

Basu tells Citu supporters: Change ways in changing times

Sermon and strike defence

STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Nov. 20. Jyoti Basu today called for strategic changes in the CPM's trade union movement in the wake of a changing industrial scenario.

"Workers will definitely organise movements to realise legitimate demands but at the same time, they should ensure uninterrupted production and make every effort to save industry. Workers will not survive if industry perishes. There must be some kind of co-ordination between the workers' fight to retain political and economic rights and their keenness to keep their factories open," Basu said while inaugurating the eighth conference of Citu, the CPM's labour arm, at Mahajati Sadan.

The veteran Marxist and CPM politburo member said it is not possible to save any industry without taking into considera-

tion aspects like its financial position and competition in the international market and modernisation and introduction of new technology. "This is one of the rules of market economy in which there is no scope for any kind of reservation. The working class will have to finalise its strategy for survival keeping in mind all these factors," he said.

Basu, also a vice-president of the trade union, defended the workers' "right to observe strikes and hold rallies" saying there should be an organised resistance to every attempt to snatch these rights.

"However, we have to make sure that your trade union action does not make people suffer. We have no intention to cause inconvenience to the people while organising rallies and other forms of agitations. But there is no question of the workers forgoing their right to observe strikes

and hold rallies," he said.

The former chief minister denied that workers in Bengal resort to strikes at the drop of a hat, indulge in violence and stay away from work, prompting entrepreneurs to migrate to other states with apparently lesser labour unrest. "It is a propaganda of the Opposition and a section of the media. Some undesirable activities have been reported from one or two factories but these were isolated cases. How can one explain so much investment in the state if the overall situation is not good?" Basu asked.

A draft report, placed at the conference by Citu state secretary Chittabrata Majumdar, blamed "inefficient management and lack of work culture among employees" for the sick and closed state-run public sector undertakings.

"Most of the PSUs are sick and have been incurring huge

losses as the government did not properly assess their viability before taking them over and did not have enough funds for their modernisation. Besides, the top management officers in these PSUs have been found to be inefficient, lacking initiative and integrity. This apart, the workers' general tendency to neglect work and make excessive financial demands made the PSUs sick," the report says.

Admitting the Citu's failure to educate the "working class", the report says there has been hardly any improvement in work culture despite a rise in membership. "The task of educating union leaders and enriching their political consciousness has been neglected. This has created a distance between the leaders and the workers. Some leaders have been found to be opportunists and involved in corrupt practices."

21/11 P.P. CPM. G. E.

Buddha breaks silence with tough talk on corrupt leaders

CM slap on 'dushtu' Lohar

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Siliguri, Nov. 17: Making up for his silence over the Dalgaon massacre yesterday, chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today branded former CITU leader Tarakeshwar Lohar a "dushtu lok (wicked man)" who had exploited the party to make money.

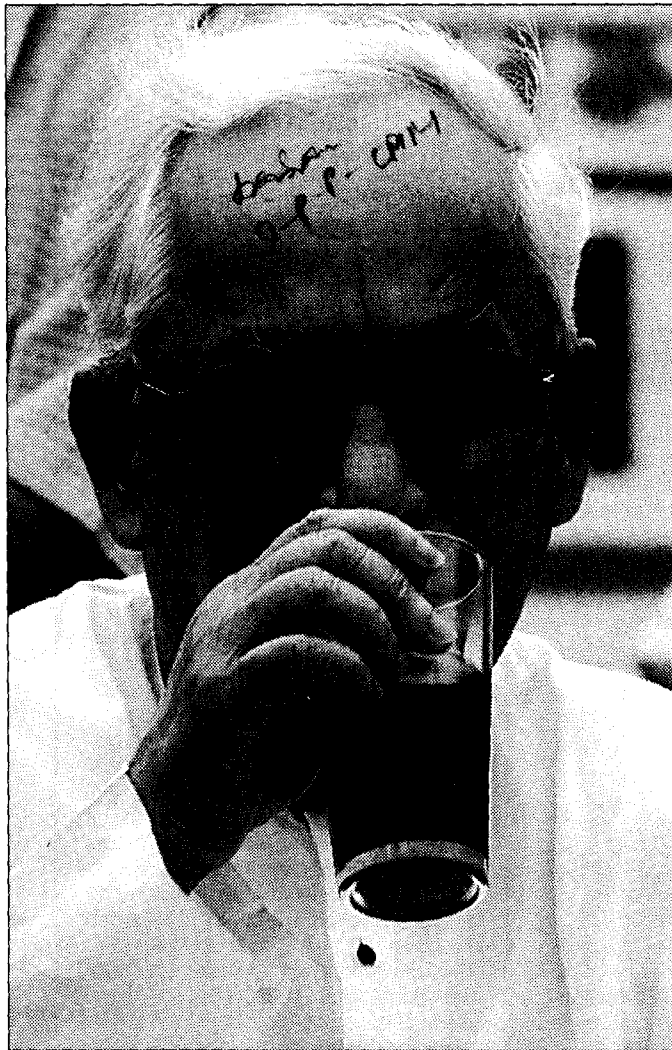
Rounding up his two-day visit to Siliguri, Bhattacharjee said: "Ami Dalgaon niye kono katha bolbo na. Ki naam jani loktar? Tarakeshwar Lohar. Lokta baje ebong dushtu. Partir namey, oshoth upaye taka tulto (I do not want to comment on the Dalgaon massacre. What is that man's name? Tarakeshwar Lohar. The man is wicked and bad. He used the party's name to extort money)."

The chief minister admitted that certain criminal elements had become part of the CITU in the gardens.

"We have to admit that our party organisation at Dalgaon was not strong. The massacre is an isolated incident triggered by one man, a rotten apple, who was involved in nefarious activities. He had even accepted bribes to get some outsiders employed in the garden. I have received the police report and am awaiting the party's observations on the incident," he said.

Bhattacharjee's refusal to speak on Lohar or the mob fury that charred 19 people to death on November 6 had left his party leaders and supporters baffled yesterday.

Today's statement was another effort by the CPM leadership



Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee: Black tea, literally. (File picture)

to distance itself and its labour arm, the CITU, from Lohar. The CPM has changed its version

on the former CITU leader and the Dalgaon carnage several times now.

12/9 1971
First, it described the dead as innocent labourers and then labelled them as "anti-socials".

Party insiders said Dalgaon dominated the two meetings the chief minister attended since yesterday.

On both occasions, Bhattacharjee is said to have warned CITU leaders against indulging in corrupt practices and making false promises to the garden labourers. At a closed-door meeting held last night, he expressed "displeasure" at the way things were being handled by the local CITU leaders.

"Anyone found guilty of such (corrupt) practices would be removed from the party. We will not tolerate anyone using the party's name to exploit the workers. People like Lohar give a bad name to the party and its trade union wing," Bhattacharjee said today, when asked what the CPM intended to do with leaders like Lohar.

The chief minister, who reviewed the law and order situation with the police brass earlier this morning, said: "In view of increased militant activities in the region, we have decided to provide the security forces with state-of-the-art weapons, surveillance and communication gadgets."

Iterating the government's resolve to weed out militancy from the region, Bhattacharjee said: "Enough is enough, we will no longer tolerate any form of violence. Let the militants surrender and we will take up the responsibility of rehabilitating them."

