

Headlines

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2 top KLO rebels held, cops seize 4 AK rifles

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [MONDAY, FEBRUARY 09, 2004 01:10:26 AM

JALPAIGURI: In a string of coordinated operations against militants on Sunday, the Jalpaiguri police arrested two Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) 'organisers', Abhijit Burman alias Siba Roy and Lalit Barua alias Nripen Singh Barua, from Changmari in Kumargramduar. On a tip-off, police raided a hideout in Joydevpur Tapu, near Changmari, and seized four AK-56 rifles and 170 rounds of 7.62 mm ammunition. While Siba was arrested in the morning, Lalit fell into the police net in the evening.

Jalpaiguri SP S.N. Gupta said that Siba was a top ranking KLO ultra and had close relations with KLO top guns like Jiban Singh, the KLO chairman, Milton Burma, the second-in-command of the militant outfit, and Tom Adhikary. Gupta said that Siba was in the militant team that helped Arvind Rajkhowa, the Ulfa chairman, escape to Bangladesh from the Bhutan training camps. In June last year, Siba had escorted the Ulfa chairman from Piping camp to Bukka in Bhutan along with five other militants, including two Ulfa ultras, Raja and Suman.

During interrogation Siba has revealed that after their team guided Rajkhowa to Bukka, another team comprising Ulfa and KLO militants, escorted the Ulfa chairman to the outfit's training camp in Bangladesh .

Siba was in the Piping camp in the Bhutan hills. After the Royal Bhutan Army launched its offensive against the anti-India insurgent outfits in Bhutan , Siba led five other KLO militants in a daring escape from the Piping camp. The SP said that the five other rebels — Sanjay Roy, Kalia, Lalit Barua, Binoy Chowdhury and Akshay Das — were scattered in Alipurduar subdivision. All of them are "frontline" KLO militants, the SP said, adding that police teams are trying to round them up.

Army chief warns of Pak's nuclear proliferation

NIRMALYA BANERJEE

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 04, 2004 03:50:23 PM]

KOLKATA: The proliferation of nuclear technology from Pakistan to Iran , North Korea and Libya is "not a happy situation", Army Chief General N C Vij said in Kolkata on Wednesday. "These are dangerous weapon systems which should have been handled more carefully," he observed. Talking to

newspersons on the occasion of the commissioning of a naval ship, he did not want to comment much on Pakistan as a peace process with the country was on. "We are optimistic," he said.

However, he emphasised that the army could not afford to relax its guard and would have to watch till next summer to be sure if infiltration to J&K from across the border had really come to a stop. The infiltrators still had their camps in occupied Kashmir .

For the past two months, it is understood that infiltration had not taken place, but this could be because it was winter and the mountain passes were snow-bound. The drop in infiltration could also be because of the fencing erected on the border and the installation of sensors. It could also be because of the peace process.

The situation in the north-east had taken a positive turn because of the on-going talks with the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac - Muivah) and the operations launched by the Royal Bhutan Army on militant camps of militant groups from the north-east in Bhutan , he said. The Khaplang faction of the NSCN was also likely to join the peace talks soon.

"The backs of all the three militant groups in the north-east, the Ulfa, the NDFB and the KLO, have been broken," he said. He was confident that the Ulfa, too, would come to the negotiation table, though he could not say how soon.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/456061.cms>

Ministers on KLO hit-list, warns Dakua

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2004 01:11:29 AM]

KOLKATA : Some of the important cabinet ministers of the ruling Left Front in West Bengal are in the KLO hitlist, tourism minister Dinesh Chandra Dakua claimed on Thursday.

While talking to media persons, Dakua said he had been informed that he too was the KOL hit-list." I know the fact but what should I do ? Shall I confine myself within four walls ? can't do that and I am not even worried about my security," the minister said.

Expressing concern over the latest KLO activities in some areas in north Bengal, the minister said that not only the ministers and high profile persons but also some local and district level CPM leaders are also being targeted by the KLO activists.

"I have not received any threat letter from the KLO, yet I have information that am on the hit list. I am not scared and believe that the responsibility of my security lies on the police," he added.

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Dakua however asserted that KLO was not a threat to the tourists bound to north Bengal. "The over all situation in the country as a whole is grim. Yet tourists are not getting scared to tour different parts of our country," he said.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/429954.cms>

Minister's relative arrested for links with KLO

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2004 01:36:51 AM]

JALPAIGURI/KOLKATA: Forest minister Jogesh Barman's brother-in-law Shyamal Roy, who was arrested on Friday, is a member of Azad Hind Bahini, a newly-formed organisation allegedly aided by the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation, said Jalpaiguri SP S N Gupta on Saturday. Roy was arrested following the interrogation of KLO leader Tom Adhikary. Adhikary reportedly told police that rocket propelled grenades belonging to the KLO were kept in Roy's house. They were removed from his a week before the Royal Bhutan Army launched the flush-out operation on December 15, the KLO leader added. Tom was held in Bhutan by the RBA during the operation. He was involved in an abortive attempt to kidnap a businessman from Falakata.

Speaking from Jalpaiguri over the phone, the minister said he had nothing to do with his brother-in-law. "The law will take its own course. I didn't have any contact with my brother-in-law for a long time," Barman said. According to him, the Azad Hind Bahini is a small organisation and is backed by a Kolkata-based 'brahmachari'.

"This organisation is responsible for past attacks on CPM workers," said he. Jalpaiguri Police arrested eight youths on Saturday after interrogating KLO activists in Bhutan on charges of being KLO sympathisers. Following interrogations of KLO activists in Bhutan, eight more youths were arrested by the Jalpaiguri police on Saturday on charge of being KLO sympathisers, the police said.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/429735.cms>

Forest minister's kin held as a militant sympathizer

NIRMALYA BANERJEE

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 2004 10:00:32 PM]

JALPAIGURI: West Bengal forest minister Jogesh Barman's brother-in-law Shyamal Roy was a member of Azad Hind Bahini, a newly formed obscure organization allegedly aided by the Kamtapur Liberation Organization, Jalpaiguri police superintendent S N Gupta said on Saturday. Roy was arrested on Friday after interrogation of arrested KLO leader Tom Adhikary's interrogation revealed that rocket propelled grenades belonging to the KLO had been hidden in Roy's house and they had been removed from there a week before the Royal Bhutan Army launched an operation against militants in Bhutan on December 15. Tom was held in Bhutan by the RBA in course of the operation. He had also been involved in an abortive attempt to kidnap a businessman based in Falakata.

Speaking from Jalpaiguri over the phone, the minister said he had nothing to do with his brother-in-law. "The law will take its own course. I did not have contact with my brother-in-law for a long time," Barman said. According to him, the Azad Hind Bahini was a small organization with a confused aim, backed by a Kolkata-based 'brahmachari'. "This organization had been responsible in the past for attacks against CPM workers." Following interrogations of KLO activists in Bhutan, eight more youths were arrested by the Jalpaiguri police on Saturday on charge of being KLO sympathisers, the police said. Among them was Anil Barman, regional co-ordinator of Azad Hind Bahini.

Meanwhile, nine Bangladeshi nationals arrested in the district had allegedly crossed the border illegally with a plan to carry out attacks on vital installations in north Bengal like the Tista bridge during the republic day, police source added.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/428039.cms>

Emulate Bhutan, says Advani

PTI [FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2004 10:34:27 PM]

NEW DELHI : India on Friday said it would continue asking its neighbours to emulate Bhutan to neutralise Indian insurgent groups operating from their territories. "The Saarc summit held in Islamabad will hopefully provide the necessary impetus to these countries to act accordingly," Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani told a meeting of chief secretaries and directors-general of police here. Advani said the action taken by Bhutan against the banned Ulfa, NDFB and KLO had been a "major breakthrough."

"This became possible as result of constant efforts made by the government at the diplomatic level with the king of Bhutan," he said, hoping the development would make such gro-ups in the Northeast realise

the futility of violence. India has been voicing concern over reports that insurgents and terrorists were operating from Bangladesh , Myanmar and Nepal . The three countries have also given assurance to India that they would not allow their soil to be misused by anti-India elements.

Referring to the additional protocol to the 1987 Saarc convention on suppression of terrorism signed at the Islamabad summit, Advani said with this "important landmark" coupled with cessation of hostilities between India and Pakistan, all member countries must fulfil the obligation under the UN Security Council Resolution 1373 and usher in an era of enduring peace, stability and prosperity in the south Asian region. Observing that the government had given priority to the resolution of insurgency problems being faced by the north-eastern states, he said while the Centre would strongly deal with terrorists, it was open to talks with groups abjuring violence to redress their legitimate grievances.

"The violence profile in these states has improved in recent years. There is an increasing desire to strengthen the forces of peace and join the mainstream for speedy development and growth," he said.

Peace talks with NSCN (Isak-Muivah), NSCN (Khaplang) and Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) have produced "significant results", he said, adding the dialogue with the NSCN was still going on. Bodoland Territorial Council became functional about a month ago after the BLT was formally disbanded with its cadres surrendering before the government, Advani said.

Ministers of state for home I D Swami, Harin Pathak and Swami Chinmayanad, home secretary N Gopaldaswami, Intelligence Bureau chief K P Singh and top police officials and security agencies are attending the two-day meeting.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/425935.cms>

8 held in Cooch Behar killings

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2004 02:45:52 AM]

KOLKATA: The state police on Thursday arrested eight people in connection with the killing of four persons by suspected KLO militants at Hajrahat in Cooch Behar , hours before chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's north Bengal tour. When contacted in Jalpaiguri, IGP (north Bengal) , Bhupinder Singh said all the arrested are being interrogated. Jalpaiguri district police sources said a group of six militants, who survived the army attack and reached Jalpaiguri, may have had a hand in the killing. Mrinal Roy, son of a former minister, was the mastermind behind the killings, police said. The team met at Dinhatra on Wednesday and chalked out the final plan, according to police. Late on Wednesday evening, a gang of assailants on motorcycles reached a video parlour at Beltapara in Hazrahat, Mathabhanga subdivision, and started firing indiscriminately, killing three persons on the spot. Another died on the way to the

6 CKRSD PDF publication for public view and free distribution

hospital. Senior officers, including IG (law and order) Chayan Mukherjee, said in Kolkata that the attacks were the handiwork of KLO militants. Three live AK-47 cartridges were seized from the spot, Mukherjee said.

The BSF was alerted to stop the killers from crossing over to Bangladesh through the nearby border. "A significant number of KLO militants had escaped into the jungles during last month's flush-out operations near the Indo-Bhutan border. We think some of them may have been hiding near Mathabhanga and could be behind the attacks," Mukherjee said.

<http://www1.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/424597.cms>

'Operation Flushout' to continue

NIRMALYA BANERJEE

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2004 04:51:27 PM]

KOLKATA: Taking cue from the Bhutan government, the Myanmar and Bangladesh governments should also crack down on militant groups from the northeast who have taken shelter in these countries, Eastern Command GOC-in-C J S Varma said in Kolkata on Thursday. "The situation in Myanmar is slightly different due to the difficult terrain in the country," Lieutenant General Varma said. " Bangladesh has already promised to take action against such groups at the SAARC meet. Everybody in the region should realise that such activity leads to wastage and hampers development. The flushing out operations against Indian militant groups that began in Bhutan on December 15 will continue for some time yet," he said. He felt that the Royal Bhutan Army would continue its crackdown on militant groups like the Ulfa, NDFB and KLO. "The militants have left their camps and have sought shelter in the forests around. Their firepower is considerably weakened and the moment is just right to finish them off. This is not a war and there is no ceasefire. The RBA will continue their operations to ensure that new camps don't come up in their country," said Varma. He said that 650-700 Ulfa, NDFB and KLO militants have either been arrested or 'neutralised' since December 15.

