

Singur to Lalgarh via Nandigram

**Rising Flames of People's Anger against
Displacement, Destitution and State Terror**

Amit Bhattacharyya



**Visthapan Virodhi Jan Vikas
Andolan**

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After the historic Nandigram struggle, it is now the turn of Lalgarh. If Singur faced the initial experience of defeat, Nandigram could legitimately take pride in her experience of victory in course of her long and bloody

struggle against the oppressive anti-people West Bengal government, the ruling CPI (M)-sponsored hermdads (goons) and police brutality. From the historical point of view, Nandigram elevated the struggle against displacement and the State-sponsored land-grab designs to a qualitatively higher level. It showed a path that, although rooted in the anti-colonial struggle of the 1940s, was new and had elements from which the struggling people of other regions could learn. And Nandigram had already found a rightful leading place in the history of just struggles in our country. The Lalgarh struggle started in a somewhat different context and so has many new features attached to it. It is the culmination of a long-standing discontent and sense of humiliation and persecution at the hands of the powers-that-be and their agencies that the downtrodden adivasis nurtured in their minds. The Lalgarh revolt is a revolt against the existing order of things, against humiliation, police brutality and for justice. Some of the methods the people of Lalgarh have adopted showed that they had already learnt from the experience of Nandigram.

Background

The place called Lalgah is situated near Jhargram on the north-western side of the West Medinipur district of West Bengal. It is not very far from Salboni area located in the same district. Around 5000 acres of land have been acquired for the Salboni project, of which 4,500 acres have been handed over by the government and 500 acres have been purchased directly by Jindal from the landowners. According to newspaper reports, a large portion of this land was vested with the government for distribution among landless tribal people as part of the much-publicised land reform programme and also included forests tracts. Moreover, although the land was originally acquired for a “usual” steel plant, in September 2007, Jindal got SEZ status for the project, with active backing from the state government, which, as always, dispensed with the requirements for following most regulations for building and running the plant, including such crucial requirements as doing an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). A government that has in reality sold itself out to big capital—both domestic and foreign—is not at all bothered about the setting up of an SEZ having a polluting steel plant in the middle of a forested area, brutally displacing tribals from their land and endangering their means of survival. It is, thus, quite understandable that there could be major grievances among the tribals against this, although the mainstream media, as one of the spokespersons of the State policy, had constantly portrayed a very rosy picture of the entire project.

After the faltering ‘industrialization’ and ‘development’ bid of the ‘left’ front government in Singur and Nandigram in West Bengal, Salboni in West Medinipur district was the next on the list in the so-called industrialisation process under the imperialist globalization in Bengal. ‘Left’ front went a step ahead after Singur and Nandigram’s forcible land acquisition episodes and handed over 4,500 acres of government’s



vested land and forest area to the Jindal Group. Taking en-route of deception another 500 acres of land were bought from the tribals by the Jindals for their upcoming 35,000 crore rupees mega steel factory (JSW Bengal Steel Limited) on 5,000 acres of land in total. Here a relevant matter that comes up is that tribal land is not transferable legally and transfer of right of the forest area is unlawful as well. But to the utter amazement of the people of Bengal, the whole process took place and the tribal welfare department and the forest department maintained a studied silence. And the most amazing fact is that in 32 years of so-called 'left' front rule in Bengal. **This vested land remained vested and instead of distributing the land to the poor landless tribals it was handed over to the steel tycoon.** Jindals had their foundation stone laying ceremony of the project on 2nd November, 2008. The ceremony wore the look of a CPI (M) party Congress or party's state conference as the entire ceremony was organised by the CPI (M). The red scaffold at the entrance of the venue bore the word of CITU written in the middle with 'Silpa chai' (we need industrialisation) slogans inscribed on both flanks. DYFI flags were fluttering all over with unplugged enthusiasm of the party leaders and cadres taking care of every tit-bit, even of the invitee list for the programme. Nothing was amiss as in a CPI (M) party's conference with placards, posters, festoons, banners flags all over. Central minister of Steel, Fertilizer and Chemicals, Ram Vilas Paswan attended with the West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's, Trade & Industry minister Nirupam Sen and other 'left' front and Congress ministers.

In a difficult situation of global meltdown when the crisis in the capitalist system is being felt all over the globe and international steel market is at its new low, Sajjan Jindal, owner of Jindal Steel Works, Bengal made pious platitudes to the poor tribals and people of Bengal. His 35,000 crore steel factory with a capacity of producing 1 crore tonnes of steel annually will come up in three stages. According to him, as published in the CPI (M) mouth piece (Bengali daily, *Ganasakti*, 3-11-'08), within the year 2012 the plant would produce 30 lakh metric tonnes of steel and it will be gradually doubled to 60 lakh metric tonnes by the year 2015. It claimed they will reach one crore metric tonnes per annum by 2020, rendering direct employment to 5,000, 12,000, and 20,000 respectively and will create double the number of indirect employment. Henceforth, in an attempt to clarify his fake transparency on buying the land from the tribals and rehabilitation issue, he said, they were cautious

enough while making the layout of the plant and tried to save village land and homesteads. One member of each family that parted with their land will be given employment in the plant after putting him in to training. The so-called land givers have been “compensated” and given company shares which can be sold after the plant starts production on a commercial basis. Moreover, they verbally assured, projecting themselves as social reformers, coming out with dollops of promises that the ICFAI of Kolkata is making arrangements for the training of the local people of Salboni for their employment; syllabus for the training is being prepared. Their generosity cannot leave village girls from employment opportunity and so BPO centres have been promised to be set up at the earliest for their employment. Even they had made arrangements to give out health services in Salboni through NGOs. An ambulance has also been arranged. Arrangements for setting up of animal husbandry and watershed schemes are also said to be there in their agenda to carry on their corporate social responsibilities.

Praises were showered by the CPI (M) on the Jindals for their so-called show of responsibility for the society in the hour of global inflation and crisis in the international steel market. No stones were left unturned by the ‘left’ front’s Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee’s and Trade and Industry minister Nirupam Sen in projecting them as the trend setters in carrying out their social responsibilities. They would have us believe that the steel tycoon is here not for profitable business interest but for serving public interest. The capitalist friendly Industry minister and Central Committee member of the CPI (M) in justification of the huge plant took refuge under the clichéd logic: Employment generation through industry, increase of employment and then the resultant widening of market and once again the widening of the scope of industrial development. [*Ganasakti*, 3-11-‘08]

Such people never disclose the fact that the circle of this logic has gone stale in a country like ours at this stage of decaying capitalism. The Chief Minister Buddhadeb as an agent of imperialist globalization echoed the same as he did before; he could visualise thousands and lakhs employed through this ‘industrialisation’ process. So he turns a blind eye towards lakhs and lakhs of displaced farmers and tribals and their indescribable distress. He bases his arguments on imperialist globalization that has already been in the doldrums. So, barely a week after the jamboree in Salboni, Mr. Buddhadeb made such a notorious comment at a corporate chambers meet that “it (globalization) is a must”. Thus it is apt

to say in this context that he finds forcible land acquisition inevitable for the smooth inroads of imperialist globalization. Good Bye Marxism!

The impact of the global crisis has already sent tremors in the Indian service sector. Corporate houses have now taken to mass trimming of working heads, cut down in wages or pay packets, shutting down of industries, stopping production capacity, etc. Since Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's assumption of office as the Chief Minister in 2001 till 2003 in West Bengal 12-06-086 people lost jobs and in this period only 25,149 people got absorbed in to jobs (including jobs on casual or contract basis). From 2004 to 2006 a total of 4,24,000 were shown the door while only 84,000 people could land in jobs. Between 2007 and 2008 the situation has obviously worsened, belying the scope of a modest job generation in a serious economic crisis. As a whole, when the total industrial scenario is dismal, West Bengal's 'left' front government is crying out loud about lakhs and lakhs of employment generation. But ironically enough, the CITU supremo Mr. A.K. Pardhe recently wrote to the Prime Minister, Mr. Manmohan Singh to stop trimming of employees. The Prime Minister, however, is busy fulfilling the wish list of the corporate lobby in several ways by cutting in repo rates, providing liquidity to the share market, increasing the FDI investments in the insurance sector from 26% to 49% and so on. But the corporate houses turned a deaf ear to his appeal to avoid retrenchments. Keeping an eye on the level of their profits, they resort to closures, cut down in wages, and salaries and retrenchment. The 'left' front in Bengal puts forth its faith in such corporate tycoons and gives it a label 'development'. A point to be noted here is that very recently, that is on November 7, 2008, JSW Steel which is projected as a saviour of Bengal, opted for a 20% cut in production.

The most awesome fact is that the game of terrible deception is found in calculated silence in not clearly disclosing the SEZ status given to the Jindal Steel Works, Bengal. For the last two years the Jindal Group had discussion after discussion with the 'left' front government on various issues of the plant, but the Jindals and the government showed no effort to make the people of Bengal know about the SEZ and kept the people in the dark. All of a sudden on 24th August, 2008 the government of Bengal declared that Jindal Steel Works, Bengal as an SEZ project. Special Economic Zone (SEZ), exactly what it means is the formation of a 'foreign country within the country', where no civil laws or industrial laws of the

country will be applicable. The right to movements and strikes will be snatched away. Commodities purchased for the project and the produced commodities of the project will be free from any type of taxes. The plant will enjoy the facility of getting water and electricity free. Jindal Group will enjoy the right to export the entire production of steel of the Salboni plant to foreign countries, i.e. other countries, mostly in the West, will be benefited. These types of steel plants are dangerously harmful for the environment, even though no existing environmental law will be applicable to the project. So, the nearby Subarnarekha River and the total forest area lying in the three districts of Bankura-Purulia-Medinipur will be dangerously polluted.

