

Maoist arrests made, but [West Bengal] yet to notify UAPA

[Note: The original article erroneously had *Jharkhand* in the title instead of *West Bengal*!]

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JHARGRAM/KOLKATA: In its hurry to crack down on Maoists, the state government had booked PCPA leader Chhatradhar Mahato under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). But it was left red-faced in court when Mahato's lawyer pointed out that the government was yet to notify UAPA in the state. Besides, the government had not yet banned CPI(Maoist), he argued.

A Jhargram court on Wednesday, therefore, declined to grant another 18-day police remand for Mahato under UAPA. Instead, it remanded him in police custody for just three more days. Three other co-accused—Ranjit Murmu, Sambhu Soren and Sugen Murmu—were remanded in judicial custody till October 21. Mahato, who was arrested on September 26 from Birkanr in Lalgarh, has already spent 12 days in police custody.

Soon after the setback in court, state director-general of police Bhupinder Singh called on advocate-general Balai Ray to end the confusion over the UAPA.

In Kolkata, the police did not book those arrested—Swapan Dasgupta and Sadananda Sinha, editor and publisher of the People's March magazine—under the UAPA. Instead, sedition charges were brought against them under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The Sealdah Court has remanded them in police custody for 13 days.

Mahato was taken from Kolkata to Jhargram under tight security on Tuesday evening. On Wednesday, PCPA supporters set a trekker and a tractor on fire after dragging out their passengers at Pirrakhuli near Salboni to demanding his release.

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