

KLO militant surrenders in West Bengal

By Our Special Correspondent

*9. Personal Photo
10-12*

KOLKATA, DEC. 24. A day after the Chief Minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, called the militants of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), one of the militant groups in north Bengal, to surrender, a top-ranking leader of the outfit responded by turning himself to police.

Himadri alias Madhusudan alias Tarzan, surrendered to police on December 22, the day Mr. Bhattacharjee announced at a rally in Coochbehar in north Bengal that his Government would consider lifting the cases against the KLO militants who surrendered unconditionally.

The Chief Minister also indicated that the other extremist outfit of the region, the Kamtapur People's Party, could act as broker between the KLO and the Government. And he was also willing to discuss the socio-economic problems of the area with the KPP leaders.

Himadri was close to the KLO's second-in-command, Mihir Das alias Milton and was one of the 38 KLO activists who had undergone arms training in Bhutan.

According to police, he decided to give up extremism and join the mainstream after he heard

Mr. Bhattacharjee's offer. He even decided to urge the Chief Minister to provide him with a job.

The KPP, however, made it clear that it would consider opening a dialogue with the Government only if the latter agreed to free the KPP activists currently in jail.

The KPP has been campaigning in the district for a long time for recognition of the Rajbanshi dialect. The movement took a new colour when the militant KLO appeared on the scene in 1996.

Several functionaries of the CPI (M) and the Left Front partners such as the Forward Bloc were killed by the KLO militants in Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling.

The Superintendent of Police, Jalpaiguri, Siddhinath Gupta, said that Himadri had left the Bhutan camp a few days ago when he fell out with the KLO supremo, Jeevan Sinha. Realising that life would be difficult with the KLO shadowing him, he decided to respond to the Chief Minister's call.

Himadri, a resident of Haldibari in north Bengal, had been charged with murder of at least four persons. His brother, Srinivas, is president of the All-Kamtapur Students' Union.

THE HINDU

25 DEC 2002

Buddha term for KLO talks

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Dinhat (Cooch Behar), Dec. 21: Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today said a dialogue between the state government and the Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation can take place only after the militants surrender arms.

The Kamtapuri People's Party was killing people in north Bengal in the name of the KLO, asserted the chief minister, while addressing the 17th district conference of the Krishak Sabha at Sanhati Maidan here

this afternoon, without naming the KPP.

"They are trying to confuse and misguide the Rajbansi community. They carry firearms and terrorise people, but are actually cowards. After massacring people, they flee to Bhutan," claimed Bhattacharjee.

"They have close links with other militant organisations. They are being instigated by Pakistani intelligence. But, despite this, we are ready to discuss their grievances, including unemployment and language problems, but only after

they surrender arms," the chief minister said.

Bhattacharjee announced development projects in north Bengal and said a plastic factory would soon be inaugurated in Cooch Behar district. A jute mill would also come up here, he said, adding that a cold storage facility for preserving fruits will be opened shortly.

"We devoted ourselves fully to ameliorate the condition of farmers. But excess production has also become a problem. We have to ensure that the farmers do not suffer as a result of

bumper production," the chief minister said.

Other leaders who addressed the rally include tourism minister Dinesh Dakua, CPM district secretary Chandi Pal, Member of Parliament Tarini Roy and Krishak Sabha district secretary Harish Burman.

Political observers take Bhattacharjee's trip to this remote area — a Forward Bloc stronghold and the domain of Bloc minister Kamal Guha — as a

"well-timed move" to make inroads into the party's vote bank before the panchayat elections

slated for next year.

"The hidden agenda of his visit is to shore up CPM support. The rally was a demonstration of the party's strength," said a prominent Forward Bloc leader on condition of anonymity.

Banners, posters and party flags put up all over the town to welcome the chief minister's second visit to this heritage town gave it a festive look.

The chief minister arrived almost four hours behind the schedule as his flight could not land at Bagdogra airport because of the dense fog.

2 2 DEC 2002

KLO militant shot at Gorumara

AVIJIT SINHA

Jalpaiguri, Oct. 29: A dash to safety through paddy fields ended in disaster for top KLO militant Suresh Roy when he was mowed down by security forces after a two-hour encounter this afternoon on the fringes of the Gorumara National Park under Mainaguri police station.

Another militant accompanying Roy, known in the KLO as Himalaya, managed to escape. A constable was injured in the exchange of fire.

A Chinese-made 9 mm pistol with 18 rounds of ammunition was found on the slain militant.

This is the second time this month that security forces have engaged militants in a shootout in the district. On October 9,

two militants were gunned down at Pukhurigram village in Madhya Haldibari near the Indo-Bhutan border.

"Acting on a tip-off, the security forces — personnel from the district police, CRPF and the crack commando outfit — rushed to Dakshin Kalimati on the Mainaguri-Ramsai Road near the Gorumara National Park," additional superintendent of police, Jalpaiguri, Anand Kumar said.

The security forces found the two militants scurrying through a paddy field to sneak into the reserve forest. On being challenged, the militants opened fire from their automatic weapons. "While one of the militants fell to our bullets, the other managed to escape. We recovered eight empty shells

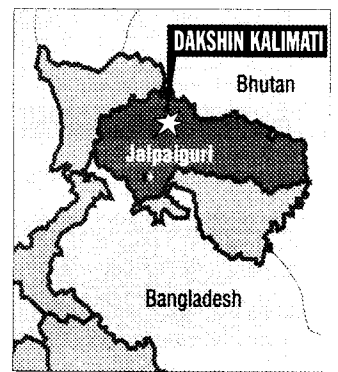
from the spot," Kumar said.

Police believe the two rebels were part of a larger gang of KLO militants said to have been hiding in the area.

Jalpaiguri superintendent of police Siddh Nath Gupta is supervising the combing operations launched to arrest the other militants, who are suspected to have sneaked into the dense national park.

In Calcutta, inspector-general of police (law and order) Chayan Mukherjee said all police stations in the six north Bengal districts have been reinforced following the spate in extremist activities.

He said a constable of the state armed police was wounded when the militants opened fire on the police party around 12.45 this afternoon.



THE ENLIGHTENED

10/30/02

Buddha brake on KLO crackdown

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Siliguri, Oct. 20: Police conducting random raids on north Bengal villages to flush out Kamtapur Liberation Organisation militants plan to "go-slow" on the advice of chief Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee.

Under pressure from the Left Front constituents, especially the Forward Bloc and the RSP, which have considerable presence in the region, Bhattacharjee said at a recent meeting with district magistrates and superintendents of police in Calcutta that the police should not harass innocent villagers in the name of

"search operations". Bhattacharjee also instructed the police not to harass and intimidate the "common public" while cracking down on the Naxalites after a section of the CPM expressed displeasure over the arrest of Koushik Ganguly, a teacher at Rajabazar Science College, on suspicion of being a People's War sympathiser.

Highly-placed sources said all police stations in north Bengal, especially in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, were asked to conduct raids only on the basis of specific information. "They were asked to be careful and not to act on mere hunch

or suspicion."

A number of Left Front leaders in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts have publicly expressed displeasure over the "random" raids carried out by the police after the KLO militants attacked the CPM office in Dhupguri and gunned down five partymen on August 17.

Many villagers in Kumargram said they were picked up in the middle of the night and beaten up by the policemen who accused them of harbouring the militants.

While the BJP and the Trinamul Congress threatened to take to the streets in protest

against the "harassment of innocent public", the Kamtapur People's Party accused the police of torturing its supporters even though it had "nothing to do with the militant organisations".

Sources said the Left Front leaders had expressed apprehension that villagers would be alienated if the police harassment did not stop immediately.

"A fair amount of restraint and caution is necessary while tracking down militants belonging to outfits like the KLO," inspector-general of police (north) Bhupinder Singh said.

"Though it's a bit difficult to

distinguish between a militant and a KLO sympathiser, we should act on specific information and depend on intelligence," Singh added.

Nearly 400 villagers suspected of harbouring or sympathising with the militants have been arrested or detained since the Dhupguri strike.

KPP chief Atul Roy said many party activists arrested on flimsy charges were languishing in jails in the districts of north Bengal. The KPP threatened to take the issue to the human rights commission if the government did not restrain the police.



Bhattacharjee

Two KLO rebels killed in paddy-field shootout

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OUR BUREAU

Oct. 9: In a fierce gun-battle that lasted more than two hours, security forces killed two militants belonging to the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) in Jalpaiguri's Kumargram area today. A head constable of the Central Reserve Police Force was also killed.

Two AK-47 assault rifles with 77 rounds of live ammunition were found on the militants. Police also recovered documents from them, which they believed could provide important leads on KLO activities. The dead were identified as Kamleshwar Roy, 25, and Bharat Singh (also known as Nripen Singh Barua), 27. This is the second time in a

month the security forces have engaged in a shootout with the militants in the Kumargram area, known to be a KLO stronghold. But the militants had all managed to escape in the September 17 encounter, which had taken place just a month after the Dhupguri killings. The inspector-general of police (law and order), Chayan Mukherjee, said senior police officers were asked to camp in Kumargram and conduct raids on suspected militant hideouts. Acting on a tip, the security forces — made up of district police, CRPF and police commandos — rushed to Pukhurigram village in Madhya Haidibari area of Kumargram police station, district superintendent of police Siddh Nath Gupta said on phone from Kumargram. The two militants were holed up in a house they had forced their way into.

At the time, a weekly market was going on in the village close to the border with Assam and Bhutan and it was teeming with

people from surrounding villages. To avoid casualty, Gupta said, the police had cordoned off the area and asked the villagers to vacate the market.

As the security forces, led by Alipurduar's additional superintendent of police R. Shivkumar, approached the house next to a primary school, the militants opened fire. The security forces retaliated.

"We had asked them to surrender, but they fired a volley at us from their assault rifles. We responded with retaliatory fire," Gupta said. Under cover of firing, the militants slipped out of the house and hunkered down in a neighbouring paddy field,

from where they fought the security forces for more than two hours.

During the encounter, CRPF personnel tossed grenades at the militants. Two of them got up and tried to run away, but were shot dead by the forces. A CRPF head constable, Talif Hussain, suffered bullet injuries and later died at Alipurduar Sub-divisional Hospital. Two more policemen suffered bullet injuries and were admitted to a hospital.