On the question of compensation package for the land owners, the Jindals tried to project themselves as 'avtars' when actually they are doing just the opposite. In fact, compensation package fails to be clean or clear. The tribals, innocent and mostly illiterate, were befooled by giving them 3 lakh of rupees for 1 acre of land, 1,50,000 in cash and the other one lakh and fifty thousand through company shares. The records of this will remain with the district magistrate. Shares might be sold out after the plant starts its production on a commercial basis. Here lies the fraudulence. In times of such an international monetary crisis, the fall in the international steel market, with the shut downs and curtailment of productions of corporate house, when everything is uncertain whether JSW, Bengal plant will ever start production or only remains as a iron ore processing plant. The second factor is that in this international crisis scenario profit making worth its name is virtually impossible. If Jindal Steel tycoon doesn't gain profit, how come the land losers with company shares will gain profit? Therefore, the issue of company shares to the land losers is questionable in itself. The start of production in the plant is doubtful, let alone the fulfilment of promises for jobs in thousands by the Jindal Group in the Salboni plant.

The steel tycoon Jindals will actually export steel from Salboni for the rich capitalist countries. The target of the 'left' front government is to hand over forest land, water and valuable minerals to the native and foreign corporate houses to smoothen the imperialist globalization process. Singur and Nandigram bore the brunt of this process. About 997 acres multi-cropped land was forcibly acquired by the CPI (M) government, unleashing large scale terror and repression for the Tata's small car factory. Tata Motors shifted its factory from Singur to Gujarat with a dubious aim. The

highly fertile Singur land has been rendered uncultivable and it still lies in the possession of the Tatas. Ratan Tata now says that the land will remain in possession since the lease fees have been paid for two years in advance. In Nandigram, the state-sponsored genocide was organised to grab the land for a huge Chemical hub to be built by the Salem Group of Indonesia. The historic resistance of Nandigram foiled this conspiracy and the struggle is still on against CPI (M)'s goons and state police forces. Now the 'left' front has set its eye on Nayachar, an adjacent island to set up the dangerous chemical hub. The tribals of Salboni are getting aware of the conspiracy and the Jindals, as later developments would show, would not be able to rest in peace.

The Beginning

The circumstances leading to the Lalgarh rebellion were as follows: On 2 November 2008, the West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee and the Central Iron and Steel Minister Ram Vilas Paswan went to Salboni to inaugurate the Special Economic Zone complex of the Jindal industrial house along with a huge police convoy. On their way back, there was a landmine explosion when the convoy of the Union minister was passing, as a result of which a police car was hit and some policemen were injured. Sometime before the explosion, the convoy of the Chief Minister had passed away. As usual, the Maoist insurgents, like 'the universal whipping boy' were blamed for it. Usually, the police harass, torture, detain and humiliate people after every Maoist attack, as had been shown by a number of fact-finding teams comprising civil rights activists and others. This time too, in order to conceal their own failure in providing security to their political bosses and to save their skin from the seniors, the police went on a rampage in the tribal villages. The Buddhadev-led police forces had all along been perfecting their methods of repression with total impunity and they knew their job well. Having no clue about the real perpetrators of the landmine explosion, they started beating up and arresting people indiscriminately. The police and the CRPF, led by the officer-in-charge of Lalgarh police station, Sandip Sinha Roy and the Superintendent of Police of West Medinipur district,



Rajesh Singh, unleashed a reign of terror in 35 villages encompassing the entire tribal belt of Lalgarh.

Around 4 AM on 5th November 2008, a huge police force entered Chhotopelia village of Lalgarh and let loose a reign of terror. They attacked and beat up the adivasi women like mercenary goons. Chhitamoni Murmu was asleep in her hut when she suddenly woke up to see that someone was trying to forcibly take away her husband. When she resisted, her clothes were lifted up by the police and she was hit on the left eye with the rifle butt and she ultimately lost her eyesight. Fourteen other women also sustained injuries on various parts of their upper bodies, legs and hands. Some among them are Panmoni Murmu, Domani Murmu and Gangamoni Murmu. Kshamananda Mahato, an old retired school teacher of the village and Surya Mahato of Gormal in Salboni were picked up and detained. On 3rd November, they picked up three school students of classes VII, VIII and IX, namely Eben Murmu, Goutam Patra and Buddhadev Patra when they were returning from Kantapahari market after listening to a *baul* song programme. Three other persons—Bhagabat Hansda, Sunil Hansda and Sunil Mandi—were also arrested on 5th. The policemen went to arrest one Dipak Protihar. His pregnant wife, Lakshmi Protihar was forcibly dragged and then thrown on the road and beaten up. The whole operation was led by Sandip Sinha Roy, the police in-charge officer of Lalgarh police station. The police used abusive language of all conceivable type and picked them up on the charge of being Maoists linked to the mine blast. Evidently, the police came to arrest Sasadhar Mahato and Karan Hembrom who were allegedly involved in the mine explosion. Lalgarh or Binpur—where these police atrocities were committed—are areas which are very far from the site of the mine-blast. It is difficult to comprehend the logic behind the police terror perpetrated in those far-off areas.

Resistance starts

The way the people of Lalgarh reacted was somewhat similar to that adopted by the people of Nadigram. What began as rumblings of protest took the shape of a spontaneous mass uprising the next day. On 7th November, when the ruling CPI(Marxist) was “observing” the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution throughout West Bengal, ten thousand Santhal men and women, armed with traditional weapons, came out and obstructed the roads leading to Lalgarh, disconnecting it from Medinipur and Bankura. Roads



were dug up and tree trunks were placed on the road to obstruct the entry of police vehicles, in the same way as it had been done in Nandigram. The police jeep and the CPI(M) motor-cycle have long been symbols of oppression and terror for villagers throughout West Bengal, so this digging up of roads, besides actually inhibiting the movements of these agents of oppression, have become a symbol of defiance and liberation. Towards the night of 7th November, the people also disconnected telephone and electricity lines, virtually converting a vast area into a liberated zone. The apex social organisation of the Santhals, the Bharat Jokat Majhi Madwa Juan Gaonta took up the leadership of the struggle, although the leader of the organisation, the "Disham Majhi" Nityananda Hembrom has himself admitted that the organisation has no control over the movement; rather the movement is controlling the organisation.

Smaller organisations of the tribals, such as the Kherwal Junit Gaonta, that have been playing active roles in the struggle have openly called for armed resistance, stating that there is no other way for the survival of the adivasis.

The people immediately cut off the roads in large areas, fell down trees to block the roads in order to prevent the entry of police jeeps and the CPI (M) hermands, organised huge demonstrations and processions, blockaded the street at Dalilpur Chowk on the Lalgah-Ramgarh road. They demonstrated in front of the Lalgah police station, were reported to have attacked a bus and then took on the police forces. At the same time they cut off the electricity lines and Lalgah as a result plunged into darkness and went without water. Soon the movement spread to

newer and newer areas. Lalgarh was cut off from Medinipur, Bankura and Jhargram District headquarters. The roads to the Jhitka forest and Nokat were cut off. On 6th November, the adivasis armed with their traditional weapons like bows and arrows numbering about 12,000 gheraoed the Lalgarh police station and damaged the cars stationed within the police station compound. They declared through the public address system that unless the police explained why they had spilled the blood of the adivasi people, the situation would deteriorate further. The pent-up anger among them was so intense that men, women and children asked for the blood of the police officers responsible for most heinous atrocities on them. In the name of arresting the Maoists, the police forces let loose a reign of terror as they are trained to do, beat up the people, humiliated them and picked up innocent people who, the people believed, were in no way involved in the incident. The movement spread to other adivasi areas—from West Medinipur to Bankura, Purulia, Hooghly, Birbhum(For details, see *Dainik Statesman*, 3 to 9 November 2008, *Bartaman*, 8 November 2008).

People's Committee against Police Terror is formed

Like the people of Nandigram, the people of Lalgarh formed their own forum to give some organisational shape to their movement. In Nandigram, it was the Bhoomi Uchhedh Pratirodh Committee (BUPC) or the Committee to Resist Displacement from Land. In Lalgarh, it was **Pulishi Santrash Birodhi Janasadharaner Committee** or PSBJC i.e., People's Committee Against Police Atrocities or PCPA. As Chhatradhar Mahato, one of the main spokespersons of the PSBJC told me in course of an interview held in Kolkata on 12 February 2009, this committee was formed on 8th November 2008 at Dalilpur Chowk in Lalgarh with representations from 95 villages. It was formed because it was not possible for the existing social organisation led by the elders, *Bharat Jakat Majhi Marwa* to stand up to the needs of the time. As one daily reported, villagers accused it of "betraying the tribal cause" (*The Telegraph*, 15 November 2008). Later on, as the movement spread, the number of the villages that joined the movement rose to more than 200. One of the first decisions of the committee was to prepare a list of their charter of demands. The 13-point charter of demands was as follows:

1. The Superintendent of Police (Mr. Rajesh Kumar Singh of West Medinipur) must apologise publicly for what his forces had done to

- the people with his hands on his ears. He would declare publicly that henceforth, he would stop arresting people, particularly women.
2. Those policemen who on 5th November (2008) at 4.30 in the morning physically assaulted the women in Chhotopelia village, must do *nake-kshot* i.e., lie down on the road and crawl, rubbing their noses to the road-surface, from Dalilpur Chowk to Chhotopelia village.
 3. Each of the women of Chhotopelia village who have been physically injured on the eyes, hands and legs through police brutality must be given compensation amounting to Rs.2 lakh.
 4. All the persons arrested so far in connection with the Salboni explosion must be released.
 5. The persons who had been arrested during 1998-2008 in West Medinipur on the suspicion of having Maoist links and implicated in false cases should have their names removed from the charge-sheets and made free from attending the courts and police stations.
 6. Police must stop the indiscriminate arrest of people of the locality from here and there.
 7. Immediate withdrawal of all paramilitary camps from the police stations areas like Dharampur, Kalaimuri and Ramgarh
 8. The government should immediately withdraw the statement that the blue-print of the Salboni explosion was prepared by Sasadhar Mahato in Bansher village.
 9. Police must stop giving false accusations and attacks on clubs and *gaontas* (i.e., organisations) set up by the people.
 10. Police must stop patrolling villages



from 5 in the evening till 6 in the morning.

