



## Intellectuals boycott film fest as a mark of political protest

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SILIGURI, Nov. 20: The anti-CPI(M) intellectuals of Siliguri, who boycotted the Siliguri Film Festival last year protesting against the Nandigram massacre, have chosen to stay away from the state-sponsored film festival this year too.

Unlike last year, this brand of intellectuals has not given any 'official' boycott call of the Siliguri Film Festival this time, but call the absence as a 'spontaneous continuation' of the protest against the CPI(M) led state government's 'ghastly acts'. "Somehow, I don't feel like attending the film festival anymore. Especially after the state machinery's vindictive gesture by way of denying the screening of Ladly Mukherjee's Singur documentaries at the Kolkata film festival earlier this month," said Siliguri College teacher and the CPI(ML) central committee member Mr Abhijit Mazumdar.

Others like Mr Abhiranjan Bhaduri, Mr Bibek Sarkar of the Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR) or Mr Debasish Chakroborty of the Siliguri Welfare Organisation voiced the same reasons for not attending the ongoing Siliguri Film Fest.

"Things have not changed much. In fact, take a look at the recent happenings in different parts of West Bengal, you will find that the state machinery's oppression has only increased," alleged Mr Chakroborty. Theatre activists Mr Partha Choudhury referred to the recent happenings at Lalgurha to support his view that the CPI(M) led government in West Bengal has turned 'completely autocratic and cannot feel the people's pulse anymore.'

"Cinema or culture is not isolated from the society we live in. Hence, I find it quite sensible to stay away from any event sponsored by an autocratic government," he said. Mr Choudhury happens to be the secretary of the 'Siliguri Sanskriti Karmi O Buddhijivi Mancha' that came into being after the Nandigram massacre.

Like last year, the activists' body, is gearing up to organise a cultural festival in January as an alternative to the state-backed event.

Reacting to the skipping of the film fest by these intellectuals-activists, secretary of the Siliguri Cine Society Mr Pradip Nag said he could not help. "It's unfortunate that they are boycotting the film festival since last year as a mark of political protest. But I don't think it's proper to mix political differences with cinema," Mr Nag said.

The Siliguri Cine Society and the state Information and Cultural Affairs department is the joint organiser of the Siliguri Film Fest, which is in its ninth year now. The seven day long movie gala would come to an end on 25 November.

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