THE OLD STORY

CPI-M monsters in local panchayats

THERE are painful similarities between the outrage at Dalgaon tea garden and the monstrous assault on a newly established factory in North 24-Parganas a couple of days later. In the first case it was Citu, in the other the CPI-M-controlled local panchayat claiming the right to decide who would be recruited — to the exclusion of management. This is a familiar story, not any more justified by overuse. When the situation got out of hand in both cases, Alimuddin Street tried to distance itself belatedly from the culprits — in vain. The Citu leader at Dalgaon, Lohar, has been indulging in rampant extortion while Anil Biswas makes a shameless attempt to defend him as a flossy white campaigner against evils like gambling and drinking. The factory attack, on the other hand, reveals not just an individual but an entire CPI-M-controlled panchayat in an industrial growth centre mocking all attempts by the Left Front to establish a healthy climate for investment. Where does Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee go from here?

The chief minister's cup of woes is overflowing. From an unending flow of hospital outrages to trade union militancy and virtually uncontrollable cadre raj. He did not need another stunning blow to his determined efforts to revitalise industry. Figures don't matter; nor do feelers from Italy, Indonesia and Malaysia that they are ready to consider business in Bengal. Dalgaon and Bishnupur are telling pointers to the reality that must be faced by anyone foolhardy enough to believe the government. It is unthinkable that party controlled panchayats can act on their own. To cite Alimuddin Street policy: "we have a one-point agenda. When factories are set up with huge subsidies, locals cannot be deprived. We won't allow it here". In other words, the Marxist government provides incentives because panchayat-approved cadres, unskilled and otherwise unemployable, can be accommodated. With such strings attached, Buddhadeb can make no impression on investors at high level meetings in five star hotels. Nothing will change as long as lumpen elements are allowed to usurp management functions. Is the government ready for the challenge?

CPM doublespeak on Tarakeswar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DALGAON, Nov. 8. — CPI-M leaders in Jalpaiguri seem to be speaking in different voices. The district CPI-M secretary, Mr Manik Sanyal, did a volte face today and held Tarakeswar Lohar responsible for Thursday's incident. He claimed that Tarakeswar was suspended from the party two years ago. However, the Birpara CPI-M zonal committee secretary, Mr Robin Rai, asserted that Tarakeswar was their party member till the date of the incident.

Mr Sanyal said the party leadership had suspended Tarakeswar after it came to know that he was misusing his position to unleash terror in the garden areas.

The Statesman yesterday carried a report mentioning Tarakeswar's alleged involvement in the killings of seven labourers in the Tukra

Jateswar division of the Dalgaon estate in 1999.

Perhaps oblivious of Mr Sanyal's volte face on Tarakeswar's role in the massacre, Mr Rai said he was their party member and also a local executive committee member of the CBMU till last Thursday. He said he had no official report on Tarakeswar's suspension.

Mr Rai said those burnt alive were members of the CPI-M. It may be noted that Mr Sanyal, in line with the police version, has all along claimed that some of the victims were outsiders.

Mr Mahananda Lakra, president of the Dalgaon unit committee of CBMU, said Tarakeswar was suspended from the post of central leader on 22 October. He too claimed that those who died in the fire were CITU workers and demanded that the party should look after their families.

Ms Munia Lakra, leader of the

garden Mahila Samiti affiliated to CPI-M, said Tarakeswar misused his position to exploit the labourers.

Mr Dipak Lakra, a labourer, said Tarakeswar and his associates had unleashed terror in the gardens. "I have the courage to speak out against him now because he has been put behind bars," he said.

The former forest minister and present sarbadhyaksha of Jalpaiguri zilla parisad, Mr Banamali Roy, who came to the spot, echoed Mr Sanyal. He, however, added that if any of the victims was a CITU member, the party should look after his/her family.

All the 19 bodies were cremated today beside the Sukti river in Birpara under police supervision.

Rap for Buddha: The Trinamul today alleged that the chief minister is "maintaining an intriguing silence" over Thursday's killings at Dalgaon.

RENGA

THE STATESMAN

9 NOV 2001

Accusations fly in massacre of rivals 12 years ago

Sins visit tea garden leader

AVIJIT SINHA

Jalpaiguri, Nov. 7: Over a decade ago, the heads of two union leaders were found on the tea estate in north Bengal where 19 people were burnt to death yesterday in the house of Tarakeshwar Lohar, a CPM trade union leader.

Leaders of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), an ally of the CPM in the ruling Left Front, accuse Lohar of masterminding the killings in 1991 as an opinion gathers strength that yesterday's attack on his house was a result of accumulated sins he has committed in the past.

A local CPM leader first defended him and then said he had been expelled. "He is nothing but a criminal," Manik Sanyal said.

On Thursday morning, a mob of several hundred people attacked Lohar's house on Dalgaon tea estate of Jalpaiguri district and set it afire. The immediate provocation was the recruitment in the tea garden of three outsiders in clerical posts, in which Lohar, a leader of the CPM's labour wing, Citu, was alleged to have made money.

"Yesterday's incident is just a retaliation by the labourers who had faced his torture for long years," said Bhaskar Nandi, leader of a Naxalite faction active in north Bengal.

"Lohar is a known man who is shielded by the party. He was involved in the brutal incident in 1991 and has a nexus with local goons," he added.

Seven people were killed in that massacre, days after an RSP labour unit was set up in the garden as a large number of work-



Lohar with his lawyer outside Alipurduar court. Picture by Ujjal Baral ■ See Page 9

ers shifted allegiance from the Citu-affiliated Cha Bagan Mazdoor Union, led by Lohar.

A few days later, the president and the secretary of the unit were beheaded, five more people were murdered and 127 houses looted and torched.

"After the incident, Lohar and his associates did not allow labourers (who had switched sides) to enter the garden. We protested. We even gheraoed local police stations, brought out movements, rallies and meetings, but Lohar was saved," Nandi said.

RSP leaders support this version. "We know he is the culprit. He was a mere labourer who reached such heights because of the support he received from a

section of leaders of the CPM," said Debabrata Ghosh, a Jalpaiguri district leader of the RSP.

District police chief Siddh Nath Gupta said in the evening: "We have note of such an incident but we are yet to get the details. We have found his involvement in the incident and will soon investigate in detail. If he is found guilty, he will not be spared."

Sanyal, the CPM and Citu's district leader, initially defended Lohar, saying he was not aware of any such incident. "It is typical of RSP leaders to allege his involvement in an incident which happened 12 years back."

Later, he clarified that Lohar had been expelled from the CPM two years ago. "Since the estate

is spread over a huge area, we could not inform everyone. He has been using the party to cheat others," Sanyal added.

As the history of Lohar unfolds as the strongman of a tea garden — known to have the last word in Dalgaon — it has come to light that he owns a Maruti car and a scooter, and also has a house under construction at nearby Birpara.

The list of his acquisitions, if true, does not match his monthly salary of some Rs 2,000 as a mere labourer in a tea garden. "He uses mobile phone and has land in the name of his father at Birpara. We have found two pipe-guns from the bodies recovered from his home yesterday," said a senior police official.

MASSACRE CHARIS TEA GARDEN



REMAINS OF THE DAY: A worker covers a burnt body as policemen look on at Dalgaon on Thursday.

19 hacked and burnt over job dispute

Pramod Giri
Dalgaon (Jalpaiguri), Nov. 6

NINETEEN PEOPLE were hacked to death and their bodies set on fire at Dalgaon Tea Estate near Siliguri on Thursday morning following a dispute over fresh recruitments.

