

Ready for unconditional talks, say Maoists

Feb. 10, 2010

Raktima Bose

Kolkata: Faced with the possibility of random combing operations and arrests once the outline of the inter-State anti-Maoist operation is finalised, the Maoist-backed Police Santrash Birodhi Janasadharaner Committee (PSBJC) on Tuesday offered to hold unconditional talks with the Centre as well as the West Bengal government. [In English the PSBJC is called the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA). –BT.net]

The offer came on the day Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram held a meeting with the Chief Ministers of West Bengal and Orissa and representatives of the Bihar and Jharkhand governments to determine the future course of an integrated and simultaneous operation against the Maoists in the four affected States.

The PSBJC was averse to initiating dialogue with the administration even a month back, citing the failure of talks between the State government and convener Chhatradhar Mahato last year.

Speaking to *The Hindu* over telephone from an undisclosed location near Lalgarh in the State's Paschim Medinipur district on Tuesday, PSBJC's spokesperson Asit Mahato claimed that the outfit had always kept the door open for composite dialogue.

Last week, Mr. Mahato demanded the intervention of State's Governor M.K. Narayanan and requested him to talk directly to the tribal people.

Accusing the Centre and the State government of violating the Constitution by "waging war against common people," he criticised other political parties for not raising their voices against it.

Mr. Mahato cautioned the administration of "people's spontaneous reaction using traditional weapons" in case "an extension of the Operation Green Hunt is launched in the State."

Protest against meeting

PSBJC supporters held black-flag processions in several areas of the three Maoist-affected districts — Paschim Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia — on the day in protest against the meeting between the Union Home Minister and the Chief Ministers.

Meanwhile, hundreds of supporters of the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights — a rights organisation that supports the cause of the tribal movement — also took to the streets in protest against the meeting.

Magsaysay Award-winning author and noted social activist Mahasweta Devi gave leadership to the rally that included several city-based intellectuals too.

The sympathisers shouted slogans against the proposed operation to flush out the Maoists, jostled with the police and burnt the effigies of the Union Home Minister and the Chief Minister.

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/10/stories/2010021061610100.htm>