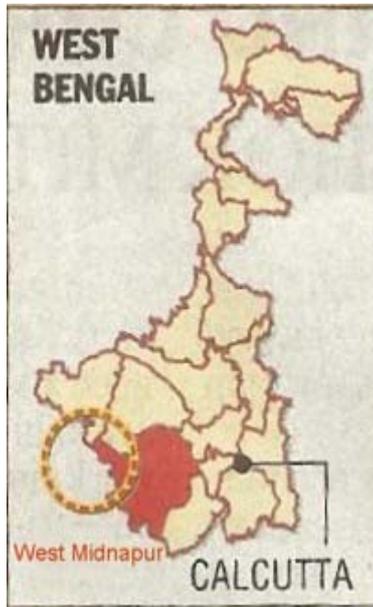


The Mass Uprising in Lalgarh

After Singur and Nanidgram, now it is the turn of Lalgarh. While the first two mass eruptions in West Bengal were over displacement of the peasants from their fertile lands which were handed over to the big comprador sharks, the Lalgarh adivasi uprising was against the high-handedness and atrocities by the police and, of course, by the social fascist goons of the ruling CPI(M). It is the first mass uprising that had erupted on such a massive scale against police atrocities in post-1947 India barring, of course, Kashmir and North East. One is reminded of the mass uprising of Manipur against atrocities by the Indian Army and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in the wake of the rape of Manorama.

Described as the biggest state and as the second Santhal uprising in Lalgarh drew banner following the land-mine attack Bengal chief minister, a host of other VVIPs, including Paswan and Jitendra Prasad, and on November 2, 2008 near district. The convoy was when it was returning from inauguration of a mega-steel at a cost of over Rs. 12,000 of land was acquired by the so-Three policemen, including an were suspended following the



adivasi rebellion ever in the rebellion, the militant mass headlines for several weeks on the convoy of the West Buddhadev Bhattacharjee, and two Union Ministers, Ramvilas top industrialist, Ashok Jindal, Salboni in West Midnapore attacked by Maoist guerrillas Salboni after Buddhadeb's project being set up by Jindal crores and for which 4,500 acres called Left Front government. inspector and two constables, land-mine blast.

What sparked off the rebellion unleashed by the police in the indescribable atrocities on state terror, the social-fascist had pounced on the villages with beating up people on suspicion of being sympathetic to the Maoists. On November 3, West Midnapore police raided far-flung villages of Lalgarh at the Belpahari end of Jangalmahal, and detained 15 people. Three of these were school-kids who were tortured badly and charged with sedition or waging war against the state, conspiracy and use of explosives. Two are Class IX students of Katapahari High School and the third is a Class VII student of a Lalgarh school. They were returning after attending a village festival on the 3rd evening when police picked them up and lined them up with four other 'suspects' arrested in the case. These incidents provoked the initial protests. But paying little heed to the growing anger and protest of the people the police continued with their terror campaign.

In Kantapahari village one Deepak Pratihar was arrested on November 4 and his pregnant wife Lakshmi was assaulted. Another ten people, including a retired teacher and a contractor from Choto Pelia village, were arrested as police raids continued in 35 villages in Lalgarh block. The turning point came when the Lalgarh police tortured 11 adivasi women on the mid-night of Nov 6 in Chhoto Pelia. Mrs Chitamoni Murmu, a poor Santhal woman, had lost her vision after being struck with a rifle butt on her left eye by a policeman. Some like Panmani Hansda suffered fractures. This brutal incident, which took place in Chhotopelia when only women folk were resent at the time of the police raid, served as the spark that set off a prairie fire spreading to the rest of West Midnapore and neighbouring Bankura and Purulia districts too.



A Fine Example of Democracy

The month-long agitation was initially spearheaded by locals under the banner of the Sara Bharat Jakat Majhi Madowa Juran Gaonta, a Santhal organisation of adivasi elders, but was later led by an independent organisation that was set up exclusively to fight state repression—*Polishi Santras Birodhi Janasadharaner Committee* or People's Committee Against Police Atrocities. None of the parliamentary parties had any role in the uprising that had brought normal life to a standstill for over a month in Lalgarh, Binpur, Jhargram, Jamboni and Belpahari blocks of Midnapore West. Although they were kept in the sidelines, and despite the incessant

propaganda that the uprising was led by the Maoists, the so-called mainstream parties, barring the ruling CPI(M), were compelled to express their support to the movement for the fear of getting isolated from the adivasi masses.