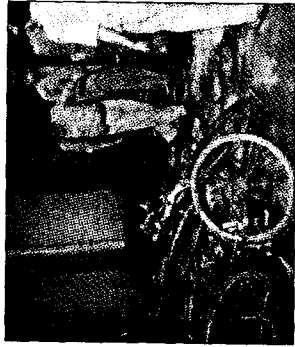
Tarakshwar Lohar, secretary of the local unit of the CITU-affiliated Jalpaiguri District Chai Kaman Mazdoor Union, had incurred the wrath of labourers when he got three "outsiders" appointed as clerks in the garden. The labourers wanted their children — qualified for the posts — to be appointed.

About 7 am on Thursday, a group of 70 labourers marched to Lohar's house. Jalpaiguri SP Siddhi Nath Gupta said Lohar opened fire on the mob, injuring a kid. The mob retreated, but regrouped in larger numbers and attacked Lohar's house.

"Sensing trouble, Lohar had hired about 15 goons and posted them outside the house. But the mob easily outnumbered his guards and attacked them and Lohar's family. Some were beheaded and others had their limbs hacked off. The mob then

COUNTDOWN TO CARNAGE

- ▲ **EARLY AUG** Dalgaon tea garden management declares three vacancies in clerical posts
- ▲ **2ND WEEK, AUG** Mazdoor Union secretary Lohar starts entertaining applications from 'outsiders' for posts
- ▲ **3RD WEEK, AUG** Word leaks out about Lohar's move, resentment grows
- ▲ **END AUG** Bitter squabbles in union on this
- ▲ **EARLY SEPT** Labourers start open protests against Lohar
- ▲ **SEPT 15** Three 'outsiders' appointed
- ▲ **SEPT 23** Labourers meet & demand Lohar's ouster from union
- ▲ **LATE OCT** Union suspends Lohar
- ▲ **LAST WEEK, OCT** Lohar engages musclemen fearing attacks



REUTERS
Policemen examine the wreckage at the house after the killings.

- ▲ **NOV 5** Labourers try to corner Lohar, but management steps in and saves him
- ▲ **NOV 6** Labourers march to Lohar's house; he fires and injures one. Labourers retreat and regroup, attack Lohar's house, kill 19 and set the house on fire

set the house on fire. All bodies were charred beyond recognition," said Gupta. Lohar managed to flee, but was arrested later in the after-

weapons have been confiscated from the village, from where the labourers and their families have fled fearing retaliation.

Trouble had been brewing in the tea garden for the past few months over the appointments. "Lohar had allegedly taken money from outsiders for their appointment," said Gupta.

On September 18, the labourers put up posters against him and on September 23, held a meeting and demanded his suspension from the union. Lohar was suspended a few days ago. "I got information in the morning that a mob was preparing to attack Lohar. I informed the garden management but by the time police reached the spot, it was all over," said Rabin Ray, a CPI(M) leader.

Emila Baurua, who heads the CPI(M)-led Dalgaon Gaon Panchayat, said she was trying to broker truce between Lohar and the labourers. She admitted Lohar had taken money for the appointments. But M.R. Choudhury, a garden executive, maintained the three new clerks were locals. The CPI(M-L) Liberation has called a 24-hour strike in Jalpaiguri.

More reports on Page 3

CPI(M) advances meet to consider A.P. developments

By K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI, NOV. 6. With reports on the possibility of early elections to the Andhra Pradesh Assembly doing the rounds, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has decided to advance its central committee meeting to discuss the development, according to Prakash Karat, CPI(M) politburo member.

The committee will meet in Kolkata on November 14-15 to finalise its broad strategy. The last Assembly elections were held in October 1999, along with the Lok Sabha polls.

At its September meeting, the committee deferred a discussion on the strategy for next

year's Lok Sabha polls, deciding to wait for the outcome of the coming Assembly elections.

The CPI(M), which had a tie-up with the Telugu Desam Party earlier, snapped it after the regional party joined hands with the Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of the 1999 elections. The Left parties contested the last polls on their own.

This time round, they would have to weigh the option of having an understanding with the Congress to defeat the TDP-BJP combine in Andhra Pradesh.

In the last four years, the Congress and the Left parties have joined hands at times and the massive protest against the electricity tariff hike brought

the Opposition on one platform.

A crucial aspect that needs scrutiny is the CPI(M)'s stand on the demand for a separate Telengana that has got accentuated with the formation of the Telengana Rashtra Samiti. A large section of the Congress is also echoing a similar demand. On Telengana, both the CPI (M) and the TDP share similar views — they oppose the formation of a new State.

Another aspect will be the likely impact of any understanding with the Congress on national politics as also that on Kerala, where the Congress and the Left parties are on opposite sides of the political divide.

CM rallies to restrict-rally line

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Oct. 29. — The chief minister today articulated his support for rallies and processions albeit with a proposal to restrict them to specified areas in the city.



Unveiling his draft of the suggested routes and guidelines at an all-party meeting today, Mr Bhattacharjee asked political parties to study the draft and submit their replies with suggestions, if any, within seven days. The rules will also apply to religious and social processions. "Should the need arise, I will meet religious leaders to discuss the matter," he said.

"Most parties present were agreeable to the spirit of the proposals. Being a coalition government, we are eliciting views of all parties and not imposing

our views in an autocratic way. It would have been better if all parties had responded.

The main Opposition should have behaved more responsibly," the chief minister said, referring to the boycott by the Trinamul Congress. He said copies of the proposal would be forwarded to both the Trinamul and the SUCI. "Let's see what they say about it," he said.

"When I was in Italy, I saw people flocking over from France because of the transport strike there. There were processions in Italy, protesting against pension cuts.

"This right prevails in all democratic countries... Just as the people have the democratic right to assemble and express their views, so also, they have the right to go to hospitals, catch trains and appear for job interviews on time," the chief minister said.

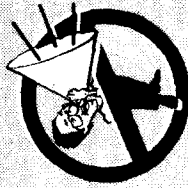
Denying that the draft was an outcome of Mr Justice Amitava Lala's order, the chief minister claimed the Left Front had begun the exercise since 2001.

Buddha prescription



Rally at:
Raja Subodh Mallick Square
RR Avenue (South channel)
Shahid Minar
Brigade Parade Ground
Deshbandhu Park
Deshapriya Park
Park Circus Maidan

Don't proceed to:



Park Street
Theatre Road
CR Avenue
Lenin Sarani
Strand Road (on weekdays)
NS Road
India Exchange Place (on weekdays)
The stretch of JL Nehru Road near Metro cinema
Gandhi statue on Mayo Road

Ground rules:

Move along left flank of the road, don't obstruct traffic
Stop at major intersections
Abide by traffic signals
Slow moving vehicles not to be allowed

'Rally cholbe, investment asbe'

KOLKATA, Oct. 29. — "Who will stop our growth? Rallies and processions will go on, and investments too will come in (Ke amader unnati atkabe? Rally, michil chalbe, investment asbe)." Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said after the all-party meeting. He buttressed his claim with figures: The state's domestic product has grown at 7.1 per cent and investments of Rs 2,500 crore has been netted this year.

There was a hiccup at the beginning of the meeting, when the CPI and RSP labelled the media "bourgeois" and "stooges of the bourgeoisie". The BJP leaders threatened to walk out in protest, prompting the chief minister to intervene. The Congress, BJP and CPI-ML (Liberation) said they would express their views soon. — SNS

Purulia OC killed in MCC ambush

HT Correspondent
Purulia, October 11

THE officer-in-charge of Bandwan police station in Purulia district, Neel Madhav Das, was killed when suspected activists of the outlawed Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) fired on a police party inside the Kantabora forest bordering Jharkhand. Four other constables, who were travelling in an escort jeep, were seriously injured in a landmine blast triggered by the Naxalites.

