion by the opposition Congress, Trinamool Congress and the BJP.

Barring a 5-year break due to a disrupted election, for 24 of the total 55 years, Mr. Basu's stoney visage appeared to have been sculpted on the House as he went from strength to strength to head one of the world's longest serving Communist Governments.

Mr. Basu had relinquished office last November and announced his decision not to contest the coming assembly elections. "I will, however, remain in politics and continue to help my party in every possible way. I am retiring from electoral politics but not from politics in general. A communist never retires," Mr. Basu today told the emotion-charged MLAs.

The House was packed with legislators, journalists and visitors who wanted to witness the historic departure of the most influential Bengal political leader from the Assembly.

The Opposition boycotted the last day's proceedings saying it did not want to witness the felicitation of Mr. Basu. "He failed as an administrator and Bengal was doomed during his tenure. Why should we felicitate him?" asked Mr. Abdul Mannan, the Congress Chief Whip.

An unperturbed Mr. Basu, who has been witness to many histories during his long

political innings, had no regrets. He was happy that he could do what he had set out to do when the CPI(M)-led Left Front assumed office in 1977.

Always a self-effacing politician, Mr. Basu brushed aside the credit given to him in many quarters for the Front's glorious victory in elections for 5 consecutive terms.

Mr. Basu's association with the Assembly began in 1946 when he won from the Railway constituency. The Muslim League was in office in Bengal. His otherwise uninterrupted Assembly career was disrupted for 5 years when his party boycotted the 1972 poll on grounds that it was rigged by the Congress under Mr. Siddhartha Shankar Ray's leadership. "I entered the Provincial Assembly with two other Communist party members. I was always given the opportunity to place our views in the House by all Speakers," he said.

The Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, spoke about Mr. Basu's outstanding contribution to the House. Representatives from various front partners - CPI, Forward Bloc, RSP, GNLF and others echoed the sentiment.

Mr. Basu was presented a shawl, a plaque and a bouquet by the Speaker, Mr. Hasim Abdul Halim, on behalf of the members.

The Speaker said Mr. Basu had entered the House on May 14, 1946, as an ordinary member. He became the Leader of the Opposition, then Deputy Chief Minister and later Chief Minister for a record 24 years. Today again, he is going back as an ordinary member.

Later, Mr. Basu laid the foundation stone for the Millennium Building of the State Assembly and unveiled a portrait of Late Bimal Chandra Sinha, father of the Congress leader, Mr. Atish Chandra Sinha.

THE HINDU

25 FEB 2001

Saif launches party, asks CPM to stop violence

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Feb. 21. — The wait for disgruntled Marxists ended today as Mr Saifuddin Choudhury and Mr Samir Putatunda launched the Party for Democratic Socialism to "end the polarisation between the Left Front and the Trinamul-BJP."

The PDS is against all forms of dictatorship, including the dictatorship of the proletariat, and will work for democratic socialism. Mr Choudhury, the party president, said at the first party conference. Mr Putatunda is the secretary of the new party.

The CPI-M dismissed PDS as "one more party", adding to the national tally of 44

The CPI-M has more than 227,000 members and not even half a per cent will be swayed by the PDS, said Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary.

Mr Choudhury and Mr Putatunda criticised the CPI-M which they said was not only desperate to cling on to power

but was also ruthlessly in suppressing minority view within the party.

"What sort of democratic party is the CPI-M that drives away members who have sacrificed a lot for it just because their views don't conform to those of the ruling cotene?" Mr Choudhury said.

Mr Putatunda said: "The ruling cotene" believes their's is the last word and the people are ignorant. The CPI-M (he was a district secretary till three days ago) was desperately trying to cover up its failures as the Assembly polls get close. "There will be attacks, including physical, in the next few months, but we have to tackle them politically."

Mr Choudhury too asked the CPI-M not to unleash violence against its opponents.

It's strange, Mr Putatunda said, that as long as he was with the CPI-M, the leadership asked him to work for it, but the moment he left he was being branded an agent of foreign forces.

Mr Anil Biswas shot back saying the party hadn't singled out anyone. "How is it that Mr Putatunda concludes it is he we are referring to?"

Mr Choudhury too repudiated the CPI-M charge that the CIA was funding him. "I am getting funds from the same sources as the CPI-M. If its source is the CIA, so is mine."

He regretted Mr Jyoti Basu's reported remark that the CPI-M would "appropriately deal with" Mr Putatunda. "I don't believe a leader of Mr Basu's stature can make such a remark and it's probably a media distortion. But, if he really said so it is likely to give wrong signals to cadres."

Mrs Tapati Saha, CPI-M MLA from Taltala, joined the PDS.

Putatunda's successor: Mr Abul Bashar has been unanimously elected secretary of the CPI-M's South 24-Parganas committee in place of Mr Samir Putatunda.

■ Photograph on page 3

THE STATESMAN

22 FEB 2001

Wife follows in Putatunda's footsteps

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Feb. 20. — Mr Samir Putatunda's wife, Mrs Anuradha Deb, and a dozen of her colleagues left the CPI-M today to join hands with Mr Saifuddin Choudhury.

Mrs Deb was one of the secretaries of the All India Democratic Women's Organisation's state unit and was an active member of the CPI-M's South 24-Parganas unit for the past three decades.

Meanwhile, the CPI-M today called Mr Putatunda's stated reasons for quitting the party "false". The "political-ideological differences", which he cited as the reason for his leaving the party, were "a cover for his efforts to disrupt the party".

Mrs Deb said the lack of democracy within the party and a series of wrong decisions by the leadership in the past few years had forced her to quit the CPI-M.

She said though some leaders had approached Mr Jyoti Basu to restore democracy in the party, nothing came out of it.

The party, Mrs Deb alleged, had interfered even in the personal lives of some of those who had left. The leaders had once told Mrs Sudeshna Chatterjee, member of the CPI-M's Calcutta district committee, to leave

her husband Mr Subir Chowdhury who quit the party last year, she said. Mr Chowdhury was also a member of the district committee.

Mrs Deb came down on the CPI-M for its failure to curb the violence being spread by the Congress and the Trinamul Congress. She also held the CPI-M responsible for inspiring anti-secular forces through its wrong policies.

Among those who left the party along with Mrs Deb are Mrs Sudeshna Chatterjee and Mrs Madhumita Deb (both mem-

bers of the CPI-M's Calcutta district committee).

The CPI-M, on the other hand, alleged "heinous efforts" were on to disrupt the party "at a time when the Left Front is gearing up to fight the Trinamul-BJP in the Assembly polls".

The political and ideological basis of Mr Putatunda's attack

on the CPI-M has a "social-democratic character which is outside the Marxism-Leninism", the party said.

Trinamul charge: Mr Shovandebe Chattopadhyay (Trinamul MLA), said in the Assembly today that Mr Putatunda's statement yesterday had vindicated the Opposition charge that the Left Front government had failed to develop the state.



Mrs Anuradha Deb announces her decision at a press conference on Tuesday. — The Statesman

THE STATESMAN

21 FEB 2001

Indrajit dies at 82, ✓ funeral on Thursday



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Feb. 20. — CPI leader Indrajit Gupta (82) died at his home in the city early today. He is survived by wife Suraiya Begum, a son and three daughters.

Mr Gupta was suffering from cancer for quite some and was being treated at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi. He was brought to Kolkata on 17 January and sank into coma the next day. The end came at 3.45 a.m.

Mr Gupta was the country's first Communist Union minister and also had the distinction of being the longest serving member of the Lok Sabha.

He headed the CPI and also its trade union wing, the All India Trade Union Congress, for a long time.

The body was taken to SSKM hospital for embalming and then to Peace Haven, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Street, for preservation.

The cremation will take place on Thursday.

The body will be taken Bhupesh Bhawan, CPI state headquarters, before the cremation to enable party workers to pay their last respects.