A 12-point People's Charter was drawn up which, among other things, called for withdrawal of all "false cases" foisted on the people since 1998, adequate compensation to the victims of police atrocities, immediate halt to police raids on clubs run by Santhals, not to carry out raids without the presence of Majhi Maroas, etc. But the most important demand of the committee that was of immediate significance was that the SP of West Midnapore, Rajesh Singh, and the culprits responsible for the outrage on women should hold their ears and crawl with their nose to the ground, all the way from Dalilpur Chowk to Chhotopelia Chowk apologizing for the police raids and detentions since the landmine blast on November 2. They demanded that the chief minister too should apologise for the high-handedness of his police officials. And though most of the other demands were met, it was this demand that became the driving force behind the agitation that went on for almost two months with short breaks in between.

The uniqueness of the uprising lay in its democratic character right from the nature and functioning of the organisation that spearheaded it, and the manner in which the mass resistance movement was conducted. To lead the movement, committees known as Gram Committees (GCs), were formed at the grass-roots level. Each committee had five men and five women, something unheard of in the highly patriarchal and male-dominated semi-feudal social set-up in India. Moreover, every committee has to get its decisions ratified at a general assembly of the people that acted as the supreme decision-making body, which is again a fundamental departure and radical rupture with the tradition of one-man or one-woman dictatorship or the authoritarianism of a small coterie or clique in all parliamentary parties without exception and even in most of the non-parliamentary organisations in our country. Such "Gram Committees" based on genuine democratic values and traditions were formed in the villages of Belpahari, Binpur, Lalgarh, Jamboni, Salboni, Goaltore and adjoining blocks. 85 GCs were formed in Lalgarh block alone and 65 GCs in Belpahari block.

The Spread of the Mass Resistance Movement

From Lalgarh, the agitation soon spread to Goaltore, Garbeta, Salboni, Gopiballavpur and Nayagram blocks. By the 12th day papers reported that "*The situation has gone from bad to worse because the agitation is gathering support from villages of Bankura, Purulia and even parts of Hooghly.*" They also reported that all attempts by the government and CPI(M) goons to isolate the adivasis from the Maoists had miserably failed.

Villagers blocked the road from Lalgarh to Binpur initially; later the road blockades had spread upto Banspahari as people came forward to block the road between Belpahari and Banspahari to express solidarity with the campaign in Lalgarh against police atrocities. On the whole, a 65-kilometre stretch of road from Banspahari to Lalgarh was blocked during the agitation.

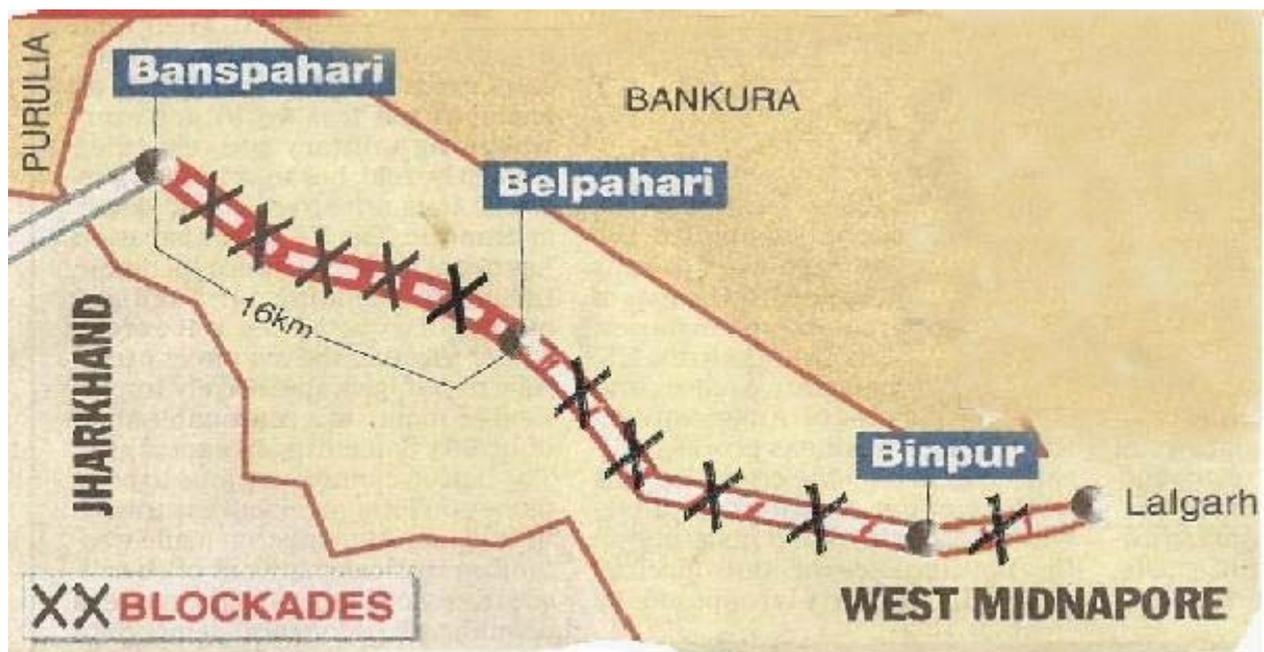
The Santhal organisation Bharat Jakat Majhi Marwa placed trees on the road to express solidarity with the agitation against police atrocities in Lalgarh, 45km away. Among other things, the Bankura protesters wanted all night raids to stop. Three CPM leaders who had gone to persuade the tribals to withdraw the blockades were beaten up. A 48-hour bandh of South Bengal was observed on Nov 28/29. Armed with bows, arrows, axe and spears people took out four separate rallies from Khoer Pahari, Nekra Pahari, Tanti Danga and Karbhanga. They shouted slogans against the police and blocked roads connecting Chandrakona in West Midnapore with Sarenga, Bankura.