11. Police must stop setting up police camps in school buildings, hospitals and panchayat offices and close down those which have already been set up.

12. The CPI (M) must stop attacking the blockaders of roads at Humgarh. The vehicles that were damaged due to such attacks on 15th November at a place on National Highway No.60 between Moyrakata and Rasakundu—30 bicycles and 2 motor-cycles must be compensated and a cash of Rs.12,000 and a bank passbook be returned. Arrangements should be made for the medical treatment of Mohan Tutu and a compensation of Rs.2 lakh must be given to him.

13. In case of attacks by CPI (M) hermdads on the adivasis and innocent people, the administration would be held responsible and adequate compensation be given by the administration itself.

This charter of demands was published in the form of a leaflet by Sidhu Soren on behalf of the PSBJC and was reprinted from Kolkata. It carried no date and was captioned “Lalgarh-er Aandolaner pashe danran Proyojan hole ‘Sarjom Girou’ dabi atut thakbe—songothito hon chhoriye din dike dike ei santhal hool-er aagun”.

This charter of demands makes an interesting study. No doubt, these are overwhelmingly directed against police repression. Demands are for the withdrawal of cases; release of those who were arrested and the withdrawal of newly set up police outposts in schools, hospitals or panchayat buildings. There are judgements of the Calcutta High Court against the conversion of school rooms into police camps. Patrolling after dusk, indiscriminate arrests, picking up people according to the sweet will of the police and subjecting them to all forms of humiliation are quite clearly against state terror. The role of the CPI (M) and their hired goons who have, beyond doubt, proved themselves to be hand in glove with the state machinery has also been clear from this charter. Be it in Singur, Nandigram or in Baghajatin railway station, the picture is the same. Interestingly, in a similar struggle, in Chengara in Kerala, where adivasi and dalit people are fighting to regain the lands from Harrison Plantations, the CPI (M) cadres blockaded the struggling people depriving them of their daily livelihood sources and medicines. Even the reporters and media persons were not spared from their blockade.

However, probably the most interesting demands are the first two which demand certain punishment to be meted out to the

senior police officials and ordinary policemen. The peasants did not say that they would like the oppressive police officers and their forces to be physically assaulted as policemen themselves had done and are in the habit of doing always. They did not demand that the oppressive policemen should be paid back in the same coin. In fact, the demand for a public apology with hands grabbing the ears is no physical assault at all. The demand for crawling with noses rubbing the road-surface may cause a bit of physical damage in the form of bruises; but this is nothing in comparison with what the policemen themselves had done to these poor adivasi people. In one of the leaflets captioned "Police o Proshashanke Samajikbhabe Boycott korun"(Initiate a social boycott against the police and administration) dated 21-01-09 the PSBJC asked: "We are not demanding death sentence for the police officer under whose command the police forces perpetrated beast-like brutality on the people. What we are demanding is their public apology. The police forces that could rape Behula Mahato in Belpahari, could force Sulochana Kalindi to undress in order to determine her sex, the police forces that force school girls to untie their inner garments in the name of search operations, those who could kick the eight-month pregnant woman of Kantapahari named Lakshmi Protihar to the ground, those policemen who could not think twice before hitting Chhitamoni Murmu on her left eye and make her lose her eye-sight—why can't this police force hold their own ears or do *nake kshot*(rubbing noses on the ground)? Did those beasts in human figures feel ashamed when they committed all these crimes...?"

In fact, however innocent these demands might seem, these are actually the demands which can never be accepted by the state forces. The simple reason is that acceptance of these demands would mean the public humiliation of the state machinery, fall from the high pedestal, dethronement from power and their submission to the will of the people. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that they would accept this punishment in the hands of those whom they had been oppressing for ages. That is why one can see that the police were prepared to withdraw all the false cases, set all the arrested free even if on bail, provide medical treatment to Chhitamoni Murmu who was brought to Calcutta Medical College to undergo an eye operation, schools, hospitals and panchayat offices were vacated by the paramilitary and police forces in accordance with the demands of the people's committee. But those

two demands were “totally impossible to accept”, as senior police officials said.

In the Jangalkhand area, the police forces have been facing *social boycott*. This call was given by the PSBJC because of police reluctance to make public apology for their torture. All groceries, cobblers, hair-cutters have stopped supplies to the police. The police are now finding it difficult to get daily necessities. Side by side, the presence of the Maoist in the area has kept them indoors within their camps and police stations. Posters have been put up in different places in support of the police boycott. Even water

Nov 22: Venue for negotiations under contention

The Indian Express

With both the Government and the tribal leadership sticking to their respective stands, the Lalgarh-Salboni stalemate continues in the West Medinipur district. While tribal leaders want to sit with the district administration at Dalilpur Chowk, the state wants the meeting to be held at the Circuit House in the district.

The tribal leaders have welcomed Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee’s decision to visit the area, but they warned of consequences if it turned out to be a ploy to push in CPI (M) cadres to the region. At a public meeting in Baruipur, North 24 Parganas, Bhattacharjee’s said he would visit Salboni. He blamed the Maoists for the current situation.

Talking to The Indian Express over phone, Chhatradhar Mahato, leader of the newly-formed Policer Attachar Birodhi Committee (committee to fight police atrocities), said: “We will not go to the Circuit House for a meeting with the district administration. If they honestly want to resolve the crisis, they should come to Dalilpur Chowk in Lalgarh. We do not understand why government officials cannot come to us?”

Chhatradhar added: “If our CM wants to meet us with genuine intention, he is welcome. But if they try breaking our unity, things will go wrong. The Nandigram situation deteriorated after he (the CM) visited the area.”

The state government, however, said it would hold the talks only at the Circuit House. “These are government norms. Official meetings are always held in official buildings,” said Home Secretary Ashok Mohan Chakrabarti. Left front chairman Biman Bose supported the government’s stand.

supply has been stopped. As reported in the press, one grocer gave back all the money to the police without supplying any articles. One shop-owner who traded with the police was rebuked and was forced to do sit-ups holding his ears. Such social isolation has complicated the situation for the police forces further (*Dainik Statesman*, February 4, 2009).

In order to build confidence against the notorious motor-cycle borne gangsters which the CPI (M) was assembling, students affiliated to the PSBJC also held motor-cycle rallies. All local CPI (M) leaders have been shifted to police camps for their safety. The secretary of the Belpahari local committee, Hariram Singh, the secretary of the Silda local committee and Anil Mahato, secretary of the Banspahari local committee have all been staying in the local police camps to save their skin from public wrath.

On the other hand, a large number of CPI (M) supporters—mostly from its youth wing DYFI—has joined the protests along with others. DYFI members Lakshman Murmu, Rath Hansda, Jolly Murmu and others proclaimed that they were Santhals before they were CPI (M) members. Tribal fraternity has thus proved stronger than their party affinity.

Role of the West Bengal Government

When the resistance movement started, the government did not, at the initial stage, slacken its offensive. But when the movement became widespread, it became defensive. It continued to maintain that the Maoists were behind the Lalgarh movement, that Maoist leaders like Kanchan (said to be West Bengal state secretary of the Maoist Party), Kishanji (said to a central committee member of the Maoist Party), Sasadhar Mahato and others were in Lalgarh, making false propaganda against the 'left' front government and inciting people. They also maintained that the Lalgarh area had become a "liberated zone" for the Maoist. These are the common ploys used by the government, the CPI (M) and its activists to brand and try to delegitimize popular movements. The "mainstream", another faithful ally of the State in such matters, has been repeating the same allegations and stating that such acts have resulted in the breakdown of civil society. Thereby, they have been attempting to dissociate the urban civil society and intelligentsia from the movement. Side by side, by carrying on such branding campaigns, the State is also trying to legitimize whatever steps it wishes to adopt in dealing with the resistance.

In response to the demands of the people and the social organisations of the adivasis to come to Dalilpur, which is the headquarters of the movement, the government refused partly on the plea that the rural roads might be covered with land mines and this invitation to come for discussion might be used as a trap. In this way, they have adopted the tactics of delaying everything thinking that the movement would die down after the people are tired out; side by side, they are giving full backing to the ruling party to enter the tribal zones with arms and try to capture the areas by fire in the Nandigram style.