Both the houses of Parliament were adjourned after condolence references.

Leaders of all parties visited Mr Gupta's home on hearing the news. Among them were Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya, Mr Biman Bose, Mr Saugata Roy, Mr AB Bardhan, Mr Nandagopal Bhattacharya and Mr Gurudas Dasgupta.

Tributes poured in from all parts of the country. Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya described the late Communist as a stalwart of democratic and trade union movements.

"In his death the country has lost a man deeply committed to the welfare of the people and democratic ideas".

Mr Jyoti Basu said: "Fosterity will remember him with reverence". He described Mr Gupta as an "unrelenting champion of the downtrodden" and a man of "indomitable spirit."

The Governor, Mr Viren J Shah, said: "I had the privilege of being personally acquainted with him for more than 35 years. We were friends and it is a personal loss to me".

■ More reports on page 8

THE STATESMAN

21 FEB 2001

Putatunda quits CPM, to join forces with Saif



Mr Samir Putatunda at the press conference where he announced his quit decision. — The Statesman

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Feb. 19. — Mr Samir Putatunda, the CPI-M district secretary of South 24-Parganas, today quit the party, ending his 36 years' association.

Only six days ago Mr Putatunda, sitting beside CPI-M state secretary Mr Anil Biswas at Alimuddin Street, told the Press that he had no plans to leave the party despite his differences with the leadership on ideology and tactics. He had said differences would be sorted out after elections.

What happened in the past few days that prompted him to take the drastic step, Mr Putatunda told reporters today: "After the Alimuddin Street meeting the bitterness only increased...As we in the district went ahead with preparations for the poll, I found my ideas and suggestions clashing with those of the party leadership. It is impossible for me to continue this way any longer. Hence I sent in my resignation letter to the party secretary."

He and Mr Ashish Chatterjee, a Calcutta district committee member of the CPI-M who also decided to leave the party, will join forces with Mr Saifuddin Choudhury to launch a new party on 21 February.

Mr Putatunda finds the Congress to be a natural ally for its "secular" character and the Trinamul his main adversary.

Mr Saifuddin and Mr Putatunda will decide the number of seats their new party will contest after talking to the Congress.

Mr Putatunda, who will not contest in the coming polls, denied that his decision to quit was prompted by his failure to get for his followers party tickets for Assembly polls.

Mr Putatunda claimed many CPI-M leaders have serious differences with the party's ideological and tactical line. "They are still vacillating and I would await their reaction to my decision for the next few days," he said, hinting that these leaders might follow his footsteps.

He said he had no idea about whether Mr Subhash Chakraborty would quit the CPI-M. "I can-

not predict Mr Chakraborty's course of action since he is senior to me. It is a fact that I spoke to him in the morning, but I will not disclose details of our talks."

Mr Chakraborty told reporters in the Assembly lobby that he won't leave the party though he had differences with a section of leaders. "I am not going to quit the party unless I am driven out." The transport minister said the quitting of Mr Putatunda would affect the CPI-M badly. "Those who do not realise this are living in a fool's paradise."

Mr Chowdhury said if the Trinamul Congress severed links with the BJP an alliance with it could be possible. He said: "CPI-M is trying to malign me by saying that I am receiving funds from CIA. If CIA is funding me then, CIA is also funding the CPI-M." Mr Chowdhury said that Left-minded people suffocating in the CPI-M could join him. He said he was getting good response from young people. "The major stress during candidate selection would be on youths."

■ Impact will be temporary: Anil, page 8

THE STATESMAN

20 FEB 2001

Exit could hit CPM where it hurts

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, February 19

AFTER MONTHS of vacillation Samir Putatunda has finally taken the plunge. With the Assembly polls round the corner, the desertion of CPI(M)'s South 24 Parganas district committee secretary is a major jolt to the party. Putatunda bowed out at a time when the party was getting ready to field Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee from Jadavpur to fight the most crucial election.

What was clearly a loss for the CPI(M), was a gain for the expelled party leader Saifuddin Chowdhury.

The Saifuddin camp looked upbeat today. Jana Chetana organisers believe that Putatunda's move would hasten desertion in the CPI(M) South 24 Parganas district committee. SFI district secretary Uttal Ghosh and Mahila Samity leader Anuradha Putatunda will follow suit shortly. Welcoming Putatunda, Saifuddin clarified that the new outfit will contest the Left Front and the Trinamool-BJP combine. "We are thinking of an alliance with Congress only if it doesn't go for a tacit or an overt understanding with the Trinamool and the BJP in the State." Putatunda's resignation has once again kindled speculations over what rebel leader Subhas Chakrabarty would do after February 25 when he gets the final list of candidates.

For the time being, Chakrabarty has decided to train his guns from within. He believes Putatunda's exit is a great loss for the party that will have a negative impact in the coming elections all over the state. "The impact is obvious. Samir was the lieutenant of a district. A house becomes weak even when one of its bricks is taken out. Samir's resignation will send ripples to other districts also. I have spoken to Samir today over telephone. He had called me up. I urged him to keep good terms with the party and see rela-



(Left) Samir Putatunda with Ashish Chatterjee at a press conference in the city on Monday. Photo: Ashok Nath Dey

tions don't get bitter."

State CPI(M) secretary Anil Biswas maintained that it would have no impact on the coming elections. "The Left Front will come to power and Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee would be the Chief Minister," Biswas, however, admitted that the resignation might have a temporary impact at the organisational level. "Some negative features may crop up. We have to repair the damage. I believe that most party members in South Parganas won't follow the Samir way." The South 24 Parganas district committee would soon elect a new secretary to run the show, Biswas said. But Biswas took

enough care to avoid unpleasant remarks against Putatunda. "Communist Party is a voluntary organisation. Anyone is free to leave the party. Samir has pointed to his political differences with the CPI(M). But he had raised his hand while adopting the Updated Party Programme." Closely on Putatunda's heels, rebel leader Subhas Chakrabarty today asserted his political difference with the CPI(M). "I have differences with my party on many aspects. I still maintain that the party's slogan on globalisation is wrong, foolish. Party leaders have mistaken liberalisation for globalisation. How can you ignore globalisation? "It goes

against course of human progress. We should concentrate on its fallout on our economy instead. I have tried in vain to convince my comrades." Chakrabarty also went to question the party's view on revolution. "Those who believe in revolution but admits that it isn't possible at the moment, actually don't know what revolution means. What's the use in ranting revolutionary slogans when we are pursuing parliamentary democracy at the moment."

Scuffing at the renewed rumours, Chakrabarty said, "I won't quit till the party expels me." He also scuttled fears that he was being cornered in the party organisation especially in North 24 Parganas.

'Poll to be a battle of ideology'

HT Correspondent
Ichchapur (North 24-Parganas), February 19

CHIEF MINISTER Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today showed complete non-chalance over Samir Putatunda's decision to quit the CPI(M). Steering clear of the issue, Bhattacharjee slagged off the BJP-led NDA Government for fanning religious sentiments and turning a blind eye to the State. The Chief Minister was speaking at the annual conclave of the Ichchapur Ordinance Factory Mazdur Union.

Putatunda's exit from the party has given rise to speculations about its effect on the coming Assembly elections. Bhattacharjee is set to contest from a seat in the district, which till today, Putatunda headed. "I have nothing to say on this matter," Bhattacharjee told reporters. Chief Minister told the gathering that the ensuing poll will be between those who believed in ideology and others who didn't.

Launching a scathing attack on the Centre over the callous attitude in giving relief to a State devastated by flood, Bhattacharjee said that he meeting with the Prime Minister was of no avail. In what would be used extensively as a poll plank, Bhattacharjee said,

"Our estimated loss was pegged at Rs 6,000 crore. Of this we wanted just Rs 1,487 crore but they gave us just Rs 103 crore."