The People's Committee Against Police Atrocities, which led the protests in Lalgarh, remained uncompromising on its major demand that the SP of West Midnapore should apologise before the people by doing sit-ups. Given the incessant harassment, humiliatio, torture and arrests of poor and helpless adivasis by the police for decades, such a demand came as no surprise. They demanded that the chief minister too should apologise for the high-handedness of his police officials. And though most of the other demands were met, it was this demand that became the driving force behind the agitation that went on for almost two months with short breaks in between.

The agitation drew wide support from various sections of people throughout the entire state. Students from all over West Midnapore, Purulia, Bankura and other districts of the state came out in large numbers expressing solidarity with the Lalgarh uprising. Sudents from Kolkata's elite institutions like Presidency College and Jadavpur University and some rights activists went to Belpahari in support of the movement. The Jharkhand Disam Party called a 12-hour bandh in the district on Nov 16. Traffic on NH-6 was disrupted as the Kurmi Chhatra Yuva Sangram Committee blocked the highway at Lodhasuli point in Jhargram. The town of Jhargram remained inaccessible as the Lodhasuli-Jhargram Road was blocked with tree trunks dumped at Kalaboni and Belphari-Jhargram Road.

The mainstream Opposition parties had no other option than to extend support to the agitation. But the agitators had few illusions on these parties and denounced Jharkhand Party MLA Chunibala Hansda, and the Congress leader Manas Bhuniya who claimed to be backing the Lalgarh agitation. On Nov 25 all the opposition parties held demonstrations in support of the Lalgarh agitation which entered a fresh round on that day. Roads were dug up again at Penchapara in Salboni, 27 km from Lalgarh, and many other places like Chilgeria and some villages between Chandra and Dherua.



Trinamool Congress extended support to the agitation of the tribals but said it will not participate in the agitation. Mamata Benarjee said: *"It is not an issue where political parties have a role. The Adivasi samaj is fighting for protection. They are being arrested indiscriminately on the plea of combating Maoists. This has been going on for a long time, but now their patience has come to an end."* Mamata alleged that CPM cadres were taking out rallies carrying firearms to terrorise the tribals. *"It is a mass uprising in Jhargram. But CPM is trying to break it with arms and motorcycle brigades,"* she said. Trinamool played no more a role than holding a token demonstration in solidarity with the adivasi agitation.

CPI (Maoist) state secretary Kanchan said in a statement: *"We are with the people of Lalgarh. The chief minister will have to apologise in front of the people for torturing tribals in West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia."*

A newspaper commented: *"A visit to the remote tribal villages in Lalgarh, Belpahari and Binpur bordering Jharkhand reveals that Maoists have already established strong bases among*

the tribals and they have many squads inside 700 square km forests of the district." Another paper reported that "CPI(Maoist) leaders held meetings at Patharkumkumi jungle near Lalgarh with the locals to decide what the tribals would do if the administration sits with the Police Santrash Birodhi Janaganer Committee (PSBJC) by November 28."