Many have also surrendered. He felt that the talk of there being over 3,000 militants in Bhutan was debatable. "It is the winter and many people come down from the hills at this time. We don't think that there are so many militants holed up in Bhutan . We will, however, continue to maintain our vigil on our side of the border," the army commander said.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/403766.cms>

Mopping up operations on in Bhutan, camps burnt

PTI [SUNDAY, JANUARY 04, 2004 12:40:39 PM]

GUWAHATI: The Royal Bhutan Army has begun burning down the dislodged camps of the extremist outfits Ulfa, NDFB and KLO alongside its mopping up operations that followed its action to flush out northeast militants from its soil.

According to an official source at Thimphu , the RBA had burnt down several camps and cleared the adjoining areas of the Manas National park . Crown Prince Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck has undertaken a tour of the areas covered under the operation, the source said.

The Ulfa camp at Goborkonda, as stated by Army chief of staff Gen N C Vij at a press conference here recently, has been destroyed and was burnt down, the sources said.

While the RBA claims to have destroyed all the 30 camps on its soil, the army authorities here said the Lechung camps were yet to be busted.

Meanwhile, the NDFB has ruled out any possibility of holding talks with the Centre and accused the government of waging a proxy war against the outfit in Bhutan .

In a statement faxed to a prominent local English daily here last night, the NDFB's Chairman Nabla Daimari echoed the views of Paresh Baruah, the Ulfa commander-in-chief when he said that despite the setbacks in the Himalayan kingdom, the outfit would emerge as a strong force again and continue its "liberation struggle".

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1040126/asp/bengal/story_2827590.asp

Kamtapur leader spots CPM behind police

OUR BUREAU

Jan. 25: Amid speculation about his arrest for alleged links with the KLO, Kamtapur People's Party founder Atul Roy today accused the CPM of launching a witch-hunt and said he was prepared to offer his cellphone as evidence in court.

Roy, a former president of the party and now its spokesman, has been under the scanner since early January when the police seized a mobile phone from KLO militant Anirban Rava, who was killed in an encounter off Mainaguri while trying to sneak into Bhutan.

Chief of the Jalpaiguri force Siddh Nath Gupta had then claimed he had “clear proof” that Rava spoke to Roy on his cellphone several times.

“We are thoroughly verifying all records stored inside the SIM card of Rava’s cellphone,” said a senior police officer.

Brushing aside the allegations, Roy today said the police would first have to prove that he spoke to Rava on his cellphone. “As a bona fide BSNL customer, I am prepared to offer my mobile phone for the scrutiny of the court. But the police cannot blame me for nothing on the issue,” he told The Telegraph.

Roy, who was deposed as KPP president last year after a battle of succession with Nikhil Roy, accused the police in north Bengal of harassing the party leaders at the behest of the CPM.

“We have maintained that the KPP is distinct from the KLO. It is sad that taking advantage of the offensive in Bhutan, a section of the police in north Bengal is harassing innocent Rajbanshis. The police are trying to bulldoze our democratic and ethnic movement by selectively targeting the KPP top brass.”

The party believes the police overdrive was the result of a CPM strategy to crush the Kamtapuri movement by equating the KPP with the KLO.

“The entire move is a conspiracy hatched by the state machinery and the CPM to create unrest among the Rajbanshi youths. Several times over the past few years, they (the police) have accused me and other KPP leaders of having links with the KLO. They want to arrest senior KPP leaders and then find an excuse to crack down on the party. Let them prove the allegations,” Roy said.

Besides Roy, the Jalpaiguri police are investigating the role of KPP general secretary Subhash Burman, who, they claim, had “recruited” four youths and sent them to the KLO’s training camps in Bhutan. The police raided Burman’s residence in Pakua in Malda three days ago.

<http://www.thestatesman.net/page.arcview.php?clid=10&id=63375&usrsess=1>

New life for ex-KLO militants

Sudipta Chanda in Siliguri

Feb. 5. — Ostracised by society and forsaken by their families, a group of surrendered KLO militants are rediscovering life through a self-help group organised by the Forum of Scientists, Engineers and Technologists.

They are also earning, and this time not by the muzzle of the guns, but by the sweat of their brows.

Madhusudan Das, Nil Kumar Das, known as Tarzan and Rustom respectively during their KLO days, and some other militants who chose to end their fugitive ways and surrender to the authorities way before the crackdown by the Royal Bhutan Army, are now regular suppliers of building material including bamboo, which are being used to construct shelter for the economically weaker sections at Sukantapally in Siliguri.

According to Mr Joy Chakrabarty of FOSET, the surrendered militants were initially permitted to lift riverbed material and sell it to various construction sites.

“It was decided that the reformed persons would be assigned to supply bamboo to the Sukantapally construction site, where the Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority is constructing low-price shelters for economically weaker persons,” he said.

The dwelling project is being supervised by FOSET and the forum is using bamboo-reinforced concrete instead of steel-reinforced ones, to construct the low-cost dwellings.

“As a result, a huge quantity of bamboo will be required, and it would be supplied by the self-help group formed with the surrendered militants,” he added.

The FOSET wants to extend the activity of the self-help group. “The forum wants to integrate them in other activities such as the hotel business, milk supply and animal husbandry as well,” the FOSET official said.

According to him, the surrendered persons are aged between 16 and 32 years.

“All of them come from families which depend on subsistence agriculture. The families do not own large land holdings and the pressure on land is severe, depriving them of an income source. They need an avenue for income and the FOSET is trying to organise just that,” said Mr Chakrabarty.

According to the FOSET official, Alipurduar deputy magistrate Mr Pravash Biswas, Alipurduar SDPO Mr Sumanjit Biswas, Kumargram circle inspector Mr Basudeb Sarkar and FOSET official Mr Sujit Das have played vital roles to redefine the lives of the surrendered militants.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/589053594.cms>

CM issues strict warning to KPP-KLO duo

DEBASIS SARKAR

[MONDAY, JULY 16, 2001 02:06:20 AM]

SILIGURI: Talking tough, West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on Sunday asked the Kamtapur Peoples Party (KPP) to leave the path of militancy and said the state government was prepared to "talk on developmental issues only".

In presence of state director general of police Dinesh Vajpayee in Siliguri, the chief minister instructed the people to go all out against the militant outfit Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO) and their allies.

"We are always ready to talk to KPP leaders on the developmental issues of north Bengal. But they will have to leave the KLO first," he said after inaugurating a housing complex for the state armed police force in Siliguri.

"KLO is extorting money in north Bengal for KPP as ULFA is doing in Assam" said the CM. "This must be stopped immediately." He added: "Till now, militants from Bhutan camps are getting shelter with the KPP."

The CM's invitation to KPP for talks comes in the wake of party president Atul Roy's reluctance to meet the CM. "So long our arrested comrades are not freed, we are not going to talk to anybody" said Roy. He added, "Our peaceful demonstrations have failed so far to get them out of jail. Now the only open way is the way of arms."

However, according to the intelligence sources, a vertical split is developing within the party on the question of KPP's approach to the KLO. "When a section of the party led by Roy wants KLO to go all out and start immediately an armed movement under the banner of KPP, the other under party central committee members Nikhil Roy and Mitali Roy favor a softer approach" informed the source. IGP North Bengal N. R. Das said the activities of KPP and KLO duo in North Bengal were "our prime concern at present."

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/376919101.cms>

KPP leaders differs on armed movement

DEBASIS SARKAR

[MONDAY, JULY 09, 2001 01:01:09 AM]

SILIGURI: West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's move to have a talk with the Kamtapur People's Party did not evoke much enthusiasm amongst top KPP leaders.

On the contrary, while accepting the existence of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation, the KPP president has warned for an armed movement to start. But, the party appears to be divided on this.

KPP president Atul Roy asked: "Why is he is so keen to see us now after putting all our workers in jails without legitimate reasons before election? Despite that, we got two lakh votes in five to six constituencies in the last election, which is our strength. Actually that has become the nightmare for Mr Bhattacharjee."

Roy has warned for immediate armed movement against the state government, "We will take up bow and arrows if all our demands are not fulfilled immediately. Days of talks are already gone."

For the first time, Roy agreed about the existence of the KLO, as "an organisation of muscles with demands like us. Maybe, we don't have any direct link with them, but their sympathy and well wishes are with us which indeed is our confidence builder."

According to an intelligence sources, the stage is all set for the armed movement with the collection of huge amount of money and arms from different places.

O.P. Agarwal, a trader abducted by KLO one year back and released last weak had to pay a ransom of Rs 3 crore" the source explained.

Besides their demand for a separate Kamtapur state, the immediate release of all KPP leaders and workers who are behind the bars since the beginning of 'Operation Kamtapur' on November 26 is their prime demand.

"Bhattacharjee himself announced their release six months back which is yet to take place," Roy said.

Roy confirmed the active support of the leaders of Telengana besides JMM leader Shibu Soren with them in forming the council for the smaller states. They all will meet in Dhuguri between July 15 and 22 to finalise their strategy and are likely to place a dharna in front of President's office soon.

Though Roy denied, differences between the top KPP leadership is clear on the question of their going with KLO and other activities. Roy agreed, "I did not know that KPP women's forum chief and few other central committee leaders are going to CM, they were at Kolkata mainly to file a petition in the High Court. So the party does not hold responsibility of the outcome of their activities at Kolkata with the CM's office. Few KPP leaders are drifting from our main objective while maintaining the relationship with our 'friends'."

Needless to say, the indication is towards KPP general secretary Nikhil Roy, Mitali Roy, Sunil Roy and others fond of muscle power.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/915606749.cms>

Kamtapur militant arrested

AMLAN CHAKRABORTY

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 2001 10:54:40 PM]

COOCHBEHAR: The police arrested a Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) militant from Mahischaru near Indo-Bangla border in Mathabhanga sub-division on Saturday.

Named Santosh Barman, the militant has confessed in interrogation that he had taken military training from 1996 to 1999 in Bhutan. KLO and ULFA militants conducted the training and Sontosh, known as Jabbar Ali during then, was a member of the 96-strong batch which included 32 KLO militants, the rest being ULFA members.

The police produced him in court on sunday, SDPO , Mathabhanga Utpal Kr. Naskar informed.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/282374335.cms>

Porous borders a major concern: Buddhadeb

THE TIMES OF INDIA NEWS SERVICE [SATURDAY, JULY 21, 2001 12:11:47 AM]

KOLKATA: North Bengal and the Indo-Bangladesh border are two major areas of concern for the West Bengal government, said chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee in the assembly on Thursday while discussing the police budget.

“We are strengthening our intelligence network in north Bengal for this,” he added, as the Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation (KLO) was being trained in arms at the behest of United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). “If they combine with the Maoists of Nepal, it could become a deadly situation for us,” he surmised.

The borders with Nepal and Bangladesh are porous, being used by the ISI of Pakistan too, he said. “Their men have been trying to destabilise the peaceful environment by supporting the separatist and anti-national forces, by circulating fake currency notes and resorting to subversive activities,” Bhattacharjee said.