Taking a cue from his predecessor Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister alleged that the BJP Government was acting as a RSS stooge in fanning religious sentiments just for the sake of



votes. They are dragging religion into politics, he said citing the Prime Minister's reported statement that the Babri demolition was "an act of national sentiment".

He also accused the NDA Government for blindly imitating Manmohan Singh's liberalisation policies. The Congress itself has understood Singh's wrong policies and have now eased him out of their policy-making body but the BJP Government is moving on the same track. These are segregating a few elite from the vast majority of the poor masses, he said. He said that the Government was blindly toeing America's diktats without pondering on its implications.

"They want our markets but would they allow us to sell our product in theirs," he said, amid wide applause. He told the gathering that multinational companies are now flooding our markets with everything often at the cost of home grown products.

Storm clouds over CPM yet to clear

Saugata Roy
Kolkata, February 18

SAMIR PUTATUNDA might have signalled peace with CPI(M) mandarins, but the rebel in him, it seems, hasn't died down.

The South 24-Parganas unit, of which he is district secretary, remains in ferment. That perhaps explains why, despite a peace conclave with heavyweights such as Jyoti Basu and Anil Biswas, he hasn't been able to submit his list of poll nominees from his district within the stipulated February 10 deadline.

The man himself says he hasn't made up his mind on leaving the party yet. "You will get to know my decision in a day or two," He says

he isn't "averse to Saifuddin Chowdhury".

Putatunda believes that the party blundered in letting Saifuddin go.

"I still believe he's an asset. He has created a precedence by asking for a respectable separation with the party." Days after both Subhas Chakrabarty and Putatunda went public with their decisions

to remain in the party, the signal that emanated from Alimuddin Street was that a wedge had successfully been driven in the liberal camp. But that doesn't seem to be the case.

The liberals are still eager to take the plunge. Ashis Chatterjee, party Kolkata district committee mem-

ber, is a case in point.

Tomorrow, he and several others are set to break away from their party and join Saifuddin's outfit - Party For Democratic Socialism.

Chatterjee's desertion could well trigger a spate of similar departures from the party ranks in Behala.

Putatunda's views have few takers in the South 24-Parganas leadership, however. But party men in Canning, Gosaba, Basanti and Diamond Harbour are with him. They are only waiting for a signal from him.

Sensing the mood, party hardliners in the district are putting together a shadow election

machinery, just in case Putatunda and his followers break ranks before the polls.

The situation is much the same in North 24-Parganas. Subhas Chakrabarty has left his leaders guessing over his stand on contesting from Belgachia (East).

The Jana Chetana Mancha wouldn't say a word on who they are expecting to join, but sounds upbeat on having more friends in the days to come.

"We don't emphasise on individuals. We have initiated a process only—one that's irreversible because it addresses the reality. We thank those in the CPI(M) who have helped us carve out our path," manich spokesperson Tapas Basu said.

Desertion Fears

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 FEB 2001

'Betrayed' Saifuddin rings party bell

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Malda, Feb. 14: Axed by the CPM and betrayed by Samir Putatunda, Saifuddin Chowdhury will wait no longer. He will float his party in Calcutta on February 21.

Saifuddin sounded angry and hurt when he told reporters here that he had waited so long for Putatunda, secretary of the South 24-Parganas CPM unit, to join him. But Putatunda, who had openly criticised the CPM on several occasions and egged Saifuddin to float a new party, had a sudden change of heart and decided not to break ranks with the CPM.

When reminded that Putatunda was to have become the general-secretary of his party, Saifuddin said: "Samir is not joining my party because he will be made a general-secretary of the CPM."

A number of local CPM workers and Left party leaders and functionaries of the Jana Chetana Manch attended the press meet. Local CPM leader Gautam Das and Surya Roy, a former CPI

leader of Malda, were among those present.

Chowdhury said his outfit was most likely to be called Party for Democratic Socialism. "But I will formally announce the name of the party at a political convention at the University Institute Hall in Calcutta on February 21."

He was not sorry, he said, that Putatunda or Subhas Chakraborty, another CPM rebel, had not joined his party. "If Samir and Subhasda can remain in the CPM with full honour and prestige, I have nothing to say. I don't want to do them any harm. Maybe they did not want to join a small party like mine," he said.

"But one could say that things got a lot delayed. My endeavour is not to break people away from their parties. I am also not angry with those who backed out at the last moment. Even if I don't have front-ranking leaders with me, people at the grassroots level will be the main strength of the secular party I have in mind," Chowdhury said.

Asked whether he would consider returning to the CPM if there was such a proposal, Chowdhury said the policies of the CPM-led Left Front were not in tune with the times. "If the CPM ever considers deviating from its stand, then only will I consider such a proposal. But I know it will not," he said.

Chowdhury predicted a hung Assembly in the state after the polls. "The *mahajot* will not materialise and no single party will get an absolute majority. So, chances are high that the CPM-led Left Front will again come to power," he added.

The former CPM central committee member said he had held discussions about his proposed secular-democratic party with others and would hold talks with other national political leaders after February 21.

Chowdhury will undertake a tour of the North Bengal districts from February 25 and, if needed, he will also hold discussions with the Kamtapuri People's Party.

THE ...

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Saifuddin to go ahead with rebel party

Trs J.F.P. BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CPM

Calcutta, Feb. 7: State transport minister Subhas Chakraborty's decision to remain in the CPM will not stand in the way of rebel leader Saifuddin Chowdhury's move to float a new party by the third week of February.

"We will certainly form a new party on February 20 and expect all right-thinking people to join it to champion the people's cause," Chowdhury said. He now heads the Jana Chetana Manch.

Chowdhury, who returned to the city from Delhi this morning, addressed a modest rally in north Calcutta this evening where he stressed the need to float the proposed outfit. A veteran CPM leader and former MLA from Murshidabad, Muzammel Haque, who joined Chowdhury's camp today, was present at the public meeting. The CPM, however, refused to attach any importance to the development.

Reacting to Chakraborty's decision not to quit the CPM, Chowdhury said: "Subhasda showed keen interest on joining the proposed new party when I discussed it with him. But I have nothing to do if he changes his mind."

The rebel leader, however, said he was confident of roping in South 24-Parganas district CPM secretary Samir Putatunda for the new outfit. "I will meet him (Putatunda) in a day or two to discuss the matter," he added.

When contacted, Putatunda refused to comment on whether he would quit the CPM and join Chowdhury's outfit. He, however, did not rule out meeting Chowdhury within the next couple of days. "I am not averse to discussing certain things with Chowdhury," he said.

However, sources close to Putatunda hinted that he has made up his mind to join Chowdhury's camp and will take a final decision in the next few days.

THE TELEGRAM

7 8 FEB 2001

Citu, Subhas in tit-for-tat rallies

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SUBHAS:

KOLKATA, Feb. 4. — The Citu will hold a rally of unorganised-sector workers in the city on 2 March. It will be addressed by Mr Jyoti Basu.

Announcing this at a press conference today, Mr Chittabrata Majumder, Citu general secretary, was hard put to explain whether the rally is the Citu's response to the "challenge" from Mr Subhas Chakraborty, who plans a similar rally on 19 February.

In fact, Mr Chakraborty thought of his rally much earlier than the Citu had planned its. Asked whether Mr Chakraborty will be invited to the Citu rally, Mr Majumdar said it's not standard practice to invite any individual leader. But he expected that Mr Chakraborty, being a Citu leader, will attend the rally.

He denied knowledge of Mr Chakraborty's rally of 19 February. "I have read in the papers that a Citu-affiliated union has planned to hold the rally. There's nothing wrong in such a rally, but no centralised rally other than the one we have decided will be held."

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5/2 (Continued from page 1)

reporters that all speculation should stop. "I'm a straightforward person and have always been guided by my conscience. I want to follow it now as I have in the past, and work for the greater interest of the people."

The only clear statement on the subject came from the chief minister — Mr Chakraborty's co-traveller on Darjeeling Mail during Friday night's journey to Siliguri. Mr Bhattacharya brushed off suggestions that his transport minister would leave the party.

