

SDO Gheraoed

Jhargram Sub-Divisional Officer Gheraoed by Lalgarh Women

[Note: This article was posted on Nov. 10, 2009 on the Indian Vanguard website at: <http://indianvanguard.wordpress.com/2009/11/10/jhargram-sub-divisional-officer-gheraoed-by-lalgarh-women/> We believe that it originally came from *The Hindu*, circa Nov. 10, 2009. 'Gherao' means to *tightly encircle* in order to force those in power to submit to the will of the people.]

A group of around 100 women supporters of the Maoist-backed Police Santrash Birodhi Janasadharaner Committee (PSBJC) gheraoed the office of Jhargram Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) demanding the release of 17 men who were arrested few days ago following intelligence reports that they had Maoist links.

Jhargram SDO S. Ullaganathan, told *The Hindu* over the telephone that initially the group alleged that Mansingh Mandi, one of the 17 arrested men, had been killed in custody since he could not be found at the police station.

"But on checking with the police, it was learnt that he and 16 others were produced at a court in Midnapore on the day, where 12 have already been released on bail. The women lifted the gherao following this," Mr. Ullaganathan said.

A day after four jawans [soldiers] of the Eastern Frontier Rifles (EFR) were shot dead by a group of Maoists in the Lalgarh region of West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district, violence involving the extremists continued unabated on Monday.

Jagannath Mahato, a local Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader and the former pradhan of the Garmal gram panchayat, was shot at by suspected Maoists while he was on his way home in the Salboni area. His condition was reported to be "critical," District Superintendent of Police Manoj Kumar Verma said.

Gunbattles raged between militants and security forces at three other places, besides Salboni. Gidhni, where the four EFR jawans were killed, remained tensed. The shops remained closed and the roads deserted.

"Security personnel have been asked to remain alert and follow the guidelines of the standard operation procedure properly for their safety," Mr. Verma told *The Hindu* over the telephone.

Suspected Maoists opened fire on a group of security personnel at Dumurpota village while the latter was out on a combing operation. The security forces retaliated and the ensuing gunbattle lasted for about two hours, said Mr. Verma.

Similar exchange of fire was also reported from two other locations in the Kotwali and the Dharampur areas during the day, following which more than 20 persons were picked up by the police from adjacent villages for interrogation.

Meanwhile, Atindranath Dutta, officer-in-charge of the Sankrail thana in the district, who was abducted by the Maoists as a "prisoner-of-war" on October 20 and released following high-drama, resumed duty at the Midnapore headquarters on Monday.

Mr. Dutta had been on leave since his release and failed to join duty even after two notices by the district police directing him to do so.

Confirming this, Mr. Verma said Mr. Dutta will stay in the police lines in Midnapore for a while before any job is "identified" for him.