Other problem areas include the activities of the Naxalites, the People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Centre in Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia, not to mention the rise in crime in trains and national highways, he said.

The Bengal assembly on Thursday adopted the Rs 1,009-crore budget amidst loud protests by the Opposition over law and order situation in the state. “Today's society is based on money and

consumerism. Thus crime is bound to be present. But we can control it," Bhattacharjee had countered, adding the state was in a relatively better position than others.

According to records mentioned in the budget, while Kolkata recorded 49 murders last year, the figures for Mumbai and Delhi were 311 and 554 respectively. The number of incidents of dacoity in Kolkata was lower than in other metros, but in the entire state, it was higher. There were 27 dacoities in Kolkata in 2000 as against 55 in Delhi and 78 in Mumbai, whereas 326 took place in the entire state last year in comparison to 254 in Andhra Pradesh and 189 in Madhya Pradesh.

"We are not saying that everything is fine here. We are just relatively better off," Bhattacharjee affirmed.

Moving the motion in the House, leader of the Opposition Pankaj Banerjee (TC) said that 11,000 Trinamul Congress supporters were still homeless as a fallout of "CPM terror". "The police budget has increased by Rs 500 crore over the last five years, but crimes keep going up," Banerjee said.

His party colleague Saugata Roy said that the 'chicken's neck' - the Siliguri corridor - should be the future focus of the government. "North Bengal is increasingly becoming a hotbed for terrorist activities. The government should develop a separate headquarter for the region," he suggested.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/2048281685.cms>

Narrow escape of Lohit Express from bombs

TIMES INTERNET NETWORK [THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2000 04:29:31 PM]

SILIGURI: A powerful explosive was found on the broad gauge railway track at Salbari station on the Assam - West Bengal border of the North Eastern Frontier Railway I at 8 p.m. on Monday, just before the arrival of Mumbai bound Dadar Express on the spot.

NF Rly Alipur Divn. commercial manager B. Dharmani said the Lohit express and Brahmaputra Express from Guwahati and Up Kanchenjunga Express from Sealdah all were to arrive one after one on the spot when a railway patrol party detected the bomb just on the time.

Immediately the GRP anti bomb squad officials rushed to the spot and inactivated the explosive. The GRP sources informed that the investigation is on and the explosive, though was not attached to any timed device, was a powerful one and capable of causing mass destruction.

Though not ruled out totally, officials did not confirm any involvement of any militant group in the incident. Sr. Area Manager of NJP R. N. Roy informed that immediately after the incident all the trains on

the route were controlled in different stations. After around five hours, the train movements became normal.

Meanwhile CPM local committee member and school teacher from Kumargram Jitendra Ch. Sarkar, who was shot and injured by suspected Kamtapur Liberation Organization militants on Monday evening was shifted to Alipurduar hospital with an injury in the abdomen, Jalpaiguri S. P. Mr. R. Kumar told TOINS.

The attack on the CPM leader took place on the eve of former chief minister Jyoti Basu's public meeting at Coochbehar on Tuesday. Sarkar was one of the leading organizers of the locality. "We have definite information that KLO and KPP would try to disturb Jyoti Basu's meeting at any cost. They tried to eliminate Sarkar as he was one of their target" said Jalpaiguri CPM district committee secretary Nilu Dasgupta said.

In the same place, another CPM leader and school teacher Pranesh Paul was also killed by the KLO militants in the same way earlier, the S. P. said. He added, "We are quite sure that in this incident also KLO and KPP is involved."

"With all this recurring incidents, the grassroot supporters may revolt any day and take arms in their hand against the militants which is not desirable," Dasgupta said.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1896675034.cms>

Bandh in Gorkhaland, North Bengal

THE TIMES OF INDIA NEWS SERVICE [WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 09, 2000 11:34:16 AM]

CALCUTTA: Even as the Darjeeling Hills and the north Bengal districts of Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar was paralysed by separate bandhs on Tuesday, deputy chief minister Budhadev Bhattacharya said in Calcutta that the decision of the Centre to create smaller states had encouraged secessionist and separatist forces to launch fresh movements.

"The Centre should be held responsible for the growing trend of insurgent activities in north Bengal too," he added.

Sources close to the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council put the blame for the fresh demand for a Gorkhaland state on the passage of the bill for the creation of separate states of Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Chhatisgarh.

"Although Subash Ghisingh is silent on the issue, he has full support behind the fresh demand for a separate state," the sources said, referring to the silence of the Gorkha National Liberation Front supremo. "There is no difference in the GNLF on this issue."

The GNLF called a 48-hour bandh in the hills which started during the day. The bandh was stated to be total and peaceful, with shops, markets schools and government offices closed.

According to the sources, the Centre was dragging its feet on holding a tripartite meeting on the problems faced by the DGHC. "Had the meeting been held, it would have helped to cool tempers." The DGHC had requisitioned the meeting in March this year and the state government recommended this to the Union home ministry in June.

A high power committee formed by the state government had recommended that the Centre arrange a constitutional guarantee for the DGHC. This obviously did not satisfy the GNLF and it went ahead with a bandh, demanding a separate state.

The bandh in Jalpaigur and Coochbehar on Tuesday was called by the CPM in protest against the killing of two headmasters on Monday. Bhattacharya said that the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) was behind the killing of the headmasters. Describing the KLO as a "terrorist outfit" Bhattacharyay said the KLO had its ties with the United Liberation Front of Asom. The KLO was also being backed by foreign forces and its activists were regularly getting arms from the ULFA. After Monday's killing the district and the state administration had both been alerted,' he said.

Forward Bloc general secretary Debabrata Biswas said during the day that the Kamtapuri agitation was growing in strength as north Bengal was neglected for a long time. To mobilize public opinion against separatist ideas and militant killings, the Forward Bloc would hold rallies throughout north Bengal from August 11 to 13.

He believed the killings of two headmasters was sinister. For, on August 5, the first meeting of the newly formed North Bengal Development Board was held in Raiganj. "The separatists are trying to nullify the impact of the board."

Biswas agreed that the board formed by the state government for economic uplift of north Bengal and the amount of Rs 33 crore allotted to it for the current year were not sufficient. "But this is a beginning. At least, the state government has allotted funds specially for the development of north Bengal." Besides, his party would now demand from the Planning Commission for allotment of Central funds to the board for the development of north Bengal.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1278121084.cms>

Kamtapuri militants shoot down CPM workers

THE TIMES OF INDIA NEWS SERVICE [TUESDAY, AUGUST 08, 2000 02:54:13 PM]

JALPAIGURI: Suspected Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation militants mounted on Monday morning a series of attacks on CPM workers, all of who were school teachers. Two teachers were killed, while the third attack was abortive.

According to CPM local committee secretary of Malbazar Prasanta Sikdar, Netai Das (50), headmaster of Maulani high school, was killed when three people in a motorcycle stormed into the school and shot him. They were carrying stenguns. Das was a zonal committee leader of the CPM.

In the second incident at Bhairatiguri primary school in the Dhupguri area, Subhash Sarkar, a teachers, was attacked with bombs and firearms inside a classroom when the teacher was examining the exercise books of students. A girl student suffered splinter injuries and is undergoing to treatment at the Jalpaiguri hospital. Sarkar was a block committee leader.

In the third incident, a group of armed militants went in search of Arun Ghosh, a teacher of Domohoni High School and a CPM activist of the district. As they did know the teacher by face, he had the time to escape. The frustrated militants snatched cash from the school cash box and escaped.

The three incidents took place in a 30-kilometre radius, and they took place in an interval of only two hours, giving rise the suspicion that all the three were parts of the same plan.

With these incidents, three CPM leaders, all school teachers, have been killed in north Bengal in the past three months. Pranesh Pal of Barobisha village was gunned down in May. "They are not killing them because they are school teachers. They are killing them because they are CPM activists. But, being school teachers, they are soft targets," Sikdar said.

He said the Kamtapuri activists were attacking CPM leaders because the CPM was actively opposing the separatist movement of the KLO.s "They are trying to demoralise our party workers." The CPM called a 24-hour Jalpaiguri bandh on Tuesday in protest against the killings.

Kamtapuri Peoples Party president Atul Roy said because of the failures of the ruling Left Front the youths of north Bengal were frustrated and were indulging in extremist activities. He refused to comment when asked if the KLO was involved in the incidents.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/8696209.cms>

Kanu supports Nepal Maoists

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [FRIDAY, MAY 03, 2002 11:04:02 PM]

SILIGURI: Veteran communist leader and COI (ML) chief Kanu Sanyal has expressed his 'moral support' for the Maoist rebels in Nepal.

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Speaking to TNN here on May Day, Sanyal added that the misrule' and negligence of the state and Central government over north Bengal were the main reasons behind the movement for a separate Kamtapur state.

Sanyal felt that West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's concerns over Maoist activities in Nepal were baseless.

"Their movement for democracy is justified though the way they are following it may not be correct," he said.

However, Sanyal does not see any anti Indian conspiracy by any external force' behind the movement in Nepal. He felt that the recent arrest of some people in Siliguri on charges of favouring the Maoists, was 'undemocratic' and misutilization' of state power.

Sanyal also felt that the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation was not a big issue. "To hide its own failure, the state gvoernment is projecting it as so. Even petty criminals and simple farmers are being labeled as KLO militants," he said.

Justifying his stand, Sanyal referred to the dismal state of affairs as far as electrification, water supply, education and health services was concerned in rural North Bengal.

"Government negligence is at its height. No villager affected by the month long wild elephant attack in Naxalbari area last December received compensation, though the administration announced Rs 20,000 compensation for each one of them," he said.

Sanyal himself lost his small hut at Hatighisa village in the elephant attack.

Addressing a huge gathering of tea workers, farmers and labourers on the occasion of May Day, Sanyal in his usual lucid and simple language described the background of May Day to his listeners.

The function was held at the Baghajatin Park.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/2049140406.cms>

Bengal militant chief surrenders

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [SUNDAY, JANUARY 27, 2002 11:21:55 PM]

SILIGURI: Operational chief of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation Suresh Roy (33), surrendered on Thursday night to the superintendent of Darjeeling Intelligence branch,D.T. Lepcha.

Wanted for several extortions, killings and abductions, Roy volunteered information like names of all major KLO and Ulfa guerrillas, their training sessions inside Bhutan and details of arms imported from Bangladesh.

A US-made semi-automatic small firearm of 0.38 mm caliber and five live cartridges were recovered from him. Hailing from Sahudangi in Jalpaiguri district, Roy was with the KLO since its inception on December 28, 1996. Trained in Bhutan, he and seven others went to Dhaka last July to procure 20 AK-56 rifles.

The arms were ordered by ULFA chief Paresh Baruah, who had been staying in Bhutan to evade arrest.

Starting with the abduction of Siliguri businessman Roshan Lal Garg in 1999, abduction of tea planter Om Prakash Agarwal and the murder of his son in 2000, killing of CPM leader and Moulani High School headmaster Nitai Das in 2000 to the killing of Khagen Acharya in 2001, Roy was the man 'in charge' in most of these cases.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/10265195.cms>

Terrorist activities in Bengal being tackled: Buddhadev

PTI [SATURDAY, MAY 18, 2002 03:26:42 PM]

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee on Saturday expressed concern at the spurt in terrorist and ISI-sponsored activities in the state, which he said, were being tackled both administratively and politically.