"It's a load of rubbish, just a rumour being spread by the media. Mr Chakraborty is very much with the CPI-M," he said in Siliguri.

Today, no CPI-M leader came to meet Mr Chakraborty at the Pathik Motel, barely 100 metres from the Durgapur no. 2 zonal CPI-M headquarters. Mr Mrinal Baherjee, state power minister, was invited but kept away. Mr Chakraborty, however, held a series of closed-door meetings with leaders of various other parties. What had they discussed?

The transport minister stonewalled this too. "Is there anything that I am hiding? Can you float a party secretly?" Then he added: "Do you reveal your family secrets? Why should I then talk about my organisation freely?"

It was left to Mr Chandranath Mukherjee to tell reporters: "Subhasda has ordered us to look for a convenient date when many people from various parties will come together and join us."

"We have already prepared our party flag. It will be red with a white full moon and a red star."

Mr Chakraborty couldn't be checked out on that — he was already gone.

THE STATESMAN

5 FEB 2001

Subhas won't leave us: Anil

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BUDDHA UNFAZED

KOLKATA, Jan. 30. — The CPI-M state secretary, Mr Anil Biswas, today discounted the possibility of transport minister, Mr Subhas Chakraborty, leaving the party.

"Why should he? He is a leader of our party," Mr Biswas said while reacting to a claim by former CPI-M MP Mr Saifuddin Choudhury yesterday that Mr Chakraborty would soon join the Jana Chetana Manch.

The CPI-M state secretary made light of a reported late night meeting between Mr Chakraborty and PCC chief, Mr Pranab Mukherjee. "Is there any bar on holding such meetings during the day?" he asked.

Mr Biswas ruled out any tie-up between the controversial minister and the Congress.

On the other hand, the Jana Chetana Manch reiterated

KOLKATA, Jan. 30. — Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya seems unconcerned about reports that Mr Subhas Chakraborty is planning to float a party. "He (Mr Chakraborty) has only one party and that is the CPI-M," the chief minister said.

Mr Chakraborty has been making noises against Mr Bhattacharya ever since he took over as chief minister. He fell out with Mr Bhattacharya over the Hrithik Roshan show held at the Salt Lake Stadium in December. Mr Chakraborty played a key role in organising the show. — SNS

today it is a certainty that Mr Chakraborty will leave the CPI-M and join force with Mr Choudhury. It, however, clarified that it is wrong to

interpret that Mr Chakraborty will join Mr Choudhury's party.

Mr Tapas Basu, a key manch leader, said: "Mr Chakraborty does not need to join Mr Choudhury's party. It should be put this way — Mr Chakraborty, Mr Choudhury, Mr Samir Putatunda, CPI-M's South 24-Parganas district secretary and other important leaders representing Left and democratic forces, will be architects of the new party to be formed soon."

Sources close to Mr Chakraborty also asked why the minister should join Mr Choudhury's outfit. "If Mr Chakraborty decides to leave the CPI-M, he will himself launch a party rather than join another," the sources said.

The manch is upbeat over the reinduction of Mr Chakraborty in the CPI-M's North 24-Parganas district secretariat at the intervention of Mr Jyoti Basu last week.

"The new arrangement that the CPI-M has made is really irrelevant. If the party wants to honour a leader of Mr Chakraborty's calibre, it should have offered him a berth in the party's central committee or a key position at the state level organisation. I have no business to say so since I no longer belong to the party. But I can't help commenting on the matter, since I have long been associated with the party till I quit it," Mr Basu said.

Mr Subhas Chakraborty's plan, however, remains a closely guarded secret. In fact, he has been making ambiguous statements for some time. Once he hurled caustic comments at the CPI-M leadership and in the same breath died he had ever spoken of leaving the party.

"This is only natural. No politician will disclose such plans till they are implemented," Mr Basu added.

We may decide next govt: Saif

MIDNAPORE, Jan. 30. — The Jana Chetana Manch, to be launched in February, might be a deciding factor in the formation of the next government in the state. Mr Saifuddin Choudhury said here today.

Compared to the other two fronts — the CPI-M and Trinamul-BJP combine — Jana Chetana Manch's prospects were bright, he claimed. The manch would not support the Trinamul-BJP in any eventuality, Mr Choudhury said. He said the manch would keep away from the Trinamul because of its links with the BJP. He wondered how Miss Mamata Banerjee spoke of secularism when the BJP was keeping the Mandir issue alive. — SNS

SUBHAS FACTOR

CPI-M fails to tackle defiance

WHAT Anil Biswas and Subhas Chakravarty have said in the last few days is unprecedented by Marxist standards. It also shows the helplessness of the state CPI-M. Biswas's admission that many party MLAs have written to him that they would not contest the poll, at least on a CPI-M ticket, is unparalleled. Nor for that matter has any Marxist minister openly taunted the selection process as Subhas has done. Conformism has never been Subhas's forte. But his pragmatic and non-Marxian stand on issues like inner-party democracy, bandhs and privatisation of PSUs has been completely out of tune with the party line causing considerable discomfiture to the leadership. Having got a raw deal despite being one of the main founders, organisers and fund raisers of the CPI-M in West Bengal, Subhas is out to wreak vengeance on those who have used him for their selfish ends and then not hesitated to stab him in the back. Since he is the only leader with a mass following, Alimuddin Street is afraid that any attempt to rein him in through tough action may have a disastrous fallout on the assembly election. It was to placate him that he was reinducted into the party's north 24-Parganas district secretariat which of course is not going to revise his decision to quit the CPI-M and launch a new party. For party apparatchiks, the situation has never been worse, despite inane noises from Jyoti Basu.

This is because the party has learnt to make compromises not only on ideals but also its integrity and character. This has taken a heavy toll of the party's image and credibility. The reason why some MLAs have not sought renomination is that they stand little chance to win as either they or their party lieutenants by their words and deeds have antagonised a significant section of the electorate. Corruption has been so thoroughly institutionalised and legitimised by the Marxists that misdeeds and even excesses of Congress rule pale into insignificance. The spread of "bourgeois vices" has been so rapid and widespread that even grassroots comrades have managed to build two storeyed houses or buy flats in posh Calcutta neighbourhoods although they have no ostensible sources of income. While nominating candidates the state leadership will have no choice but to replace many old faces with new ones. Surely something more radical is needed to salvage the situation. This is an impossibly tall order.

THE STATESMAN

28 JAN 2001

Stage set for Subhas to quit party

Arindam Sarkar
Kolkata, January 12

SUBHAS CHAKRABARTY has lately been daring the CPI(M) leadership to throw him out of the party. If it does not oblige, the controversial State Transport Minister may quit the CPI(M) soon, say party sources.

Taking the cue from expelled CPI(M) leader Saifuddin Chowdhury, Chakrabarty has challenged party mandarins to expel him. At a meeting in Kalyani yesterday, he said: "If the party wants, why can't it expel me?"

The battlelines were long drawn between the party hardliners and liberals—Chakrabarty's camp. The end of the tussle is now in sight with Chakrabarty apparently deciding at last to sever the ties going back four decades. It is just a matter of time before he quits the CPI(M), say party insiders.

Party colleagues close to him—South 24-Parganas district secretary Samir Putatunda, Saifuddin Chowdhury and Tarit Topdar—are unwilling to disclose the timing. But Chakrabarty's lieutenants say he

would definitely leave the party before the Election Commission notification on State polls.

Others say he could take the plunge even before the State committee finalises the list of candidates for the forthcoming Assembly polls because the roll would reveal that partymen close to him in North 24-Parganas were denied tickets—a sign of how Chakrabarty has been marginalised.

The chances of Chakrabarty opting to move out of the party gains ground with the State Transport Minister losing his toehold in the North 24-Parganas district secretariat. This makes it easier for district secretary Amitava Basu and secretariat member Amitava Nandi—his two most powerful opponents in the district unit—to ensure that Chakrabarty is unable to secure ticket for his men

in the forthcoming polls.