Gupta would not say how many rounds the forces had fired, but police sources put the number at 50. The sources said the security forces used mortar and grenades during the encounter.

The militants, members of the KLO's action squads, were believed to have been trained by the Ulfa.

Poor list withdrawn

The government has cancelled the list of people living below the poverty line in 60 of the 341 blocks across Bengal.

Panchayat minister Surjya Kanta Mishra said many affluent families had got themselves recorded as living below the poverty line to garner government benefits.

"We had to cancel the list as there are some irregularities. That is why we have decided to go by the old list," he said.

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TELEGRAPH

CK Pradhan shot in Kalimpong

Statesman News Service

SILIGURI, Oct. 3. — Former GNLF leader CK Pradhan was shot dead in broad daylight around 1.40 p.m. at Darwa Dara, Kalimpong, by a gunman today. The assailant, reportedly a youth, fled towards Relli Road after shooting Pradhan from the back.

Pradhan was returning from a memorial service. He was in conversation with some people when the assailant shot him from close range. The bullet pierced Pradhan's body and came out through the belly, witnesses said. It was learnt that Pradhan tried to flee the spot but fell down when he reached RC Mintri road. He died on the way to a hospital.

The GNLF called a 72-hour bandh in Kalimpong from 6 p.m. today demanding immediate arrest of the culprit, Mr Dawa Pakhrin, the party's Kalimpong branch president, said.

The GNLF president, Mr Subash Ghisingh, convened an emergency meeting of the executive councillors in Darjeeling later today. "We are shocked at the turn of events," Mr IN Pradhan, an executive councillor of the GNLF, said.

Soon after the incident, shops and other establishments closed and vehicles went off the roads. Police have cordoned off the area and posted pickets at different points of the town to maintain law-and-order.

Pradhan, one of the founders of the GNLF, fell out of Mr Ghisingh's favour in 1994 after he was denied the vice-chairman's post in the DGHC.

Another report on Kolkata Plus III

Gorkha leader shot dead

9-1
Reserve Police
9-1
4/10

KUHELI CHAKRAVORTY

Kalimpong, Oct. 3: Dissident Gorkha National Liberation Front leader Chandra Kumar Pradhan was shot dead in Kalimpong this afternoon by a lone assassin. The murder brought normal life to a grinding halt in the town and triggered tension in the Darjeeling subdivision.

Pradhan, an executive councillor for backward community welfare in the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and a friend-turned-foe of DGHC chief Subash Ghising, was walking to the Darwadara market from Damber Chowk when he was shot in the back from point-blank range by a young man at 2 pm. He was rushed to hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

The 50-year-old leader is survived by his wife, twin daughters and a son. One of his daughters got married last Monday.

Condemning the killing, the GNLFF has called a 72-hour strike in Kalimpong starting this evening. Immediately after the incident, normal life was thrown out of gear as shops and utility services closed down. Shocked people poured out on the streets.

"Daju (elder brother) was coming to the point at Darwadara where the road bifurcates and had stopped to talk to me. We were in the middle of a conversation, when he made a noise and collapsed," said Manik Sarkar, who still had bloodstains on his white shirt. "We saw the assassin, a youth of about 20, running away with a gun. He vanished towards Relli Road."

Sarkar, who owns a shop near the assassination spot, and a few other witnesses claimed the killer was not a local youth. "I saw his face once when he turned back before fleeing and I rushed after him. But he fled and we took Daju, who was bleeding profusely after collapsing on a staircase, to the hospital," said Sarkar.

Darjeeling superintendent of police Sanjay Chander, who rushed to Kalimpong, said the situation was under control. "The area has been cordoned off and heavy deployment of security forces has taken place throughout the sub-division. There has been no incident of violence till now."

He confirmed that the assassin was a young man in his early twenties, who fired only one round and fled after the operation.

Around 3.30 pm, Pradhan's wife Shila came out of the hospital, wailing that Ghising was behind the murder. Pradhan had fallen out with Ghising after the attempt on the DGHC chairman's life last year in which the former's hand was suspected.

4 OCT 2002

Ulfa leader admits training KLO

AVIJIT SINHA

Jalpaiguri, Sept. 21: Ulfa commander Gautam Seal, who was recently arrested by Assam Police in Dhubri, has narrated in detail how the militant outfit has been training rebels of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) at its camps in the dense forests of Bhutari's Piping area.

Seal was produced at the Jalpaiguri court today. The police have asked for a 10-day remand for further interrogation.

"It is definite that he can provide us with many more leads about extremist activities in north Bengal. He knows many details about the KLO, too," said Siddh Nath Gupta, superintendent

of police, Jalpaiguri.

Seal, who was brought here to be interrogated by Bengal police on Ulfa-KLO links, said around 200 KLO cadets were undergoing training at the camp the last time he visited Piping. According to Seal, the Piping camp is at present headed by Rustom Choudhury, alias K.D. Gautam, who joined the Ulfa in 1994.

The Ulfa leader said many among the first batch of KLO members trained there had gone on to become front-ranking leaders of the organisation.

The second batch of KLO militants also took training from Ulfa leaders at the Barpeita camp. Seal said he had first received

training at the Ulfa training centre in Dhubri and had then gone to Mithun Pahar.

Later, he worked for the KLO as part of the Ulfa-KLO "tie-up". He, however, denied involvement in any of the murders that the KLO is accused of having executed.

While staying at the "group headquarters", Seal got information that his wife was pregnant and rushed to his village under the Bilasipara police station area of Dhubri district, where he was arrested.

Seal has expressed the desire to surrender and help the police for the sake of his wife and baby. His hopes of an independent state has also faded

"There is nothing we can achieve by running from the police and spending our entire life in the camps," he admitted.

Seal said Ulfa leaders stay with their families at Mithun Pahar, located between Kawapani and Deothang in Bhutan. The place is like a military cantonment. Located on a hilly terrain, it is ringed with barbed wire fences and has bunkers from where guards keep vigil. It has plastic tents, huts and generators.

Seal also described the location of the Ulfa camps to the police. Besides Piping, there are three more camps known as the "number seven battalion" camp, the Nalbari camp and

the Dibrugarh camp.

Activities at Mithun Pahar are headed by Jeet Kailita, Ulfa's second-in-command. Leaders like Bening Rava and "major" Robin Neu also stay there.

According to Seal, every Ulfa camp has AK-56 and AK-47 assault rifles, a universal machine gun, detonators, gelatine sticks, fuses, grenades and other accessories to prepare improvised explosive devices.

Mithun Pahar has the capacity to send at least 300-400 activists armed with sophisticated weapons to any camp at any time. Its cadets include men and women. The group's headquarters has about 400 radio transmitters to maintain the network.

9 September 2002

22 SEP 2002

Gunbattle with KLO ends in vain

OUR BUREAU

7-10
1899

Sept. 17: Police and militants armed with automatic weapons exchanged fire in two separate shootouts in Jalpaiguri district today, exactly a month after the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation gunned down five CPM workers at Dhupguri.

In a fierce gunbattle reported from Kumargram, hub of the Kamtapuris, police fired nearly 100 rounds at a group of nine Ulfa and KLO militants. The extremists, flushed out of a house in Chengamari village, escaped unhurt.

In the other incident, the police and a group of KLO activists fired at each other on the dry bed of the Jaldhaka river in Jalpaiguri. Here, too, the militants managed to flee. Tushar Roy, second-in-command in the

militant outfit, was believed to be in the group.

Inspector general of police (law and order) Chayan Mukherjee said in Calcutta that the militants holed up in Chengamari were believed to have slipped into neighbouring Assam. He said the district police contacted their counterparts in Assam and sought help to flush out the militants.

Though district police sources confirmed the second shootout in Jalpaiguri, Mukherjee said he had no information.

The armed militants had forced their way into three houses at Chengamari village under the Kumargram police station early in the morning and demanded food at gunpoint.

As a police contingent, led by district superintendent Siddh Nath Gupta, entered the

Regional problem

village late in the morning, the extremists came out of the houses and ran towards a nearby forest.

While the security forces, including commandos, threw a ring and blocked all exits, the extremists pulled on black fatigues to hoodwink their pursuers.

The police and the militants exchanged heavy fire for nearly two hours. During a brief lull, the nine managed to sneak into the Sikia forest.

As the militants fled towards Paglahat, a CRPF contingent, called in by district authorities to deal with the heavily-armed extremists, arrived. But the security personnel failed to recognise the militants, mistaking them for commandos from the police force.

It was too late by the time

the paramilitary forces realised the mistake. The militants had already crossed into Assam through the Tukra forest. They had also forded the Gholani and Sikiajhora rivers before entering Assam.

"We are sure the militants belonged to the KLO-Ulfa combine. They took advantage of the forest terrain and managed to cross over to Assam," superintendent Gupta said.

In the other incident, the police became suspicious when they spotted six men walking down the Jaldhaka riverbed in the Dobabari-Bamanidanga area of Jalpaiguri district. When challenged, the group opened fire at the police team, which retaliated.

Police sources said the militants under cover of flying bullets managed to escape.

KPP hurls liar slur at chief minister

ANUPAM DASGUPTA

7-10
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Siliguri, Sept. 2: Kamtapur People's Party chief Atul Roy today branded chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee a "liar" and accused him of "misleading" people for linking the party with the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation.

Denying any connection with the militant outfit, Roy said the chief minister was indulging in "political chicanery" to tarnish the image of the party. He said the KPP is a political organisation fighting democratically for recognition of the cultural identity and language of the Rajbanshis in north Bengal.

Referring to Bhattacharjee's speech in Dhupguri yesterday, Roy said: "He made an utterly baseless allegation that we are raising funds for the KLO. He seems to have lost his sense of discretion."

On the other hand, Roy said the CPM "squeezed" money from people "in the name of raising party funds".

The KPP leadership, long living in the shadows of the KLO, is worried about the political fallout of the August 17 strike on the CPM office in Dhupguri. The leaders feel such attacks would alienate supporters and weaken the Kamtapuri movement.

KPP leaders said they fear a police crackdown on the political organisation on suspicion of its links with the KLO. They said the police are harassing KPP supporters in villages across the region.

Senior party leaders today held a meeting to discuss the fallout of the chief minister's "false" charges. They felt his statements could provide the po-

lice a stick to beat the KPP with.