The administration tried to buy off the leaders of various santhali organizations and succeeded in winning over a few tribal heads but this had no impact on the agitating adivasis who refused to heed the calls of the tribal leaders. On November 14, Marwa leader Munshiram Murmu was beaten up when he tried to persuade a group to lift a blockade in Jhargram town. Three CPM leaders - Ranjit Hembran, a former pachayat samiti sabhapati and Ramu Duley and Tulu Hembran, zonal committee leaders were on their way back home to Sarulia when they were struck by arrows at Sarenga area on Nov 19.

Thus the government had not only failed in these attempts to 'divide and rule', but even new organizations like that of the non-*adivasi* Kurmi (Mahatos) joined the agitation against police atrocities thereby giving the agitation a general character. People from 91 villages held a meeting at Kantapahari in Sonajhuri jungle and discussed ways of intensifying the agitation. District police officers sent an SOS to Writers' Buildings, seeking directives on how to contain the 'rebellion'. By end of November, the agitation had spread to over 400 villages. Deputy superintendent Shyamal Lalgarh police station, includes Belpahari, and Shilda has become can't go even 500 metres from the police roadblocks." "We don't call it a tribal movement," said Sidhu Soren, secretary of the apex committee elected from the Dalilpur meet. "Most villagers, cutting across caste and creed, have endorsed our 11-point charter of demands against the police. We will continue with the blockade till the administration concedes to our demands."

By end of November, the agitation had spread to over 400 villages. Deputy superintendent Shyamal Lalgarh police station, includes Belpahari, and Shilda has become can't go even 500 metres from the police roadblocks." "We don't call it a tribal movement," said Sidhu Soren, secretary of the apex committee elected from the Dalilpur meet. "Most villagers, cutting across caste and creed, have endorsed our 11-point charter of demands against the police. We will continue with the blockade till the administration concedes to our demands."



Jonaki Tudu, an 18 year old tribal girl at a protest near Belpahari

An interesting episode was the resignation of a IPS officer who refused to take charge of operations in Lalgarh. The additional superintendent of police, after being shifted to Lalgarh additional superintendent of police camp at Kalaimuri to move into the forest as being suicidal as it was a stronghold of Maoists infested with land-mines. When he was subjected to "foul behaviour" by his superiors he resigned the job.

Desperate attempts by Buddhadeb to intensify and justify state terror and state-sponsored terror

Unable to suppress the mass agitation that has been growing by the day, the social-fascist CPI(M) government had drawn up a heinous plan of pitting *adivasis* against *adivasis* as done by the BJP-Congress in Chattisgarh in the name of *salwa judum* that had earned world-wide condemnation. And, hordes of CPI(M) goons pounced on the villages, in Nandigram style, and unleashed a wave of terror on the tribal masses. At least 50 truckloads of armed CPM men, flaunting the banner of *Adivasi O Anadivasi Shramajibi Janasadharan*, and accompanied by policemen, cleared all the blockades along the entire 22-km stretch from Gurguripal near Midnapore town to Dherua on December 4. They issued warnings of death to the *adivasis* if they continued with the agitation. A similar operation has been planned from Kalabani, from where two top district officials had been arrested by the people a day before.

The entire operation was master-minded by CPM district secretariat members Bijoy Pal and Satyen Maity, confidants of the party's West Midnapore secretary Dipak Sarkar. To give it an *Adivasi* face, the social-fascist brigade showcased partymen Pulinbehari Baske and Kanai

Murmu, who held several meetings, urging the tribals to give up the agitation. CPM leaders, as in Nandigram and elsewhere, took care that the media did not accompany them so as not to reveal the atrocities committed by them to the outside world. The villagers said these armed men were outsiders from West Midnapore's Garbeta, Cheruah and Jamtala. CPM's motorbike brigade was deployed to remove the blockades from Bhadutala to Bhipur taking advantage of the absence of the agitators belonging to the People's Committee against Police Atrocities who were having a meeting in Narcha village that night. However, this repeat of the Keshpur-Garbeta experiment of sending the infamous "bike brigade" only boomeranged. The adivasis replied in the same vein going around on motorbikes and putting up posters of the 'People's Committee Against Police Atrocities'.