Though law and order in West Bengal was 'definitely better' compared to other states, the recent increase in terrorist activities were causing concern to the state government, Bhattacharjee said in an interview to the CPI(M) daily Ganashakti .

Bhattacharjee, who completed his first year in office as the head of the sixth Left Front Government, said 104 persons, involved with international terrorist groups, were arrested in connection with 18 incidents.

"Their activities along the state's international border with nine districts are a cause of worry to the administration," he said.

Asserting that these groups had the direct backing of Pakistan, the chief minister said that while ULFA and KLO terrorists were active in North Bengal, PWG and MCC ultras were operating in south Bengal

"These terrorist activities are being tackled both administratively and politically," he added.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/6490198.cms>

KLO extremists holed up in forest

PTI [WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2002 09:27:40 PM]

JALPAIGURI: Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) extremists are holed up in Bandaki forest beat area of Jaldapara reserve forest area for the third day on Wednesday as police and para-military forces continued combing operation to flush them out, top district police official said.

The militants had taken shelter inside the forest after they were chased by the forces in Suripara village near Jaldapara on Sunday, SP Siddhinath Gupta said.

The militants have some rations with them as they had forced the villagers to part with large quantities of 'cheera' (flattened rice) before entering the forest, he said.

The police and para-military forces had stepped up combing operation specially in the adjoining villages of Jogindranagar, Mechbill, Kunjanagar, Moiradanga, Shalkumar, Kalabari, Pradhanpara and Bhangharhat, he said.

The police, he said, would continue their combing operation based on information given by the local people, who had reported that some of the ultras were seen moving around inside the forest.

Some of the holed up extremists were even identified by the villagers from their photos in the police file, he added.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/9915881.cms>

KLO militant killed in encounter

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2002 03:45:01 AM]

KOLKATA: For the first time in North Bengal, the army was involved in a shoot-out with Kamtapur Liberation Organisation militants on Tuesday near Siliguri. One KLO militant was killed.

The encounter came as a surprise, as the army is not deployed in counter-insurgency operations in West Bengal.

The incident took place in the afternoon. A group of army intelligence officers in civilian clothes and civilian vehicle chased five KLO militants travelling in a Maruti van from Bagdogra to Matigara.

As the soldiers overtook the van and asked it to stop, one of the militants got down and tried to open fire. The soldiers fired back, killing him on the spot. Two others were arrested while two militants managed to escape. One arrested militant was identified as Subhas Roy, a senior KLO leader.

Army sources said they had information that a large arms consignment was being smuggled in.

There was also information that the KLO and the banned Ulfa had exchanged weapons. Darjeeling police superintendent Sanjay Chander said, "It was entirely an army operation and the police had nothing to do with it."

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/475288966.cms>

Wanted KLO leader surrenders

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 2002 12:13:47 AM]

SILIGURI: Operational chief of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation Suresh Roy (33), surrendered on Thursday night to the superintendent of Darjeeling intelligence branch, D.T. Lepcha.

Wanted for several cases of extortions, killings and abductions, Roy volunteered information like names of all major KLO and United Liberation Front of Asom guerrillas, their training sessions inside Bhutan and details of arms imported from Bangladesh.

"He surrendered after a lot of persuasion. It will help us greatly," said Lepcha. A US-made semi-automatic small firearm of 0.38 mm caliber and five live cartridges were recovered from him.

Hailing from Sahudangi in Jalpaiguri district, Roy has been with the KLO since its inception on December 28, 1996.

Trained in Bhutan, he and seven others went to Dhaka last July to procure 20 AK-56 rifles. "We have kept three of those and handed over the rest to the ULFA at the Kalikhola camp in Bhutan," added Roy. The arms were ordered by ULFA chief Paresh Baruah, who had been staying in Bhutan to evade arrest.

Starting with the abduction of Siliguri businessman Roshan Lal Garg in 1999, abduction of tea planter Om Prakash Agarwal and the murder of his son in 2000, killing of CPM leader and Moulani High School headmaster Nitai Das in 2000 to the killing of Khagen Acharya in 2001, Roy was the man 'in charge' in most of these cases.

He was produced in court on Friday. According to Darjeeling superintendent of police S. Chander, Roy has given details of the KLO operations, the Kalikhola training camp for militants in Bhutan and KLO contacts outside the state.

"He even confirmed that Kamtapur People's Party and KLO were interwoven and under a single command and having close links with the ULFA," claimed Chander.

Roy told TNN that he had surrendered because he wanted to shun violence and join the mainstream. The police have launched manhunts in Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts based on Roy's leads.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1501414335.cms>

Security stepped up to frustrate KLO activities

[THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2001 08:20:36 PM]

SILIGURI: Police have taken extra security measures to effectively combat Kamtapur Liberation organisation (KLO) militants active in Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar districts of North Bengal, the Inspector General of Police (North Bengal) N R Das said.

Das, who had visited Kumargram in Jalpaiguri district, known as a KLO stronghold, on Wednesday said here that one additional company of CRPF and two platoons of combat commando force had been sent to Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar district to tackle the situation.

Police of these two districts were already provided with a series of firearms to effectively combat the militant forces, he said.

The IG who had reviewed the total situation with senior police officials at Kumargram yesterday said KLO was fast losing its support in Rajbanshi community following which they stopped their movement in daylight.

Referring to the recent KLO killings of RSP leaders, Das said the militants supported by ULFA of Assam had adopted a 'hit and run policy' to create panic and establish their strength. They were taking the advantage of 230-km long Bhutan border and fleeing to jungles immediately after action.

Though police was trying to guard the border, but it was not just possible to guard the entire border with the existing police strength, he said.

The IG, quoting his Bhutan counterpart, said the Bhutan government had decided to uproot all ULFA and anti-India militant camps by December this year which would help police tackle with the situation more effectively.

Besides militant activities in these two districts, Dakshin Dinajpur district was facing a new problem of influx of Bangladeshi minorities after general election in there. Around 20 to 30 families had already crossed over to India and the trend was on rise.

Police was keeping a strict vigil over the situation and coordinating with BSF to stop the influx and push back the illegal entrants, Das added.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/372557.cms>

'Porous' border may aid rebel movement

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2003 03:51:16 AM]

KUMARGRAM: All along the Indo-Bhutan border in North Bengal , from Samtse to Kalikhola, there is just one question doing rounds: Is the Army vigilance tight enough to prevent militants from crossing over into India and Bangladesh .

“No, the security is not so tight,” said a police intelligence functionary at Kumargram’s RSP party office on Saturday. “I have been to a few places at Keshuabari, close to the Kalikhola rebel camp, where there is no vigil. Militants can escape along the dry river bed.” RSP leader Premananda Das countered: “The security is all-pervasive. I have seen troops hiding behind bushes and hillocks and keeping watch through field glasses.”

Travelling along the 15-km long Samtse-Banarhat road on Friday, this correspondent did not come across many security check points despite reports that some Kamtapur Liberation Organisation militants had recently set up a camp near Samtse, a border town in Bhutan. “I have not seen any Indian Army presence here,” Bhutan police officer Lundrup Dorji, on duty at the Samtse checkgate, said. A Border Security Force officer, however, assured that there was round-the-clock patrolling since December 17.

On the more sensitive Kalikhola border near Kumargram, an Army official said: “We have set up camps here and are keeping our eyes glued for militants.” He agreed that it was difficult to completely seal off

the border, but pointed out that it was not necessary to do so. "There are certain routes the militants are likely to take while escaping and we are waiting for them there," he said. His company has just arrived from Binaguri and was in the process of being deployed. The Bangladesh border is only about 50 kms from the border town of Kalikhola in Bhutan , leading to speculations in Kumargram that many of the militants at Kalikhola have managed to escape. " Bangladesh can be reached in four hours in a bicycle," a resident said.

There was one report, though unconfirmed, that militants in three boats had sailed along the Sankosh river to Bangladesh . The river flows down from the Kalikhola area in Bhutan and marks the boundary of West Bengal and Assam. Sitting at Uttar Haldibari, the native village of supremo Jivan Singh, surrendered KLO militant Madhusudan Das gave an account of the Kalikhola camp, as it had been. There were nearly 250 Ulfa and KLO militants, armed with nearly 200 weapons, like AK-47 rifles and light machine guns. The militants were housed in about 15 tents. There were bunkers and patrols around the camp to defend it.

Villagers pointed to a parch on the hills, saying the camp was located there and they had seen smoke rising from there on December 15 and heard reports of gunfire. Though the operation in Bhutan was now about six-day old but not many militants have been handed over to the police. This has raised doubts if many of them had managed to escape. Raising an eyebrow, a police officer doubted why the delay was on the part of the Bhutanese authorities. There was also concern about the fate of kidnapped Cooch Behar businessman Gopal Debnath, suspected to be detained by militants in Bhutan.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/176358.cms>

Midnapore jail inmates go on indefinite hunger strike

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2003 12:48:08 AM]

MIDNAPORE: Around 50 inmates of the Midnapore Central Jail went on an indefinite hunger strike from Wednesday, demanding their unconditional release and status as political prisoners.

The undertrials were arrested for their alleged links with the ultra-Left MCC-PW, but according to the Bandi Mukti Committee, all of them are poor tribals of West Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura districts. They were arrested in 2002 when the police initiated a special drive to curb Naxal activities in the state. But even after a year-and-a-half, the police failed to chargesheet the prisoners and most of them were not even produced in court. In a desperate move, the prisoners have decided to go on a hunger-strike to draw attention to their plight.

Though the West Midnapore district magistrate and the police superintendent have been informed, no effort has been initiated to solve the crisis. Police superintendent K.C. Meena said that the police could not intervene in the matter and it was up to jail superintendent Panchanan Biswas to sort out the problem. Moreover, only the courts could decide on the unconditional release of the inmates and their status as political prisoners, he said. Earlier, the Bandi Mukti Committee, Society for Prevention of Democratic Rights and the Midnapore wing of the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights had demanded the release of the prisoners.

Midnapore district Congress president Nirmal Ghosh alleged that police had arrested innocent villagers and tortured them.

Many of them were accused of conniving with the KLO although they had never been to north Bengal.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/146690.cms>

Buddha backs Manik on Bangla rebel camps

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2003 02:42:36 AM]

KOLKATA: Burgeoning militant training camps in Bangladesh and Bhutan and their backing by the Pakistani ISI are some of the major concerns Marxists love to share with the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre. Tripura chief minister Manik Sarkar is even ready to call in the Army. He will be leaving Kolkata along with West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee for Srinagar on Tuesday to plead his case with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at the Inter-State Council meeting. Bhattacharjee said the Centre should talk tough with Bangladesh over harbouring militant camps.

“The extremists --- whether KLO (Kamtapur Liberation Organisation) in Jalpaiguri or NLFT (National Liberation Front of Tripura) --- are working in tandem in the North-east with active support from the ISI. Bangladesh has now become a haven for their leaders. I don’t know why the Bangladesh government is denying it. I told about this to the Bangladesh foreign minister when he called on at my chamber. I reminded him how people of West Bengal stood by their neighbours during the Bangladesh liberation war. Is this the attitude we deserved?” Bhattacharjee said.

Addressing a meeting at Rani Rashmani Avenue against the Tripura carnage, Sarkar said that the NFLT and the ATTF were running 47 militant camps in Bangladesh. “But Bangladesh would never accept the facts,” he said.