"The chief minister is a liar. Otherwise, he would not have tarred the KPP and KLO with the same brush," Roy said. "The police have fed him with such distorted facts and he relies too much on the force."

Roy said the chief minister's public remarks would embolden the police further to "pick up and torture the KPP supporters". The party will soon submit memorandums to deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and Governor Viren J. Shah against "police atrocities on the pretext of tracking down the KLO militants".

The chief minister had yesterday accused the KPP and the KLO of misguiding the Rajbanshis.

"Where were they when we were carrying out land reforms in north Bengal? It was the Left Front which had dis-

tributed land to the landless Rajbanshis," he had said at the rally in Dhupguri.

Bhattacharjee added that the local problems had to be solved "politically and not at gunpoint".

The KPP leadership today decided to launch a campaign against the police harassment. "This is the only way to fight the brute force of the police and save our workers who are being picked up and tortured," Roy said.

The party leadership fears that the police, taking advantage of the Dhupguri strike, would crack down on the KPP as it had emerged as a rival of the CPM in the region.

The leaders said the KPP had always eschewed violence and functioned "within the framework of the country's Constitution".



Atul Roy

KLO part of ISI terror network: CM

9 Regional Probs
Niraj Lama in Dhugguri

5r 2/9
Sept. 1. — Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today said KLO was part of an ISI-sponsored terrorist network and expressed disgust at the Centre's lukewarm attitude towards the state's concerns.

Addressing a gathering on his first visit here after five party members were gunned down on 17 August, the chief minister said he had talked to the Bhutanese King on insurgency. "I spoke to the King and have received an invitation for further talks," he said, indicating he might accept the invitation. The ultras have set up training camps in Bhutan.

"I recently appraised the Prime Minister and his deputy about our concerns. I asked Mr Advani: 'Why was the Centre not stopping Bhutan from allowing the insurgents to use its soil?'...How long can we tolerate...." Mr Bhattacharjee said.

"We will not accept the murder of our comrades," he said. He warned businessmen against giving in to the ransom demands of the ultras.

Mr Bhattacharjee held the Ulfa, Naga insurgent groups and ISI responsible for the KLO's creation. "Like in Punjab, Kashmir and the Northeast, the ISI wants to destabilise West Bengal."

Rubbishing the Kamtapur People's Party's claim of being the political front of the Rajbanshis, he said the KPP had won two per cent votes in the last Assembly polls. "The Rajbanshis are with the LF."

After the meeting, Mr Bhattacharjee met DMs and SPs of six North Bengal districts.

Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary, said LF members had the "right to self-defence". He criticised the Opposition for failing to condemn the KLO attack. "The Opposition links insurgency to lack of development, but the KLO just wants to destabilise our government."

Relatives of the 17 August victims were paraded on the stage. It was announced that the party would look after the victim's children.

Buddha to take rebel case to Bhutan

PROBIR PRAMANIK

first visit to Dhupguri since the KLO gunned down five CPM workers on August 17, said at a party rally held under tight security.

Dhupguri, Sept. 1: Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today asked Bhutan to make "sincere" efforts to flush out Kamtapur Liberation Organisation militants hiding in that country and said he would soon visit Thimpu to discuss the issue with the Bhutanese king.

"The KLO and its ally Ulfa have been carrying out subversive activities in north Bengal from their safe havens in south Bhutan. We cannot tolerate it any longer. I will personally take up the matter with the Bhutanese king," Bhattacharjee, on his

"Although it's a diplomatic issue, I will take it up with the king since I have a personal invitation from him. The Bhutanese government should make sincere efforts to drive the terrorists from its jungle as it's a friendly neighbour," Bhattacharjee said.

He accused the Opposition parties of "encouraging" the KLO and the People's War to foment trouble and oust his government. Without naming the Congress and the Trinamul Congress, he said the Opposition is "bankrupt of any political programmes" to counter the Left Front.

"The Opposition parties

maintain silence when the disruptive forces are killing innocent people in the state. Instead of condemning their acts, they are encouraging them," he said.

The chief minister admitted in public that there was an intelligence failure. "We had not received the right information on the KLO's plan. Otherwise, the attack on our party office could have been prevented."

He said the administration has learnt a "lesson" and the police force is being equipped to fend off terrorist attacks in future. The government suspects the hand of Pakistan's

Inter-Services Intelligence in the growth of the KLO and the Ulfa, Bhattacharjee added.

He accused the KLO and the Kamtapur Peoples' Party (KPP) of misleading the Rajbanshis in north Bengal. "Where were the Kamtapuris during the Left Front's land reforms agitation? It was the Left Front which distributed land to the landless Rajbanshis."

He said the government is not going to give in to the militants. "Guns are not the answer to the Kamtapur issue. If they (the KLO) think they will achieve anything at gunpoint, they are mistaken. Let me see

how many guns they have to take on the might of the state."

KPP build-up

Coinciding a "revival thrust" to the Kamtapur agitation with the chief minister's visit to Dhupguri, KPP president Atul Roy urged party workers to surmount odds to fulfil the "latent ambitions" of ethnic Rajbanshis.

The KPP will hold simultaneous demonstrations in Malda, Darjeeling, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri on September 25 to protest against "police atrocities" on party cadre "on the pretext of tracking down KLO militants", Roy said.

What are Marxists Afraid of?

Kamtapur, the latest hotspot on India's militancy map in North Bengal, nurtured by neglect over three long decades

SUBRATA NAGCHOUDHURY
JALPAIGURI | WEST BENGAL

THIRTY years is a long enough time to go without a leader. It is also a long time for a leaderless movement to survive. So, when the Kamtapur agitation makes headlines today with acts of violence, it is as much a 35-year-old cry for statehood, as it is a desperate upsurge in the search for a leader.

The community in question here are the Rajbanshis, the sons of the soil of the north Bengal districts of Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, North and South Dinajpur and Malda. Rajbanshis comprise 31 per cent of the 12 million population of these districts. Their grievances of deprivation date back to the late '60s, but the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) — the political front of the present movement — has not been able to capitalise on the popular discontent. Today, the movement has been virtually hijacked by KPP's armed underground wing, the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO).

While not many buy the KLO's promise of a separate state of Kamtapur, the violence is less easy to ignore. The gun culture that has invaded the once-peaceful Dooars — the KLO is believed to be getting training and support from the ULFA and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland in camps in Bhutan, on the Assam-Bengal border — has alienated a large section of Rajbanshi intellectuals and academics from the movement.

According to sources, the KLO has several hit squads of six people or less. They move through corridors in the dense forests and clusters, which are

used for cover, shelter and food during operations. Apart from hit squads, there are wings for fund-collection and intelligence-gathering. A large number of young girls are believed to act as couriers for the KLO.

Even as fears of bloodshed follow the KLO attack on the Dhupguri party office of the CPI(M) earlier this month, in which five people were killed, parallels are being inevitably drawn between the Kamtapur agitation and the Gorkhaland movement a decade ago. The geo-physical proximity is one reason for this, but sociologists, politicians and senior government officials find more similarities than similarities between the two.

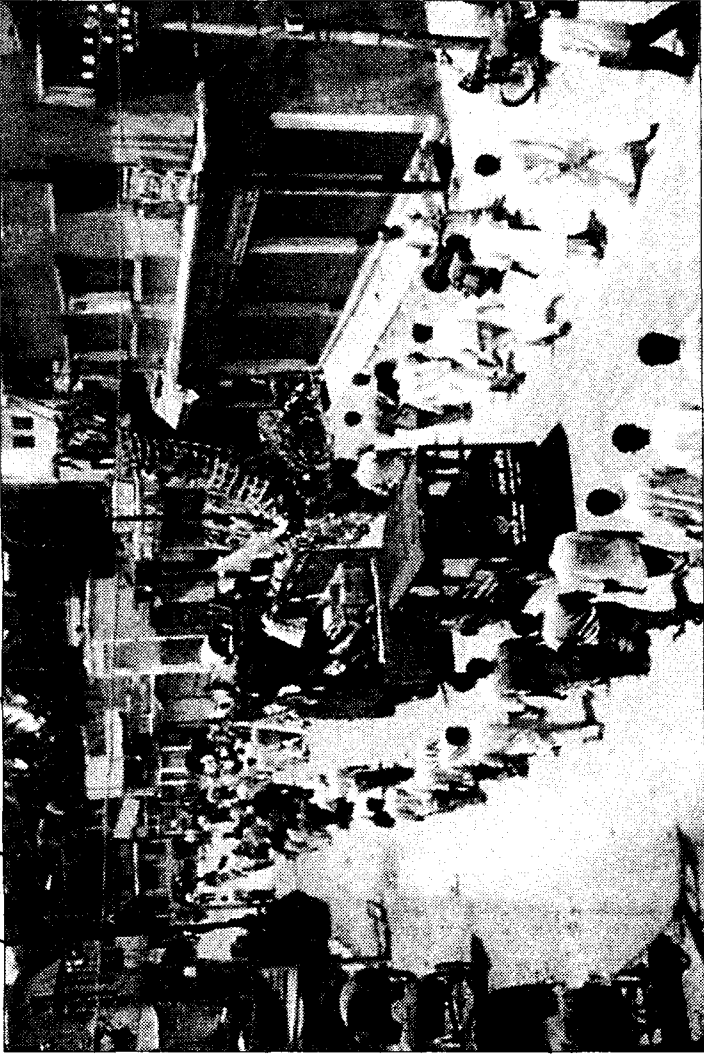
Most glaringly, of course, the Rajbanshis have no Subhash Ghising among them. Nor is there any dispute about the Rajbanshis being the original in-

KLO STRIKES

- 20-odd CPI(M) leaders warned and then killed in rural Jalpaiguri, sometimes in broad daylight, with AK-46
- Half-a-dozen tea garden owners, officers kidnapped. A couple released after six months on payment of ransom.
- CRPF convoy attacked with remote-controlled explosive device

habitants of the area. Also, unlike the Gorkhas, the Rajbanshis are scattered all over the region, heavily interspersed by Bangladeshi refugees, Nepalis and tribals working in the tea plantations.

As may be expected, it is the settlers — the largest numbers of whom are Bangladeshi refugees — who are the bone of contention. Says Ananda Gopal Bose, a reader in History at the



BIPLAB BASAK

The CPI(M) takes out a procession with the bodies of those killed in the attack on the Dhupguri party office (above); Three KLO suspects arrested in connection with the attack (below)



as unsuitable for traditional cultivation, actually facilitated the transfer.

