

Members of Rights body held on way to Lalgarh

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MIDNAPORE: About 74 members of seven Kolkata-based human rights organisations were arrested at Kharagpur railway station this morning. Members of Association for Democratic Rights (APDR), Suraksha Samiti, West Bengal Bandi Mukti Manch, Lalgarh Manch, and Legal Service Centre, were on their way to Lalgarh when they were arrested. About 15 students of Presidency College were also in the visiting team.

Soon after they boarded the train at Kharagpur, they were called out and taken to the police station on the plea that prohibitory orders are in force in Lalgarh. The members of the human rights organisations have been booked under Section 143, 186, 188 and 511 of the Indian Penal Code. They will move court protesting against the dubious role of the police, the APDR leader told reporters.

Renowned social activist Ms Medha Patkar and several other members of the cultural world from Mumbai proceeding to Lalgarh had to face a similar ordeal last year. The APDR state secretary, Mr Debiprasad Roy Chowdhury, who was among the arrested, expressed surprise over the incident particularly when Section 144 of the CrPC was not in force in Kharagpur station.

"The railway minister and Trinamul chief Miss Mamata Banerjee was allowed to hold her rally at Jhargram town recently by slackening prohibitory orders. Then why such double standard on the part of police," he asked. The West Midnapore SP, Mr Manoj Verma, however, was not available for comment.

Meanwhile, the Bhursa village in Salboni wore a deserted look today as most of the inhabitants fled their homes in the aftermath of a long gunbattle between the suspected Maoist cadres and the CPI-M gunmen yesterday in which three Maoist cadres were killed.

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