

On Nandigram firing anniversary, Mamata vows to bring down communists

'We can forget our own name, but not of Nandigram,' firebrand leader Mamata Banerjee said Friday, sharing the dais with activist Medha Patkar at Nandigram's Adhikaripara as the victims of the March 14, 2007 carnage in this part of West Bengal's East Midnapore district were remembered a year on.

Exactly a year ago at around 10.30 a.m., police bullets felled at least 14 people who were protesting the proposed land acquisition for a special economic zone (SEZ).

A year later the gun-battles between the ruling Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and the opposition-led Bhumi Uchched Pratirodh Committee (BUPC) are not a regular phenomenon. But clashes continue now and then even after the CPI-M's 'recapture' of Nandigram after a massive November onslaught.

'I cannot return the dead sons to their mothers. I cannot return the honour of the raped. But I vow on the soil of Nandigram to bring down the communists who perpetrated the atrocities, killed democracy and innocent villagers,' said Mamata.

She took a handful of Nandigram soil and headed back to [Kolkata](#) where daylong programmes were organised. A procession is being held in the state capital with the soil in a place of honour.

As Mamata and Medha spoke in an impassioned manner, tears rolled down the faces of women assembled there.

Women were the worst victims of violence in Nandigram throughout 2007. Many were raped and assaulted by alleged CPI-M cadres both during the chaos of the police firing on March 14 and later in November last year when party men 'recaptured' the area.

'We are observing this day as martyrs' day and farmers' day. I am taking the soil of Nandigram to Kolkata and seek justice across the state,' Mamata said.

'Why are the culprits still not arrested? We want the triumph of good and defeat of the evil,' she said.

The Trinamool Congress leader also shared the dais with Provash Ghosh, the leader of Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI), a communist party outside the ruling Left Front but with pockets of mass support in rural West Bengal.

Meanwhile, a report in a Kolkata daily quoting a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) official said that there was no evidence to suggest that Maoists were present in Nandigram to arm the people.

While the ruling communists justified the actions in Nandigram citing presence of Maoists, the CRPF, which was deployed in the area in November last, said: 'It is a fabricated story that they came to distribute arms here'.

At least 14 people were killed March 14, 2007, in Nandigram as police opened fire to quell mobs and retake the area they lost control of in January after unrest over acquisition of farmland for industry.

'It is a black day in the 30-year rule of the Left in West Bengal. It is unfortunate and harrowing,' state Public Works Department (PWD) Minister Kshiti Goswami, who represents the Left Front constituent Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), had said on March 14 last year.

On July 31, 2006, the state government signed an agreement with Indonesia's Salim Group to implement industrial projects, including a chemical hub, to be spread over 10,000 acres in a 50:50 joint venture in Nandigram.

With the people of Nandigram rising in revolt, the government later decided to shift the project to Nayachar island in the same East Midnapore district.

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