However, locals feel the switch will eventually spell doom for the 200-odd tea-cultivating Rajbanshis, who are completely dependent on the larger gardens at a time when the tea business itself is in a downslide.

CPI(M) district secretary Manick Sanyal, one of the most powerful leaders in the belt, however, denies the party's culpability. "The Rajbanshis who lost land in the government's land reforms programme were *zotedars*," he said. "As for those who sold their land for short-term gains... well, the the fault lies with them, not those who have purchased it. Land is not an expandable item. Its nature is such that once it gets divided, it gets split."

Alleging that the Rajbanshis were merely trying to use history to generate ethnic passions, Sanyal also denies that the region has fallen behind in the development stakes, vis-a-vis industry, infrastructure and employment generation.

"Once upon a time, all the rickshaw-pullers in Jalpaiguri town were from neighbouring Bihar. Now the Rajbanshis have taken over. There are hundreds of Rajbanshi graduates and even post-graduates. Scores of them cycle 15-20 km everyday from Sahudangi to Siiliguri town to work as labourers," says Sanyal.

The veteran Marxist's yardsticks of development will undoubtedly surprise many — particularly after 25 years of Left Front rule — and raise many hackles. "These are the words of someone in authority," says a leader of the constituent Left Front party on condition of anonymity.

"But the Dhupguri incident should be an eye-opener. The Rajbanshis may not be able to match either the organisational strength or the leadership might of the Marxists, but the disgruntled elements will continue to create disturbances. The region may not turn into another Gorkhaland but it could well be another Tripura."

FUTURE STRATEGY

KLO

- Raise funds through network, loot banks, post offices
- More strikes on CPI(M) leaders, many have already been warned
- Recruit more youth, procure arms
- Kidnap for ransom, to free jailed leaders

CPI(M)

- Restore confidence among people and party cadre, mount countercampaign
- Set up vigilance squads, arm some cadres, provide security to leaders
- Recruit Rajbanshis for student wings, frontal organisations
- Promote developmental work in villages

North Bengal University, "This region has seen several waves of Bangladeshi refugees before and after Independence and during the 1964 and 1971 wars. Each agitation in Assam triggered another wave of migration into Bengal. The latest and largest influx has been that of Nepalis ousted from Bhutan. The region has absorbed the successive tides but no special package has ever been offered here."

Moreover, the Rajbanshis, whose traditional livelihood was agriculture, rarely ever ventured into other economic activity. The

Police bounce back with KLO duo death

J. K. S. (100)

PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, Aug. 31: The death of two Kamtapur Liberation Organisation leaders, prime suspects in the recent strike on a CPM office in Dhupguri, in an encounter has come as a shot in the arm of the state police, particularly its top brass in north Bengal.

Coming on the eve of chief minister Buddhadeb Bhat-

tacharjee's visit, the encounter is a face-saver for the police, which were the target of criticism by Left front partners in the wake of the terror unleashed by KLO insurgents.

The anger of local CPM activists, too, had boiled over when director-general of police D.C. Vajpai visited the Dhupguri party office after the August 17 strike. They had heckled the police boss, blaming the force

for not doing enough to ensure security.

Today's shootout at Mathabhang, coupled with last Wednesday's gunning down of KLO's self-styled camp commander Rohini Adhikary on the Bhutan border, has come as a respite to the force. "The annihilation of at least three top-notch KLO militants, the prime suspects behind the Dhupguri attack, prior to the chief minis-

ter's visit will surely enable him to soothe the ruffled feathers of party workers at the Dhupguri rally on Sunday. It will also give the militant-wary police force some credibility," said a senior police official.

The slain militants — Haripada Roy, better known as David Barua, and Jogesh Roy, alias Kalyan Singha — were residents of Dhupguri. Police believe they had played an active role in plan-

ning and executing the strike on the CPM party office.

"David, a 26-year-old member of the fourth batch of trainees at the KLO camp in Bhutan, was one of the masterminds behind the Dhupguri attack. David had provided the blueprint of the Dhupguri party office and the exact layout of Dhupguri town to KLO action squad chief Jay Deb Roy, alias Tom Adhikary. The fair, tall and intelligent David

within a short span had found a place in Adhikary's crack action squad," said an intelligence officer.

David, who was from Milpara in Dhupguri, and Jogesh from neighbouring Gadang knew the escape routes to be taken after the attack like the back of their hands. David and Rohini Adhikary had put the final touches to the strike plan, the officer added.

"The two successful encounters also prove that the security forces have so far managed to plug most of the escape routes and contain the militants within the country. The strike force has split up into different groups to evade detection and is trying to take unconventional transit routes to reach their hideouts either in south Bhutan or neighbouring Bangladesh," a senior police official said.

2 KLO men killed in encounter

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SIN 119
SILIGURI/COOCH BEHAR, Aug. 31. — Two KLO militants were killed in a police encounter at Beltuli in Cooch Behar early today.

The Cooch Behar SP, Mr Praveen Kumar, said the ultras, Haripada Roy alias David Barua and Jogesh Roy alias Kalyan Singh, belonged to Dhupguri, Jalpaiguri.

A police team raided the Beltuli area and another waited for the militants, the DIG, Jalpaiguri range, Mr KL Meena, said. There were six militants but four, including KLO linkman Jagadish, managed to flee. Police

J. Praveen Kumar
think they have crossed the Mansai river and gone to Ghoksadanga or Falakata. The respective police stations have been alerted.

Police have seized a 9mm pistol, allegedly belonging to the militants, from the shoot-out site. Mr Kumar said the dead ultras possibly had links with the attack on the CPI-M office at Dhupguri. He added that David and Kalyan had been trained in Bhutan.

In another development, Jalpaiguri police arrested Takura Das, associate of KLO chief Jeevan Singh, in Kumargram early today.

■ **Dual task for Buddha at Dhupguri, page 5**

Dual task for Buddha at Dhupguri

SUDIPTA CHANDA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Aug. 31. — Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's proposed visit to Dhupguri tomorrow is likely to prove one of his most sensitive missions in North Bengal.

The Chief Minister faces the dual task of soothing frayed nerves and also assuring security and justice to a people, which is seeing red since the 17 August attack on the CPI-M office. KLO ultras shot dead five CPI-M supporters and injured 12 others at Dhupguri that evening.

While there is grief and anger on the one side — some of it directed against the police for alleged inaction, allegations of police excesses are equally strong from other quarters.

The Chief Minister's

Left Front meet on police role

KOLKATA, Aug. 31. — Mr Biman Bose, Left Front chairman, today said the Left Front committee would take up in its next meeting the open criticism of the state government on certain issues by some of the LF partners.

The Forward Bloc, CPI and the RSP have criticised the police for the killings of CPI-M leaders and activists at their party office at Dhupguri in Jalpaiguri by Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation extremists.

The partners have also begun to express their reservations about the state government's proposed farm policy.

Mr Bose declined comments on the reported criticism by the partners. It was pointed out to him that such statements outside the LF were a violation of an earlier decision that the partners would ventilate their criticism only within the LF. — SNS

proposed visit amidst such strong emotional crosscurrents has generated a lot of curiosity. People are anxious to find out whether he assumes a tough stand or allows politics to take the better of the situation.

Social observers in the

region believe, the Left Front, which has vowed to "combat the subversive forces politically," would utilise the opportunity to launch its political offensive against the insurgents from the same platform.

State urban development

minister Mr Asok Bhattacharya, who would also attend tomorrow's rally, had earlier stated that contrary to the intentions of the militants, the CPI-M would intensify its political activity in the region.

Besides the Chief Minister, Left Front leaders Mr Anil Biswas, Mr Ashok Ghosh, Mr Debabrata Biswas, Mr Manju Mazumdar and local politicians are also scheduled to attend tomorrow's public programme, which underlines the importance of the CPI-M and the Left Front are placing on the rally.

For many, the Left Front will also get the opportunity to use tomorrow's platform to kick off its campaign for the upcoming panchayat polls besides proving its numerical superiority in the region. The organisers expect around 1.5 lakh people tomorrow.

1 SEP 2002

CPM sniffs KLO link within

ASTAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Aug. 26: The CPM leadership will soon put under microscope the role allegedly played by a section of grassroots party workers in Jalpaiguri district in the spread of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation.

The decision follows reports from the party's Jalpaiguri unit that suggest a group of party-men in Dhupguri and Moinaguri are enabling the KLO activists to expand their bases in Jalpaiguri.

Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee had recently alleged that a section of the CPM had helped create the KLO.

CPM district secretary Manik Sanyal has submitted a report on the Dhupguri incident in which five leaders were killed by KLO militants inside a party office.

Though Sanyal has not specifically mentioned the members maintaining links with KLO functionaries, he hinted that the role played by some of them

27/8 — should be examined thoroughly.

CPM insiders now want to know under what circumstances a section of the partymen are keeping touch with the KLO.

The party has information that some of its members are maintaining the KLO connection "under pressure and threats" from the militants. But there is a handful of CPM members who maintain secret links with the KLO on their own.

These members are not satisfied with the district leadership and are reportedly helping the KLO to make inroads in Jalapiguri, particularly in pockets where Rajbanshis are in the majority.

It is learnt that the state CPM leadership will try to remove the misgivings of the disgruntled members and retain them in the party fold. If they refuse to go by directives, the leadership might ask the district unit to initiate measures against them.

CPM state secretary Anil Biswas and chief minister Buddh-

adeb Bhattacharjee will meet the district party functionaries when they visit Dhupguri on September 1 and try to measure up their sentiments.

The CPM state secretariat is preparing a note on the developments following the Dhupguri incident. It will be placed at the two-day state committee meeting beginning September 7.

Apart from the initiative to tackle the disgruntled party members in the district, the secretariat will also place its findings on the role played by police after the KLO attack on the Dhupguri office, party sources indicated.

Most of the CPM leaders in Jalpaiguri, including forest minister Jogesh Burman, have expressed their displeasure over the functioning of the district police after the KLO attack.

Director-general of state police D.C. Vajpai was manhandled by a section of supporters when he went to Dhupguri to investigate the case following instruc-

tions from the chief minister himself.

It is learnt that the CPM has now realised it might be difficult to politically counter the KLO on its own in Jalpaiguri and pockets in north Bengal. The party's state leadership, therefore, plans to fight the outfit together with the Left Front partners.

