

2 intellectuals get 14 days in police custody

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Kolkata A court in Jhargram today remanded Prasun Chatterjee and Raja Sarkhel, two Kolkata-based intellectuals arrested by the state CID last night for their alleged links with Maoists in Lalgarh, in police custody for 14 days. The CID had picked them up from their homes in Jadavpur for their alleged links with the banned CPI (Maoist) and booked them under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

The CID had also pressed other criminal charges, including anti-national activities and criminal conspiracy, against the two intellectuals. Chatterjee and Sarkhel were active members of Gana Pratirodh Mancha, a social outfit based on the Left as well as Maoist ideology. They were also members of the Lalgarh Sanhati Mancha, which was formed in December 2008 to provide support to the mass movement at Lalgarh.

Both are also said to have organisational links with Gaur Chakraborty, spokesman of CPI (Maoist) who is currently lodged in jail custody since his arrest on June 23 from Kolkata under the UAPA.

Public prosecutor Suman Das Mahapatra told the court that both were arrested on the basis of information provided by the arrested PCAPA leader Chhatradhar Mahato and had links with the banned CPI (Maoist). He said the police had also recovered posters and hand-bills of the Maoist outfit from them during the arrest and they had helped the Maoists on several occasions. Prasanta Roy, counsel for Chatterjee and Sarkhel, argued there was no evidence of their involvement with the CPI (Maoist).

Rights activists up in arms over CID's midnight swoop

Following the arrest of two intellectuals by the CID late Monday night for their alleged links with tribal leader Chhatradhar Mahato, city intellectuals today came out in protest against what they termed as an illegal arrest.

At a press meet in the city, human rights activist Sujato Bhadra denounced the way that Prasun Chatterjee and Raja Sarkhel were arrested last night. "Their families were told they would be back soon. Then they were detained and charged under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). They have long been associated with the Gana Pratirodh Committee and are certainly not involved in terrorist activities," said Bhadra, adding that supporting the People's Committee against Police Atrocities (PCAPA) was not illegal since it was not a banned outfit.

"Participating in the tribal movement in Lalgarh and helping the PCAPA is certainly not illegal.

What is illegal is the way they have been arrested and detained,” he said. Bhadra said the method being used by the CID to interrogate Mahato is illegal since he was being deprived of proper rest and sleep.

“The state government is trying to create a fear psychosis so that people stop supporting the PCAPA and the movement. We do not feel Maoists and the PCAPA are the same. Only the government is trying to equate the two,” he said, while drawing parallels between the UAPA and TADA and POTA.

“Let them arrest Mahasweta Devi or Bibhash Chakrabarty. They have also drafted a letter of protest they have sent to the CM. As a next step on their agenda, they will also be holding a protest meet on October 8 from College Square to the Metro Channel,” Bhadra added.

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