

Maoists trying to cash in on potato farming crisis

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KOLKATA: With security forces zeroing in on the Maoist core area in [Jangalmahal](#) comprising parts of West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia, the ultras are busy spreading their network in neighbouring Hoogly and other parts of West Midnapore.

The target is to organise wage labourers and marginal farmers working in potato fields, whose lot did not improve despite spiralling potato prices. At a time when everyone is blaming the market or the futures trading, Maoists are reaching out to the deprived with an immediate solution the people's court. Maoist activists are promising that they will drag the middlemen to the people's court, impose huge fines on the offenders and help the marginal farmers.

Small farmers could not get the best of a good harvest last year. They sold their produce at a much lower price to the middlemen as the crop was badly hit by wart disease.

"We have contacted the farmers in the potato producing areas of South Bengal and told them that CPI (Maoist) will extend their support to them," said Maoist leader Kishanji, who has been controlling the Maoist insurgency in Lalgarh.

The Maoist leader has also announced drawn up a charter of demands for rehabilitation of the poor farmers. "The government has to waive all agricultural loans that farmers took last year. At the same time the state has to arrange for interest-free loans," said Kishanji, who also supports other demands of the farmers subsidized rate of fertiliser and potato seeds.

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