Moreover, sources in the Chakrabarty camp has got the word that the party would go all out to defeat him at the hustings. And even if he manages to win, he would not be included in the sixth Left Front Government should it come to power.

"Considering the kind of flak Subhas is facing, it would very difficult for him to remain in the party for long. As for us, we will definitely float a new party that would make deep inroads into the Left and Trinamool bastions.

We will play a very crucial role after the polls," Saifuddin Chowdhury told The Hindustan Times.

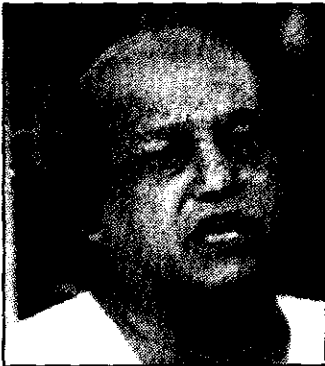
But is the CPI(M) bothered about the consequences? According to sources, Politburo members Jyoti Basu, Sitaram Yechury and CPI(M) general secretary Harkishen Singh

Surjeet are working overtime to pacify the party's enfant terrible. But party mandarins—State secretary Anil Biswas, central committee member Nirupam Sen and State secretariat member Surjya Kanta Mishra—believe that there is no point speculating.

Speculations were not confined to the State Transport Minister's standing in the party alone. The impact of Subhas' probable absence on the CPI(M)'s vote bank is under the scanner. But the party leadership refused to be drawn into the controversy. Without referring to him, Biswas said: "Do you think in our party individuals matter? It's the CPI(M) everywhere."

"People come and people go, but the party will remain," believes Nirupam Sen. As for Mishra, he said: "Look, even the expulsion of Nripen Chakrabarty in Tripura didn't have any impact on the fortunes of the CPI(M). So we are not bothered about such things."

But the man in the spotlight had the last word in. "I will do exactly what I want to. As for the rest, it is for them to speculate. But whatever I do, it will be pro-people."



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 JAN 2001

Saifuddin strikes out with new party

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, February 21

THE SEARCH for a third alternative outside the Left Front and the Trinamool-BJP combine finally took political shape today with the emergence of a new outfit — the Party for Democratic Socialism.

Saifuddin Chowdhury and former CPI(M) district secretary Samir Putatunda announced its formation at a political conference held at the University Institute Hall. A red flag with a white circle in the middle and red star embossed on it is the PDS banner. "The newborn party will aim at breaking polarities that have stagnated the State's development," Chowd-

hury said. "We'll look for a middle path between the orthodox Left and the reactionary Right with the Congress as our ally."

But it will consider the option only if the State Congress doesn't strike a deal with the Trinamool-BJP combine for sheer electoral gains. Chowdhury has made this clear to AICC general secretary in charge of West Bengal Kamal Nath.

The conference today elected Chowdhury and Putatunda as its State president and general secretary. Putatunda announced a 58-member State PDS committee and 18 member State secretariat to plan strategy for the electoral battle ahead.

Members of breakaway groups from Left front con-

stituents, the Indian Labour Party and individuals such as CPI(M) M.L.A. from Taltala Dr Tapati Saha joined the PDS.

Chowdhury, while making public the PDS programme and constitution stressed on transparency and democracy within the organisation and respect for the minority view. "We have dropped the communist concept of democratic centralism, which only helps breed a suffocating mindless autocracy. Members who hold the minority view are marginalised and even ostracized. Don't dissenters have the right to live with self-respect," Chowdhury asked.

He rubbished the need for command systems, whether in polity or economy. "They have

led to the fall many socialist countries. Instead, we should nurture pluralism in all forms."

The gathering and the mood at the PDS today indicated the new outfit could emerge as a potent force in the coming elections. The new party might damage the CPI(M)'s poll prospects in the marginal seats and emerge as a force to reckon with in districts such as Nadia and Murshidabad. It appears that the new PDS secretary is yet to forget his wounds. He took on the CPI(M) for its "double standards" and its "hankering for power". Digressing from Chowdhury's low-key approach, Putatunda urged his colleagues for an "aggressive political campaign against the opponents."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 FEB 2001

Left wants Govt. to consult all parties

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 25. The CPI and the RSP today suggested that the Government have wider consultations among Opposition parties on the current situation instead of just the main party, while the CPI(M) stuck to its guns.

Reacting to reports that the BJP-led Government had kept the Congress, the principal party in the Opposition, informed of its decision to recall the Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, the CPI disagreed with the approach.

"This approach is not proper as if consulting the major political party is enough. This could mean that a regional party which may not become a major political party would never be consulted. Opposition is not a bloc", the CPI National Secretary, Mr D Raja, told *The Hindu* here.

He said in India, multi-party democracy is at work and Opposition parties determine the

stand on issues based on ideology. Identical views could emerge on some issues, which lead to coordination among various parties in the Opposition.

"Wider consultation by the Government is always good. People should be taken into confidence," he said charging the BJP-led Government with trying to use the current situation to its political advantage.

The CPI which had warned the Government that taking military action against terrorist camps across the border could lead to a full-scale war, reiterated that the Government should build international opinion and strengthen its intelligence gathering machinery.

The Revolutionary Socialist Party, too echoed similar views while emphasising that the Government should take the people into confidence before launching military operation. Mr. Abani Roy, RSP's Rajya Sabha member, said consulting the major party in the

Opposition was not enough. "The Government should take into confidence all political parties. It is a multi-party system".

While noting that the decision to recall the High Commissioner to Pakistan has created some "pressure", he said the Government should also take steps against terrorists inside the country before contemplating strikes across the border. G.P.P. CPI(M)

However, the CPI(M) said it was not in favour of whipping it up as an issue. The party general secretary, Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, said that the Opposition suggestion to the Government to take "other steps" seemed to be at work. "We have been saying that the Government make use of all avenues to build world opinion," he said noting that the response of the international community appeared to be emerging. The CPI too felt that the Government should pursue with its diplomatic steps.

THE HINDU

26 DEC 2001

CPM purges 17 in clean-up drive

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, December 16

IN A sweeping drive to cleanse the party of corrupting influences and check factionalism, the CPI(M) today expelled 17 members, sending strong signals of caution down the rank and file of the organisation. The move follows recommendations from the districts.

The 24th state committee meeting took the decision today, in the presence of Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and Left Front chairman Biman Bose.

The meeting discussed threadbare reports about organisational weakness in certain areas where the party has lost touch with the masses because of inadequate initia-

tives to address pressing problems. The leaders also discussed how development was tardy in some areas.

CPI(M) State secretary Anil Biswas was happy with the party's "inherent discipline and unity", but said there was no scope for complacency. The party thinks it needs more youths and women in its fold, and that there is a need for greater political awareness among existing members.

The CPI(M) State committee discussed Poto, and members said that it was foolhardy for the BJP and its allies to push the legislation through in a hurry. The CPI(M) leaders, however, carefully avoided discussing Poto.

"The Ordinance had been passed, but even that couldn't stop the terrorists from storming Parliament. Instead of framing new laws, the ideal approach of fighting terrorism would be through political deliberations," the party State secretary said.

With the party congress due soon, leaders discussed at length the problems of organisation. A new panel of leaders was formed to look after organisational affairs at the district and zonal levels.

The leaders also stressed the need to check efforts to malign the party at the grassroots.



ANIL BISWAS

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 DEC 2001

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People at war

9-P.P. U.P.M.L.

"The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy's not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable."
— Sun Tzu in "The Art of War".

WAR IT is between the Indian state and the naxalites who have suddenly struck with renewed vigour and reach. The Centre has used the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) to ban the CPI(ML)-People's War (the PWG) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), the two outfits which are the most active.