The incident occurred on Saturday afternoon when the Purulia DSP, K.K. Lahiri, and Das were on their way to Kantabora, where MCC activists were apparently holding a meeting. The police party had split into three groups and Das was heading the second one. Inside the forest, the first jeep, packed with constables, hit a landmine. Seeing this, the OC jumped out of his car and was immediately felled by a burst of gunfire. He was rushed to the local hospital, where he died of gunshot wounds. Four constables are also in critical condition.

Senior officers, including IG (Western Range) Gautam Mohan Chakrabarty and the district police super, have rushed to the spot and a combing operation is under way to nab the culprits. Vigil has also been stepped up along the Purulia-Jharkhand border.

Police sources say that the MCC is trying to regroup and set up small bases in Purulia district, especially inside the dense Kantabora jungles. Das has received a tip-off about one such base, where MCC activists were holding a meeting.

Biman

bashes Lala again

S.P.C
C.P.M

5.1
8/10

MALDA, Oct. 7. — In case anyone had missed it, Mr Biman Bose, Left Front chairman today made clear that his attack was very much against an individual. "I didn't attack the judiciary. I have criticised a particular judge who had taken a 'suo motu' decision in his own court banning processions and rallies during specified hours on weekdays and curbing freedom of speech and democratic right," he said in Malda while justifying his vitriolic outburst against Mr Justice Armitava Lala of Calcutta High Court.

Even 72 hours after Mr Bose's initial outburst, the chief minister refused to comment.

Without mentioning Mr Justice Lala by name, but confirming that it was indeed Mr Justice Lala he was referring to when queried

Tribal justice...

Mr Bose attacked Mr Justice Lala frontally — "He is completely against tribals and lacks minimum knowledge about the tribals of Bengal (the reference was to Mr Justice Lala's car being held up in Kolkata because of a procession by a tribal outfit). Where else will they come to protest from the districts if not in Kolkata?"



And via innuendo: "I urge all you reporters to look for his past record... they will be published one by one... one episode has been published in *Ganashakti* today."

by reporters, Mr Bose — during a meeting with the party faithful at the CPI-M office here —

added, "he should have communicated the matter to the executive because the judiciary has no 'right' to pass such an 'order', though the verdict has not yet been written."

Mr Bose added: "He (referring to Mr Justice Lala) has violated the direction of the Supreme Court. He should see the SC cases in 1990 Vol-I page 193-205 paragraph 26." Citing this precedent, the Left Front chairman claimed: "The judge can't issue a decision such as the one he has without the Division Bench's consent." "The people will lose faith in the courts if the decision is implemented... it harms democracy. And, he warned, "we will say more tomorrow in detail at our convention in Kolkata."

— SMS

BUDDHA APPREHENSIVE OF INDUSTRY REACTION AT CPM BELLIGERENCE

Cracks seen in Left Front over Justice Lala ruling on rallies

Our Kolkata Bureau
8 OCTOBER

CONTRADICTIONS between the Left Front as a political coalition and the Left Front government are starting to show up, on the High Court ban imposed on rallies and processions in the city during working hours.

Chief minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharya does not want to antagonise business and industry, which has hailed the high court judgement.

And possibly, to avoid sending out wrong signals, he skipped the "indoor convention" of the Left Front, organised here on Wednesday, to protest the judiciary's activism in banning rallies and processions that disrupt normal life in the city with unerring regularity.

But not so for the coalition of political parties that Mr Bhattacharya heads. Of course, chairman of Left Front, Biman Bose turned a cautious self and refrained from stridency. There was no more challenging the court order by calling for more processions and rallies. No more screaming that Justice Amitava Lala, the judge who banned rallies and processions, leave the state. The Front chairman played it safe and did not even mention once the "judiciary trampling democratic rights" line, which he has been crying hoarse in the run-up to the convention.

It has become starkly evident, that concerns over business and industry's perception of the state had driven a wedge between the government in Writer's Building and CPM party headquarters at Alimuddin Street. No one from Writer's Building was seen at the convention held indoors. There were no rallies to the convention either.

In fact, the convention turned out to be more of a "do's and don'ts of a rally" rather than a protest over a judicial verdict. Left Front chairman Bose's shrill outburst earlier against Justice Lala, transformed into a call for a more "responsible role for sponsors of rallies."



RALLYING POINT: Left Front chairman Biman Bose, CPM secretary Anil Biswas and former chief minister Jyoti Basu at a Left Front convention in the city on Wednesday. — Mona Chowdhury

"We should abide by the state government's recent rules and hold all major rallies either at Brigade Parade ground, Shahid Minar or at Rani Rashmoni Road. All major rallies should be held on holidays. Unlike other parties, we are already following this," Mr Bose said.

He had an advice for those who need to reach a railway station or an airport to travel out. "Leave home early if there is a rally," is the new Bosespeak.

He said rallyists should not obstruct medical emergencies and jeopardise traffic discipline and land ordinary people in difficulty. But then, that too has been the concern of teeming citizens of the city reflected by Justice Lala in his ruling.

At 90, former chief minister was the solitary star speaker at the convention. But then, the name of the judge who ruled against rallies and processions seemed to have slipped his memory. His sole worry was that with polls round the corner, how would political parties reach out to the people. There was no word of how people will reach workplace to earn a living.

Plea for suo moto contempt against Biman

Kolkata
8 OCTOBER

A plea for suo moto contempt proceeding against West Bengal Left Front chairman Biman Bose for allegedly making contemptuous statements against the court was made before the Kolkata High Court on Wednesday by the president of All India Minority Forum Idris Ali.

Submitting a copy of a vernacular daily before the Vacation Bench, comprising Justice Alok Chakraborti and Justice Subhro Kamal Mukherjee, carrying a report of Mr Bose's alleged statement against the court, Mr Ali prayed for contempt proceedings against the Front chairman saying such public statements against the judiciary would hamper the dignity of the court.

He also submitted that Mr Bose had made personal attack against Justice Amitava Lala, who on September 29 passed an order directing that no rally or procession could be held in the metropolis between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays.

The Bench directed Mr Ali to file an application in this regard. Mr Ali also sought modification of Justice Lala's order and the subsequent order of the Vacation Bench on October 2. The Bench, in response to the state government's move for a stay of Justice Lala's order, had on October 2 allowed puja immersion processions but refused to grant a stay in the absence of any copy of the order. Mr Ali said processions with dead bodies and those of religious significance should be allowed by the court. — PTI

CPM wrests Uttarpara

Statesman News Service

CHINSURAH, Sept. 29. — The CPI-M won the Uttarpara Assembly seat in West Bengal with Mr Jyotikrishna Chatterjee of the CPI-M defeating Mr Indrajit Ghosh of the Trinamul by 16,278 votes.

Mr Adhir Mukherjee of the Congress and Mr Zamirul Islam of JD-U got 14,703 and 3,313 votes respectively.

According to results from the Uttarpara and Konnagar civic bodies, which have been under the control of Opposition parties, the CPI-M got around 9,000 votes more than the Trinamul.

Mr Jyotikrishna Chatterjee said: "People voted against the Trinamul as its ally BJP has made life miserable for the people.