However, both of them had little to say against the BJP government. Instead, the two chief ministers came down heavily on the Congress, days after the no-trust motion in Parliament.

“It is surprising how a national party like Congress could tie up with such anti-nationals in the last Tripura polls when extremists had taken the lives of Congress leaders like Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi,” Sarkar said.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/385532.cms>

CM offers carrot, Army wields stick

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2003 02:39:54 AM]

KOLKATA: Taking a leaf out of Tarun Gogoi's books, chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee held out an olive branch to the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation, urging the militants – who have been fighting side-by-side with the United Liberation Front of Asom in Bhutan – to return to the mainstream. "The militant camps in Bhutan have been smashed. Most KLO leaders are in the custody of West Bengal police. I appeal to everyone connected actively with the KLO to return to normal life. The state government will help in their social and economic rehabilitation," he said.

Though Bhattacharjee claimed that rebel camps had been smashed – Bhutan, too, had said the same thing – the Indian Army came under militant fire at the border. A jawan was killed. Three militants were also killed in the encounter and three were captured. Sources said it appears that a number of rebels are still holed up in the jungles near the border. Some might even be retreating deep into Bhutan. An Army detachment had gone looking for them at the border on Wednesday night but came back without finding any one. On Friday morning, when the troops were patrolling the same area, they were fired upon. The troops are now waiting for the militants to surrender after they run out of food and ammunition.

The Royal Bhutan Army, too, was carrying out operations at the nearby Kalikhola militant camp in Bhutan, an official in Siliguri said. It is believed that the RBA is also burning abandoned camps. But the surrender trickle continued on Friday when three KLO militants gave themselves up to the police at Kumargram on the Indo-Bhutan border in north Bengal and handed over a machine gun. They had escaped from the Piping militant camp in Bhutan.

Interrogation of an arrested KLO militant has revealed that many militants, even before the start of the operations in Bhutan, had planned to surrender on KLO's raising day on December 28.

However, top KLO leaders like Tom Adhikary and Milton Burman were preventing them from giving up. Tom was at the KLO's Bukka camp while Milton was at Piping. They would not even allow junior cadres to go to the market alone, to prevent them from escaping. Even at the Ulfa central headquarters near Samdrup Jongkhar, where 18 KLO men were holed up, the Ulfa would not let them surrender.

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TABU'S TRYST WITH RAY'S ARANYA

SUSMITA MUKHERJEE

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [TUESDAY, OCTOBER 01, 2002 12:34:46 AM]

The sun was about to dip behind the blue mountains. Silence had descended on the forest bungalow in Murti, about two hours' drive from Siliguri, where Goutam Ghose had pitched tent for the shooting of Abar Aranye.

The production team came scurrying to receive us. "I think you should take some photographs and go back," advised one, "the situation is tense. We are moving around with armed guards. You don't have that advantage, do you?"

The driver of the Maruti van who had just dropped us had also hinted at "Dooars being tense". He had pointed to a hill range and said, Look that's the Indo-Bhutan border. The militants are most active there." He must have referred to the KLO.

Tabu aage pisse police niya ghurtachhe (Tabu is going around with police escorts)," he had said. We were informed at Murti that Tabu would be coming any moment.

But an hour passed by and it was almost dusk when a maroon Qualis drove in. Tabu alighted in a pair of body-hugging jeans and a T-shirt.

After a brief rehearsal, Goutam Ghose shouted, "Action!" The shot over, Tabu was back in her Qualis.

We were on her trail again in the morning. Tirthankar Bhattacharjee, OC, Matelli, responsible for her security, was vigorously mopping his brow while Tabu was cooling off inside her car. She had just finished a shot. A correspondent of a Bengali channel informed, "There will be an abduction scene. But Tabu will be rescued." Our driver, who overheard this, remarked, "The militants don't kidnap you here. They kill you." Meanwhile, Tabu had just inched open the door of her Qualis.

Journalists ran for the star. How does it feel to work in a Bengali film, they asked her. "It's great! I want to work in more Bengali films if I get good roles." Was it easy to learn Bengali? "Not really, but Goutamda sent me a cassette with the recorded dialogues.

I hope to pick up the right pronunciations by the time the dubbing is on." Next moment, she was inside her Qualis again.

It was night by the time we returned to Siliguri. The deserted roads were bathed in darkness. We could see the headlights of the Qualis speeding ahead of us with a police Gypsy in front.

Honestly, Satyajit Ray's arnaya had changed. Terror now ruled the forests.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/22403347.cms>

Shoot-at-sight orders issued at Bhutan border

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2002 12:43:19 AM]

KOLKATA: Inspector General of north Bengal Bhupinder Singh said on Monday shoot-at-sight orders have been issued along the state's border with Bhutan. According to Singh, the step had been taken to restrict the movement of insurgents.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Priya Ranjan Das Munshi met chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee during the day to discuss the north Bengal situation.

He claimed he discussed plans with the CM to bring the Rajbonshis back to the mainstream.

"Those who have turned into Kamtapuris but have not joined the KLO should be brought back to the mainstream", Das Munshi said.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/21101647.cms>

Abhijit's arrest irks lawyers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 04, 2002 12:29:17 AM]

KOLKATA: The arrest of law clerk Abhijit Kundu as a Naxalite "suspect" has created a stir in the legal fraternity.

"It is a grim signal to us that we should not even dare to defend legally those who are accused by the state,"

comments senior advocate Asit Ganguly. Advocate Kunal Mutsuddi of Alipore court, whose assistant Kundu was, has filed a writ petition (WP No. 12688 of 2002) before the Calcutta High Court. Mutsuddi, along with advocate Ashok De, were present when Abhijit was picked up on August 29 outside the

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Baripada district court, Orissa. The lawyers had gone there as defence counsels for 11 alleged Naxalites arrested from Mayurbhanj district in 1999.

“The police swooped down upon us and whisked Sri Kundu away; they did not show any warrant nor any arrest memo nor cared to listen to me or Mr De but bodily lifted him away and we had no idea on whatever charges he was being taken or wherever he was being taken.

This left me in a trauma,” writes Mutsuddi in a letter to the president of the District Bar Association, Alipore.

Earlier, on July 9, the legal team engaged in the case, including women, had alleged that police had raided their hotel rooms at Baripada, humiliated and searched them and took away important papers without any warrant or memo. The District Bar Association, Alipore, condemned the incident in a meeting on July 31.

According to Mutsuddi, Abhijit was a law clerk duly certified by the court. He had also got permission from Baripada court for interviewing his clients in jail.

“Such incident has deprived me of active assistance of my clerk in conducting the trial further,” he writes.

Trinamul rubbishes KLO There was no organisation like KLO and the killing that took place at Dhuguri on August 17 was because of internal conflict between two rival groups of CPM, Trinamool Congress leader Pankaj Bandopadhyay claimed here. He said intense rivalry among several top-notch CPM leaders had led to the killing.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/18397620.cms>

Woman Kamtapuri leader held in Jalpaiguri

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 07, 2002 11:32:00 PM]

JALPAIGURI: Chairperson of the women's wing of North Bengal's militant outfit Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (klo) Bharati Das and two others have been arrested from Shaltali village of Jalapaiguri district, police said on Wednesday.

Bharati was held along with two linkmen Dhanjay Ray and Bablu Ray on Monday.

The militant woman leader was entrusted with the task of recruiting girls for the outfit and also for their training in extremist camps in Bhutan, police said.

Resident of Madhya Haldibari, Bharati had been moving from place to place for the past few years to evade arrest.

A close associate of KLO chief, Jiban Singha, Bharati used to organise secret meetings in remote areas of North Bengal, police said.

<http://www.hindu.com/2004/01/13/stories/2004011304971200.htm>

The Hindu, Tuesday, Jan 13, 2004

Demand for separate Kamtapur State renewed

By Marcus Dam

KOLKATA, JAN. 12. After being in political limbo for over three years, the Kamtapur People's Party has renewed its demand for a separate Kamtapur State to be carved out of West Bengal's six districts in the north. "The entire party organisation is being revamped and a fresh membership drive will begin shortly," the KPP president, Nikhil Roy, who was released recently after serving eight months in jail told in an exclusive interview over telephone from his residence in Jalpaiguri district today.

The KPP leadership had been thrown into disarray following a crackdown on its activists for alleged criminal offences in November 2000, and Mr. Roy was jailed in March 2003 after being arrested on several charges, including waging war against the State.

Even as the KPP "prepares to set up new committees at the district, block and anchal levels," the State Government has learnt that the party used to receive funds from the militant Kamtapur Liberation Organisation, one of the outfits targeted in last month's offensive by the Royal Bhutan Army against Indian insurgents holed up in camps in that country. This was revealed to the local police during interrogations of senior KLO leaders captured in the offensive and now in police custody.

"Such allegations are entirely baseless," Mr. Roy said. "It is a conspiracy hatched by the authorities to break our movement. We are a democratic party and are pursuing our demands through peaceful means." The State Government has categorically rejected the KPP's demand.

"But the KPP is willing to discuss its demands with the State authorities if invited to do so," Mr. Roy said. "Our agenda also includes the recognition of the Kamtapuri language and the economic development of north Bengal."

Mr. Roy admitted that the "party organisation had suffered a major setback following the arrests of at least 500 of our leaders and activists by the police in November 2000." However, now that "most of them have been released we are preparing to re-organise the party. The central committee will be meeting on January 24 to work out the details," he said. A founder-member of the KPP and presently its

spokesman, Atul Roy, said that the decision to renew the Statehood demand had been "publicly announced at a meeting in Siliguri on January 7 — the party's foundation day."

<http://www.indiatoday.com/webexclusive/dispatch/20020915/mitra.html>

Statescan

A section of the 3.5 million Rajbanshis in northern Bengal and western Assam feel they are being marginalised. India Today's Sumit Mitra reports on their displaced anger that is wreaking havoc in the region.

A small town with rows of bamboo houses covered with galvanised iron sheets, Dhupgiri is an indelible, uninspiring place. Its citadel of power is the two-storey office of the CPI(M) zonal committee—the building that embodies the power of the ruling party and the state—deciding on who will qualify for the title of

a plot of land or a primary school job. Nobody dared snap one's fingers at it, let alone attack.

But its undisputed security fell in tatters in the evening of August 17. A group of six boys rode to its gate on bicycles, walked into the building, searched for the room where committee member Gopal Chaki was seated with Krishak Sabha workers, the party's peasant front, and began firing at them from an automatic rifle loaded with 9-mm bullets. Chaki got the first blast on his chest. The firing felled a dozen more. One of the boys clad in black with black scarves covering their faces hissed in Kamtapuri, the local dialect, "Taste the fun of working for the CPI(M)."

Five of the injured, including Chaki and local leaders Ganesh Roy and Gosain Seal, died. Police said the assailants had Indo-Mongoloid features typical of Rajbanshis, and belonged to Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), a terrorist front of Rajbanshi youth that has been active in the area for the past two years in collaboration with Assam's ULFA. The attack was reportedly led by "Tom" Adhikari, the code name for the head of KLO action squad who are trained in the ulfa camps in Bhutan forests, north of the Indian Dooars. Their leader, Tumar Das alias Jiban Singha, hailing from Cooch Behar district, has an army of more than a hundred men trained in Bhutan camps.

