

Cop boycott call in Salboni

December 14, 2009

Salboni: Traders of a Salboni bazaar have decided to start a “social boycott” of the joint forces after some of the personnel allegedly ransacked shops following a blast in which a jawan [soldier] was injured. The boycott means shops in Pirakata, about 20km from Lalgarh, will not sell provisions to the personnel.

Such a move had forced police to the brink of starvation and pull out a camp from Kalaimuri in April, when the Lalgarh agitation was at its peak. Aided by Maoists, the villagers demolished the camp after the police left. They also blocked the supply of essentials to the camp in Ramgarh in May.

Food may not be a problem now because the roads, dug up during the Maoist-backed agitation, have been repaired. But, at a time the police are desperate to win back villagers’ confidence, the alleged ransacking of shops spells a public relations disaster.

West Midnapore police chief Manoj Verma denied any ransacking. But stationery shop owner Debashis Ghosh had a different story to tell. “The police were brought here to maintain law and order but they are doing just the opposite. We won’t sell any item to them,” he said.

The security forces were engaged in a gun battle with Maoists in Pirakata this evening. It continued intermittently from 5pm to 9pm. Around 8.30pm, supporters of the People’s Committee Against Police Atrocities ransacked the local CPM office.

Tea stall owner Pintu Manna said the jawans accused the villagers of being in cahoots with the rebels while ransacking the shops yesterday. Ghosh alleged that 20 shops were targeted because they had refused to shut down after the jawan was injured. Verma said the police had asked them to down shutters fearing an encounter with the Maoists. “That led to a verbal spat. But it’s not true that shops were ransacked.”

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1091215/jsp/bengal/story_11865007.jsp