"The Trinamul chief even supported the a communal



One more in the series of debacles

outfit like the RSS. This is a win of the masses and a slap to the NDA face."

Mr Pankaj Banerjee, party spokesman, however, attributed Trinamul's defeat to "CPI-M's electoral malpractices".

"Despite massive rigging, over 50,000 voters preferred

me. I would have won the poll if people were allowed to apply their voting right. A section of Trinamul workers conspired against me," said Mr Indrajit Ghosh.

"In booth 124, the Trinamul secured only 15 votes which is even less than what the JD-U candidate got. Is it an example of fare election? The Congress had joined hands with the CPI-M to ensure my defeat," Mr Ghosh said.

State chief electoral officer Mr Basudeb Banerjee has said the Congress and Janata Dal (secular) would forfeit their security deposits for failing to acquire the minimum percentage of votes cast.

He said the allegation of technical snag at one of the electronic voting machines that held up polls at booth 60 for several hours has been found to be baseless.

Avoid luxuries, CPM tells members

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Sept. 22. — Stay away from personal luxuries that do not conform to Marxist ideology or your source of income. Don't patronise unwanted elements within or outside the party. Maintain discipline inside the party organisation. These, and many more, are part of the new *mantra* that the CPI-M state committee has asked its leaders and members to follow after a two day meeting that ended last evening. The party, however, does not think using air-conditioners in cars and offices is a luxury. Using computers for organisational work is also considered a "necessity".

Not willing to comment on the antecedents of people like Dulal Banerjee who was recently convicted for murder or those who patronised him, the CPI-M state secretary Mr Anil Biswas today

said that party leaders have been asked to introspect. According to him, "People should not think that CPI-M leaders and its members are taking advantage of staying in power for 26 years.

"In many areas unwanted people gave been patronised by a section of party leaders. Cells have been set up at state and district levels to look into such complaints. We reviewed the complaints and found that we have been able to solve part of the problem. But there were some false allegations as well. State committee members have to be specially careful that they don't patronise any such unwanted element." Mr Biswas refused to comment on Mr Rajdeo Goala who allegedly patronised Dulal Banerjee in his heydays.

This is not the first time the CPI-M has made an attempt to put its house in order, but the recent exercise gains significance in

the light of allegations of corruption that have been made against party leaders at all levels over the past few years. On many occa-



Mr Anil Biswas: New mantra

sions the voices of dissent were raised from within the party.

The meeting was attended by 36 members of the state committee, politburo member Mr Prakash Karat and was presided over by Mr Biman Bose. "The focus of the meeting was party organisation. We reviewed the action taken after the 19th and 20th state

conferences and the areas of weakness," said Mr Biswas.

The state committee has declared that intra-party activities that go against the CPI-M's interest will be stopped and probe will be ordered if anyone is found to have amassed assets disproportionate to income. Also, there will be a ban on raising funds for the party without issuing a receipt. "No one should utilise any opportunity for comfort in personal life. Party leaders have been asked to be introspective on this issue," said Mr Biswas.

Asked whether using air-conditioned cars and offices were considered "luxury" by the CPI-M, he said: "There was time when we sat on mats and used pencils to write party pamphlets. But times have changed and now the volume of work has increased manifold. A minister sometimes moves in a car for six

to seven hours a day. It can't be called a luxury. Now, computers are a must for our offices. We have to judge what is a necessity and what is a luxury."

Stressing that 98 per cent of the ministers, MLAs and MPs donate their entire salary to the party fund (save one or two who site family problems), Mr Biswas claimed the CPI-M has a central commission which looks into aspects of "digression from Communist ideology" and "has absolute power over every leader". "Not even one person can digress from the ideology".

"Leaders of our party are sincere. But there are some people who have shown weakness resulting in questions being raised about the honesty of Communists. We are running a government for 26 years, and leaders may have their own doubts and raise questions. Communists have to maintain transparency," said Mr Biswas.

289

595

23 SEP 2003

Rebel's progress

Kamal Guha's outburst rings hollow

When Kamal Guha launches a blistering attack on a government in which he is a minister, the irony is lost on simple-minded workers whose cause he claims to defend. The latest occasion was the convention of the TUCC, the Forward Bloc's trade union wing, in which he proclaimed that the Left Front was ignoring the problems of farmers and labourers in the jute and tea industries. What it suggests is that the Forward Bloc leader is aware of the militant postures he must adopt in order to secure a popular response. That does not imply he will take his protest to its logical conclusion. In the fitness of things, one might expect him to relinquish office in order to be with those whose plight he claims to share. That will not happen. He has been shouting so often that Anil Biswas knows exactly how to respond: "we have the patience to tolerate him". In other words, no one in the CPI-M takes him seriously enough to call for some kind of disciplinary action.

That does not imply the charges are not serious. Guha claims the CPI-M persistently refrains from consulting junior partners while taking crucial decisions. From the CPI-M's point of view, it may be a matter of responding to winds of change illustrated most recently by the industries minister Nirupam Sen's tour of the UK to woo investors even if it cannot deal firmly enough with CITU-dominated unions. This is something on which it doesn't stand with the Forward Bloc, RSP and CPI on the same platform. But, says Guha with some justification, it goes against the principle of collective responsibility. The most damaging comment is that Left Front meetings have become irregular since Biman Bose became chairman. Why, then, surrender to the dictates of Big Brother? For the loaves and fishes of office? And does he have his own party with him in his assault? As long as satisfactory answers are not found to these questions, his outbursts will continue to ring hollow.

THE STATESMAN

23 SEP 2003

Dulal era leaves Dum Dum in eerie silence

20/8
KCF-Kolkata
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Kolkata, August 29

FROM COCKY confidence to utter despair, from silent hope to equally quiet jubilation, the mood swung both ways following Dulal Banerjee's trial on Friday.

Everybody was silent in Dum Dum, from those who supported Dulal to those who had suffered because of him. It was as if the area was bidding farewell to the man who had pulled so many strings.

The supporters had made preparations to celebrate, buying 21 bags of Holi colours with the confidence that Dulal would be acquitted. They spread the word that he would be back soon. It was not to be.

When the verdict came, the supporters disappeared from the courtroom, from Dum Dum, even from the party office from where Dulal had controlled his operations. Even his brother Babin was nowhere to be seen.

The verdict pleased hundreds of others, though they tried not to show it. They were equally silent, yet their faces could not hide their delight at the fact that the man they dreaded would never trouble them again.

Dulal too had been confident when he went to court. Clad in a spotless white shirt, he smiled and waved at the hundreds who had waited for him, some to support him but most out of curiosity. Even some lawyers joined the crowd, curious as everybody else. Dulal smiled all the way from the police jeep to the courtroom, where dozens of others streamed in. "Many had come just to catch a glimpse of Dulal Banerjee, of whom they had read so much in the newspapers," said public prosecutor

OTHER CASES

- ▶ **Deaf & dumb couple:** In-laws come in the way of the court's effort to reunite Kajori with her husband
- ▶ **Puja pandais:** Organisers made to withdraw plea against fee structure for pujas in remote areas
- ▶ **Cola controversy:** Notices to be sent to Coca-Cola and state government

See Page 3

Nabagopal Ghosh.

The police kept a wary eye open for potential troublemakers. Special security had been arranged at the court, at Dum Dum and for the public prosecutor. "The atmosphere was charged when the judgment was pronounced."

When it came, the smile disappeared from Dulal's face. His supporters mingled with the rest of the crowd, trooped out and went into virtual hiding, leaving even the party office at Nearabagan deserted.