The massacre shook the CPI(M)-Director-General of Police Dinesh Bajpai reached the spot the next day and Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya addressed a huge public rally last week. The Dhupgiri incident however was one episode in a series of violent incidents related to the self-assertion of Rajbanshis—3.5 million people who are spread over north Bengal, western Assam and Rangpur in Bangladesh. Once the rulers of the land—the Koch Rajbanshis ruled over the medieval kingdom of Kamtapur—they rue that they have been marginalised in West Bengal by the bhatia, the immigrant east Bengal Hindus. The Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) is fighting for a separate Kamtapur state, its main

agenda in last year's assembly elections, but says it has no link with the militant klo. The CPI(M) is unconvinced.

The KLO attacks on CPI(M) began in January 2000 with the murder of Dilip Roy, a Rajbanshi who was leader of the Marxist youth wing Democratic Youth Front. After that, 11 middle-rung leaders of the CPI(M) and its Left Front partner, the rsp, were killed in Jalpaiguri district, where Dhupguri is located. "The klo has killed Rajbanshis and non-Rajbanshis in equal numbers", says CPI(M)'s Jalpaiguri district secretary Manik Sanyal. "But all of them are members of our party or our allies. Their principal aim is to destroy the Front."

Sanyal and his party are keen to prove that Kamtapuri outbursts, like the Naxalite attack in south Bengal, are part of a conspiracy to oust the left from power. The CPI(M) brushes off the argument that its armed adversaries can be products of regional imbalances, marginalised ethnic groups increasingly leaving the democratic path. "If the Kamtapuris have a popular cause", roared the chief minister at the Dhupguri meeting, "why do they get so few votes?" Sanyal argues that the Kamtapuris who own "60 per cent" land in Jalpaiguri and more in Cooch Behar, have no genuine grievance.

But both the chief minister and Sanyal got it wrong. In the assembly elections, KPP President Atul Roy got 20,000 votes from Dhupguri while another secured 21,000 from Kranti. "Did the Jharkhand party do any better in its initial years? But at a later stage its cause had to be upheld," argues Roy. The Rajbanshi alienation is rooted in their search for cultural, linguistic and political identity. Their struggle began when Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma (1865-1935), the community's first modern leader claimed kshatriya status for them and called their language "Kamtabihari", distinct from Bengali. In 1967, when the CPI(M) triggered a peasant movement confiscating land, the Rajbanshis united to form the Uttarakhand Party. It splintered in 1987, one of its wings evolving into All Kamtapur Students' Union (AKSU). The entire aksu secretariat was put behind bars by the CPI(M)-led government in 1996. Observers in Jalpaiguri think AKSU has morphed into KLO.

The Rajbanshis identify themselves with the Koch royalty of Cooch Behar (whose scion is Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur).

A land-dependent people proud of their history, they soon began losing land to the Bengali immigrants, who dominate the CPI(M), either by distress sale or by state acquisition. Notwithstanding Sanyal's assertion that they still own most lands in the area, every morning you can see long rows of Rajbanshi labour at the Phulbari crossing in the outskirts of Siliguri waiting to be hired for the day.

"The Kamtapuri unrest", says Ananda Gopal Ghosh, a professor of North Bengal University, "is an outcome of being evicted from land". The CPI(M)'s response to the problem has been stronger police measures. In Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri, kpp men are hounded for harbouring rebels.

Bhattacharya has even promised to visit Bhutan and persuade Thimpu to flush out the insurgents from the southern forests. The problem, however, is rooted in the paradox of development which leaves

some groups behind and when that happens they turn to guns. It happened with the santhals of Midnapore who turned Naxalites when they lost out to Bengal peasantry.

It is happening with the Rajbanshis of north Bengal turning against the 'Bhatia'. The Marxist clarion call may be for the working class to unite, but they are a bad manager when it comes to racial or caste coalitions and conflicts.

<http://www.the-week.com/23nov16/events1.htm>

Do or die: ULFA-aided fight for statehood picks up pace in Kamtapur

The Week, Nov 16, 2003 , West Bengal

By Tapash Ganguly/Jalpaiguri & Siliguri

Atul Roy may look calm but he is seething inside. The Kamtapur's People Party president recently directed the party's chief organiser, Lalit Burman, to write to Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, seeking an appointment. "I want to let him know that thousands of our youth are languishing in north Bengal jails and many have been killed in fake encounters," he told The Week at his residence at Bidhanpally near Siliguri. "North Bengal has turned into a jail for Kamtapuris." Resentment is the hallmark of the separatist movement that has spread over West Bengal's six northern districts. Insurgents back their calls of "Do or die, Kamtapur chai (We want Kamtapur)" with the tale of a 13th-century king who ruled Kamrup in Assam. As Muslim invaders nibbled at his kingdom, the king shifted his capital to Gosanimari in Coochbehar and named it Kamtapur after Goddess Kamakshya. This historical tidbit appears in a book by Gunadhar Burman, who belongs to the Kamtapur Vhasa Sahitya Parishad, an offshoot of the Ulfa-inspired Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO). The book ends with a warning to all Kamtapuris not to trust Kolkattiya Bangalis (Bengalis from Kolkata). Revolution for progress: Kamtapur's People Party supremo Atul Roy (above left); KLO activists Set up 10 years ago by 11 educated Rajbanshi (a major tribal community of north Bengal) youth, the KLO began its armed operations in 1998. By September 2003, its militants had killed 32 people and kidnapped six businessmen. Prateek Banerji, a petrol pump owner from Moynaguri, and Gopal Debnath, a hardware merchant of Nisigunj, who were kidnapped this year, are being held for a ransom of Rs 50 lakh each. CPI(M) activists are often targeted by the organisation, which considers the party the sole representative of the Kolkattiya Bangalis.

"For five years the KLO lay low, organising and strengthening itself," said an inspector-general of police. "They also opened different frontal outfits." The All Kamtapur Students' Union was formed in August 1994 by Srinivas Das, one of the KLO founders. The women's front, Kamtapur Women's Rights Forum, was set up in 1998. The Sahitya Parishad and the Kamtapur's People Party, headed by Atul Roy, were created in 1997. Sixteen KPP candidates, including Atul, contested the 2001 Assembly elections unsuccessfully.

The KPP does not have a strong leadership, though Atul, who is no longer the president, runs the show. He said their demand was only for statehood, not sovereignty. "We do not want to go out of India," he said. "But there has been no development in north Bengal after Independence. The worst-affected are the Kamtapuris, who have lost their land and are unable to find jobs. The situation has gone from bad to worse during the 26 years of Left Front rule." When asked how he could justify the claim for a separate state when the

Rajbanshis constitute only one-sixth of north Bengal's population, Atul rubbished the census as "a handiwork of the Kolkattiya Bangalis". "They have deliberately left out the Kochs [another major tribal community], Kaibartyas and Namasudras," he said. All these groups together form almost 50 per cent of the 15-million strong population of north Bengal. A professor of North Bengal University concurs with Atul. "Successive state governments introduced various land reforms to resettle the East Pakistani refugees, creating a new class of landless among the Rajbanshis and Kochs," he said.

Coochbehar acceded to the Indian Union on September 11, 1949; Maharaj Jagadweependra Narayan was assured by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that it would be made a separate state. But West Bengal chief minister Dr B.C. Roy declared it a district. The Partition brought an influx of Bengali refugee farmers from erstwhile East Pakistan, who initially got along well with the Rajbanshi and Koch zamindars. But the abolition of the zamindari system in the 1950s and the rise of the Naxal movement upset the balance. An Intelligence Bureau officer traced the birth of the KLO to the "militant politics of Assam". He said the Ulfa and People's War Group of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa as well as Maoist Communist Centre militants of Jharkhand and Bihar wanted to coordinate operations with Nepali Maoists. A safe corridor was necessary, and north Bengal was ideally situated. Fazed by militancy: Director-General of Police D.C. Bajapayee Most of KLO's founders present at the first meeting held in the home of a farmer, Rajen Das, at Pukhurigram village in Jalpaiguri, have been arrested or have defected. Those arrested include Rajen's son, Madhusudan Das alias Tarzan, who persuaded his brother Srinivas to give up militancy. Srinivas has reportedly evinced an interest to join the CPI(M). Intelligence agencies say the organisation enjoys the support of Ulfa and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland. In fact, two Ulfa representatives-Bhaskar alias Dilip and Ajay Kosari-were present at the very first KLO meeting in 1993. Demanding formation of a new state and expulsion of foreigners (read: the progeny of Bengali refugees from East Pakistan), the KLO sent 116 cadres for arms training in Ulfa camps in Bhutan.

Tarzan, 28, was a member of the first batch that was trained by Ulfa in Bhutan in 1995. He was deputy commander of KLO, until he surrendered to the police last year. The first three batches were aware of their mission when they went for training. But later, trainees were lured with the promise of lucrative jobs and a position in the security force of independent Kamtapur. Some even signed up in the hope of getting two square meals a day. Police gathered information about the whereabouts of the camps from Tarzan and other arrested militants.

But these arrests have not changed the situation for political leaders. Said Pintoo Ganguly, CPI(M) Kumargram zonal committee member: "Though most local KLO activists have surrendered and some have joined our party, life is still not safe for us." Atul accuses the ruling party of duplicity. "Many of our

boys were arrested on false charges at the instance of Marxist leaders," he said. "Then the leaders arrange their

release on condition that they join their party." Police sources say two dozen KLO cadres have been killed in encounters since 2000, and about 50 have surrendered. About 90 militants are at large, and officers are worried about their tie-up with Ulfa. "As long

as the camps in Bhutan are intact, it'll be difficult for us to rout the KLO from its base," said Director-General of Police D.C. Bajpayee.

<http://www.ganashakti.com/old/2001/010122/head.htm>

What Actually Happened On January 3

Garbeta

Staff Reporter

FOR the last two and a half years, the Trinamul-BJP combination has been trying to create disturbances in the districts of Midnapore, Hooghly and Bankura. These adjoining districts are the areas where the Left Front government has distributed more than 10,000 acres of cultivated land among the landless peasantry. But the landlords are now trying to recapture their land through hired goondas. The Trinamul Congress gave shelter to these landlords, organised the anti-socials for its political game, and fully utilised these elements in the Panskura parliamentary byelection. But when the CPI(M) and the Left Front started a resistance movement after the elections, they got unexpected mass support. During these two and a half years, 136 cadres of the Left Front parties have been killed in these three districts; 98 of these were killed in Midnapore alone.

During the last six months, the CPI(M) organised several meetings in these areas; 16 big rallies were held in this period. More than 50,000 people attended each of these rallies. A good number of anti-socials left the villages. The CPI(M) tried its best to rehabilitate the uprooted villagers in their own villages. It gave a fund call for the reconstruction of the houses that were burnt down. It will be noted that more than 1,100 houses had been burnt down by the Trinamul-patronised lumpens.

Ms Mamata Banerjee several times announced that she would hold a meeting at Keshpur, but failed to do so. On January 3 she held a central rally there, for which people from eight districts were mobilised and more than 1,500 buses and other vehicles were arranged. On the eve of the meeting, however, the Trinamul goons attacked the villages, to which village people also put up resistance. The goons also attacked policemen, and 32 police personnel were injured. But yet they maintained patience. The Trinamul's object was to provoke the police into opening fire. Their provocation failing, they fled away due to the people's resistance, leaving their buses and other vehicles behind. The Trinamul Congress then called for a general strike on January 5, on the plea that its men were attacked.