Bhattacharjee will meet the Front leaders in the second week of September and explain them his views on the functioning of the police.

Several Front constituents have alleged that the government's dependence on the police is gradually increasing and a section of police officers, taking advantage of the situation, is offering contradictory reports to Bhattacharjee on various issues.

During his meeting with the Front leaders, Bhattacharjee will try to answer their grievances over the police department and is likely to seek their opinion regarding its administration.

27 AUG 2002

THE REBEL COMMAND STRUCTURE

Tr 10
22/8

Tamir Das alias Tushar Das alias Jeevan Singh
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

7- Regional Problems

Avinash Adhikary
POLITICAL WING CHIEF

Himadri Roy alias Tarzan
DEPUTY COMMANDERS

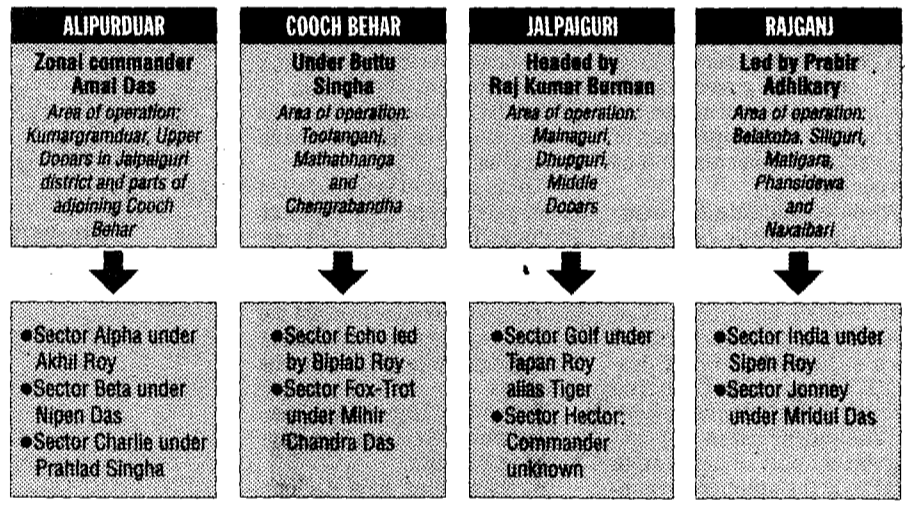
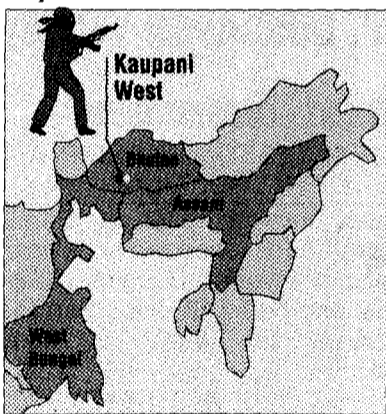
Mihir Das alias Milton Burman
DEPUTY COMMANDERS

10-MEMBER CORE COMMITTEE

Jeevan Singh, Himadri Roy, Avinash Adhikary, Sukumar Roy alias Sanjay, Biplab Singha, Joydeb Roy alias Tom Adhikary, Pulasta Burman, Pabitra Singha, Mihir Das and Badal Das

Army general headquarters located at Kaupani West in Peping, inside the Fifshu jungle in southern Bhutan above Kalikhola on the West Bengal-Bhutan-Assam tri-junction. Jeevan Singh operates out of the general headquarters, which is a joint camp run by the KLO-Ulfa-NDFB combine

THE HEADQUARTERS DIVIDED INTO FOUR ZONAL COMMANDS



The outfit also has a 44-member crack "action squad" headed by Tom Adhikary. It is made up of KLO and Ulfa cadre on a 70:30 ratio

Graphic: RAJ

2 2 AUG 2002

Bandh in three N Bengal districts total

2/8 5/11
Statesman News Service

SILIGURI, Aug. 19. — The bandh called by the CPI-M in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling districts today went off peacefully without any reports of untoward incidents.

In Dhupguri, where KLO gunmen attacked the CPI-M office on Saturday, the DYFI has threatened an indefinite bandh from Wednesday if the police fail to arrest the culprits and suspend the

9. February 1972
Dhupguri O-C. The DYFI's Dhupguri zonal secretary, Mr Sanjeet Dey, threatened to halt the movement of vehicles from Bhutan to India if no steps were taken by the authorities of both countries to dismantle ultra camps in Bhutan. Security was beefed up despite the bandh being total in all three districts. All offices, business establishments and educational institutions remained closed. Traffic stayed off the road.

Though the Siliguri CPI-M had said there would be no picketeers,

several were seen on the outskirts of the town. Vehicles did not ply from Siliguri to the Hills and Sikkim. The bandh, however, had little effect in the Hills. A large number of policemen were deployed along the highways near towns and the odd vehicle on the road was stopped and searched.

Jalpaiguri SP Mr SN Gupta said 11 people have been brought to Dhupguri police station for interrogation. Raids are continuing but no arrests have been made.

More reports on Kolkata Plus IV

Tighter security for five ministers

KOLKATA, Aug. 19. — IB officials have been asked to review and upgrade the security cover of five ministers from North Bengal when they visit their constituencies, following the KLO attack in Dhupguri, police said. The ministers are Mr Asok Bhattacharya, Mr Jogesh Burman, Mr Kamal Guha, Mr Dinesh Dakua and Mr D Tirkey. — SNS

2 0 AUG 2002

Attack reply to police torture, say parties

Pramod Giri
Siliguri, August 19

THREE ORGANISATIONS have linked the Dhupguri attack to rampant violation of human rights by the police. They have asked the State Government to rein in the police or face the likelihood of more such attacks.

The Kamtapuri People's Party, the CPI-ML (Liberation) and the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR) have accused policemen of torturing villagers in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts on the pretext of combing for KLO militants. They have warned that more "incidents" would take place if the "rights violations" were not stopped.

KPP chief Atul Roy condemned Saturday's killings but held the CPI(M) responsible for the deterioration of law and order in North Bengal. "The police are torturing innocent Rajbongshi people and KPP supporters on the pretext of searching for militants. They are doing so at the behest of CPI(M) leaders. Innocent villagers in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar are agitated," Roy said.

The police did not dismiss the allegations. North Bengal Divisional Commissioner D Chakravarty said: "I won't say there are no human rights violations, but we are sensitising the police."

The CPI-ML (Liberation) echoed the rights-violation allegations against the State Government and police. Party secretary Sankar Das said police officers often went to Jalpaiguri villages like Barnis, Ramsai, Domani and Madav Danga and tortured innocent Rajbongshi people as well as KPP supporters.

His party had carried out an investigation on allegation of human rights violations in these villages and found the charges true. A report has been submitted to the District Magistrate of Jalpaiguri.

The APDR carried out investigations in Alipurduar on June 8 and June 9 and drew a similar inference. State secretary member Abiranjana Bhaduri said the police tortured a Class VII student at Sitabari village after tying him to a tree.

Nagen Roy, a clerk in Salkumar High School, and his son were arrested at Munsipara. Roy was the KPP's candidate from Phalakatta in the last Assembly elections. Policemen went to Nagen's home in search of his son. When Nagen resisted, he too was arrested and tortured, Bhaduri said.

CM plans visit to Dhupguri in Sept

CHIEF MINISTER Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee will visit Dhupguri next month following the KLO attack in which five CPI(M) members were killed.

"The DGP has gone to the spot. A search is on for the culprits. I will go there in September," Bhattacharjee told reporters here today when asked to comment on the latest situation at the North Bengal town.

IGP (law and order) Chayan Mukherjee said those responsible for the killings are yet to be nabbed.

Forward Bloc MP from Cooch Behar Amar Roy Pradhan today said there is a possibility that the ISI was involved in Saturday's attack.

"Though it has been reported that KLO militants are involved in the Dhupguri incident, the probability of an ISI link in the attack should not be ruled out," the Forward Bloc MP said.

PTI, Kolkata

Intelligence wake-up for State police

District tip-offs were ignored as 'false alarms'

Kinsuk Basu
Dhupguri, August 19

THE STRIKE has been a lesson for the police top brass in the State. It tells them that writing off alerts by the district Intelligence bureau (DIB) as "false alarms" can prove costly and that the KLO has changed tactics.

The Jalpaiguri DIB had filed a report in June stating that KLO militants were regrouping and planning major strikes. The report said senior Ulfa leaders had been carrying out reconnaissance in North Bengal along with the KLO for the past couple of months and detailed their movements.

But Jalpaiguri SP Siddinath Gupta reportedly ignored the report. "Most of the DIB reports are routinely ignored by senior officers, perhaps because the bureau is considered a punishment posting. Reports filed by the DIB personnel are generally ignored," said a senior police officer.

The DIB report said senior Ulfa leaders had been visiting parts of this trouble-torn district with the Kamtapuri militants from their bases in Bhutan. Top Ulfa leaders, including Rustom Chowdhury and Gautam Sil, had visited parts of Kumargram, Alipurduar and even Banarhaat — the stronghold of the key architect of the recent attack Tom Adhikary — with some KLO recruits in search of new shelters.

The Ulfa-KLO militants had picked upon a new route through Newland in Assam to slip into Kumargram since the roads were no longer safe for their movement.

The report even specified that the joint team had planned to form small compact action squads to carry out effective strikes. These squads, the report said, had spread out over Panbari, Toofanganj and Kumargram. The Dhupguri attack has shown that the KLO has changed

its modus operandi of striking on four-wheelers and bikes. Instead, they have picked on cycles as their means of transport, allowing them to blend with the crowd.

Intelligence sources said KLO supremo Timir Das had sneaked into Kumargram along with Tom Adhikary on August 5 before the latter decided to move on to Mainaguri. During his brief stay at Mainaguri, the 30-year-old Adhikary visited sympathisers in certain pockets including Bakalai, Helapakri and Saabari.

It was only after a group of KLO militants went on a collection drive inside Duramari bazar under Banarhaat police station area on July 23 and slipped away having collected around Rs 70,000 that the local police sat up.

That was a month after the DIB had filed its report. But by the time the district police took note of the increasing KLO activities, the militants had already struck.