In Belpahari area, the Maji Maroas, led by former members of the Jharkhand Party, namely Manik Tudu and Baburam Tudu, and accompanied by CPM goons, took out a rally that went through the forest hamlets Singadoba, Simulpal, Loboni, Thakurpahari and Odulchua touching the villages along the Jharkhand border. Raising slogans against Maoists, the state-backed tribal leaders and the social-fascist goons issued threats to the Adivasis and warned them of grave consequences if they did not stop giving food to the Maoists.

On December 4, the chief minister announced in the Assembly that the organisation leading the tribal protest in West Midnapore was being steered by a Trinamul Congress leader who is the brother of a wanted Maoist. The leader of the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities, Chhatradhar Mahato, *"is the brother of the wanted Maoist action squad leader, Sasadhar Mahato. Sasadhar's group is known as the Lalgadh squad"*, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said.

"We have come to know that the Lalgadh squad had carried out the November 2 blast. Sasadhar is an underground Maoist action squad leader, while his (elder) brother Chhatradhar is leading the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities and creating trouble. Chhatradhar is a Trinamul leader," he said.

"Can a dialogue work with these men?" Bhattacharjee asked. *"These Maoists are trained in Jharkhand and are being sent to our state to unleash violence."*

To cover up the state terror unleashed by his government and the social-fascist terror by his storm-troopers of CPI(M) on the adivasis, Buddhadeb tried to place the blame on "outside forces" for "fomenting trouble" in the districts bordering Jharkhand. He accused the then-chief minister of Jharkhand Mr Sibusoren for "instigating trouble" in the state's three bordering districts—Purulia, Bankura and Midnapore (West)—and said that Sibusoren was bent on merging these three districts with Jharkhand. He alleged that Mrs Chhunibala Hansda of the Jharkhand Party (Naren) was directly involved with Maoists and that *"Mrs Hansda's party members are Jharkhandis by the day and Maoists by the night."* Mrs Hansda countered that it was dissident CPI-M cadres who made up the Maoist ranks.

Biman Bose, CPI-M state secretary too squarely blamed Mr Sibusoren for the tribal agitation in West Midnapore. Mr Bose also alleged that the Centre has been acting against the interest of the state since the withdrawal of support by the Left parties to the UPA government.

"This was the reason behind the Centre not acceding to the request of the state government to send CRPF to West Midnapore and withdrawal of the existing central force from the district," Mr Bose alleged.

However, all these strong-armed tactics and disinformation campaign unleashed by the social fascist CPI(M) and its government in West Bengal against the legitimate, democratic and just mass movement failed miserably in face of the unity and democratic awakening of the adivasi people. The vigilante gangs of the CPI(M) were resolutely countered; the tribal leaders who were bought off by the police and administration were effectively isolated and some were even punished; and all attempts to water down the agitation were trounced.

Chief of the Gaonta, Mr Nityananda Hembram, faced punishment for agreeing to call off the agitation without prior permission from the full Majhi-Madowa body. The People's Committee Against Police Atrocities branded the six Santhal outfits that helped the administration remove blockades from Jhargram and who had attended peace talks as traitors. *"They betrayed us by helping the administration,"* said Sidhu.

On Nov 23, a CRPF jawan in Purulia had to be transferred to Calcutta after being caught molesting a homemaker by villagers who held him hostage for over two hours.

A significant victory for the Masses

On Nov 27, bowing to pressure from the Police Santrash Birodhi Public Committee (PSBPC), or the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities, the West Bengal government had to withdraw all thirteen police camps from Ramgarh, Lalgarh, Belpahari and Salboni areas of West Midnapore as protestors dug up the road branching off from NH 6 to Jhargram, cutting off the town from the rest of the state. These camps were set up on November 10. The PSBPC had sent a deputation to the OC Ramgarh Police the previous day and demanded that the police camps be withdrawn within 24 hours or they would confine police officers in the camps and boycott police and civil administration. The setting up of police camps in school buildings had prevented the children from continuing their studies at schools and drew the anger of the masses. The camps which were withdrawn had been operating from Kalaimuri, Koima and Pirakata in Salboni and Chhurimara and Jamtalgera in Belpahari police station areas. The police outposts were at Pirakata and Ramgarh. Most of the 700-odd policemen posted at these camps and outposts moved out by 27th night. Two police camps from Lalgarh Ramakrishna High School and Lalgarh Saradmoni Girls' High School on December 1.

".... the withdrawal of the police camp was a virtual 'surrender' to the Maoists as this was part of the Maoist-backed PSBPC's 12-point demand" decried a newspaper.