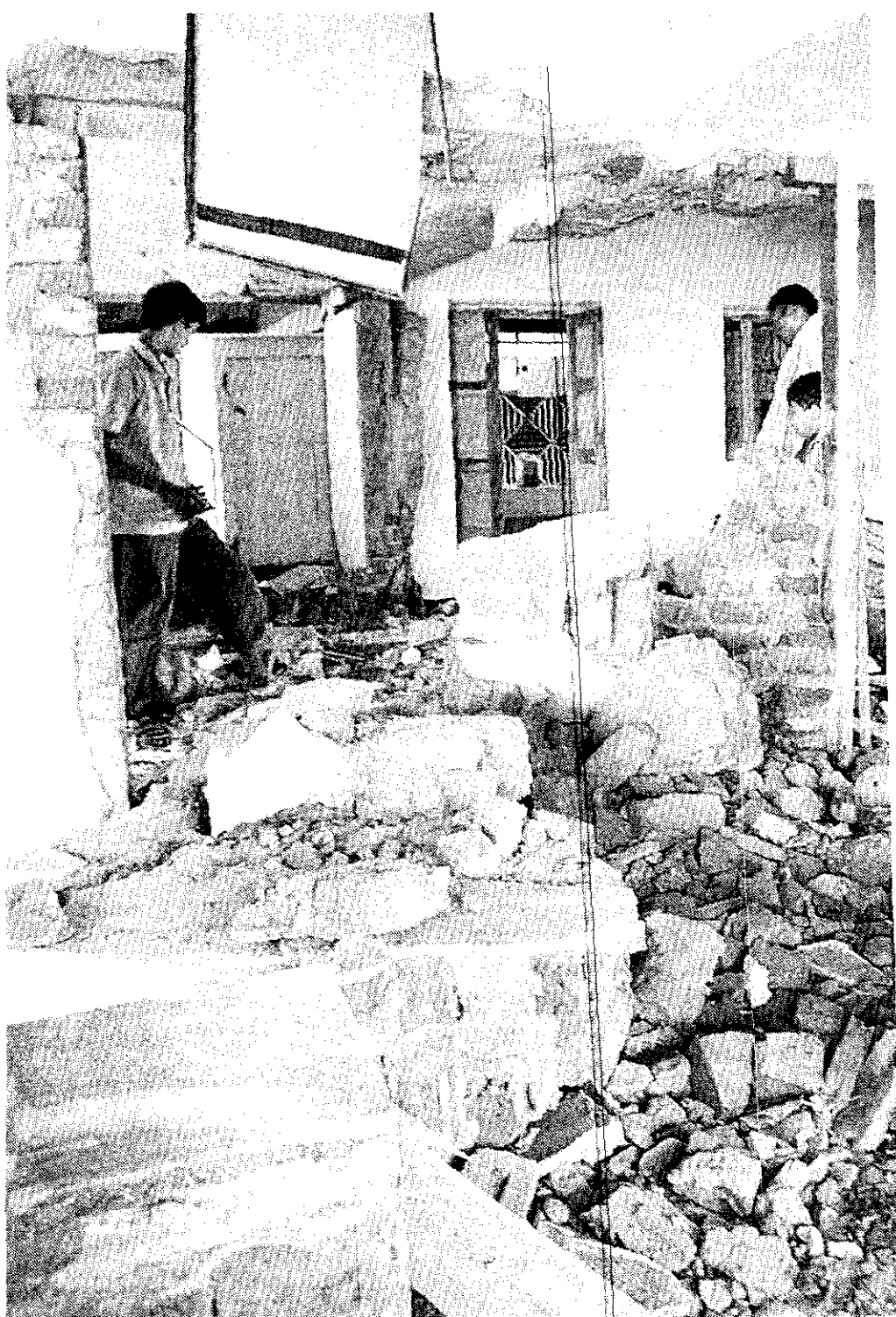
Earlier, when Andhra Pradesh took the lead in combating naxalism by proscribing the PWG, neighbouring Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh did not show the same enthusiasm. Perhaps, the limited operations of the PWG in the forest areas abutting Andhra Pradesh lulled them into a false sense of security. Either way, the decision-makers always believed that left-wing extremism was more a problem to be tackled by Andhra Pradesh alone.

Now all that has changed. Though Andhra Pradesh bore the brunt of the recent upsurge in naxalite violence, Chhatisgarh and Orissa were also affected. There are also indications that the ultras may be working closer with the Maoists in Nepal.

A difference between the MCC in Bihar and the PWG in Andhra Pradesh is that the latter managed to spread its activities to new areas despite severe repression. The PWG has spread its activity to Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Chhatisgarh — partly because of the contiguous forest area, Dandakaranya, that runs through these States. In these areas, the PWG had been taking up the issues of tribals and uniting them to fight the Government.

But Andhra Pradesh is where its growth has been most spectacular. In the semi-forest areas and the plains, the PWG has succeeded in building up its movement despite the loss of several of its important cadres and gradually taken the naxalite movement from the organisation phase to the guerilla warfare stage.

The PWG, which strictly adheres to tactics and strategies employed by Mao Zedong during the Great March, now enjoys considerable sway in as many as 15 districts in Andhra Pradesh. It has already formed two primary-level guerrilla



The destruction at an MLA's house in Visakhapatnam district which was targeted by

The formation of the People's Guerilla Army has led to a regroup of the naxalites. K. Srinivas Reddy details the developments in the recent upsurge in violence.

zones — one consisting of five districts of North Telangana and the second comprising the north coastal districts of Srikakulam,

Vizianagaram, the agency areas of Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh and Malkangiri, Ganjam, Gajapati,

Koraput and Raig Orissa. Intelligence sources also believe that the PWG lea-



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with the idea of forming 'base areas' in the large tracts of forest in Andhra Pradesh. A guerilla zone, according to PWG strategy, is an area where the revolutionary and the 'reactionary state' are equally placed fighting for control of the area. The base area formation would technically be the later stage of the guerilla zone where the 'revolutionaries' win the battle with the state and establish their control and governance in an area.

Is the PWG really in such a strong position? The police believe that the group's total strength in Andhra Pradesh does not exceed 1,000 underground cadres and that they do not have more than 800 guns which range from the Chinese-made Kalashnikovs to crude single-shot weapons, popularly known as *tapanchas*.

How could such a small force (when compared to the massive strength of the police) become a constant source of annoyance for the State Governments? The answer to this question lies in the 'three S' advantage of the PWG — secrecy, speed and surprise. In addition is its well-knit secret organisational structure.

Indeed, in the late 1990s, the police managed to get an upperhand through sustained anti-extremist programmes such as increased combing operations, the development of a vast informant network and, of course, by seriously addressing the people's problems. Be it primary health care or education, laying roads or providing some employment opportunities for the rural populace. Over a period of about five years, the Andhra Pradesh Government managed to really involve the people in development works seriously and the police did get an upperhand.

Scores of top cadres of the PWG including three Central Committee members and many underground squads were 'liquidated'. Essentially, the police used the ultras' strategy against them. The highly-trained Grey Hounds police unit was deployed which effectively used the '3S' formula.

So, obviously the naxalites had to bring about some changes in their mode of functioning. Thus was born the People's Guerilla Army (PGA). All squads and other party organisations functioning in the plains were summoned to the forest areas. The PWG created platoons consisting of 30 to 40 armed extremists to move in the forest areas. According to intelligence sources, there are seven platoons in operation in Andhra Pradesh and along its borders at present.

The formation of the PGA appears to have helped the naxalites regroup. For one, it has increased the sense of security among the underground cadre and stemmed the spate of surrenders. For another, the military nomenclature and structure and the carefully-planned attacks on police stations (in Orissa as well as Andhra Pradesh) has boosted morale.

The PGA formation also came at a crucial time for another reason. The PWG had extended its network to Bihar after another splinter group, Party Unity, merged with it. Though talks with the MCC for achieving a broad understanding for working towards a common goal could not be reached, there was a cessation of armed conflict between the two.