Role of the CPI (M)

For the first few days after the beginning of the movement, the ruling party—CPI (M)—had been watching. Then they stepped into the scene and tried to sow dissension within the adivasi society through various means. They raised the same bogey of Maoism and, using the same language as the West Bengal government, put the entire ‘blame’ on the Maoists. At the same time, they connived with the police forces to break the blockade with armed hermdads and motorbikes. This was the policy that the CPI (M) hoodlums used in Nadigram and met with failure.

Meanwhile, on February 1, one CPI (M) leader named Nadalal Pal was killed. Who killed him is still shrouded in mystery, although the CPI (M), as always, put the blame on the Maoists. On February 2, armed CPI (M) cadres took out a procession in Ramgarh Khasjungal area with the dead body and when they passed, they fired on a meeting of the PSBJC and killed Rajaram Mandi, Lokhindar Mandi and Gopinath Soren on the spot and injured many others. Members of the People’s Committee have found a number of spent cartridges from the spot, some of which bore numbers viz, KF02A7/94, S&B30-06. Newsmen have quoted police sources to state that of these, KF02A7 cartridge is of an AK-47 rifle. Chhatradhar Mahato, the people’s committee leader complained that it was a pre-planned move by the CPI (M) who attacked the gathering with arms brought in a car along with the dead body. It was held that firing was done from two cars—one a Bolero car bearing no.WB34/59759 and another trucker bearing no.WB33/8768. It was alleged that CPI(M) goons like Anuj Pandey and the armed guards of Khaliluddin brought AK-47 rifles in the cars(for details, see *Dainik Statesman*, February 4, 2009). Two other persons—Ramesh Murmu and Basanti Hansda—both of Ramgarh



jungle area received bullet injuries and were taken to the Medinipur Medical College for treatment. Their relatives as also those of the three dead persons alleged that the police were forcing them to give it in writing that their relatives were killed or injured due to their own firing (*Dainik Statesman*, February 4, 2009). That the CPI (M) and police are hand in glove has thus been proved once again.

The CPI (M) hermits made another attempt to break the resistance of the people in the Nandigram fashion—coming with motorbikes and arms and in black attire. On 26 February, they entered Madhupur under Salboni police station with the armed police forces in the front. They were, according to Chhatradhar Mahato, about 150 in number. They entered Madhupur village firing from their weapons, beat up a number of women, destroyed the houses of Manbod Mahato and Chandrasekhar Mahato, and looted their property. A large number of people were injured, some of them seriously. Besides Lakshmi Rani Deb Singha, Sudip Deb Singha, Binapani Deb Singha and Haripada Deb Singha, many others were wounded and were still untraced. When the reporters proceeded to the affected place, they, again in the Nandigram fashion, were prevented from doing so by the CPI (M) hermits (See *Dainik Statesman*, 27 February 2009).

Meanwhile, the CPI(M) has been trying to create *Salwa Judum* type of situation in West Medinipur and other adjoining districts by creating organisations from among the adivasi people such as ‘Gana Protirodh Committee’ (People’s Resistance committee, which killed adivasi leader Nirmal Sardar earlier) and ‘Adibasi-Anabadibasi

Santi-o-Unnayan Mancha' (Forum of adivasis and Non-adivasis for Peace and Development) on the Chhattisgarh model to combat the Maoist movement with the full backing of the state machinery. (See leaflet captioned 'Lalgarh-er andoloner Rajnoitik Anushilon-ke egiye niye cholun' undated, published by Bilas Sarkar on behalf of Lalgarh Andolan Sanhati Mancha formed on 12 February).

New Demands

In course of time, certain new demands were placed in the name of the 'Adibasi-Mulbasi People's Committee' of Purulia on 25th January 2009. Apart from the demands for the stoppage of all police atrocities and other demands related to those which have been pointed out already, there were some new demands which dealt with people's livelihood, self-government, employment opportunity, new development model and the rejection of the state-sponsored model, promotion of the Santhali language and culture, health, education, agriculture. We are reproducing some relevant portions of the text after rendering them into English. This is a free translation. The demands are as follows:

1. *Oppression of all types on the adibasi-moolbasi people must stop. The police must stop arresting and torturing all members of opposition parties, dissident persons and ordinary villagers of cooked-up charges by branding them as "Maoists" at the instigation of the ruling CPI(M) leaders. The police must stop all illegal acts such as arrests without warrants, intrusion into houses without warrants, arrests without furnishing memos of arrest, third-degree torture in the police lock-ups, beating of village people, damaging the crops in the field, looting of money and property while raiding houses, rape and torture of women, intimidation or threat, badi(substitute) arrests, obstructions to free movement of people on the roads and molestation of women in the name of checking, taking pictures without consent, threatening villagers to go to the police stations, alluring and pressurising villagers to go to show the police the jungle paths i.e., using them as human shields in dangerous zones, forcing and bribing the villagers to act as police informers, etc.— should be stopped.*

2. *There should be the general and widespread improvement of the district. All poor villagers should be given cultivable land. Small irrigation network should be developed in the villages. Old dams and canals should be renovated and turned into working*

condition. Cold storage should be set up in every block for the preservation of fruits. There should be improvement of the infrastructure of the village markets. Peasants should be given seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and bank loans at cheap prices. The government must ensure just prices of agricultural crops.

3. As Purulia is a backward area, its rent cannot be fixed at the same rate as those of developed districts such as Bardhaman, Howrah, Hooghly etc. As there was no improvement in agriculture in Purulia, all rents should be waived.

4. The forest zones of the Ajodhya area should be protected. Forest resources cannot be destroyed in connivance with the forest department. Indiscriminate production of charcoal and felling of trees should be stopped. As the Japanese hydro-electric project has done much harm to the vast forest zones, a programme for widespread re-forestation should be undertaken as compensation. At the time of social re-forestation, stress should be placed on the planting of many indigenous precious trees and fruit trees rather than on foreign breeds such as Sonajhuri, Eucalyptus etc. The just prices of inflammable trees, Sal leaves, Kendu leaves etc. should be ensured.

5. Industries that destroy the national forest life such as Japanese hydro-electric project, sponge-iron industry etc. should not be started. There should be agriculture-based industries and industries that serve the people's needs. There should also be the revival of bidi and lac industries which had a rich heritage. There should be the development of rural technical and handicraft industries.

6. Workers doing their jobs should be paid a minimum daily wage of Rs. 125. Their wages should be paid in time and there should not be any harassment in this regard.

7. The "100-day work" programme should be properly and completely implemented. All types of government and party-corruption relating to such projects as 100-day work, BPL-card, Old-Age Pension, Indira Awasan, etc must be stopped.

8. Electricity and potable water should be provided to all villages in the district. Health centres should be set up and improvements be made. Ensure the supply of free medicine to the poor and introduce medical van service to distant villages.

9. Improvements should immediately be made to the educational scenario which is already in a very bad shape in the district. The number of schools at the primary and secondary levels should be increased. All vacant teaching and non-teaching posts should be immediately filled up in the schools. All corruption relating to

mid-day meals should be stopped. The Manbhum University should immediately be opened.

10. Start introducing the Santhali language in every government work. There should be the introduction of complete education from the primary to the higher level in the Santhali language. Steps should be taken for the preservation of culture of Kurumali Mundari language.

11. Steps should be taken to promote the rich folk culture of the district. The day of the important Sabar festival should be declared a government holiday. The Satari/Sarna religion of the adivasis should be recognised.

12. The CPI (M) led government's policy of promoting drinks among the simple, innocent adivasi moolbasi people should be discontinued. All liquor shops within 1 km of school and college complexes should have their licenses cancelled. The practice of illegal liquor business with the connivance of the police administration and the CPI (M) leaders should be completely stopped.

13. There should be the establishment of self-rule in Jangal Mahal and with that end in view, an autonomous body named "Jangal Mahal Autonomous Body" be constituted embracing Purulia, Bankura and West Medinipur. There should be special economic package for the three districts. Those police officials and bureaucrats - outsiders who harbour an attitude of hatred towards the adibasi-moolbasis people (i.e. indigenous people) in the three districts should be removed and in all branches adivasis and sons of the soil should be given proper opportunity.

These demands have important implications. Many of these are against state repression perpetrated by both the ruling party, CPI (M) and the state machinery. There is also a blueprint for an alternative model of development, which is pro-people. The promotion of agriculture, agro-industries, handicraft industries, revival of dying industries, opposition to destruction of natural resources are anti-globalization in



nature and hence anti-imperialist. The fixation of minimum wages for the workers is a basic demand which is often flouted by the government and CITU leaders. Demands for electricity, potable water, health centres, and schools are such demands that the mere raising of these demands indicates what a situation the basic masses of our country have been reduced to over the last 62 years since the ‘transfer of power’ to “friendly hands”. It is a commentary on the so-called ‘development’ model introduced by the Indian ruling classes and their political representatives who had sold out our country’s resources by hoodwinking people and also by drowning their resistance in pools of blood. Another notable feature is the demand for the introduction of the Santhali language and the *alchiki* script which has almost become extinct. In fact, as reported in the press, as a result of globalization and the domination of one language over another, thousands of indigenous languages had already gone into oblivion and many more are awaiting the same fate in different countries of the world. These things take place before our very eyes, but many of us are quite ignorant about it. The new model of development should bring within its scope this element and give it due importance. In fact, in areas where people’s struggles are being waged in whatever form, local languages show signs of resurgence, local writers, artists, singers come up and leave signs of their creativity. It is in this way that even extinct languages can develop. This is the experience also of the tribal people in the struggling region of Dandakaranya. The opposition against liquor sale is of course a social demand; use of liquor creates animosity within families, and subjects women to the harassment by their husbands and



others. The demand for the formation of an autonomous body for the three adivasi-populated districts in West Bengal in this region is a natural demand arising out of a deep sense of socio-economic deprivation and exploitation.