This was the office where Dulal and his supporters had beaten Chandan Chakrabarty and Sanjay, alias Bunty, to death last year. There could have been a third murder: there is no trace yet of the rickshaw-puller who took a battered Chandan home.

As the rest of Dum Dum rejoiced in silence, a widow wept at 7 Dum Dum Road, even though she had had the last laugh. "Justice has finally been done, thanks to the detective department and Cossipore O-C Anil Jana," Chandan's widow Sandhya said.

She said many others had died similarly but she was the first to complain. "Many murders must have gone undetected," the O-C agreed.

CPM undecided over Basu stand on Sonia

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Aug. 17. — The CPI-M politburo is yet to take a decision on former chief minister Mr Jyoti Basu's view that he has no objection to Congress president Mrs Sonia Gandhi becoming the Prime Minister, CPI-M state secretary Mr Anil Biswas said here today.

The number of seats obtained by us and others in the elections will determine who becomes the Prime Minister or who will form the government, Mr Biswas said. Mr Basu's comment is based on his long political experience, the CPI-M state secretary said.

Mr Biswas denied that the state government is in any way soft on senior VHP leader Mr Pravin Togadia by letting him en-

ter the state when he has been refused entry by the Bihar government.

Earlier too several leaders of his ilk have come but there was no visible rise in the BJP vote bank.

Instead the BJP's votes dropped to three per cent in the last panchayat elections. These visits are to our advantage as more and more people will realise their true nature, said the CPI-M state secretary.

"We do not have the time to be Congress' advisor," Mr Biswas said referring to Forward Bloc's criticism that the no confidence motion to be moved by the Congress in Lok Sabha will help NDA partners close ranks.

"Irrespective of the platform we will use every opportunity against the NDA."

CPM for new rural class struggle

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Aug. 9. — The CPI-M will apparently raise its efforts to improve rural health-care and education through its newly-formed panchayats to the level of a "class struggle" for distribution of land and wages for landless labourers.

A set of guidelines on how the CPI(M)-run panchayats would function was formulated at a meeting at Alimuddin Street yesterday. The meeting was at-

tended, among others, by Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, Mr Anil Biswas, minister for panchayats Mr Suryakanta Misra and sabhadhipatis and sabhadhipatis of zilla parishads belonging to the CPI-M.

Mr Biswas said that the panchayats would use foreign funds for rural development "without harbouring any inferiority complex about taking such funds". He said it did not necessarily mean that "our self-respect and interests would

have to be compromised".

The Left Front government will adopt the policy of "constructive cooperation" with the Murshidabad and Malda zilla parishads, which the Congress has wrested from the LF.

The chief minister referred to the bitterness and strife among political parties during the panchayat polls and stressed upon the need to remove such feelings through development.

"We have instructed panchayat functionaries of our par-

ty to bring the rural poor, irrespective of their political affiliations, under the development process," Mr Biswas said.

The emphasis on improving healthcare and education systems was understandable, as the present government had identified these two areas as needing maximum attention.

Despite government claims of covering 70 per cent of the state population under its healthcare system, rural health centres are ill-equipped.

The quality of education has suffered. The initiative to reverse the trend is intended to match the state government's resolve in this regard.

The CPI-M will bring out a brochure detailing its guidelines, while meetings will be held in the districts to acquaint panchayat functionaries belonging to the party with the administrative apparatus and the party's ideological basis, since a majority of them are not party members, Mr Biswas said.

Politburo leaves door ajar for pact with Cong

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, June 6: The CPM will fight the Assembly elections in five states in November without seeking support from or an alliance with the Congress but if the party approaches the Marxists, chances are that the response will be positive.

The party politburo, which met here this afternoon, decided not to "knock on the door of the Congress" in any of the five states. "The Congress will have to decide their political strategy. They have to find out political parties with whom they will go for poll alliance," politburo member Sitaram Yechuri said at the party headquarters, when asked whether the CPM will forge an alliance with the Congress before the Assembly elections.

Though the CPM is almost

determined not to seek Congress support in fighting the elections, it is undecided on its response if the Congress seeks a seat-share deal or offers a pre-poll alliance "to defeat the BJP".

It is learnt that the CPM is eager to keep options open for a patch-up knowing its organisational shortfall in Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Mizoram.

Sources in the party said it will "consider" any move by the Congress to defeat the BJP. The CPM will not seek help from the Congress on its own. A section of the party feels, in case the Congress approaches the CPM for an alliance, the party will respond positively.

The role of the Congress during the recent Assembly election in Tripura was discussed this afternoon. Several leaders op-

posed any move to forge an alliance with the Congress. Referring to the role played by the party in Tripura, they said the Congress had connived with separatist forces led by Bijoy Rankhale to defeat the CPM.

Many in the CPM have reservations about a pact with the Congress as they feel it will tarnish the party's "secular image". The Congress is not communal but there are elements in the party who compromise with communal forces, a section of the CPM leadership said.

"The Congress is the most politically-opportunist party and we have to be very careful while forging any alliance with them," said a senior CPM leader.

The party's central committee, which will meet for three days from tomorrow, is likely to take up the issue.

BANKS, INSURANCE SECTOR WORST-AFFECTED

Strike hits Left-ruled States

By Aarti Dhar

NEW DELHI, MAY 21. The day-long nationwide general strike, spearheaded by the Central trade unions, brought the Left-ruled States to a virtual halt today while it evoked a partial response elsewhere in the country.

There were reports of stray incidents of lathicharge and arrest of the striking employees who registered their protest against the Centre's economic policies. The banking and insurance sectors were the worst affected across the country.

Describing the strike as "historic and the biggest-ever in the country after Independence", the trade unions claimed a resounding success but the Government dismissed it as a "politically-motivated annual ritual of the Left" to make their presence felt.

The strike was called to protest privatisation of the profit-making public sector undertakings and oppose changes in the labour laws in favour of employers. It demanded immediate enactment of legislation for agricultural workers.

The other demands are scrapping of policies leading to the aggravation of joblessness and unemployment, wider social security schemes for all, particularly those in the unorganised sector, restoration of the quantitative restriction on import, removal of the ceiling on payment of bonus and restoration of the 12 per cent interest rate on Provident Fund deposits.

The strike was near total in West Bengal and Tripura, it had a good response in Kerala, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Jharkhand while life in the other States was partially affected.

Reports reaching here said that the Left-dominated sectors in oil, power, coal, mining, telecommunications,



The busy central Kolkata, wearing a deserted look due to the 24-hour bandh called by the CITU on Wednesday. — Photo: Sushanta Patronobish

engineering and textiles saw their workers keeping away from work.

Loading and unloading at the docks and ports were also partially affected. Rail and road transport was disrupted in the strike-hit States and two private airlines — Jet Airways and Sahara — suspended their regular flights to and from Kolkata. However, there was no change in the Indian Airlines and Alliance Air schedules.

About 60-lakh State Government employees, including municipal and panchayat workers, joined the strike.

Central Government employees, owing allegiance to the Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers, also kept off work. The Reserve Bank Employees Association also took part in the strike.

At a joint press conference in the evening, representatives

of seven Central trade unions said the strike sent out a clear message to the Government to reverse its policies. "However, they should not take it as the last resort. We will intensify our struggle," said Umraomal Purohit of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha.

A democratically-elected Government had a right to draft its economic policies but the Centre had done something that was "injurious to the country as well as the people" and, unfortunately, the Opposition had not been able to play its role, he said.