Internationally also, the PWG has been getting good exposure. Its representatives had attended an international seminar organised by the Workers Party of Belgium (WPB) in Brussels and the PWG managed to get other Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties from Brazil, Chad, Mexico, Nepal, Philippines, Senegal and the United States to endorse "the people's war being led by the working class in India".

The Maoist uprising in Nepal has also come as a shot in the arm for the naxalites in India. The success stories of the CPN have obviously enthused the PWG cadres. The PWG had already brought into operation a plan to open a "revolutionary"

corridor between Nepal and North Telangana (Nepal to Dandakaranya) traversing through Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh.

It was against this backdrop that the naxalites recently stepped up violent activities, in Andhra Pradesh and its neighbouring States, to mark the first anniversary of the PGA's formation. In a clever change of strategies, the PGA has been targeting multinational companies (MNCs) and also properties owned by politicians.

In Andhra Pradesh alone, it blasted a granite unit owned by the Union Minister of State for Defence, Mr. U.V. Krishnam Raju, in Medak district and the Heritage Milk chilling unit in Chittoor district owned by the family of the Chief Minister, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu. The Coca Cola manufacturing unit in Guntur and the Tata instant coffee making unit in Medak were also destroyed by the PGA during last fortnight.

In Orissa, a Minister's house was blasted while in Maharashtra two police stations came under attack. One more police station was targeted in Chhatisgarh. Though the PWG does not generally resort to acts which endanger the life of the common man, its targeting of elected representatives and MNCs must have pushed the Centre to ban it under POTO.

How it's run

SEVERAL DOCUMENTS seized by the police after exchanges with the People's Guerilla Army (PGA) throw light on the tightly-knit outfit.

The platoons and the Special Action Teams are the main force of the PGA, while Special Guerilla Squads (SGS) and Local Guerilla Squads (LGS) constitute the secondary force. The base force of the PGA comprises the Village Defence Squads (VDS) and the Area Defence Squads (ADS).

Ideological and military direction comes from the Central Military Commission (CMC) which functions under the control of the all-powerful Central Committee. The CMC is headed by the secretary of the Central Committee. The CMC's responsibilities include giving a military, ideological and political direction to the PGA, supply of weaponry and ammunition, intelligence and communications. Under the CMC,

each State has a separate State Military Commission (SMC) headed by the State Committee secretary.

Each SMC is assisted by Sub-Zonal Military Commands headed by a State Committee member. Each district or division has another committee exclusively for military works. The Sub-Zonal Committees lead the military platoons in the State.

Each platoon mounts offensives on the "enemy" with the help of the secondary and the base forces in the district. The specific task of the platoons is to attack the "enemy" and seize weapons and provide protection to party units.

The LGS help the PGA in military tasks and also help the party in mobilising and indoctrinating people. The people's militia units and other organisations participate in military exercises on the instructions of the area committees. — **K.S.R**

Terror stamp on PWG before law legitimacy

FROM SEEMA GUHA

New Delhi, Dec. 5: The Centre today used the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance to outlaw the People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Centre.

It was the opportunity L.K. Advani had been looking for to drive home that the nation urgently needed tough laws to deal with the unprecedented terrorist threat.

Andhra Pradesh chief minister Chandrababu Naidu, a crucial NDA ally, gave North Block the perfect excuse. Faced with increasing attacks from the PWG, he had been urging the Centre to declare it a terrorist organisation and ban it country-wide. It is outlawed in Andhra.

The PWG recently unleashed a wave of violence in Andhra, targeting units belonging to the families of Naidu and Union minister Krishnam Raju. Last month, the Naxalites kidnapped relatives of Vidyasagar Rao, minister of state for home. While banning the PWG, the Centre included the MCC in the net.

Advani had hinted last week that the Centre was considering Naidu's request. "These outfits and all their formations and front organisations have been declared as terrorist organisations with immediate effect," he announced today.

Naidu was measured in his reaction, merely saying it would now be possible to effectively contain the PWG menace. "What is MCC?" he asked his secretaries. When told that it was another Naxalite group, he said: "It is good that such Left groups are being banned."

The PWG and the MCC have joined the ranks of 23 militant groups banned under the Ordinance. Others include the Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Harkat-ul Mujahideen and Hizb-ul Mujahideen.

The use of the Ordinance a day after an all-party meeting called by the Prime Minister ended in deadlock, is, in a way, a slap in the face of the Opposition.

The People's Union of Civil Liberties was scathing in its reaction. President K.G. Kannabiran said the ban was "totally un-

democratic" and uncalled for in view of the outcry against the Ordinance. He said the ban would not have any effect on the functioning of the PWG. "The PWG would not have survived for the last 35 years and spread to five states if it did not have the support of the people," he said.

The Maoist uprising in Nepal coupled with violence unleashed by Naxalite groups in Andhra, Bihar and Orissa, has been worrying security officials. Delhi knows the Maoists have close links with India's extreme left-wing guerrillas and unless they are reined in, they could pose a security threat.

Intelligence officials talked of a "red corridor" extending from western Nepal, through Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Andhra, Madhya Pradesh and parts of Maharashtra.

The agencies fear that unless the government takes action, an extreme-left movement may sweep through the heartland. Considering the poverty and unemployment in these areas, a Maoist movement could catch the people's imagination.

... deputy, but no shots with PM

- 6 DEC 2001

HD-1

Naxals go on the rampage in A.P.

112

By Our Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD, NOV. 30. Large-scale destruction of property by the naxalites of the People's War Group in Medak and Chittoor districts of Andhra Pradesh — where the extremists targeted a granite-making factory owned by the family members of the Union Minister of State for Defence, Mr. U. V. Krishnam Raju, and the Heritage milk chilling unit owned by the family members of the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu, — marked the first anniversary of the formation of the People's

Guerrilla Army, on Thursday.

Besides blasting the two establishments, the PWG cadre also attacked an instant coffee-making unit of a multinational company and snatched a pistol from the retired Air Chief Marshal Dennis La Fontaine in Medak in the early hours of Friday. Two houses of the ruling TDP activists in Medak and Warangal districts were also blasted.

The sudden upswing in naxalite violence barely two days before the proposed visit of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to Hyderabad on Sunday, has forced the State police to de-

clare a high state of alert throughout Andhra Pradesh.

The PWG violence was discussed at a meeting of District Collectors and Superintendents of Police, convened by Mr. Naidu, here today. The differences between IAS and IPS officers, on talks with the PWG, were evident at the meeting. While one Collector suggested that the Government start negotiations with the outfit, a senior SP objected to the proposal saying no negotiations should be commenced before the PWG laid down arms.

Mr. Naidu had earlier expressed his anguish over the spate of vio-

lence and said the State was losing investments because of such acts.

That the PWG would resort to large-scale violence was anticipated because it had announced that the PCA anniversary would be observed throughout the State till December 7.

The Indupriyal and Narsapur squads, assisted by youngsters, attacked the granite factory and blasted the generator room and administrative building around 3.30 a.m. Simultaneously, another squad attacked the manufacturing unit of Tata Coffee Limited.

S.P.F. CPIML

THE HINDU

1 DEC 2001

Naxalites shift focus to another Orissa district

11/12 HT-6
HT Correspondent
Bhubaneswar, December 14

AFTER MALKANGIRI it could now be the turn of Mayurbhanj district to be in the line of Naxalite fire.

Following the series of offensives in the southern districts of the State over the last few months, the Left wing extremists, according to Intelligence sources, are preparing to attack Government establishments in northern parts of the State, particularly Mayurbhanj district. Intelligence sources disclosed that the Maoist Communist Centre, which enjoys a stronghold over neighbouring Jharkhand, is spreading its tentacles over Mayurbhanj, Sundergarh and Keonjhar districts.