New Social experiments: Formation of Village Committees

The adivasis of India are one of the most oppressed and downtrodden sections of the people in the country. Generation after generation, they had been subjected to all forms of deprivation, exploitation and humiliation. Governments came and went through election after election, but the condition of the tribal people did not change; on the contrary, it went from bad to worse. The panchayat system proved to be a tool in the hands of the ruling classes and ruling parties. Thus the tribal people had to fight not only against the police repression, an anti-people government and the ruling CPI (M), they at the same time felt that unless they themselves took up the management of their own government, there would possibly be no end to their present plight. What they indicated through their demands has important implications for their lives.

In the thick of their struggle, the people of Lalgarh organised a public meeting at Ramgarh on 1 January 2009 and there they took the decision to form *gram committees* (village committees) in as many villages as possible. They have also formed village defence committees particularly in the villages that are alongside the main roads. This is a form of people's militia to protect their villages from the assault teams of CPI (M) goons or hermdads and the police. As Chhatradhar Mahato told me, each of these gram or village committees would have 10 members, of which 5 would be men and 5 women. One area committee would be formed with representation from 10 villages and the number of members would be 20. Above this, there would be a central committee comprising 35 members, of which 12 would be women and 23 men. Initially, the central committee was confined within the Lalgarh, but then it spread to other blocks as well. The total number of villages where village committees have been formed is at present nearly 300. I have been able to get the names of 187 such villages, spreading over West Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia Districts. For the sake of historical documentation the names that are available given in the appendix.

The task of the village committee is to implement the village development programme, to resolve problems of different types—both within and outside the family. In case, it fails to resolve some issue, then that would be referred to the area committee, and failing that, to the central committee. On being asked whether the committee had by now to confront any dispute on rural issues, both Sukhlal Soren and Chhatradhar Mahato referred to one incident. One peasant near Kantapahari was not allowed to cultivate and use a water pump due to resistance from the whole village; the village committee intervened and decided that water would have to be supplied on cash payment. There was another case relating to the theft of cows—a very common offence in the villages. It was settled through discussion.

Women's Struggle

The movement of the tribal people has also helped in freeing women from various social restrictions. Previously, the Majhi Marwa adopted a conservative attitude towards the free movement of women and wanted to restrict them within the four walls of the homes. Their present struggle had freed them from such social bondage. The active participation of village women in the struggles, sometimes even surpassing their men folk in numbers, has been hitting hard at patriarchy and social subordination. The struggle of Lalgah has proved again that unless you adopt the path of struggle, you cannot expect to make changes for the better. There are many other problems. One of them is of course that relating to the consumption of liquor by the men folk. It has all along been creating family problems everywhere. In order to resolve various issues relating to women—social subordination, women's liberation, etc—a Women's Committee of the PSBJC was formed on Women's Day on 8 March 2009 at a public meeting at a place called Narcha under Jhargram. It was attended by about 5000 persons. The Women's Committee is to act as the women's branch of the PSBJC and will fight not only against police repression and attacks by CPI (M)-sponsored hermits, but will also struggle against domestic oppression. Srabani Soren of village Boropelia, Lalgah, who became the convenor of the Women's Committee, declared in her speech that women had become the main victims of state-terror and party-terror; they have also been subjected to beatings by their drunkard husbands and many other forms of repression and social inequality. The committee, according to Srabani Soren, would

fight against all these (*Dainik Statesman*, March 9, 2009). This committee has much in common with the *Matangini Mahila Samiti* formed in Nandigram during the peak period of people's resistance there.

As is reported in some media in the recent period, regular meetings of the village committees have been taking place so as to enable the people to realise the need of organised resistance to state terror and attacks by the CPI(M) hermits. In these meetings, women are taking a very active role. What the CPI(M) cadres generally do is that seven days before the commencement of elections, they start distributing dress, liquors free and even dole out cash among the adibasi people as bribes in order to get their votes. In order to nip that possibility in the bud, the members of the Women's Committee have already started discussions to put pressure on the men-folk not to take liquor at all. They have decided take control over liquor shops and drinking houses, in case the need arose. If anyone ignored this ban on consumption of liquor, then he could even face social boycott. On 15th March, 2009, a huge gathering was organised by the PSBJC at Pirakata where writers, professors, civil rights activists, artists, students, members of women's organisations and social workers from Kolkata and other states were present. At that meeting, women were conspicuous by their massive presence (*Dainik Statesman*, 19th March, 2009).

Maoist presence in Lalgarh and their role in the struggle

The Naxalites or the Maoists had been the main targets of attack from the Central and State governments for their professed revolutionary ideology and their assertion of the classical Marxist dictum—"force is the mid-wife of the old society pregnant with a new one" and need for "the forcible overthrow of the existing social order". Ever since the Indian Prime Minister described, in April 2006, the Maoist insurgency as the 'single greatest threat to the internal security of the country since independence'—a threat that has, according to him, to be rooted out like a virus—the central and state governments have sharpened their weapons to do everything they could to deal with that "threat". The State of West Bengal is no exception to it. The state and the ruling CPI (M) cadres have been pursuing a policy of brutal persecution of the Maoists and the Maoist sympathisers like the witch-hunting in medieval Europe. Not only the Maoists, but all dissident voices

have been branded as 'Maoists', attacked and maimed in every possible ways by trampling underfoot all democratic and constitutional norms.

From the late 1990s when the CPI (M-L) People's War started political work among the adivasis in the West Medinipur district, the tribal people had to face attacks from the state and the party cadres. It is not that people have been subjected to police brutality now; since 1998, when the CPI (M-L) People's War started working in this area, as a leaflet published by Sidhu Soren described, there had been a steady rise in the intensity of persecution of the tribal and other innocent people. Behula Kalindi of Laljol, Belpahari was raped by the police, girl students of schools were forced to strip in the name of routine checking and the beating of an old woman with a bamboo stick, are some instances of state-sponsored brutality that the people had to face. There were also other methods of sadistic torture. Petrol was pushed into the rectum of some prisoners and third degree torture was meted out (victim being Shamsheer Alam in 2008); rope was tied to the penis and then pulled inside the police-station (victim being Sushil Mahato, in 2007); lizard was put inside the undergarment and the pant tied up tightly by the police, the prisoner writhes in pain as the lizard bites the penis and other parts of the body (victim being Sushil Mahato, in 2007). And the chief-cum-police-cum-culture minister-Buddhadev Bhattacharjee's police draw sadistic pleasure out of it. It was in the jungles of Jhitka that the body of Asim Das, also known as Kanchan, a Maoist activist, was found on 29th February 2004. According to civil rights activists, he was arrested, tortured and killed in a fake encounter. This incidentally is the second incidence of fake encounter killing of Maoist activists in West Bengal, according to their findings.

In fact, there is nothing unusual that the radical political forces would be active among the adivasis. Five days after the mine explosion, the Maoists, in one of their press statements acknowledged that they were responsible for it and that there would be more of such blasts and that anti-people projects like SEZs would not be allowed to be set up in Salboni (*Ananda Bazaar Patrika*, 08-11-08; *Sanbad Pratidin*, 08-11-08). However, the presence and participation of the Maoists or similar political forces in no way delegitimizes this seemingly spontaneous and democratic expression of people's anger. This is amply expressed by what Arati Murmu, a woman who had been assaulted by the police and who had gone to block the Lalgarh police station, had to say:

“Whenever there is a Maoist attack the police raid our villages and torture our women and children. For how long will we suffer this oppression by the police? All of us are Maoists, let the police arrest us. We have come out”.

Lalgarh is giving inspiration to people in other areas

Interestingly, the revolt in Lalgarh is instilling confidence in the adivasi people even in areas far from the adivasi-dominated districts to rise up against oppression and exploitation. An instance of this was seen in Nataberia of Bagda area, near Bongaon of North 24 Parganas district. On 28th November, Panu Sardar, and elderly adivasi from Malipota village had gone to the Nataberia police outpost to enquire about the case of his son Dipankar, who had been murdered six months ago. The policemen present in the outpost did not pay any heed to his entreaties; instead they ordered him to get them tea from an adjoining tea stall. When the old man protested, they beat him up brutally. When Panu Sardar returned to his village and narrated this incident, a few hundred adivasi people from his village, all enthused by the events in Lalgarh, accompanied him back to the police camp. They broke through the gate of the camp and destroyed the place. Finally, a large police contingent under the Bongaon SDPO arrived to bring the situation “under control”. Something like this would have been unthinkable even a few days before Lalgarh happened.

It has happened in history many a time that whenever a new method of struggle has been invented by the people, struggling people in other areas who have been trying to grapple with the situation, immediately take up that method and start using it in their own way to the utter disadvantage of the state and their henchmen. As for example, in the Raina zone in the Burdwan district of the WB, angry villagers cut down roads to prevent the entry of police forces and CPI (M) goons/hermads to capture the villages before the Lok Sabha elections. On 23rd March at late night, the people of village Banteer cut down roads. The administration repaired the road on 24th. In retaliation, the villagers again cut the road at the same place, also cut down the main road connecting Shyamsundar with Banteer and formed vigilance groups to monitor the entry of persons into their village. On 25th, they set up ‘People’s Resistance Committee’ (PRC) and set up notice debarring the entry of police forces throughout Hizlana area (*Dainik Statesman* 26th March 2009). When the police tried to enter the area on the pretext

of arresting the assassins of one CPI (M) worker, the villagers particularly the women resisted them and even snatched a teenager from the hands of the police. In the face of people's bold resistance, the police forces retreated and came back with a huge force. They attacked the people, injured and humiliated women and there were widespread pitched battles with the police. The angry villagers cut down roads and felled trees to prevent the entry of police vans and the hermad-led motorbikes. The PRC put up notices on the road against the entry of policemen and CPI (M) hermad forces inside the Hizlana area. Many people were arrested and there were big rallies in protest (*Dainik Statesman* 31st March 2009).