Trinamool demands 'full-timer' for Home

Leader of the Opposition Pankaj Banerjee today reiterated the demand for a "full time" Home Minister, citing the spurt in extremist attacks in the State.

The Trinamool leader said the Chief Minister, who is also in charge of the Home (Police) Department, is not being able to tackle the on-going political battle in the districts. State CPI(M) secretary Anil Biswas, however, rubbished the argument. "Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee is a whole timer and he can manage things well."

HTC, Kolkata

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Warm-up before big battle, warns Kamtapuri leader

Arindam Sarkar
Kolkata, August 19

KAMTAPURI PEOPLE'S Party (KPP) chief Atul Roy says the terrorist attacks in North Bengal are only the beginning of a bloody battle that will hit the region before the panchayat election.

The CPI(M)-led Left Front Government is bound to face the wrath of the KPP and the KLO if it does not return the land to the Rajbongshis and acknowledges their Statehood demand, he said.

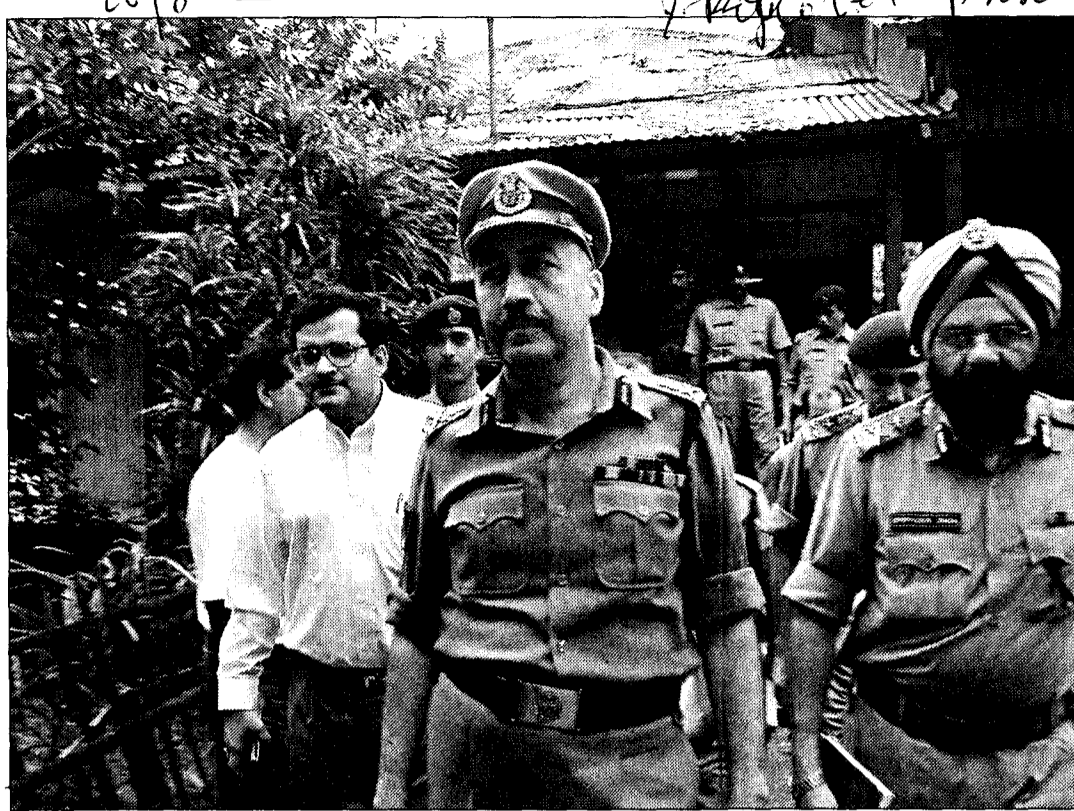
"One burst in Dhupguri and the State Government is rattled," said Roy. "We want to send a clear message to Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee—the fireball will reach the goal. The Rajbongshis have not benefited from development projects. Not a

single son of the soil got even a minibus permit here."

The KPP, 500 of whose leaders are behind bars, are regrouping and want to build a base in Malbazar Haldibari, Methliganj, Jalpaiguri Dhubguri, Alipurduar, Toofanganj, Dinhat, Mathabanga, Cooch Behar, Islampur, Balurghat and Raiganj.

Roy said an elite force trained in Purulia has been deployed to arrest and torture KPP workers. The KPP leadership believes this is largely to prevent the KPP from controlling the panchayats in the villages.

"It is this power struggle that sparked the clash. But we will start with the panchayats polls and end with a Kamtapuri State comprising Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Malda, North and South Dinajpur and adjacent areas



Director-General of Police Dinesh Vajpai in Dhupguri, where he was heckled on Monday.

Assam cops mull joint drive

Rahul Karmakar
Guwahati, August 19

THE ASSAM Police is mulling the possibility of joint operations after the killing of six CPI(M) members by Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) at Dhupguri on Saturday.

Senior Assam Police officers say cooperation between the two States is crucial in tackling militants of the Ulfa, NDFB and KLO, all operating from bases in south Bhutan.

"There have been instances of coordinated moves between the police force of the two States in the past, but those were half-hearted," a senior police officer said. "We hope that the West Bengal Government would be

more serious this time on joint counter-insurgency operations."

Ever since the rise of the KLO, whose members are trained by the Ulfa and NDFB in Bhutan, the focus has shifted to the jungles of Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts. The jungles have been used as corridors between Bhutan and Bangladesh. The NDFB militants in particular have escaped into the West Bengal jungles to dodge military action of the Unified Command. The rise of the KLO has helped Ulfa to find shelter in West Bengal.

"Assam and West Bengal have a common problem—a border with Bhutan. Though Bhutan is under pressure to push the militants out of its soil, it does not

have the firepower to do so," the police official said.

Thimpu has been worried over the increasing activities of the KLO. The Bhutanese national daily *Kuensel* recently reported that the Himalayan kingdom "has become a hub for murderers, abductors and kidnappers".

"Activists of the KLO in league with Ulfa militants have reportedly shaken the planters in Dooars tea belt area with threats of extortion, abduction and murder," it said.

"The abducted Indian victims are brought to camps in Bhutan by their captors, from where they negotiate for ransom," *Kuensel* said. Bhutan is reported to have turned a blind eye to such activities.



Atul Roy
Battle mode

links with them.

"The KPP is a democratic outfit and the KLO works from underground. But since the goal is the same, the State Government is bound to crumble and accede to the demand for a Kamtapuri State as the KPP and the KLO mount their pressure," said Roy.

Brief but bloody trail of terror

Pramod Giri
Siliguri, August 19

THE KAMTAPURI Liberation Organisation (KLO) has run up a long list of victims in just six years of its existence.

In fact, its tryst with violence began quite early, just two years after it was formed, in mid-1996, by hardliners in the Kamtapuri People's Party Students' Front who wanted to replace the KPP's demand for a separate State with that of a separate country.

The KLO started off by creating panic among the CPI(M) cadres, since it sees the ruling party as its main opposition. Schoolteachers affiliated to the CPI(M) were a soft target.

Tea planters and businessmen of the region became their prime targets for abductions and extortions. In Jalpaiguri district itself, the KLO's inventory of depredations is quite exhaustive.

The three most spectacular kidnappings were those of Roshanlal Garg in 1999, Om Prakash Agarwal the next year and Deepankar Ghosh in October 2000. All three were tea planters.

Garg was released after a few months in captivity when, according to Intelligence sources, his family paid the KLO Rs 80 lakh as ransom. Agarwal was abducted in early 2000 and his son, Gopal, who tried to resist, was murdered. Agarwal was released after his family reportedly paid nearly Rs 1 crore as ransom.

Ghosh, a lawyer who had close links with the CPI(M),

Bandh brings North Bengal to a halt

HT Correspondent
Siliguri, August 19

LIFE CAME to a grinding halt today in the three North Bengal districts of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling in response to the CPI(M)'s bandh call to protest Saturday's KLO attack on its party office in Dhupguri. The party had called a 12-hour bandh each in Cooch Behar and Darjeeling and a 24-hour bandh in Jalpaiguri.

The bandh was complete in all three districts except in the hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling. No untoward incident was reported from any of the districts.

All State and Central Government offices remained closed, with only skeletal staff manning the District Magistrates' offices in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. The employees, however, wore black badges.

Public and private transport remained off the roads, with all shops and business establishments keeping their shutters down. Educational institutions, banks and private establishments too remained closed.

However, train services were not affected as they had been kept out of the bandh's purview. Jalpaiguri DM Utpal Bhadra said tea gardens had responded to the bandh call.

The bandh was total even in interior areas of the district. "Even in remote villages, schools and shops remained closed and we have reports that many farmers did not go out to their fields," a police officer at Jalpaiguri said.

The North Bengal State Transport Corporation did not ply buses on any route. Emergency services were affected in the district. The bandh, CPI(M) leaders claimed, was total and spontaneous.

10 action squads for new strike plan

Jaideep Mazumdar
Kolkata, August 19

THE KAMTAPURI Liberation Organisation (KLO) has 10 "action squads" working under senior leader Tom Adhikary alias Joydeb Roy as part of its new strategy for effective strikes.

The action squads comprise six to eight members, all of them trained at the Ulfa camps in Bhutan. "The best of the lot in these batches were picked up for these squads," a defence Intelligence officer posted in North Bengal told *Hindustan Times*.

These squads have fanned out to the remote villages dominated by the Rajbongshis. "The local people are anyway their families, relatives or supporters. So this makes it difficult to trace them."

The KLO militants have stopped carrying arms except during operations, and travel on bicycles or on foot. "This is exactly what the Ulfa had done in recent times after realising that it made them less conspicuous," said the officer.

Interrogation of KLO leader Suresh Roy, who surrendered earlier this year, had revealed

that the group's "commander-in-chief" Jeevan Singh was its undisputed leader. "He's revered by the cadres and other second-rung leaders," said the officer.

The second-rung comprises "deputy commander-in-chief" Tamir Das and Tom Adhikary.

"The two are confidants of Jeevan Singh. Adhikary usually plots the operations and liaises with the Ulfa though Jeevan Singh is the pointman. Jeevan has a good rapport with Ulfa commander-in-chief Padesh Barua and its Bhutan commander Raju Baruah. He and Raju ex-

change information and are known to plan strategies jointly," said a senior IB officer.

