

Maoist leader challenges government to prove claims on Mahato

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The West Bengal government and the police were out to malign arrested tribal leader Chhatradhar Mahato in a bid to take away people's support for his movement in Lalgarh, top Maoist leader Kishenji claimed today. "The government, by maligning Chhatradhar, who was spearheading agitations against alleged police excesses in Lalgarh, is trying to destroy a people's movement," he said.

He contested the police's claim of Mahato owning huge property, bank accounts and an insurance policy of Rs one crore, saying, "if it is true let them seize the property and disclose the relevant documents to the press." Speaking from an undisclosed location, Kishenji said, "Let Home Secretaries Ashok Mohan Chakraborti and Ardhendu Sen and DG Vupinder Singh declare the property owned by Mahato."

Arrested former Maoist taken to Jharkhand

The Jharkhand-based Maoist squad commander, arrested by a team of West Bengal's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on Friday from Hooghly district, was taken to Jharkhand on Saturday on a four-day transit remand.

Chandrabhushan Yadav was arrested on the basis of information given by Mr. Mahato. Anuj Sharma, CID's Deputy Inspector-General, told reporters that Mr. Yadav held the rank of commander in the Jharkhand Maoist squad and looked after the organisation's functioning in four districts, including Latehar, Gumla and Lohardaga.

Mr. Sharma said 16 cases of murder, abduction and extortion were pending against Mr. Yadav with the Jharkhand police, who announced a reward of Rs.12 lakh on his arrest. A sum of Rs.67,000 in cash, six mobile phones and documents were found in Mr. Yadav's possession at the time of arrest, he added.

Mr. Yadav was produced before a court at Chunchura in Hooghly district, from where a Jharkhand police team took him to Jharkhand.

'Police ploy'

Polit bureau member of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), Kishanji, however claimed that Mr. Yadav is a former Maoist who left the organisation "long ago."

Speaking to *The Hindu* over telephone from his hideout in Lalgarh, Kishanji alleged that Mr. Yadav's arrest was a "ploy of the police to carry on with its misinformation campaign."

Meanwhile, top-ranking police officials interrogated Mr. Mahato in several rounds throughout the day. According to police sources, the interrogations are focussed on extracting information on about Mr. Mahato's links with city-based Maoist sympathisers and fundraisers. [The Hindu](#)