Response from the Urban Literati

Unlike Nandigram, the response of the urban intellectuals is partial. At the initial stage of the Lalgarh struggle, some members of the urban literati did go to Lalgarh to express their solidarity with their movement. Later on, a broad solidarity forum named Lalgarh Andolan Sanhati Mancha (Lalgarh Movement Solidarity Forum) was set up in Kolkata with people from different walks of life such as artists, teachers, social activists, women's organisations, students, civil rights and democratic organisations. There were joint press conferences in Kolkata where the PSBJC leaders were also present. On 15th March, there was a huge mass meeting at Pirakata where writers, teachers, singers, civil rights activists, students from Kolkata and some tribal leaders and social activists from outside West Bengal were present and addressed the gathering. A mass procession took place in Kolkata on 6th April 2009 at the initiative of the LASM against attempts to stage another bloodbath on the Nandigram model on the pretext of holding the elections. It started from College Square and ended at Esplanade East. The Lalgarh cultural team performed and Chhatradhar Mahato spoke on behalf of the people. It was attended by around 1000 people where tribal people from Lalgarh along with their drums and traditional weapons were conspicuous by their presence. A number of artists, teachers, scientists, social workers, civil rights activists, students, members of different women's associations took an active part. Another big rally is going to take place in Kolkata on 24th April.

An All-India Team comprising eminent economists, historians, journalists, social workers such as Amit Bhaduri, Uma Chakrabarty, Gautam Navlakha, Sandip Pandey and others spoke at a citizens'

convention held at Moulali Juva Kendra at Kolkata on 9th April and went on a fact-finding mission to Lalgarh from 10-11 April 2009.

Lalgarh Struggle Phase II

Phase II of the Lalgarh struggle can be said to have begun since the dates for the Lok Sabha elections were announced. From then on, the WB government and the Election Commission started talking about the need to send police and central forces to ensure the smooth holding of the elections in Lalgarh. In fact, for the last several months, the government has been left totally in the dark about what had been going on inside the Jangal Mahal because of the police boycott call given by the PSBJC and prevention of police entry into the area. There is good reason to believe that in the name of the smooth holding of elections, the police and their CPI (M) political bosses would actually try to capture the area, set up police and paramilitary camps in as many areas as possible and facilitate the entry of the armed hermdads in the Nandigram style by defeating resistance movements in pools of blood. However, despite tall talks, the WB government was quite aware of the risks involved in taking such administrative steps as that might result in an adivasi rebellion the serious implications of which they can wish away only at a great peril. The adivasi leaders also made it amply clear that any political party could enter the area for election campaign and go out unharmed, but they would not be allowed to be accompanied by police forces. And if the police seek



Singur to Lalgarh via Nandigram



Women and children in huge march in Purulia

to enter the area by applying force against the people's committee's dictum, the people would be forced to resist with whatever arms they could lay their hands on; for this the administration alone would be held responsible.

The government decided to test the strength of the adivasi movement by sending central paramilitary forces on 21st March 2009. But they were stopped at Peliachawk in Lalgarh by the tribals. As one leading English daily reported, the Maoist-backed villagers waylaid them, snatched their rifles and held them hostage for five hours. Large groups of women blocked and barricaded police reinforcements sent to rescue the Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) jawans. The PSBJC leaders made the IRB assistant commandant to give a written "undertaking" that "police had done wrong by torturing tribal women at Chhotopelia on November 5, 2008 and killing three PCPA workers at Khasjungle on February 2". Thus after five hours, the IRB jawans were set free (*Times of India*, 22-3-09). When the central forces were thus prevented from entering Lalgarh, the DGP made trips by helicopter to make aerial surveys from above to locate the activities of the Maoist armed squads, which, according to them, had already been firmly entrenched in the Lalgarh area.

Meanwhile, two members of the PSBJC—Monoranjan Singh and Bishnu Singh—who had disappeared from Phulkusma where he went to buy goats on 23rd March, were found killed and their decomposed bodies were found in Majhgheria in Bankura not far from Belpahari in West Medinipur. Chhatradhar Mahato put the blame for their murder on the Salwa Judum type resistance committee formed by the CPI (M) and the police. In protest, the PSBJC at a public meeting held at Simulpal at a hilly area on the Jharkhand-Bengal border, gave a call to oust the CPI (M) and the police from the Jangal Mahal area (*Sanbad Protidin*, 30 March 2009; *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 30 March 2009). They also reiterated their decision to continue the boycott of the police forces. Meanwhile, the PSBJC lost another of its members, named Indrajit Sahis of Maitipara, Dheta who disappeared after joining the Simulpal meeting held on

29th March and whose bruised body was recovered on 1st April. According to the People's Committee, he also was the victim of attack by the Salwa Judum-type resistance committee.

That the Lalgarh movement has steeled the resolve of the tribal people and is spreading to other areas as well is evident from other incidents where police forces were prevented from entering villages on the plea of arresting the Maoists. Alleging that Maoist squads have camped in the Ajodhya Hills, the police forces of the Bagmundi, Balarampur and Arsha police stations have started long-range patrolling with the CRPF on the night of 26th March. At the early hours of the morning when the state and central forces, allegedly on a tip-off that some Maoist squad members had taken shelter there, were about to enter Chhat Rajera village, villagers surrounded them and did not allow them to enter. From a source other than the police version, it is known that the police started the operation all on a sudden, could not find any Maoist squad member there. When they asked someone about the name of the village after entering it, heated exchange of words started, and the police beat up a boy. After that the situation went out of control. The whole force was gheraoed and people opposed police highhandedness. At the front row there were women. They made it clear that before entering the villages, the police would have to give prior information and secondly, they would not be allowed to torture and beat up people in the name of search operations. New rescue police teams arrived. The state machinery had to submit to the united resistance and courage of the villagers and beat a retreat (*Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 28th March 2009). The Lalgarh movement has started to bear fruit which certainly augurs bad for the government.

Lok Sabha Elections and the Lalgarh Struggles Ahead

The situation that the people of Lalgarh, nay the people of West Bengal, have been confronted now is totally unprecedented. Sometime after the election process was finalised, the WB government taking the cue from the Election Commissioner declared that police and central forces would enter Lalgarh to facilitate the election process and that the Maoists had already encamped there and they were bent on disturbing the entire process with their call for poll boycott. On the issue of the Lok Sabha elections, Chhatradhar Mahato said that the people of Lalgarh are keeping very well without the presence of the police forces and



Sixth April 2009 Rally in Kolkata

would continue to remain so during elections. Their committee was not against elections; in fact, the people of Jangal Mahal would definitely participate in the democratic process, in elections to oust the 'left-front' candidates from power. But that can be done without the presence of the state forces. If the police and central forces are allowed to enter, they would also have armed CPI(M) hermdads closely following them from behind in police uniforms(as they had done in Nadigram), and both the state forces and the CPI(M) goons would then try to let loose a reign of fascist terror to ensure the victory of 'left-front' candidates. On the question of protection for polling officials, Chhatradhar Mahato said at a press conference held at Kolkata on 5th April 2009 at the Press Club that although there is no need for protection to the polling officials as no harm would be done to them by anyone, the people themselves will take responsibility for their free entry and free exit along with ballot boxes. And they would not allow the police and central forces to enter the area in the name of peaceful holding of elections. In case state and paramilitary forces entered the area against the will of the people who have been continuing the boycott of police forces for refusing to accede to the demands of the PSBJC placed long time ago, then the people would definitely resist with their traditional weapons like bows and arrows and the committee would give a call for the boycott of elections. But the home secretary, government of WB is quite adamant to use his

muscle power and has bluntly declared that forces would definitely enter Lalgarh 'at all costs'. He alleged that the Maoists were using the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCPA) as a front. "Both the Maoists and the committee are against the police entering the area. Chhatradhar Mahato's outfit (the committee) is operating as front, backed by Maoists" (*The Telegraph*, 5th April 2009). What baffles the general public is that since the declared objective of the People's Committee was to take part in elections and to do it, quite rightly, without the presence of the state machinery in any form, and when they are giving the word that they would themselves give protection to polling officials, if at all there arises the need of it, then do they are so insistent about sending the force there? The other pertinent point is: if the People's Committee is a frontal organisation of the CPI (Maoist), as the home secretary insists one should believe, then how will he explain the diametrically different position taken on the issue of elections by the Maoists on the one hand and the People's Committee on the other? Does not these questions give credence to the view that the top bureaucrats of the WB-government are in fact taking a very partial attitude to serve the ruling CPI (M) itself?