Information gathered by the State Intelligence wing reveals that the Naxalites are planning to attack the Bangiriposi and Jharpokharia police stations as well as the Mayurbhanj district armoury. Sources said, the ultras are intensifying their movement to inveigle local youths and are increasing distribution of their literature through pamphlets and posters in the northern districts. Meanwhile, the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist)-People's War had organised an arms training camp recently inside the Salibi forest, on the Rayagada-Koraput border, for local recruits.

A police official admitted that the Naxalite groups were intensifying their activities in Mayurbhanj and other northern districts in addition to the KBK districts and said the police was on the alert to take on the Naxalite challenge. The State BJP on Sunday expressed concern over the rise in Naxalite menace in the southern districts of Orissa. On the concluding day of the two-day State executive meeting of BJP at Jagatpur, the party passed a resolution demanding stringent action to curb the Naxalite movement.

Keeping in view the forthcoming polls, the party decided to strengthen its organisation in the rural areas and start from the grassroots level.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 DEC 2001

Naxals blast court building in A.P.

By Our Staff Reporter

NIZAMABAD, DEC. 1. In continuing attacks, naxalites belonging to the banned People's War Group blasted the munsif and sub-court complex at the revenue divisional headquarters town of Asifabad in Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh early today.

Reports reaching here said six members said to belong to the People's Guerrilla Army (PGA) came to the court carrying weapons. They woke up the court superintendent, Mr. Padmaji, and the attendant, Mr. Gaffar, and asked them to come out. The court staff, who questioned them were asked to leave.

The superintendent reportedly pleaded with the naxalites not to

blast the court building as they would not achieve anything. The naxalites, who identified themselves as the "Upendra military

The Bellampalli Additional SP, Mr. Vijay Kumar, and the Kagaznagar DSP, Mr. Ch. Ramchander, visited the spot.

RD 1 Ban under study: Advani 2/12

NEW DELHI, DEC. 1. The Government is considering a ban on the People's War Group (PWG) under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) which has already proscribed 23 terrorist outfits, the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, said today.

"The Government is contemplating banning the PWG under the POTO as the group has been spreading its activities in States beyond Andhra Pradesh," he told reporters here. — PTI

platoon", went ahead and placed Claymore mines kept in containers and blasted the old and new building complex. The new court building houses the munsif and sub-courts while the old building was used as a storing depot.

A security alert was sounded in Nizamabad and Adilabad districts and massive combing operations have been launched in the two districts in the wake of widespread violence unleashed by the extremists across the State.

Militants kill 7 in Udhampur village

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, DEC. 1. Seven persons, five of them Hindus, were gunned down by unidentified militants in a remote village of Udhampur late last night. In another incident today, 44 persons were injured, six of them seriously, in a powerful grenade blast in north Kashmir town of Bandipore.

According to police, in the first incident, seven persons, four of

them members of village defence committees (VDCs) were gunned down in Kharout village in Panchnari block of Udhampur district by unidentified militants.

Mr. P.L. Gupta, IG, Jammu zone who visited the village along with the Minister of State, Home, Mr. Khalid Najib Sohrawardy and Director General of Police, Mr. A.K. Suri, said that a group of militants wearing police uniform, entered the village after midnight. They

asked four Hindu members of a VDC and three others, two Muslims and a Hindu villager to accompany them for patrolling in the area.

They also asked them to prepare food for them, Mr. Gupta said. Fooled by their police disguise the VDC members obeyed their 'orders'.

They were then taken out of the village and gunned down in cold blood.

THE HINDU

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Naxalites blow up minister house

FROM DEBABRATA MOHANTY

Bhubaneswar, Dec. 2: In a chilling sequel to the string of attacks in Andhra Pradesh, members of the Peoples' War Group (PWG) last night blew away a house of Orissa cooperative and textiles minister Arabinda Dhali.

A few moments earlier, about 25 PWG members had bombed an unarmed police outpost nearby after ordering the policemen to vacate.

No one was killed or injured in the attacks. The incidents took place in the Potteru area of Malkangiri district a day after the blasts, in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, in a factory owned by the family of chief minister Chandrababu Naidu and another

er by a Central minister.

Last night, the PWG struck in Andhra again in a series of attacks, gunning down a contractor, suspected to be an informer, in Medak district.

The Orissa minister was away in Bhubaneswar when his farmhouse was bombed. Two caretakers were asked by the Naxalites to leave the place before it was ripped apart by explosives. Sources said the Potteru farmhouse is generally abandoned as Dhali's family stays in another village.

This is the first Naxalite attack on the property of an Orissa minister, though several policemen have been killed and scores injured in serial strikes recently. Dhali and his family are provided Z-category security

after he figured in the PWG hit list this year.

Orissa director-general of police N.C. Padhi said the attacks were "symbolic" as the PWG has declared the border districts of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh a war zone. Padhi said the group was observing Saturday as "Terrorism Day" in the so-called war zone.

In Andhra, two houses of an MLA of the ruling Telugu Desam were destroyed by PWG activists. The legislator, Y.V. Satyanarayana, and his family members were not present in the house at Koyyur in Visakhapatnam district at the time of attack.

In the same district, the extremists opened fire on two police stations and on a third one in East Godavari district, appar-

ently in an attempt to loot weapons. They were beaten back by police after a gun battle.

The PWG is banned in Andhra, but not in Orissa yet. The state government has prepared a Rs 371-crore scheme to combat the Naxalite threat.

The biggest-ever Naxalite attack in Orissa took place on August 10, when a group of about 200 killed five policemen and injured 22 in simultaneous attacks on Kalimela and Motu police stations in Malkangiri district.

Two PWG commanders were killed when police returned fire. After the incident, a battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force was stationed there. Already, 13 platoons of the Orissa State Armed Police are deployed in the district.

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CPI(M) plan to counter RSS programme ^{HPD 11}

10/12
By K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI, DEC. 9. To counter the Vanavasi programme of the RSS and expand its base, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is drafting a Tribal Policy which could be put into force after the party congress, scheduled to be held in March next year.

The CPI-M is currently engaged in the process of drafting such a policy document with thrust on four major areas. It would be sent for approval to the party's central committee, which meets in Kolkata next January.

Although the party had decided some years ago to draft a tribal policy, it was not attempted. With the Vanavasi programme penetrating in several areas, the CPI-M had decided to embark on its own programme to counter it.

The approach to the policy was finalised at a recent meeting of a sub-committee at Kolkata with focus on the problems being faced by tribals over the land and their alienation from it, the problem of displacement on account of opening up mining to the private sector, restricting their traditional access to forests, the need to protect the identity of tribal culture which is coming under threat and the deteriorating state of tribal women.

The CPI-M feels there is a great potential in organising the tribals who have been suffering on account of exploitation by contractors, with many working as bonded labour. In the absence of any gainful employment, they often make cheap labour who are hired by contractors and carted to various

States with little or no protection at all. Apart from the socio-economic aspects, the party wants to counter the Vanavasi programme which it feels seeks to drive a wedge among tribals using religion (between Christians and non-Christians) and co-opt them to toe the Hindutva line, the CPI-M Politburo member, Mr. Prakash Karat, told *The Hindu*.

He charged the RSS with trying to construct history and religion. Calling the tribals "Vanavasi" instead of "Adivasi" was one form of exercise. Mr. Karat admitted that the RSS programme had penetrated in many areas and that the outfit had made headway.

In fact, at the last party congress held in 1998, the party took note that the RSS' Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram had stepped up its work for dealing with the problems of tribal people which were distinct from other sections and suggested it may be necessary to set up mass organisations of adivasis. "The Central Committee should take up such issues for discussion and provide some guidance to the State Committees on how to take organisational steps to tackle the work of the RSS among different sections of the people", the party said in its Political Organisational Report then.

Mr. Karat said the recent sub-committee meeting was attended by politburo members and representatives and tribal activists from 13 States including Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and the northeast.

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