35 CKRSD PDF publication for public view and free distribution

At the same time, they tried to recapture Garbeta. The Trinamul Congress, BJP and PWG mobilised their men in a remote village with a large number of arms and ammunition. Their objective was to capture four villages and to kill four leading cadres of the CPI(M). But the villagers, getting scent of the conspiracy, foiled it. Seven people have been missing since then. A police investigation is going on. The situation is now under control.

In the meantime, a good number of secessionists, backed by the Trinamul Congress, are trying to create disturbances in three North Bengal districts, i.e., Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar and Darjeeling. These secessionists belong to the Rajbanshi community. Land is the main issue here too. Most of the Rajbanshi people are pro-Left and have a long tradition of class struggle. These secessionists have raised the slogan of a Kamtapur state, and are backed by the ULFA of Assam. They have murdered eight CPI(M) cadres, including one district committee member and three zonal committee members. The situation improved and massive political activity began after Jyoti Basu visited these disturbed areas.

http://www.indianexpress.com/full_story.php?content_id=9133

KLO uses road project ruse to rope in gullible

The Indian Express, Monday, September 09, 2002

SUBRATA NAGCHOUDHURY

Posted online: Monday, September 09, 2002 at 0000 hours IST

JALPAIGURI, SEPTEMBER 8: It was simply the lure of a job building roads — not any ideological belief in a separate state — that took this Rajbanshi youth across the border to a Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) training camp in Bhutan.

Today, Arjun Burman (name changed to protect his identity) has escaped from the camp but cannot return to his village for fear of being killed. So he lives under the watchful care of a police officer, who treats him like a trusted lieutenant.

In November 2001, 21-year-old Burman, a resident of Takoamari village in Baxirhat, Cooch Behar, got a job offer from a neighbour. "I was told it was a road project in the hills of Bhutan and I would be well paid for at least six months," says the Class IX dropout.

"As soon as there were several youths willing to go, our contact person led us to Peiping camp. We were told that some physical training was mandatory for working on the project. But I soon realised that this was an arms training camp, from which it would be difficult to escape."

Burman recalls that their training started soon after arrival. There were 66 Rajbanshi recruits. “Only 18 of them were from Cooch Behar.

The majority had come from Dhupguri and Moynaguri in Jalpaiguri district. From the general talk at the camp, I gathered that we were the fourth batch to undergo training. Each person in the group was given a new name,” he adds.

According to Burman, there were four trainers — all of whom either belonged to the UULFA or the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). “They were called Surya Bodo, Swapan Doimari, Neelambar and Tiwari,” reveals the former KLO recruit, adding that these were all probably false names.

From December 2001 to the first week of March 2002, Burman and the other recruits were given field training, during which they were taught “military exercises” which included discipline, rules of the camp, cadre hierarchy and long hours of physical exercise.

Their day began at 4 am, recalls Burman. By 5 am, all the recruits had to assemble on a flattened hilltop. The next two-and-half hours were spent in physical training — jogging, short sprints, dips and tri-jumps.

“The intensity of the exercises gradually increased. At one time, I was doing something like 200 dips and over 8,000 tri-jumps along with long runs,” says Burman. The recruits were served one meal at about 8 am, after which they were allotted field work, which varied from setting up bunkers with bamboo poles to collecting wood and carrying rations from secret dumps.

The other meal was served at 4 pm. All the inmates took turns cooking and doing other odd jobs. The camp was surrounded by a tight security ring. Several squads, each comprising two new recruits and one senior, guarded the camp every night.

The arms training began on March 10. “At first, our instructors trained us with dummy AK-series guns, teaching us the different parts,” says Burman, rattling off the technical names, the lessons still fresh in his mind.

“No doubt, it was quite adventurous but the food was grossly inadequate to cope with the strain,” says Burman, who finally decided to make a break for freedom on a Sunday evening in March, when the security was slightly relaxed.

He, along with three other recruits, dodged past a sentry post and ran down a steep slope till they reached a place called Hatipota, where they knew there was a police outpost. “I am free now but I still live under the shadow of the gun,” points out Burman.

http://www.outlookindia.com/pti_news.asp?id=181877

Buddha asks KLO militants to surrender, assures rehabilitation

LD BUDDHADEV

SILIGURI (WEST BENGAL), NOV 16 (PTI)

Chief Minister of West Bengal, Buddhadev Bhattacharjee, today asked KLO militants to surrender with arms, and assured that the state government would arrange for their social and economic rehabilitation in return.

Addressing the open session of the fourth two-day Darjeeling district conference of Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) at Naxalbari, near here, Bhattacharjee observed that the KLO had taken a wrong path which could never meet their goal. He cited for example the "failed militancy" in Punjab and Assam.

He warned that the Left Front government would in no way allow Kamtapuris to create an "Assam-like situation" in West Bengal.

Criticising the Kamtapur People's Party, Bhattacharjee alleged that KPP leaders, whom he described as 'mostly illiterate', very recently had claimed that the party was the sole representative of Rajbanshi community of North Bengal without knowing the 'history and geography' of the region.

"But, this is untrue. It is the CPI-M which has a stronger base in the community for decades," he said.

<http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=2002122506571200.htm&date=2002/12/25/&prd=th&>

KLO militant surrenders

THE HINDU, 25-12-2002

By Our Special Correspondent

KOLKATA DEC. 24. A day after the Chief Minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, called the militants of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), one of the militant groups in north Bengal, to surrender, a top-ranking leader of the outfit responded by turning himself to police.

Himadri alias Madhusudan alias Tarzan, surrendered to police on December 22, the day Mr. Bhattacharjee announced at a rally in Coochbehar in north Bengal that his Government would consider lifting the cases against the KLO militants who surrendered unconditionally.

The Chief Minister also indicated that the other extremist outfit of the region, the Kamtapur People's Party, could act as broker between the KLO and the Government. And he was also willing to discuss the socio-economic problems of the area with the KPP leaders.

Himadri was close to the KLO's second-in-command, Mihir Das alias Milton and was one of the 38 KLO activists who had undergone arms training in Bhutan. According to police, he decided to give up extremism and join the mainstream after he heard Mr. Bhattacharjee's offer. He even decided to urge the Chief Minister to provide him with a job.

The KPP, however, made it clear that it would consider opening a dialogue with the Government only if the latter agreed to free the KPP activists currently in jail.

The KPP has been campaigning in the district for a long time for recognition of the Rajbanshi dialect. The movement took a new colour when the militant KLO appeared on the scene in 1996.

Several functionaries of the CPI (M) and the Left Front partners such as the Forward Bloc were killed by the KLO militants in Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling.

The Superintendent of Police, Jalpaiguri, Siddhinath Gupta, said that Himadri had left the Bhutan camp a few days ago when he fell out with the KLO supremo, Jeevan Sinha. Realising that life would be difficult with the KLO shadowing him, he decided to respond to the Chief Minister's call.

Himadri, a resident of Haldibari in north Bengal, had been charged with murder of at least four persons. His brother, Srinivas, is president of the All-Kamtapur Students' Union.

http://www.indianexpress.com/print.php?content_id=8574

What are Marxists Afraid of?

Sunday, September 01, 2002

Kamtapur, the latest hotspot on India's militancy map in North Bengal, nurtured by neglect over three long decades

SUBRATA NAGCHOUDHURY

JALPAIGURI , WEST BENGAL THIRTY years is a long enough time to go without a leader. It is also a long time for a leaderless movement to survive. So, when the Kamtapur agitation makes headlines today with acts of violence, it is as much a 35-year-old cry for statehood, as it is a desperate upsurge in the search for a leader.

The community in question here are the Rajbanshis, the sons of the soil of the north Bengal districts of Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, North and South Dinajpur and Malda. Rajbanshis comprise 31 per cent of the 12 million population of these districts. Their grievances of deprivation date back to the late '60s, but the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) — the political front of the present movement — has not been able to capitalise on the popular discontent. Today, the movement has been virtually hijacked by KPP's armed underground wing, the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO). While not many buy the KLO's promise of a separate state of Kamtapur, the violence is less easy to ignore. The gun culture that has invaded the once-peaceful Dooars — the KLO is believed to be getting training and support from the ULFA and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland in camps in Bhutan, on the Assam-Bengal border — has alienated a large section of Rajbanshi intellectuals and academics from the movement.

The CPI(M) takes out a procession with the bodies of those killed in the attack on the Dhupguri party office. According to sources, the KLO has several hit squads of six people or less. They move through corridors in the dense forests and clusters, which are used for cover, shelter and food during operations. Apart from hit squads, there are wings for fund-collection and intelligence-gathering. A large number of young girls are believed to act as couriers for the KLO.

Even as fears of bloodshed follow the KLO attack on the Dhupguri party office of the CPI(M) earlier this month, in which five people were killed, parallels are being inevitably drawn between the Kamtapur agitation and the Gorkhaland movement a decade ago. The geo-physical proximity is one reason for this, but sociologists, politicians and senior government officials find more dissimilarities than similarities between the two.

Most glaringly, of course, the Rajbanshis have no Subhash Ghising among them. Nor is there any dispute about the Rajbanshis being the original inhabitants of the area. Also, unlike the Gorkhas, the Rajbanshis are scattered all over the region, heavily interspersed by Bangladeshi refugees, Nepalis and tribals working in the tea plantations.

KLO STRIKES

- 20-odd CPI(M) leaders warned and then killed in rural Jalpaiguri, sometimes in broad daylight, with AK-46
- Half-a-dozen tea garden owners, officers kidnapped. A couple released after six months on payment of ransom.
- CRPF convoy attacked with remote-controlled explosive device

As may be expected, it is the settlers — the largest numbers of whom are Bangladeshi refugees — who are the bone of contention. Says Ananda Gopal Bose, a reader in History at the North Bengal University, “This region has seen several waves of Bangladeshi refugees before and after Independence and during the 1964 and 1971 wars. Each agitation in Assam triggered another wave of migration into Bengal. The latest and largest influx has been that of Nepalis ousted from Bhutan. The region has absorbed the successive tides but no special package has ever been offered here.”

Moreover, the Rajbanshis, whose traditional livelihood was agriculture, rarely ever ventured into other economic activity. The abolition of the zamindari, therefore, hit them hard. Many impoverished Rajbanshis have consequently sold off their land to Bangladeshi settlers, widely regarded as both industrious and enterprising.

The latest onslaught on traditional landholding patterns comes again from the lure of easy money. A section of the Rajbanshis who held on to their land has turned to tea-cultivation, selling their produce to larger gardens with in-house factories. The agricultural front of the CPI(M), perceiving the land as unsuitable for traditional cultivation, actually facilitated the transfer.

However, locals feel the switch will eventually spell doom for the 200-odd tea-cultivating Rajbanshis, who are completely dependent on the larger gardens at a time when the tea business itself is in a downslide.

CPI(M) district secretary Manick Sanyal, one of the most powerful leaders in the belt, however, denies the party’s culpability. “The Rajbanshis who lost land in the government’s land reforms programme were zotedars,” he said. “As for those who sold their land for short-term gains... well, the the fault lies with them, not those who have purchased it. Land is not an expandable item. Its nature is such that once it gets divided, it gets split.”

