

Kishenji was living in Kolkata in 2006, Bengal Govt did not arrest him



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Kolkata REPORT BY W MIDNAPORE POLICE: *Govt didn't clear action against Maoists, sympathisers*

The West Bengal government could have nabbed Maoist leader Kishenji three years ago, if it had chosen to act on information collected by its police.

In 2006, the then Superintendent of Police, West Midnapore district, Ajay Nanda, submitted an information folder to the government, containing details of Kishenji's whereabouts, his hideouts, and his attempts to win the support of intellectuals in and around Kolkata.

Kishenji was then living in an apartment in Baguiati, close to the Kolkata airport. However, the police and government of Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee — who have now launched a massive, unsuccessful manhunt for Kishenji — simply sat over the report.

On December 27, 2009, Bhattacharjee said it was “very difficult” to pinpoint Kishenji's “exact location”, even though he has been talking to innumerable journalists on an almost daily basis. On December 23, Kishenji rang Principal Secretary (Environment) Madan Lal Meena and had a lengthy conversation, for which the government reprimanded the officer. State DGP Bhupinder Singh has said phone taps show Kishenji is in Bengal, but “there are a number of reasons” why he cannot be caught.

The West Midnapore police report, which The Indian Express has accessed, said over 100 Maoist commanders, of which seven or eight were central committee members — had been operating out of Kolkata since 2005. Kishenji had been staying in the Baguiati apartment for about three years, building up the base of the underground armed tribal movement. The Maoists had been in touch with ‘intellectuals’ based in the city, collecting funds for their tribal resistance movement in the districts of West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia.

The 150-odd page report was prepared after Sushil Roy, the seniormost leader of the CPI(Maoist) and founder member of the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI), was arrested in West Midnapore. The folder included pictures of Maoist leaders operating in Kolkata, and of ‘intellectuals’ holding arms in jungles along with the Maoists. It had detailed information on the Maoist operational strategy in Bengal. According to the report, seven members of the CPI(Maoist) central and state committees were then living in Kolkata.

However, the police failed to act against them, allegedly because they were denied the mandate by the government, which was uncomfortable with the idea of voters getting to know that Maoist leaders had a free run of the city.

“All information about Maoist operational strategies and their leaders, including Kishenji, who were then operating in the city, was shared with us. We repeatedly sought permission to arrest them, but didn’t get the orders,” said a top Kolkata Police officer who declined to be named.

“The state government wanted to hide the fact (of Maoist operations) as Assembly elections were due in 2006. We were told that arrests cannot be made in the city, as it would impact adversely on the Left Front’s poll prospects,” the officer added.

Another senior officer said the police were instructed “not to touch ‘intellectuals’ as arresting them might have earned the government the wrath of the public”. Besides, some of these Maoist sympathisers were close to CPM leaders, the officer said.

“We got several pictures of a doctor from B R Singh Railway Hospital, carrying arms, alongside Maoists in West Midnapore. We submitted all the photos and other documents about the doctor to state authorities and asked for an arrest order. But the order was not issued because the doctor is close to a CPM heavyweight. This doctor continues to serve in the hospital,” said the officer.

He added that police had information and photographs to establish the Maoist connections of a CITU leader who used to then lead a trade union of transport operators in Beliaghata in North Kolkata, and is now often interviewed as a Maoist commander.

“An arrest warrant was not issued against him as he was a CITU leader,” the officer said.

Ajay Nanda, who is now additional director, National Police Academy, Hyderabad, told The Indian Express over the phone, “We created a data bank in 2006. The data bank included very crucial information about Kishenji and his hideouts in the city. The information folder is at present with the Midnapore Police. They must be working on the information.”

DGP Bhupinder Singh said, “We have the information folder with us. We are still continuing to work on the inputs. However, I cannot comment on why state authorities did not respond to the inputs at that point of time.”

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