"The police may have been withdrawn from the camps but our main demand has not been met yet. The district superintendent of police is yet to apologise to the villagers at Dalilpur. So, there is no question of withdrawing our agitation. We will soon hold a meeting to decide on our future course of action," said Chhatradhar Mahato, leader of People's Committee Against Police Atrocities.

The PSBPC leaders declared punishment on the Lalgarh OC Mr Sandip Sigha Roy as the government has not yet taken any steps against the OC for torturing the tribal women. Earlier, seven of those arrested by the West Midnapore police who were produced in court and remanded in police custody till November 14, were released and charges of sedition, conspiracy, illegal assembly, use of explosives and attack on ministers foisted upon them—Gopal Karanda and Dipak Pratihar from Lalgarh's Katapahari, and Sahadeb Mahato and Lakshmiratan Murmu from Salboni's Birdhanpur—had to be dropped after ten days as no evidence could be found against any of them.



Thus the withdrawal of the police camps and fulfilment of some other demands did not end the mass agitation that continued to block the roads after allowing the withdrawing troops to pass by. They demanded punishment to the police officials responsible for the torture of adivasi women. To appease the agitators, the state government ordered an inquiry into the torture of tribal women on December 1st but this move was dubbed by the PSBPC as nothing but a "farce" intended to hush up the case since the so-called administrative probe was conducted by an officer of the department against which they have serious charges.

"If the government was really serious enough to probe the police torture, they would have had it conducted it by a retired judge of High Court," the PSBPC leaders said. They warned that they would block National Highway 6 and rail tracks from December 4 if West Midnapore officials did not heed their demands.

The mass agitation became further intensified as adivasis blocked fresh roads at Sankrail and Nayagram blocks on December 1st. They also demanded the withdrawal of the main police camp from Lalgarh town. The town of Jhargram was cut off again from the rest of the state. The fury of the people also took the form of several attacks on the CPI(M) offices and goons. When CPM cadres forcibly cleared the road blockades put up by the tribals in the area the latter set ablaze a CPM office in Belatikri area of Binpur, West Midnapore on December 1.

The Midnapore West district police had to bow to the demands of the Police Santras Birodhi Public Committee (PSBPC) yet again on December 4 and release four of their activists arrested earlier for digging up the State Highway 9 at Kalaboni in Jhargram.

"We will remove the blockade ourselves only if the officials decide to go to Dalilpurchawk and solve the problem of Lalgarh. But we will continue with our stir if you neglect our demands," said Prankrishna Soren, a schoolteacher. *"Why are police and administration fearing common*

people? Are police officers and civil officials feeling guilty themselves? Why don't we have one standard road, electricity and pure drinking water even six decades after Independence," asked Shyam Chand Murmu, a protester.

The month-long Adivasi agitation under the banner of the Police Santras Birodhi Public Committee (PSBPC) at Lalgarh, Jhargram, Belpahari, Binpur and adjoining blocks of Midnapore West was called off on the evening of December 7 with the district administration conceding 10 of their 12 demands. Agreement was reached on ten issues including the release of three schoolboys, withdrawal of cases against others held on charges of involvement in the land-mine blast of Nov 2, withdrawal of police camps, meeting the expenses for the treatment of villagers injured during police raids, removal of the inspector-in-charge of Lalgarh PS, end to night raids by the police, setting up an enquiry committee to investigate the atrocities committed by the police as well as CP(M) cadres and compensation for the damage to the houses during police raids, and so on. The administration agreed to consider the criminal cases filed against the Adivasis and other indigenous people for their alleged Maoist links since 1998, particularly in cases where charge sheets have not been submitted. The committee, headed by the principal secretary of the backward class welfare department, will begin meeting on 15 December. After the committee report is submitted, the PSBPC demand for Rs 2 lakh compensation to each of the affected people will be considered by the government. Buddhadeb himself apologized for the police atrocities on adivasi women.

A day after the truce in Lalgarh came the Rs 8-crore government bounty for Adivasi development in the trouble-torn Jangalmahal. West Midnapore district magistrate Narayan Swaroop Nigam announced the package for Lalgarh, Belpahari, Jamboni and the adjoining areas of Jhargram. The package includes augmenting drinking water facility, setting up of hostels for tribal students and upgrading the existing ones and a land development programme to facilitate cultivation.

