

The Telegraph

3000 tribals raid office



The Jhargram [lathicharge](#)

Nov. 11 [2009]: Nearly 3,000 tribals launched a “surprise attack” on the subdivisional office in Jhargram town today and allegedly tried to set it on fire before police struck back with batons and tear gas.

Employees bolted doors and windows to save themselves when they realised that the protesters in the office compound were about to storm inside. Tens of people were banging on the closed gates when the police moved in.

West Midnapore superintendent Manoj Verma said the “mob led by Maoists” was carrying kerosene. “They were about to sprinkle it outside the office doors when the police arrived.”

A police officer underlined the “surprise” element in the strike, saying the mob entered the office premises peacefully but changed colour all of a sudden. “They suddenly began running towards the office building and all hell broke loose.”

He added that the protest leaders were aware that the office did not have police cover.

Verma said that had the police not reached the premises within three minutes, there could have been a catastrophe. The baton charge was backed up with 20 tear-gas shells. “Five people were picked up.”

The People’s Committee Against Police Atrocities, which had herded the protesters into the town from villages, has called a 72-hour bandh in the subdivision from tomorrow in protest. Two women, injured in the police assault, have been hospitalised.

Mamata Banerjee slammed the police action. “Ordinary villagers are being tortured,” she said.

She also complained about policemen in plainclothes in the crackdown, especially one in a red T-shirt.

“Who are these people in red and blue T-shirts? I will ask the Union home minister to deploy the army in Lalgah,” she told a TV channel.

Asked whether the men in T-shirts could be CPM cadres, Mamata said: “You also have a look. I don’t need to say. How can they be with the police?”

The government denied any excesses. Home secretary Ardhendu Sen said: “Some people, including women, were lathicharged but that was merely an act to disperse them. The police didn’t do anything drastic but used force to the extent needed.”

Union finance minister and Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee iterated in Calcutta that the Centre would continue to co-operate with the state on the anti-Maoist drive. "It is the decision of both the state government and the Centre to deploy joint forces in Lalgarh," he said.

'Hostages' freed

The Maoists have released the two sweepers of the police department abducted yesterday.

"We decided to release them because we found out that they were only sweepers of the police department. They don't fight us," said Maoist leader Kishanji.

Rajendra Hela and Ramswarup Hela reached a police camp at Manidaha on foot around 8am. From there, they were taken to the Midnapore police lines, 15km away.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1091112/jsp/bengal/story_11731235.jsp