The representatives claimed that police resorted to lathicharge at 16 places and arrested 3,000 activists, including some outside the Supreme Court here for violating prohibitory orders.

The Union Labour Minister, Sahib Singh Verma, said the unions had never approached the Government on their demands.

"We received their memorandum and their decision to go in for the strike but they never asked us to discuss the matter."

In fact, the Government was looking into the possibility of increasing the ceiling on bonus and was making all efforts to give the best returns to the Provident Fund contributors.

Denying that the Prime Minister had refused to meet the unions as claimed by them, Mr. Verma said the representatives had made it clear that they would go ahead with the strike irrespective of their meeting with Mr. Vajpayee.

The striking trade unions were the AICCTU, the AITUC, the CITU, the HMS, the TUCC, the UTUC and the UTUC-LS and independent unions and federations.

The INTUC and the BMS backed out at the last-minute describing the strike as "anti-national".

CPM smells something rotten in state of CPM

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OUR BUREAU

Calcutta, May 19: In a rare public introspection, chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today said some degradation had taken place in the CPM because of its enormous growth in 26 years.

"I am afraid a large number of unwanted, undesirable people, who, in the ordinary run of things, cannot hope to be seen anywhere near an ideology-driven party like ours, are not only coming closer, they are actually gaining entry into the party structure," he said.

Bhattacharjee's statement rekindled memories of the late Benoy Choudhury's (at the time second only to Jyoti Basu) public lamentation in 1995: "Ours is a government run by contractors."

In a way, it was also confirmation of what the Opposition describes as the CPM's "dark underbelly".

"Who are these unwanted people, what are they doing in

our party? I have asked the party to drive such elements out. We have nothing to do with them," Bhattacharjee said, addressing the charge that the communists had used violence to win the just-concluded panchayat election.

The immediate context of his unexpected self-criticism was the attack by CPM supporters on Union minister Tapan Sikdar while he was campaigning. Occurring close to the election, the incident had prompted the chief minister to express "personal regrets" and the BJP-led Centre to seek an explanation from the state government. Bhattacharjee and the CPM were then forced to undertake a damage-control exercise.

"What happened during the panchayat election was very painful to me," Bhattacharjee said.

"We had received adequate forces from the

Centre and a neighbouring state, but we could not prevent the recurrence of violence. I regret the loss of lives," he said.

During campaigning and on polling day, over 40 people died. He added that the CPM was not "absolutely disciplined" or "without trouble-makers" during the election.

The chief minister's party reserved comment, but its leaders were in discussion.

State party secretary Anil Biswas, who had carried out a large-scale, but not too well known, purge over the past few years, was not readily available for comment.

Sources close to him said: "There is complete unanimity between the government and the party on the point Bud-dhababu has raised. In fact, we are the only party that actually takes measures against un-

wanted elements. For a host of compulsions, however, the cleansing cannot be faster than what it is now."

Bhattacharjee becomes the third in a line of CPM leaders who, having perceived an ideological and moral erosion, have spoken out against the trend.

Like Benoy Choudhury and former Tripura chief minister Nripen Chakraborty before him, Bhattacharjee chose to go public on the state of the CPM outside the confines of party forums, asking the leadership to put in place corrective measures.

Chakraborty's criticisms in the late eighties had earned him the party's wrath, for the act had seemed at that point a direct challenge to a section of the leadership, as a result of which he had to recede into the back-ground.

Benoy Choudhury's outburst, too, did not go down well with the leadership of the day, but he did not suffer any programmed marginalisation.

■ See Page 10

QUOTE

Who are these unwanted people, what are they doing in our party?

BUDDHADEB
BHATTACHARJEE

Minister on the run from CPM goons

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, May 7

THE RACE for the panchayats got a bit too hot for the CPI(M) — still red-faced over the attack on Tapan Sikdar — when a RSP minister was put on the run by a local cadre at Pakhiraloy Ghat in Sandeshkhali on Tuesday night.

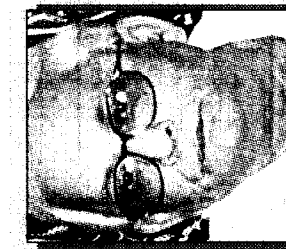
Dhoti-clad veteran PWD Minister Amar Chowdhury ran a full kilometre for his life when the pistol-brandishing CPI(M) toughie came after him. The 60-year-old minister escaped unscathed in the friendly fire, but one of his colleagues who couldn't run as fast got the beating of his life by the CPI(M) cadres.

Q.P. to CPM. HT-1 8/5

stones," said a shaken Chowdhury over the phone.

"They had planned to kill our local party secretary Atul Ghosh," he quivered. But such are the compulsions of coalition politics that he wouldn't mention which party his tormentors belonged to. Even in his FIR, he identified the culprits as Sofrej Mollah (the "hefty man"), Rahim Naskar, Ruhul Amin Mollah and Chhattar Mollah, but shied away from putting them down as CPI(M) cadres. That dirty work was left to a local RSP leader.

RSP state secretary Debabrata Banerjee was as evasive. "Our party district secretary Ratan



MERE COINCIDENCE, SAYS BUDDHA

Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has asked the police to arrest the gunman who chased PWD minister Amar Chowdhury at Sandeshkhali on Tuesday night. He, however, said the violence had started much earlier and that the minister's presence was a coincidence. "I wouldn't go into the culprits' political identities as even the minister's FIR doesn't mention that."

"It was eight in the evening when I arrived at Pakhiraloy Ghat for election campaign. There was commotion over a cycle ramming into a pedestrian. I could see a hefty person was in-



SUBHENDU GHOSH/HT
Tapan Sikdar at Koiful where he spoke at a rally on Wednesday.

Dasgupta confirmed that Chowdhury's hecklers were CPI(M) men," he said, but quickly qualified his statement by differentiating between the "they" who chased the minister and the "they" in Alimuddin Street.

Banerjee was also all praise for Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, narrating in detail how many times the Chief Minister had called him up over the incident. Meanwhile in Burdwan, a CPI(M) and a Trinamool worker died in a clash at Nasigram on Tuesday night. A policeman and a few others were seriously injured in the clash.

More reports on Page 3

Buddha blames RSP for crisis

Statesman News Service

CHANCHAL, April 28. — Chief minister Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today blamed the RSP for the present crisis in seat adjustments in the panchayat polls.

The CPI-M will hold state-level talks with the RSP on 30 April to solve the seat sharing problem for the ensuing three tiers polls. Speaking to reporters at the Malda circuit house, today, Mr Bhattacharjee said he has discussed the matter with party secretary Mr Anil Biswas over the phone. It has been decided that LF leaders will meet again to overcome the crisis.

Mr Bhattacharjee said his party had offered one zilla parishad seat in Malda to the RSP according to the formulated theory of the LF. The RSP, however, refused the proposal nominating over 10 zilla parishad seats. The RSP today boycotted the chief

Kultali clash

KOLKATA, April 28. — At least 20 people including seven women were injured in a clash between CPI-M and SUCI workers at Satkori Colony in Kultali, South 24-Parganas, this morning. Police said the two groups attacked each other with revolvers and bombs. SUCI leaders allege Marxists had kidnapped two of their men yesterday, but CPI-M leaders deny this. — SNS

minister's rally in Chanchal. At the rally, the chief minister said: "You cast your vote according to the position of a LF candidate... to defeat the Opposition." He also alerted school teachers about their duty. "Don't avoid your duty," he said. He talked about educational rights and asked the people to keep a watch on teachers' activity.