Alleging that the Rajbanshis were merely trying to use history to generate ethnic passions, Sanyal also denies that the region has fallen behind in the development stakes, vis-a-vis industry, infrastructure and employment generation.

“Once upon a time, all the rickshaw-pullers in Jalpaiguri town were from neighbouring Bihar. Now the Rajbanshis have taken over. There are hundreds of Rajbanshi graduates and even post-graduates. Scores of them cycle 15-20 km everyday from Sahudangi to Siliguri town to work as labourers,” says Sanyal.

The veteran Marxist’s yardsticks of development will undoubtedly surprise many — particularly after 25 years of Left Front rule — and raise many hackles. “These are the words of someone in authority,” says a leader of the constituent Left Front party on condition of anonymity.

“But the Dhupguri incident should be an eye-opener. The Rajbanshis may not be able to match either the organisational strength or the leadership might of the Marxists, but the disgruntled elements will

continue to create disturbances. The region may not turn into another Gorkhaland but it could well be another Tripura.”

The Hindu, online edition

Tuesday, Sep 27, 2005

We will abide by statute, says Cooch Behar leader

"Our movement is peaceful and democratic"

Special Correspondent

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- 1949 accession treaty cited in support of demand
 - No links with ULFA, KLO, says Bangshi Badan Burman
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KOLKATA: "We will abide by the Constitution and carry forward our movement for a separate Greater Cooch Behar peacefully and in a democratic manner," Bangshi Badan Burman, general secretary of the Greater Cooch Behar People's Association (GCPA), said on Monday. The activities of the GCPA, demanding "either a separate State or Union Territory of Greater Cooch Behar" to be carved out of the districts of north Bengal and eastern Assam, have caused a flutter. Five persons died in a clash last week between GCPA supporters and the police in Cooch Behar. GCPA leaders cite the 1949 treaty between the Government of India and the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, Jagatdipendra Narayan, that led to the merger of the princely state with India as a "document that substantiates our claim for special autonomous status for Cooch Behar." "We have no links with any militant outfit — be it the United Liberation Front of Asom or the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation — and have no intention of seeking the support of either," Mr. Burman told The Hindu over phone from Cooch Behar. "The GCPA was set up in September 1998, and it has taken us seven years to marshal our forces." Last week, West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee denounced the re-emergence of separatist forces in north Bengal and warned that the people would foil any attempt to divide the State. Mr. Bhattacharjee accused militant outfits such as the ULFA of fomenting trouble in the region and providing support to organisations such as the GCPA and previously, the KLO. Centre intimated The West Bengal Government informed the Home Ministry of the developments in north Bengal in the wake of the GCPA's recent activities and conveyed its views on the treaty of accession that the association's leaders have been referring to in support of their political agenda. Also awaiting a response from the Centre is Mr. Burman. "We called off our four-day-long hunger strike in Cooch Behar last week following an assurance from the district administration that our demands had been passed on to the Centre. Our movement will be

resumed only after we get to know what the Centre has to say. We will be informed of it at a meeting promised to us on October 15 by the District Magistrate," he said.

The Statesman, online

Thursday, September 22 2005

Top cop among five killed

Statesman News Service

COOCH BEHAR/KOLKATA, Sept. 20 — Five people, including three policemen, were killed and several others injured in a clash between The Greater Cooch Behar People's Association activists and the force at Khagrabari near Cooch Behar town today. A curfew has been imposed upon the area.

The GCPA wants an "interim government in Cooch Behar" and no polls in the district as the terms on which it allowed itself to be included in India have been "violated."

The previously Princely state of Cooch Behar had joined the Union of India on 12 September, 1949, before merging into West Bengal on 19 January, 1950.

Mr Mustak Ahmed, Additional Superintendent of Police, Kalimpong, was killed at Chakchaka when a mob threw stones at him. He led the police contingent at Chakchaka, Mr Raj Kanojia, inspector-general, law and order, said. The two other policemen to have been killed are Gour Chandra Dhar (48) and Jogesh Chandra Sarkar (47), said North Bengal's inspector-general, Mr KL Meena. Two GCPA activists died in police firing. Mrs Tanushree Biswas, officer-in-charge of the Siliguri police women's cell, Ms Mumtaz Begum, inspector, Bagdogra, and constables Gore Tamang and Dilip Pradhan, injured, were taken to a nursing home at Siliguri. The IG said the police had told the GCPA to remove a road-block. Then they started firing: "only eight rounds," said the police while locals alleged a 15-minute fusillade. Mr Meena, too, was injured in the scrimmage. At Khagrabari and Chakchaka, several police vehicles and the Cooch Behar magistrate's car were damaged. The magistrate, Dr Ravi Inder Singh, ordered an extension of prohibitory orders under Section 144 Cr PC by another 24 hours. Some 23 GCPA supporters found themselves in MJN Hospital. Four hundred people were arrested. The GCPA general secretary, Mr Bangshi Badan Sarkar, demanded an inquiry by a Supreme Court judge into today's incident, alleging that the party's fasting supporters had been stopped by the police from moving towards the town. The district Trinamul Congress president, Mr Rabindra Nath Ghosh, too, demanded a judicial inquiry. Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee is to come here on Saturday for an 'anti-Greater Cooch Behar' gathering organised by the Left Front at the airport ground.

Earlier, the GCPA announced a mass fast-unto-death programme, scheduling its start for today. It wants Cooch Behar made a C-category state.

Left slams 'Greater Cooch Behar'

Statesman News Service

COOCH BEHAR, Sept. 14. — "Greater Cooch Behar" is fast becoming the main issue for the next Assembly elections in Cooch Behar.

In the first phase the CPI-M tried to ignore the issue but later they came forward possibly to maintain its vote bank.

The Forward Bloc chairman, Mr Kamal Guha is the first Leftist leader who had felt that the movement for the "Greater Cooch Behar" might cause problems for them. Now all the Left Front constituent parties are jointly organising meetings and campaigns to retain their bases especially in the rural areas in the district, though the proponents of "Greater Cooch Behar" never said that they were interested to fight elections.

Recently, the general secretary of The Greater Cooch Behar People's Association, Mr Bangshi Badan Barman had declared that the activists and supporters of the GCPA would start a hunger strike till death from 20 September, demanding proper implementation of the Cooch Behar "merger agreement".

He alleged that they repeatedly submitted their demands since 26 December 2000 but no initiatives were taken till now over the demands.

The Greater Cooch Behar People's Association is fighting for the last few years for implementation of the "Cooch Behar Merger Agreement" and declaration of the area as a C-category state of India.

The Left Front is visibly anxious over the issue and it is evident from the fact that they are organising gatherings, street corner meetings, processions and all sorts of campaign everyday against the pro "Greater Cooch Behar" activists by terming them secessionists and separatists.

The Left Front is conducting all the programmes to make the 24 September meeting a success. On that day the chief minister Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee will attend an anti-secessionist gathering as the chief speaker at the airport ground in Cooch Behar.

On the otherhand, the GCPA leadership alleged that they were facing attacks from the Left Front activists.

The GCPA general secretary opined that the CPI-M and the Forward Bloc were campaigning against them with certain political motivation. Denying that they were secessionists he alleged that the Left Front was terming them so to reap some political mileage out of the issue.

The major political parties took some time to catch the issue. Though the veteran Forward Bloc leader Mr Kamal Guha took up the issue earlier, the other Left Front parties including the CPI-M joined much later.

Forward Bloc sources said that the CPI-M took a long time to feel the danger. The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Trinamul Congress are yet to express their stand over the issue.

The Congress ventilated its stand on last Monday. They found a well-planned design of the CPI-M over the issue. Cooch Behar District Congress president Mr Shyamal Choudhury alleged that the CPI-M was trying to redirect the attention of common people from all the problems they were suffering from.

He made it clear that they will not term The Greater Cooch Behar People's Association as a secessionist and terrorist organisation till the administration does so. He alleged that the Left Front was playing a dual-role over this issue.

The Statesman online edition

Wednesday, October 5 2005

Cooch Behar killings spark Left row

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Sept. 21. — A day and five deaths later, Cooch Behar emerged as a potential potboiler with the CPI-M and Forward Bloc exchanging blames, at a level rarely witnessed before.

While Mr Kamal Guha, state agriculture minister and vice- chairman of the North Bengal Development Council, blamed the administration for the chaos that was reigning in Cooch Behar, the CPI-M state secretary, Mr Anil Biswas, found Mr Guha "instigating the agitators" instead of doing something for the region as NBDC vice-chairman.

Today's exchange is likely to add a new dimension to the local political equations when the chief minister, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, addresses a Left Front meeting on 24 September. The Union home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, is scheduled to visit the Berubari area on 25 September to oversee BSF operations.

"I had warned the government two years ago and asked the chief minister as well as the chief secretary and the home secretary to take action. But they did not bother to react. The Greater Cooch Behar Peoples' Association is spreading canards about the agreement that was signed between the Maharaja

of Cooch Behar and the Government of India before the merger of the state”, Mr Guha said at Writers’ Buildings today.

“Why is he blaming others? As vice-chairman of the NBDC, why didn’t he convene a meeting to discuss these issues? What initiative has he taken to ensure development of the region? We should exercise restraint when we talk. There is no point instigating the local people now”, Mr Biswas said while reacting to Mr Guha’s statement. He also issued a statement giving details of what the Left Front had done for the poor and landless farmers. Without naming any political party, Mr Biswas said those demanding a judicial inquiry were indirectly instigating the agitators.

Mr Guha claimed that the GCPA was telling the local people that they need not pay taxes and that the Maharaja had left a fortune for the development of the state which continued to lie unutilised with the government. “I requested the chief minister to take up the issue with the Centre and procure a copy of the original agreement and make it public. But I was laughed aside. Only the Forward Bloc tried to address the issue politically at local levels but other Left parties kept mum,” he said.

“I don’t think many Rajbansis are supporting the movement. There is a possibility that Kamtapuris were behind the violence yesterday. However, it is our failure even if one local resident takes their side”, said Mr Guha

The minister said he did not know Mr Bansibadan Burman, the GCPA leader. “I have heard that he used to be an SFI activist. But I don’t know about the forces behind him.”

The Statesman online edition

Wednesday, October 5 2005

North-South divide reflected

GCPA denies hand in top cop’s death

COOCH BEHAR/KOLKATA, Sept. 21.— Thousands of Greater Cooch Behar People’s Association (GCPA) supporters continued their fast-unto-death agitation, having begun it yesterday. Six of them, ill, have had to be shifted to hospital. The GCPA, to be at it until the home ministry yields, denied attacking policemen yesterday. It said it did not know who had done so. According to it, it does not harm even the CPI-M. The Forward Bloc claimed to have organised anti-GCPA rallies around the district today as the separatists vowed to carry on till “victory” was achieved. In Kolkata, grieving people poured into Gas Street today for a last glimpse of Mustaq bhai, the additional superintendent of Kalimpong slain in yesterday’s police-GCPA confrontation. The body was flown in from Bagdogra. Ahmed, a pan-vendor’s son, was born and brought up in this economically low-profile area. He is the first high-rank West Bengal

police officer to have died in action in more than two decades. Vinod Mehta, deputy commissioner (port), was killed by a Garden Reach mob in 1984. Some 25 junior policemen have died since 2003 whilst doing duty in West Bengal's Maoist-dominated districts. — SNS

[This collection is a random collection and does not included all the news reports on Koch Rajbanshi published during the mentioned perioed]