The KLO has about 200 trained cadres and about 75 SLRs, carbines, AK-series rifles and sophisticated small arms. "These were purchased from the Ulfa with the Rs 80 crore they extorted from tea planters, businessmen and affluent people in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling districts in the past four years."

The KLO is now recruiting youngsters for its fifth batch to be trained in Bhutan from early next year.

Police suspect Ulfa hand in KLO strike

OUR BUREAU

Dhugguri, Aug. 18: As the numbed town woke up to the deadly KLO strike, police today saw the hand of Ulfa militants as well in the killing of five CPM leaders that came amid heightened security in the wake of Independence Day.

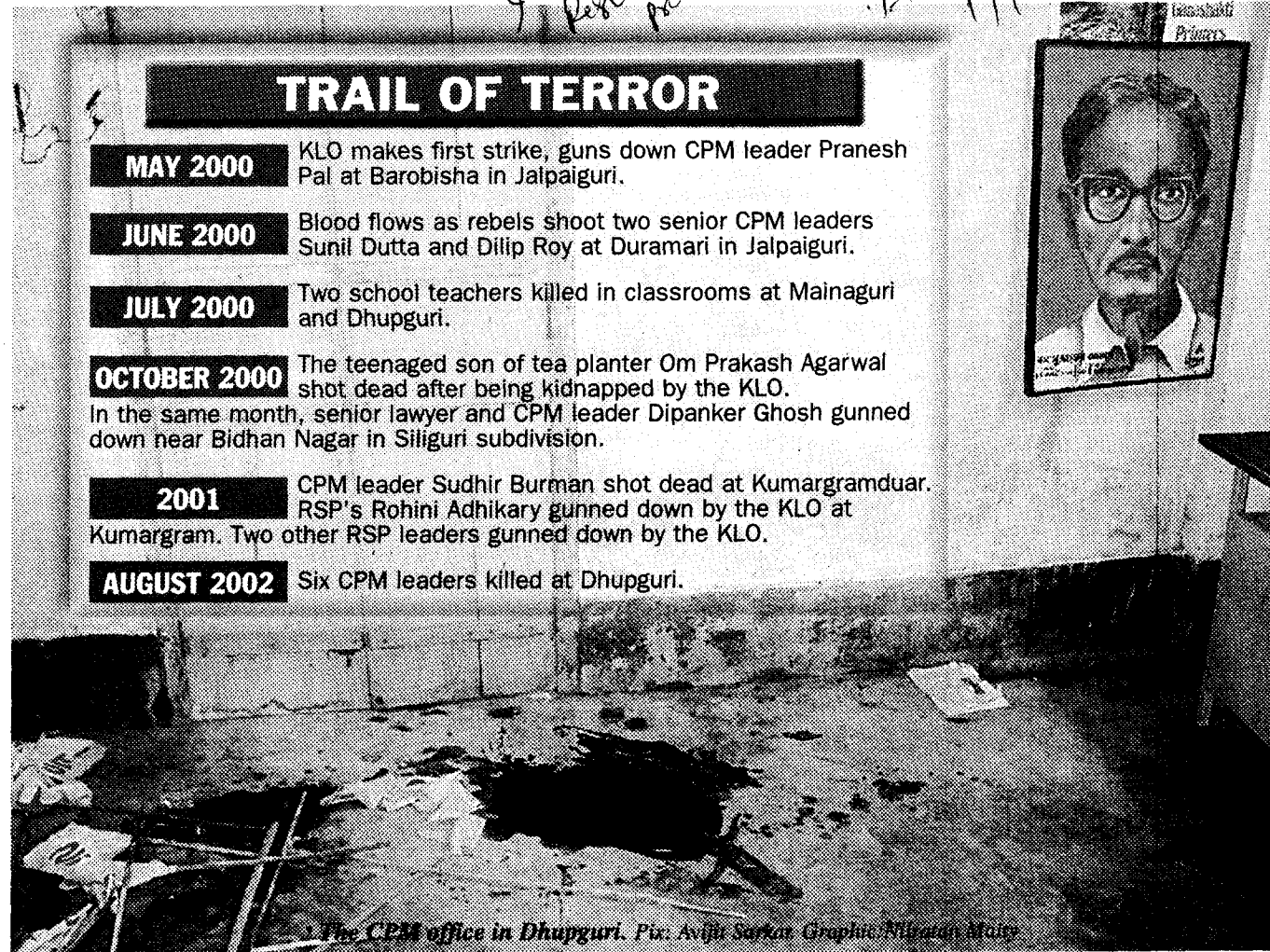
"We suspect it was a joint KLO-Ulfa operation, going by the way the attack was carried out. Eyewitness accounts confirm our suspicions," said Jalpaiguri additional superintendent of police Anand Kumar. He added that the police are keeping a watch over all routes to Bhutan and neighbouring Cooch Behar where the militants might escape.

Intelligence officials did not rule out "a pact" between the KLO and Ulfa militants to attack "common" targets. Both groups, incidentally, have their bases in Bhutan and run their training camps there. "From preliminary investigations, we have found out that there were five to six militants belonging to the KLO accompanied by a lone Ulfa cadre," Kumar said.

After a night's hunt across the Jalpaiguri district, Kumar said they had detained four people, but did not give details. "We are interrogating them," was all he said.

In Calcutta, director-general of police D.C. Vajpai said four people were arrested in connection with the killings. Vajpai met senior officers, including inspector-general of police (north) Bhupinder Singh, and asked them to beef up security for politicians' hitlist.

Vajpai, who is leaving for Dhugguri tomorrow, asked the North Bengal Armed Police in Siliguri to send reinforcements



TRAIL OF TERROR

MAY 2000

KLO makes first strike, guns down CPM leader Pranesh Pal at Barobisha in Jalpaiguri.

JUNE 2000

Blood flows as rebels shoot two senior CPM leaders Sunil Dutta and Dilip Roy at Duramari in Jalpaiguri.

JULY 2000

Two school teachers killed in classrooms at Mainaguri and Dhugguri.

OCTOBER 2000

The teenaged son of tea planter Om Prakash Agarwal shot dead after being kidnapped by the KLO. In the same month, senior lawyer and CPM leader Dipanker Ghosh gunned down near Bidhan Nagar in Siliguri subdivision.

2001

CPM leader Sudhir Burman shot dead at Kumargramduar. RSP's Rohini Adhikary gunned down by the KLO at Kumargram. Two other RSP leaders gunned down by the KLO.

AUGUST 2002

Six CPM leaders killed at Dhugguri.

The CPM office in Dhugguri. Pic: Avijit Sarkar. Graphics: Niladri Maiti

to Jalpaiguri for a districtwide combing operation.

The toll rose to five, with one more injured CPM worker, Subol Roy, dying from bullet wounds. The dead included Gopal Chaki, district CPM secretariat member and a senior zilla parishad office-bearer. A 48-hour bandh,

called by the CPM to protest against the killings, was observed in Dhugguri.

Blotches of blood on the toilet floor and walls pocked with bullet marks were a grisly reminder of the deadly strike on the CPM office on College Road, where militants sprayed the party worke-

rs gathered in a meeting with bullets from assault rifles. In desperation, some had tried to shut themselves in a toilet, but in vain.

Even 24 hours later, it was not clear how the killers, who, witnesses said, had come on bicycles, had made the gateway. While some said they escaped on

the same cycles, others said the rebels jumped onto three motorcycles waiting outside the two-storied party office.

Police sources said they suspected the assailants included KLO action squad chief Joydeb Roy, popularly known in the region as Tom Adhikary.

Revenge for fiancée arrest

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Dhugguri, Aug. 18: Last evening's daring strike has again proved that the banned Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) has enough firepower to take on the CPM.

If intelligence reports are to be believed, the outfit's self-styled commander-in-chief Jeevan Singh alias Tamir Das has been seething since the arrest of his fiancée Bharati Das, who is also the chief of the Kamatapur Women's Rights Forum. Das was arrested on August 5.

Bharati, like Singh, is a well-trained rebel. She has reportedly undergone sophisticated arms training at the Ulfa area command camp in south Bhutan.

Intelligence reports suggest that before her arrest, the firebrand women's forum leader was primarily responsible for recruiting cadre for both the KLO and the women's wing of the armed outfit.

Faced with an acute funds crunch and police crackdown, the KLO was lying low for the past few months and "looking for an opportune moment to strike terror".

"Last evening's attack was more retaliatory in nature, to reassert their might. It was engineered to spread panic among people, to show that they meant business. The CPM worke-

rs, whom the KLO considers its sworn enemies, were the most likely target. It was similar to the terror strikes a couple of years ago," a senior intelligence official told The Telegraph.

"Besides, the outfit was desperate to exhibit its newly-acquired firepower and sophisticated arms training. It was also a clear message to the law enforcers that the militants can strike back at the establishment with vengeance," the official added.

The surprise strike has made both the intelligence and security forces wary of further attacks. "It is the handiwork of the Ulfa-KLO combine," said a senior official.

"We fear that several highly-trained members of these two outfits are at large in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts. According to our information, the rebels have chalked out a series of deadly strikes. A 31-member militant squad has fanned out in the area. They are holed up at different hideouts," he added.

Singh, too, is believed to have entered north Bengal from his Bhutan hideout at Tintala after the arrest of Bharati.

The commander-in-chief had reportedly planned last evening's strike. Tom Adhikary, as Singh is popularly known, and his deputy Tushar are believed to have been in the squad.

INTELLIGENCE FAILURE LED TO KLO ATTACK: DM

CPM threatens to hit back

SFI
19/8
(Kampan) *Regional Problem*

Statesman News Service

SILIGURI/JALPAIGURI, Aug. 18. — The CPI-M's Jalpaiguri district committee has threatened retaliation a day after the KLO attack on the party's Dhupguri zonal office.

The district committee secretary, Mr Manik Sanyal, spoke of "jehad against the KLO". "We have tolerated their attacks so far. But the time has come to retaliate ... If they are so inhuman, we will answer them," he said today.

The death toll in the attack has risen to five with two more persons succumbing to injuries in North Bengal Medical College and Hospital. The condition of party members Mr Bhabesh Sarkar (at NBMCH) and Mr Chandan Sarkar (at Paramount Nursing Home, Siliguri) is serious.