While the state government has been preparing itself for the brutal action ahead, the people of Lalgarh have also been preparing themselves for resistance against it. The committee has set up check- posts at two points of entry into Lalgarh—Barapelia and Ramgarh. Sensing that policemen and their decade-long CPI(M) hermsds-accomplices-informers could also enter in plain dresses, they have decided to search all vehicles entering the area to prevent the entry of unwanted persons along with arms and ammunition(*Dainik Statesman*, 5th April 2009). Thus the Lalgarh movement has added another arsenal to their list of weapons for fighting police atrocities—setting up of people's check posts. So long, we have always been familiar with the police check-posts; now we witness the creation of people's check-posts. It is not important to consider here whether such an effort would be long-lasting or not. In all likelihood, it would not be possible to prevent the forcible entry of the police and central forces at least at the initial stage and the barricade would probably crumble down at the first armed push, may be with much bloodshed. That is not important here. What is important is the thought of creating such a barricade, the thought that this is the point of entry into people's area, this is the symbol of people's power, however weak it might appear to be. And this method would certainly be adopted along

with others in other areas of struggle also. Is this not something to rejoice about? The Lalgarh struggle is offering many lessons to all those who are eager to learn.

People's Development by the People's Committee

It is well-known that the WB state government did not do anything to introduce genuine developmental work in the Jangal Mahal area, not to speak of uplifting the living conditions of the people. What the so-called 'left-front' government had failed, nay, preferred not to do, is now being sincerely attempted by the Committee of the People against Police Atrocities. The long-neglected health services have already started work at the committee's initiative. The health centre at Kantapahari was set up two years ago by the government, but remained unutilised—a sad commentary on the apathy of the powers-that-be to the plight of the people. The People's Committee took control over it and started a free health centre, thereby partially meeting the long-standing needs of the people of the locality. Some physicians from Kolkata have been paying regular visits to Lalgarh to ensure that everything is kept going. The centre was inaugurated on 19th March by Chhatradhar Mahato and given the name of 'People's hospital'. It started functioning with one physician and six health workers. On the first day, nearly 100 persons came to their own hospital for treatment. Dr. Shanti Mullick, a physician who went there from Kolkata, said: "Most of the patients have been suffering from mal-nutrition. One has to see in order to believe it. The health services here are very bad. Although the infrastructure is there, there are no doctors, no medicines due to the apathy of the administration. I welcome the initiative of the committee". Among those who attended was a woman named Shantabala Nag who had one of her bones in the right hand broken and did not have any treatment at all. Others like Panmani Murmu, Jiban Kisku of Dalilpur and Churamani Murmu of Narcha came for ailments related to malnutrition. They said that what the government failed to do has been done by the committee of the people (*Dainik Statesman*, 21st March 2009).

Agricultural production and removal of scarcity of water are the two other pressing problems. For the promotion of agriculture and addressing the problem of scarcity of water, the committee has already taken steps to install tube-wells in many villages. For many years, the local people had pleaded with the authorities to

pay attention to people's health, potable water and irrigational facilities; but the government could not be moved at all. The People's Committee that grew out of the people's struggle has taken up that task. As reported in the press, two tube-wells have been set up in Bahardanga and one at Barapelia and steps are being taken to set up tube-wells in Kantapahari, Krishnakumari and other villages. For the purpose of irrigation, canal dredging has commenced in Barapelia and the work is about to start in Kalaimuri. The cost for installing each tube-well is around Rs. 12, 000 and that for canal dredging in the two areas would come to around Rs. 8 lakh. The PSBJC has appealed to the people for donation to meet the expenses and the response is tremendous. Although the people are poor and many of them cannot make both ends meet, they are coming out with whatever amount they can offer, since here they realise quite well that this money is essential for their own development, and not for fattening the purse of the people's enemies. Apart from monetary contributions, the people are also giving voluntary labour i.e., unpaid labour for the cause of local development. Local people said that scarcity of potable water was grave; however, the setting up of tube-wells has improved the situation considerably. "We need more tube-wells and we have informed the committee about the requirement". Persons like Chhitamani Murmu, Panmani Murmu and Gopinath Mandi told one reporter that they had contributed some amount from their income to the committee meet the expenditure. "What the government has failed to do has been done by the people's committee and thereby removed our problem". Not unexpectedly, the CPI (M) leadership of the locality out of their own frustration have criticised the committee by alleging that the money was being forcibly taken from the people (*Dainik Statesman*, 5th April 2009). The CPI (M) cadres are behaving in a manner which is similar to a situation when the ghost is being compelled by circumstances to take the name of God. It shows the sorry plight in which they have landed themselves. When they extract money from the people by intimidation for fattening their own purse, then, in their eyes, that is voluntary contribution; but when people's committee makes appeal to the people for meeting the expenses for developmental work, however limited that might be, for the benefit of the people themselves, which the ruling CPI (M) and their government were supposed to do but which they did not, then such noble efforts are being branded as forcible extraction. Incidentally, such developmental work at the elementary level, employment of

voluntary labour for people's interest and many other things were accomplished by the people of Dandakaranya under the leadership of Maoist Communist revolutionaries many years back. That again proves that means and methods invented by the people in course of their struggle either for the creation of a new society or for the betterment of their living conditions or against state repression are adopted and implemented by other people in other areas as well.

Maoists and the Lalgarh Struggle

We have seen many a time that whenever there is a people's movement—in whatever form—against the policy of the India state or anti-people measures adopted by it, then the Maoists have been made the main targets of attack. Despite the odds that the Maoists and the people sympathising with their cause confront regularly, such accusations and attacks, in fact, also act as blessings in disguise as, by implication, they are being projected by their enemies as a group of ideologically-motivated people who have been fighting for the cause of the poor and the downtrodden people of India. And this projection, even if it comes from their enemy, is not possibly misplaced.

Very recently, as reported in sections of the media, one senior Maoist leader named Sekhar who is a member of the Bengal-Jharkhand Orissa Regional Committee met some journalists secretly at a place near the West Bengal-Orissa border and talked at length about the movement at Lalgarh. According to him, the mine blast was directed against the Salboni SEZ project as also against chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee who, because of the crimes he had committed over the years against the people, deserves nothing but death by assassination. Sekhar said: "We give extreme punishment i.e., death to some individual or enemy when we are left with no other option. In some cases, we liquidate reactionary elements and the CPI (M) leaders in order to raise the confidence of the people. This much I can tell you with confidence that the people of Jangal Mahal are seething with



Chhatradhar
Mahato

so much discontent that the administration and the police do not even have the faintest idea of it. Had we have given the green signal, the common villagers would themselves have meted out death sentence to oppressive jotedars, mahajans and goons every day. There would have been incidence of death in large numbers every day. In many cases, we have intervened to make them restrain their anger”. Sekhar went on to say that the CPI (M)-led misrule has gone to such an extent that the people of the area nourish deep-rooted hatred against them. The Maoists have always stood by the side of the people to the best of their ability in their fight against injustice and have thereby endeared themselves to the people. He remarked that the CPI (M) leaders and their henchmen have been trying to weaken people’s morale by terrorising and killing our activists and sympathisers; still we have not resorted to indiscriminate killing of the CPI (M) cadres, it is only in exceptional cases that we have to mete out such punishment (*Dainik Statesman*, 4th and 5th April 2009).

The Maoist leader also said that they are ready with their firepower to take on the police and central forces, if they dared to forcibly enter Lalgah. “The arms and the cadres have arrived and the boys have been trained. Now let the police try to enter; we’ll match them bullet for bullet”, Sekhar is reported to have remarked. The message has reached Belpahari police station. Scared of the Maoist retaliation, some of the serving sub-inspectors have managed to get transferred to Kotwali and other “safe” places. Others are waiting with bated breath for the central forces to take the lead (‘Indian Maoists get ready for battle ahead’, downloaded from the Net). The police forces of the state are also passing through difficult times. As a daily newspaper reported, “We live like prisoners here. Even if there is an incident after sundown, we are not allowed to go outside without our superiors’ permission, because such phone calls can very well be traps laid by the Maoists. Believe it or not, this is what a police officer was saying sitting inside a police station in the Maoist heartland of western Bengal” (‘Tracking Terror in Maoist Land’, *Times of India*, 27th March 2009). The police station is Balarampur—42km from Purulia town and not very far from West Medinipur. The state government is determined to enter to ensure what it said the smooth holding of the Lok Sabha elections. The stage was thus set for a showdown. When the PSBJC refused to budge an inch in the face of threat from the home secretary, the WB government

shifted the onus of taking the decision of sending forces there to the Election Commission.

Latest Developments

Meanwhile, in response to the request from the Election Commissioner in charge of WB elections, Mr. Debashis Sen to meet him in order to discuss the issue of holding the election in Lalgarh, an eight-member-team comprising five tribal representatives of the People's Committee including Chhatradhar Mahato and three civil rights activists and members of the Lalgarh Andolan Sanhati Mancha (Forum in Solidarity with the Lalgarh Movement) met Mr. Sen at his office in Kolkata on 12 April 2009. Mr. Sen met the delegation alone. There Chhatradhar Mahato made it clear that since they knew from their own experience over the past several years that entry of police forces would inevitably be followed by torture and brutality, they could never trust them. The same is true also of central forces. Instead, elections could be held without armed forces at all. Sujato Bhadra, a member of the delegation, said that there were instances in some other countries where elections are held minus police presence. In England also, as one of my friends who participated in elections there some years back remembers well, elections were held without the presence of police forces at all. In reply, Sen said that it would take many years to implement that in India. What he concretely proposed is that a force solely under the charge of the Election Commission and without the presence of the state forces would go and conduct elections and leave as soon as the elections were over. The delegates, however, expressed their misgivings over this proposal as the Election Commissioner himself could not give any guarantee that other forces would not stay on or infiltrate in the name of holding elections in Lalgarh. Chhatradhar Mahato, however, told Mr. Sen that he would discuss Mr. Sen's proposal with the Committee and intimate their collective decision to him. The People's Committee met on 13th April and took the decision and intimated it to the Election Commission. It was reported in the press on 14th April. The committee reiterated their original stand of not letting state police or central forces such as the CRPF enter Lalgarh to hold polling. Instead, intellectuals and members of the civil society could act as observers. The police should first learn how to gain the confidence of the people. If it takes one year or more, let that be so; elections could, thus be held at Jangal Mahal after that. If

the State government goes against either of these two options and try to apply force, then conflict would be inevitable. The committee observed that they had also been watching the role of the central forces since 2004. They would be under the direction of the state forces, and would perpetrate brutality on the people as the state police forces would direct them to do. Right to life is to be ensured and not just elections (*Dainik Statesman*, 14 April 2009). The state government has stated that forces would be sent to Lalgarh very soon.

