

## **What Happened in Nandigram?**

### **A statement of facts by CPI (M) Party**

The trouble in Nandigram began with attacks on Panchayat members, administrative officials and police on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2007. The following is a brief of what happened thereafter.

1. East Midnapur was poised to be declared as "Nirmal" district, for excellent achievements in sanitation. A central team was scheduled to visit Nandigram on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> January for this purpose. In fact, the central team has already visited other areas of the district and watched the noteworthy success in this regard. On 3<sup>rd</sup> January, the preparatory meeting for the visit was taking place in Kalicharanpur Gram Panchayat office. Some activists of Trinamool Congress gathered there at around 11-30 in the morning. They demanded that the land acquisition notice, served by Haldia Development Authority be scrapped and the Panchayat declare that there would be no such acquisition. Samerun Bibi, the Panchayat pradhan, refused to heed their demand. They were violent and abusive. They ransacked the Panchayat office. The Panchayat secretary was injured in the attack. The mob also pelted stones on the health sub-centre. It was only after this that the Panchayat pradhan informed the Nandigram police station. As the police vehicle was proceeding towards the village, they were attacked by an armed mob. 11 policemen including 2 ASIs were seriously injured. The police vehicle was torched. A rifle was also looted which was later returned to police station by TMC MLA Subhendu Adhikary. After some time another mob attacked a police car of Khejuri police station about five kilometers away and attempted to burn it. The police have not entered the area since then.

2. The miscreants started moving with arms and began to destroy bridges and culverts linking roads. They created an atmosphere of terror. On 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> January, they virtually destroyed every link road and bridge connecting Nandigram and Khejuri to the outside world. They also burnt a 25KV electric sub-station. An armed gang equipped with firearms attacked the CPI(M) local committee office in Rajaramchawk and burnt it. Cadres of TMC and other forces roamed around and threatened CPI(M) leaders and sympathizers with dire consequences. On both these days many houses of CPI(M) workers and sympathizers were looted. A large number of CPI(M) workers were forced to leave the villages and take shelter in a nearby camp. That the mob was armed could be seen in the photographs published in newspapers. The entire incident was meticulously planned.

3. The ousted CPI(M) workers and their families took shelter in a camp in the southern side of the Bhangabera bridge in Khejuri area. On 6<sup>th</sup> January miscreants of the so-called Jami Rakkha Committee (a conglomeration of TMC, Congress, SUCI, Naxalite groups, Jamiat ulema-e-Hind) attacked the camp at about 3 a.m. They even prepared bunkers for the attack. There was resistance from the camp and in the ensuing conflict three of the attackers died. One of them, Seikh Salim was a resident of South Kendemari, about 12 Kms away from the spot. It was evident that they gathered there to attack the camp in a planned manner.

4. On 7<sup>th</sup> January morning, the miscreants attacked the house of Sankar Samanta, CPI (M) Panchayat member, looted his house and burnt it. They dragged Samanta to Shitpara and burnt him alive in a haystack.

5. Bhudeb Mandal, another CPI (M) supporter was seriously injured in the attack. The miscreants left him, assuming that he was dead. He however, regained consciousness and somehow reached a relative's house. Later he was hospitalized. In all 153 houses were looted. The houses and shops of Lakhman Mandal, Sonachura Panchayat pradhan, Samerun Bibi, Kalicharanpur Panchayat pradhan, Arjun Maity, Dr, Pratap Paul, Rabiul, Annapurna Das -- all CPI (M) workers -- were burnt.

6. Among those evicted from the villages are 2 district Committee members of CPI (M), 2 local committee secretaries, 6 zonal committee members, 16 local committee members and 56 Party members. More than 200 families were forced to stay in relief camp or relatives' houses. Later, the number surged and more than 2000 people were ousted from the village. Their houses were looted and their lands were forcefully occupied. Hundreds of people were forced to pay ransom.

7. The attack spread to adjoining Khejuri and some parts of rural Haldia. On 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2007 a police party went to the village to discuss the issues. They were brutally attacked without any provocation. The local OC was seriously injured. Despite this, the police did not retaliate and returned back. The miscreants dragged Sadhucharan Chatterjee, an elderly police person and killed him. His body was found in the river after a three day search.

8. On 10<sup>th</sup> February, Sunita Mondal, a student of class ten, was brutally murdered after torture. Her body was found on a tree, with rope tied to her neck. Her father was ousted earlier by miscreants. The police could not enter into the village to collect information even after such an incident. Members of the State Women Commission were also faced resistance when they tried to investigate the matter.

9. On 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February, another 22 houses were burnt by the TMC miscreants. Many more families were forced to flee from the villages.

10. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March, one housewife (name withheld) was mass raped by a gang of TMC miscreants led by Srihari Samanta, a local TMC leader. The victim is from a CPI (M) sympathizer's family and refused to join the programme of Bhumi Rakkha Committee. The victim was hospitalized and her entire statement has been recorded.

11. The Chief Minister has stated categorically that there will be no forced land acquisition in Nandigram. On 9<sup>th</sup> February the CM pointedly told in a public meeting in Khejuri that without the consent of the people of Nandigram nothing will be done. Later, on a number of occasions during the last one month, the CM has repeatedly stated in very clear terms that the proposed Chemical Hub would be shifted if the people of Nandigram did not accept the proposal. Even after that, there was no respite from the atrocities perpetrated by the Bhumi Rakkha Committee, making it amply

clear that the question is not at all that of "land acquisition" but a political strategy to maintain a forced acquisition of Nandigram by a combination of political forces.

12. The district administration, meanwhile called a series of all Party meetings and peace meetings, mostly boycotted by TMC, Congress and Bhumi Rakkha Committee. The last such meeting was organized on 10<sup>th</sup> March where representatives from Left Front partners and BJP were present. TMC, Congress and Bhumi Rakkha Committee declined the invitation. It was decided in the meeting that the administration would move to restore reconstruction work and normalcy in the area and anyone resisting the constitutional duties would be legally dealt with.

13. On 14<sup>th</sup> March, the police entered the area after prior announcements through loudspeaker. When they reached Sonachura, they were attacked with bombs and guns. In the ensuing confrontation 13 people were killed. One more person was killed due to bomb injury.

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