The People's Committee Against Police Atrocities that was leading the tribal agitation said West Midnapore police had been given a week to visit the area and apologise for alleged atrocities on tribals. Committee leader Chhatradhar Mahato, however, was categorical. *"The administration did not meet our main demand: the SP will have to visit our area and apologise for the police excesses on the tribals of Lalgarh after the Salboni blast (on November 2). We are giving the administration time till December 14 to meet that demand,"* he said.

The month long agitation by the Police Santras Birodhi Public Committee (PSBPC) against police atrocities on innocent Adivasi women of Lalgar in Midnapore West pushed the state government to take up Adivasi issues.

In the aftermath of Lalgarh agitation many plans were announced for the development of the Adivasis. After granting a special package of Rs 32.60 crore for Adivasi development, the state government has allotted Rs 103 crore as scholarship to be given to around four lakh Madhyamik- passed Adivasi students in the state, of which, Rs 17 crore would come from chief minister's relief fund while Rs 69 crore will be given by the state backward class welfare department. But, Mr Jogneswar Murmu, president of the Jhargram subdivision Adivasi cell, ridiculed government's concern for the Adivasis. He said whatever fund is being allotted afresh for their upliftment will be of no use. *"For, the funds will find their way to ruling party coffers as the implementing agencies remain unchanged or it will be returned at the end of the year after remaining unutilised,"* he said. For example, Rs 9 crore meant for construction of dwelling houses for the tribals in the state, is still lying unutilised and is ready for return too as the financial year is at its fag end. *"The bodies that could not spend Rs 9 crore in a year how could they utilise a hefty amount like Rs 32.60 crore ?,"* the Adivasi leader added.

According to Mr Chhatradhar Mahato, the PSBPC leader, sanctioning funds for giving scholarships to Adivasi students is another big "hoax" of the government to coax them. *"How can tribal students get good grades in examinations enabling them to grab scholarships?"* he asked.

Cases have been started against several Lalgarh policemen, including a former inspector-in-charge, who had been accused of harassing tribals and molesting women while raiding villages in search of Maoists.

District superintendent of police R.K. Singh confirmed the case against inspector Sandip Sinha Roy, who had been asked to go on leave after the tribals launched an agitation against the alleged atrocities, but refused to identify the other officers who went on the raids. *"Cases*

of assault, molestation and ransacking have been started against Sinha Roy on the basis of complaints lodged by tribal women," he said.

But the women victims refused to attend a hearing called by the Midnapore range deputy inspector-general at Kharagpur, over 50km from their village, Chhotopelia. The People's Committee Against Police Atrocities said the DIG should visit the village if he wanted to talk to them. The tribals have threatened to block roads and rail tracks if Singh does not apologise for the "atrocities" by January 2. And on January 8, it announced it wouldn't dig up roads, but stuck to its stand of shutting out police. Chhatradhar Mahato, the leader of the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities in the West Midnapore town, said the decision not to obstruct roads had been taken because "common people are suffering". However, he made it



clear the boycott of the police, renewed after a committee meeting on January 6, would continue.

"We found that despite our demand, the West Midnapore superintendent of police did not come to Dalilpur or any other place in Lalgarh and apologise. So we have decided to boycott the police," said Chatradhar.

"No policemen will be allowed to enter the villages and those who do, will be confined", he said.

People should emulate Lalgarh to counter state terror

Lalgarh uprising stands out as a shining example of how people can ensure their lives and liberty in face of ever-growing state terror and state-sponsored terror by waging a resolute, united, militant mass resistance movement. It stands out as an example of how people can achieve victories by basing on their own strength and programme and their own independent organisation instead of depending on the self-seeking anti-people parliamentary political parties and authoritarian organisations. Lalgarh stands out as a living example of the collective consciousness and collective participation of the masses. It demonstrates the strength and power of the democratic organisation of the masses; of how the mass of the ordinary people can become part of the decision-making process and how they can make history by active participation in the people's movements at the grass-roots level. Today, as the reactionary ruling classes of India, in collusion with the imperialists, conspire to strengthen and further fascise the state apparatus in order to unleash the most cruel state terror to suppress the struggling masses in the name of "fight against terror", Lalgarh shows a way to unite the masses into organised resistance along democratic lines. And if the fascist ruling classes do not heed such democratic yearnings of the masses Lalgarhs will have to become really red and assume the form of armed uprising to establish revolutionary people's power in the vast countryside as witnessed in parts of Dandakaranya and Bihar-Jharkhand.