The attack has sent shock waves through the region, particularly among CPI-M members who have been targets of the KLO — armed wing of the KPP. Till now, however, the ultras were targeting their victims in isolation. The Jalpaiguri DM, Dr Subroto Gupta, admitted that "Intelligence failure" had led to the incident.

A 24-hour bandh has been called in Jalpaiguri and a 12-hour bandh in Cooch Behar tomorrow. In Siliguri, the CPI-M district committee has called a 12-hour bandh tomorrow. The Darjeeling district CPI has supported the bandh. "There are no words to condemn the barbaric incident," Mr Ujjal Chowdhary, district CPI secretary, said.

The chief minister has asked the DGP, Mr Dinesh Bajpai, to visit the region tomorrow. Security has been beefed up at the CPI-M office in Siliguri and

the party held protest rallies at many places today.

Mr Mridul Dey, CPI-M state committee member, and urban development minister Mr Asok Bhattacharya rushed to Dhupguri today. The town wore a deserted look because of the bandh called by the local CPI-M unit.

According to eyewitnesses, yesterday's operation lasted five minutes. The militants came on bicycles and fled through Surya Sen Colony. Incidentally, the local police station is hardly 200 metres away from the party office.

Amid claims that the gunmen had fled to militant camps in Bhutan, a senior police officer said six KLO "linkmen" had been detained for interrogation. No arrests have been made so far. The commissioner of Jalpaiguri division, Mr D Chakraborty, said a red alert has been sounded in Cooch Behar and Darjeeling and the Bhutan and Bangladesh borders are being monitored.

The Dhupguri CPI-M zonal committee secretary and former forest minister, Mr Banamali Roy, expressed "security fears for the public". The Jalpaiguri superintendent of police, Mr SN Gupta, was not available for comment. The DM expressed "surprise" over the fact that the militants managed to flee though they came on bicycles. "This despite the police having cars."

A high-level meeting was held at Writers' Buildings today which was attended by Mr Bhupinder Singh, I-G (North Bengal), among others, adds SNS from Kolkata. It was learnt that security will be beefed up in district committee offices of the CPI-M, especially in North Bengal.

Photographs on page 6

19 AUG 2002

Police fear for CPM HQ

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, August 18

THE DHUPGURI attack has sent shockwaves around not only CPI(M) party offices in North Bengal but also the State headquarters at Alimuddin Street.

The police have beefed up security at Alimuddin Street as most party leaders, including Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, frequent this office. DC (SB-1) Gaurav Dutt discussed the matter with CPI(M) State secretary Anil Biswas this morning.

By afternoon, three policemen were seen guarding the entrance to the party office in addition to the usual police outpost in front of the alley leading to the headquarters. Biswas, however, is not keen on the increased security cover at the party office. Instead, he wants to keep faith in the people of the locality, saying they



Anil Biswas
Banking on masses

are the ultimate security against extremist forces.

"We have as many as 1,800 party offices spread over the State. It won't be possible for the police to provide security to all the offices. They may beef up security if they like but we depend on people the most because extremists have very little mass support. We will combat these

forces politically without any compromise," Biswas said. The party state secretariat took stock of the situation in an emergency meeting today and called upon partymen to thwart such attempts with the help of locals. "The police have started combing operations in the area. Director General of Police Dinsh Vajpai is going to Jalpaiguri to monitor the operations," Bhattacharjee said after the meeting.

Biswas said the extremists often take shelter in neighbouring Bhutan. That is why Jalpaiguri has always been a prime target of extremists. Thirteen party activists, including two district committee leaders, have been victims of terror attacks in two years.

"We urge the Centre to take up the matter with Bhutan because it is the appropriate authority for such cross-border talks," he

said. The security personnel along the India-Bhutan border in Jalpaiguri and the subdivisions bordering Assam have been alerted.

CPI(M) state committee member Mridul De left for Jalpaiguri today with a string of political programmes against the attack. The protracted programme spread over a fortnight will start with a 12-hour bandh in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling tomorrow and end with a Left Front condolence meeting at Dhupguri on September 1. Meanwhile, the State party has asked all party units to keep their red flags at half-mast and organise street corners and rallies to mobilise public opinion.

Other Left parties such as the Forward Bloc and the CPI(M-L) Liberation have condemned the killings. State Bloc secretary Asoke Ghosh has urged the police to be more alert.

Telltale Ulfa signs in attack

Jaideep Mazumdar
Kolkata, August 18

SATURDAY'S ATTACK on the CPI (M) zonal office at Dhupguri was masterminded and executed by a 31-member "action squad" of the Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation (KLO) and bears the trademark of an Ulfa operation.

The militants sneaked into Darjeeling from Bhutan in the last week of July. Intelligence agencies had tipped off the State police on their movement and alerted the State administration to the possibility of a strike on "soft targets".

Senior officers of central Intelligence agencies told *Hindustan Times* that the information about the entry of the KLO militants was provided to the State police in the first week of August. "We also told police

Intelligence sources feel KLO couldn't have executed such an operation alone... The Ulfa must have helped in planning the operation and lent the arms

that these militants, who received arms training at Ulfa camps in Bhutan, were spreading out into Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts, and were planning a major operation," a senior Intelligence officer said. "We had information that the operation would be carried out at a stronghold of the KLO and KPP."

Dhupguri is a KLO stronghold.

Intelligence agencies are certain that the Ulfa was involved in the operation. "This sort of operation could not have been planned by just the KLO. The Ulfa had, at the very

least, helped in planning the whole operation and must have also provided strategic help," the officer said. The arms used for the operation could have been lent to the KLO by the Ulfa.

"There are a number of Ulfa activists hiding in Darjeeling, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri. They were definitely involved. Some hitmen from Ulfa camps in Bhutan may have accompanied the KLO action squad," he said.

Senior Army officers who have traced the Assam-based militant outfit's organisational structure and operations for years

say the operation smacks of Ulfa's involvement. "This is exactly the way the Ulfa used to carry out strikes in Assam. The modus operandi, from preliminary reports and observations, is the same as that of the Ulfa's strikes at Congress workers and offices in Assam in the early 1990s or against the Asom Gana Parishad later," said a senior officer who has commanded counter-insurgency operations in Assam.

That the whole operation was well-planned and executed with clockwork precision is evident, Intelligence officers say. "The militants knew a meeting was scheduled to be held at the CPI (M) office. They chose the day carefully—it was a market day—and they achieved their objective of creating maximum panic.

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Siliguri, Aug. 17: Two key Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) militants were arrested from separate places around Kharibari near here last evening.

Chandan Singh alias Raj Rajbangshi was picked up from a tea stall near Panitanki More and Shyam Lal Singh alias Chila Roy was nabbed at Batashi. When confronted with police, both surrendered without resistance.

Police sources said the rebels were not carrying arms. Senior officers said both Chandan and

Shyam Lal had been on the run for the past year. They were produced before the sub-divisional magistrate in Siliguri today. The court remanded them in custody till August 25.

The twin arrests come close on the heels of the police picking up Bharati Das, the Kamtapur Women Rights Forum chief, from the Jaipesh area of Jalpaiguri district. Das is also said to be

the fiancée of self-styled KLO chief Jeevan Singh.

A police team led by Bagdogra circle inspector Prodyut Das assembled near Panitanki More in the cover of darkness and threw a cordon around the tea stall. Chandan leaked Shyam Lal's whereabouts after his arrest. Shyam Lal was picked up soon after.

"The militants probably ca-

me out of hiding to meet relatives. Chandan hails from Bhutsinghothe and Shyam Lal from Sukarujothe in the outskirts of Siliguri," Das said.

The police claimed Chandan was a close associate of KLO action squad chief Tom Adhikary and Jeevan. The KLO chief is a "top-notch militant" wanted in several cases, including the murder of a local CPM

KLO rebels arrested

9-Region problem

leader in October 2000.

Dipankar Ghosh, a Matigara zonal committee member of the CPM, was shot dead from point blank range near Phansidewa. Ghosh, an advocate, owned a small tea garden in the Dooars.

"Police came across the names of Chandan and Shyam Lal from two KLO militants arrested six months ago. Chiranjit Burman, Naresh Chandra Burman and Chandan had hatched the plan to eliminate the CPM leader," said Siliguri additional superintendent of police K. Jayaraman.

CPM bleeds in reprisal

18/8
OUR BUREAU
KLO
9-February 1978

Aug. 17: In a daring strike at dusk, Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) militants arrived at the crowded CPM office in Dhupguri on bicycles and gunned down four senior leaders before escaping on waiting motorcycles.

Fourteen CPM workers were injured in the attack which penetrated the tight security cover over Jalpaiguri. Sources said the incident took place around 6.45 pm, when a meeting was on in the office, located in Dhupguri bazaar. Saturday being the weekly market day, the area was crowded.

Quoting witnesses, the sources said three militants, armed with automatic weapons, pedalled up to the front of the office, stormed in and opened fire before escaping on three motorcycles that their colleagues were waiting with.

Dhupguri zonal committee members Gopal Chaki, Dulal Roy, Gosai Sil and Ganesh Rai were killed. CPM state secretary Anil Biswas said. Chaki was also the Jalpaiguri zilla parishad member in charge of PWD. Unconfirmed reports said at least five CPM workers were killed.

Biswas blamed the KLO for the "planned strike" and said the party would hold statewide protests tomorrow. A bandh has been called in Jalpaiguri on Monday.

Senior district police officials, including superintendent of police Siddh Nath Gupta, have rushed to the spot. The area has been cordoned off.

The strike is significant in the wake of intelligence reports that a 31-member "action squad" of KLO and the United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) militants had entered Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling in the first week of August.

The reports said the militants, armed with automatic weapons, including AK-47 and AK-56 assault rifles and 9mm pistols, had split into six groups and fanned out in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling districts, where they were planning a series of strikes.

The attack follows the arrest of Kamtapur Women Rights' Forum chief Bharati Das, said to be the fiancée of self-styled KLO commander-in-chief Jeevan Singh, in the first week of August. Police and security agencies had been apprehensive that the KLO-Ulfa combine would carry out a series of retaliatory strikes.

Witnesses said KLO action squad chief Joy Deb Roy alias Tom Adhikary, his deputy Tushar Roy and Bijoy Roy alias Kitab Das were among the six involved in the attack. Ulfa activists were also involved, they added.

■ See Page 9

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