Our observations

The struggle in Lalgarh has added another chapter to the glorious tradition of revolt in West Bengal, nay of India. It started as a fight against state terror and brutality. It is also a fight for dignity and justice for the tribal people. It is also an assertion of self-rule. It is also a fight for the preservation of our country's natural resources which have been systematically betrayed to Indian big capital and foreign imperialists by those who serve them and for which precisely they are in power. So this movement is also anti-imperialist in character. The demands the fighting people have placed reveal that they have some alternative model of development in their minds. It started as a spontaneous movement; but the Maoist movement has been also spread in this region as a backdrop to it. The new experiments the people are carving out for themselves might be new to their own region, but these and many other things have also been attempted in other areas of our country. Like what the Indian ruling classes and their agents—the CPI (M) leadership did earlier in other cases, this time also they have made a political blunder on their part. They have attributed the success of the movement to the Maoists. The Maoists are quite likely to be in the thick of things now like in Nandigram, if not at the initial stage; but that should not make one forget that it was a sense of neglect, humiliation and loss of dignity in the minds of the tribal people that started the prairie fire in the face of police brutality. The word 'Maoist' has already become the symbol of defiance and resistance against this oppressive system and is looming large on the horizon as a living spectre, haunting the powers-that-be. The Lalgarh struggle has begun. It has already entered the second phase. The way people are being mobilised and prepared for the bloody struggle ahead, the setting up of check-posts, formation of village defence units, developmental work

initiated by the committee shows that the movement in this phase has definitely assumed an organised character. There is ground to believe that Maoist radical politics has been playing a major, if not the decisive role, in the movement. Needless to say, the Lalgarh movement has added another glorious chapter to the struggle of the long-suffering Indian people. It has immense possibilities.

As the reports last poured in from media-persons on 6th April 2009, the WB government has already taken the decision to send the central forces such as the BSF and the CRPF and the state forces in large numbers to enter Lalgarh through different points so as to encircle the zone in the next 2/3 days. That would be quite unprecedented in the history of our country. Here the government is bent upon showing its muscle power with all savagery and brutality on the plea of looking after the interests of the very people who themselves have already stood united against such a move and determined to resist, come what may. Nobody can tell how many people will fall down dead in the battle ahead, how many people would receive bullet wounds and would get disabled for life, how many children would lose their parents, and how many women would be humiliated in their just and heroic struggle for justice and dignity. But if the fighting spirit of the people is any indication, then the **Battle of Lalgarh** can never be a one-sided affair and the state knows that quite well. And that has made it uneasy. Lalgarh can never be a second Nandigram. Lalgarh is sure to take the movement on to a higher stage. Long live Lalgarh.

The Lalgarh Struggle is another Watershed in the Long History of the Downtrodden People against Humiliation, State Terror and for Justice

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Singur to Lalgarh via Nandigram

Appendix

The total number of villages where village committees have been formed so far is at present nearly 300. The names of only 187 such villages, spreading over West Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia Districts are available with us. They are:

1. Birkanr
2. Chhotopelia
3. Madhabpur
4. Boropelia
5. Dharampur
6. Kamladanga
7. Guriapara
8. Beldanga
9. Jaypur
10. Narcha
11. Bahardanga;
12. Papuria
13. Bansher
14. Lokat
15. Shaldiha
16. Chhotopelia(Ramdi)
17. Melkheria
18. Aamalya
19. Sarasbedia
20. Amdanga
21. Teshabandh
22. Belboni
23. Kuyapara
24. Kantapahari(West)
25. Tantisol;
26. Grampughuria
27. Khoirasuli
28. Mekhibari
29. Ghoraghanti
30. Bandhgora;
31. Kantapahari(East)
32. Sitaramdahi;
33. Hanrulia;
34. Baganda
35. Krishnakumari;
36. Bhuladanga
37. Banpughuria
38. Galasia
39. Purnapani
40. Bankati
41. Sijua
42. Sindurpur
43. Pathardanga
44. Kukurmuri
45. Lalgarh
46. Podiha
47. Bridabanpur
48. Jirakuli
49. Chandabila
50. Dingla
51. Narendrapur
52. Salboni
53. Janakipur
54. Dhansol
55. Garia
56. Karangapara
57. Dalilpur
58. Gosaidanga
59. Arma
60. Shyamcharandanga
61. Pairabila
62. Tara
63. Bagmari
64. Keliasol
65. Bankisol
66. Hatigosa

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 67. Gujisol | 108. Durlabhpur |
| 68. Sakhisol | 109. Mahulbani |
| 69. jamsol | 110. Mangalapur |
| 70. Bhurgadanga | 111. Nakdana |
| 71. Dubrajpur | 112. Colony |
| 72. Makarkol | 113. Bara Nakdana |
| 73. Sitarampur | 114. Betjharia |
| 74. Shaluka; | 115. Bhimsol |
| 75. Shalukabandhgora | 116. Kenduasol |
| 76. Kushmashuli | 117. Shimaldanga |
| 77. Gobindapur | 118. Uporbhangadali |
| 78. Badhagara | 119. Tilghagri |
| 79. Kendadanga | 120. Rangamati |
| 80. Baliguma | 121. Naria |
| 81. Sirishboni | 122. Balibandh |
| 82. Sarasbeda | 123. Kalsidanga |
| 83. Faringdanga | 124. Koysa |
| 84. Dubrajpur(Jhargram) | 125. Jhitka |
| 85. Kalabani(Jhargram) | 126. Dhanghori(Salbani) |
| 86. Magura(Binpur) | 127. Dhachati |
| 87. Bhandaru | 128. Kalaimuri |
| 88. Malbandi(Medinipur) | 129. Birbhanpur |
| 89. Chakadoba(Belpahari) | 130. Bhelaidanga |
| 90. Tamajuri(Belpahari) | 131. Bakhantor(Goaltor) |
| 91. Humgarh(Goaltor) | 132. Dumuria(Goaltor); |
| 92. Bulanpur(Goaltor) | 133. Georgegate(Goaltor) |
| 93. Aamlabati(Salboni) | 134. Kashia(Goaltor) |
| 94. Bandhgora(Salbani) | 135. Netai(Lalgarh) |
| 95. Bhimpur | 136. Daintikri(Lalgarh) |
| 96. Khayerpahari(Sarenga) | 137. Kanchandanga(Lalgarh) |
| 97. Dahijuri(Jhargram) | 138. Jirapara(Goaltor) |
| 98. Jualdanga(Jhargram) | 139. Luginuthari(Goaltor) |
| 99. Gopalpur(Jhargram) | 140. Sankaria(Sarenga) |
| 100. Ghoraghati(Lalgarh) | 141. Chingra(Sarenga) |
| 101. Radhakheria | 142. Koyma(Sarenga) |
| 102. Tilabani | 143. Baragadra(Sarenga) |
| 103. Phulkushma | 144. Chhotodagra(Sarenga) |
| 104. Bhulabeda(Belpahari) | 145. Tentuldanga(Goaltor) |
| 105. Raipur | 146. Shiarbinda(Chakadoba) |
| 106. Nachhipur | 147. Hijli(Bankura) |
| 107. Papatpur | 148. Burisal(Bankura) |

149. Salbani (Bankura)
150. Neguria (Banshpahari)
151. Gerulia (Bhulabheda)
152. Chitamati
153. Chakadoba
154. Thakurabandha (Dhanara area), Bankura
155. Bidri (Chakadoba)
156. Dharampur (Rampur)
157. Jamirdiha
158. Kheriarata
159. Kashtar
160. Hatbari (Sarenga, Bankura)
161. Taldiha (Sarenga, Bankura)
162. Sahajpur (Raipur)
163. Dhirighutu (Sarenga)
164. Pidrakuli
165. Bhimpur
166. Belyasol
167. Kuldiha
168. Khoyerdanga (Bhimpur)
169. Patharpara (Bhimpur)
170. Bandarbari (Dheko)
171. Balarampur (Purulia)
172. Katbera (Purulia)
173. Malbandi (Dherua)
174. Kurkutsol
175. Burisol (Salbani)
176. Bandhgara (Salbani)
177. Gopalpur (Area no. 6)
178. Boyrabir (Juyaldanga, Jhargram)
179. Raipur (Bankura)
180. Bridabanpur (Kalabani)
181. Patharchakbi (Jhargram)
182. Piyalgeria (Jhargram)
183. Sor (Jhargram)
184. Uporburisol
185. Chhagalputa
186. Namgara (Bankura)
187. Chhutarmara



A section of women participants in 23 November Rally



Part of the audience in the Purulia meeting