CPI condemns vandalism in Iraq

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 14. The Communist Party of India (CPI) today condemned the vandalising of Iraqi history and appealed to all historians, archaeologists, cultural figures and the general public who treasure culture to raise their voice of anger and anguish against this.

Referring to the vandalising of the National Museum in Baghdad by a mob of looters right under the nose of the U.S. forces, the party charged that this "is one of the greatest crimes" committed by the coalition forces against the world legacy of culture and history.

"This crime which destroyed several thousand years of historical and cultural artefacts has to be attributed to the Americans who had wantonly demolished all institutions in Iraq without putting any alternative in place. It appears to be a deliberate effort to demoralise the entire Iraqi society by wiping out the oldest records of human civilisation by the modern day barbarians", the CPI Central Secretariat said in a statement.

15 APR 2003

THE HINDU

Delayed response on Iraq has affected India's image: CPI(M)

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 10. The CPI (M) has criticised the 'delayed' Indian response to the war in Iraq saying the 'ambivalent' attitude of the Vajpayee Government had affected the country's image in the world.

The CPI (M) Parliamentary Party leader, Somnath Chatterjee, today said the party had demanded such a resolution much before the U.S.-led military action began in Iraq.

"If we had (adopted the resolution) with grace... the ambivalent attitude has considerably affected image of India", he said. Now, Iraq was witnessing a breakdown of law and order, looting and plunder.

Mr. Chatterjee ridiculed the images of "people's revolt", saying it was easy to "simulate and collect people" to give an impression of celebrating or re-joining. Pointing out that the Government's task did not end with passing the resolution, the CPI (M) said it would continue to demand that "the occupation



Somnath Chatterjee

forces withdraw from Iraq and the new Government be composed of Iraqi people".

Turning to the controversy over the proposed introduction of Value Added Tax, he demanded that the Centre take steps to educate the traders about its impact and application. While not entirely agreeing with VAT, Mr. Chatterjee said now that the Finance Ministers of most States had agreed to put off its implementation to June 1, it showed that they had consid-

ered the opposition to the new legislation. The implementation of the new tax should not give the impression that it was being imposed hurriedly.

Significantly, the CPI-M member and West Bengal Finance Minister, Asim Dasgupta, is the Chairman of the Empowered Committee that decided on the implementation of VAT in 16 States by June 1.

Mr. Chatterjee also criticised the arrests of MLAs and the threat to invoke of ESMA against striking Government employees in Tamil Nadu saying it showed that "parliamentary democracy has reached a nadir" in that State.

The party said it strongly resented the deliberate attack on parliamentary democracy.

On the imposition of excise duty on hosiery and garments, he said the move had already evoked several protests as the levy would deal a severe blow to small-scale industries and would promote imports at the cost of domestic produce.

11 APR 2003

THE HINDU

Rape at Goksadanga

Result of promoting criminality by Marxists

Barely a fortnight after women members of a marriage party were subjected to horrendous gang rape in Nadia's Dhantala by allegedly local CPI-M leaders, an activist of CPI-M's women's wing in Goksadanga in Coochbehar met with a similar fate. And true to their form and style the mandarins of Alimuddin Street immediately went into denial. From the state party secretary Anil Biswas to the senior party minister from Coochbehar Dinesh Dakua everyone cried foul. First they "categorically denied" the incident although an "official medical report" had confirmed rape. When the denial didn't work they claimed that neither the victim nor the perpetrators had anything to do with their party. They "disclosed" that the victim was of "questionable character" and the incident was part of the Opposition and media's "slander campaign" against their party. In fact the party comrades who had been accused of committing rape at Goksadanga were hailed "prized assets". Newspapers publishing this "slandorous story" were threatened with defamation. But all this boomeranged when the non-CPI-M Left Front partners accused Anil Biswas and his comrades of trying to scuttle investigations into the case even before it had begun. They asked whether "questionable character" of a woman justified rape and quoted the relevant Supreme Court verdict. In fact they recalled that a similar "deplorable comment" made by a woman CPI-M leader a decade ago about a gang rape victim in Birati. What is worse is that Goksadanga residents are being threatened not to recount the horrendous incident even to the senior LF minister Kamal Guha or members of the Women's Commission. The fear of someone spilling the beans is obvious.

The devious methods adopted by Alimuddin Street to stone-wall investigations are not surprising. The three CPI-M leaders involved in this case have already earned wide notoriety for accusations of extortion, cattle and goods smuggling to Bangladesh, running a roaring illicit distillation business and defalcation of funds. But they are also the kingpin of the party's rigging machinery to ensure landslide electoral victories time and time again. Their indispensability to the party, like "killer" Dulal of Dum Dum and "mafia" Bulton of Habra, is well known. This is the reason why the party has not yet expelled Dulal (charged with double murder) and is defensive about protecting the Dhantala and Goksadanga rapists. But this attitude is emboldening its lumpen elements to repeat Dhantala and Goksadanga elsewhere. Keeping the vote rigging machinery intact seems to be all that matters.

Radhika's revolt

ST-8. 14/2
Issues raised by him must be addressed

The CPI-M MP from Mathurapur, Radhika Ranjan Pramanik breaks new ground in his revolt against the Marxist mandarins of Alimuddin Street. Even Saifuddin Chowdhury and Samir Putatunda did not accuse the party of "committing personal and political duplicity and fraud" and "harbouring hardened criminals including thieves, dacoits, and killers". Surprisingly, the tenor of Pramanik's accusations have evoked no response from the leadership, not even the usually dismissive "kutsa" (slander). The reason is simple. Pramanik enjoys such goodwill and public confidence among his electorate that Mathurapur has returned him seven times to the state assembly and five times to the Lok Sabha.

Also serving the party loyally for over four decades, no one doubts his bona fides. Alimuddin Street also knows that there is no way to rebut his charges. His revolt comes at a time when the panchayat elections are round the corner. And his accusations are echoed by some Left Front partners who have had enough. However, the CPI-M's great worry is that Pramanik's revolt will make the party's factional squabbles in south 24 parganas, the worst in the state, more intense. The party suffered major reverses in the last assembly elections because of the large following of the PDS leader Samir Putatunda among Marxists in this district. And with Pramanik planning to join forces with the PDS and the Trinamul Congress in the panchayat elections, the CPI-M are worried that the fallout is more than they can handle.

The most serious charge levelled by the member of Parliament is that the party promotes partisan interests, and encourages corruption even in the centrally-funded Local Area Development Scheme for MPs. He has indeed stirred a hornet's nest. Not only has he alleged "massive accounting discrepancies" in the execution of MPLAD schemes but added "fraud" committed in the name of development simply to win votes. One scheme built with one Marxist MP's quota is alleged to be financed from different MPs of the party. Pramanik says that he has been persecuted by the party because of his open fight against corruption and other "serious vices that are fast eroding the party's credibility and vitality." The party has tried to "discipline" him in the past by issuing strictures, serving show cause notices and excluding him from the district committee. But nothing has worked.

On the contrary his outbursts debunking the "hypocritical" policies and slogans of the party like dictatorship of the proletariat and democratic centralism will have an adverse effect on the party "discipline". What must stick in the collective throat is Pramanik's charge that the party's "scheming, authoritarian" leadership is making itself a laughing stock. If he is expelled, it will be construed as a sign of weakness and inability to address the issues Pramanik raises.

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