

## Nandigram voting booths to be sealed for panchayat poll

All poll booths at volatile Nandigram in East Midnapore district of West Bengal will be sealed off during the panchayat elections starting May 11, officials said Tuesday.

District magistrate Anup Agarwal told IANS: 'We will seal off all 171 booths in Nandigram to avoid any kind of violence during the elections. Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel will be deployed at the booths a couple of days before the elections.

'The number of guards has not been finalised so far. But we are thinking to station about 1,000 personnel at the booths,' he added.

Nandigram witnessed violent incidents last year over the issue of acquisition of land for a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in the district. Many people were killed and many more wounded in the violent protests in March 2007 after villagers protested the West Bengal government's plans to take over 10,000 acres of land for the SEZ.

The panchayat elections in West Bengal will be held May 11, 14 and 18 and the police fear renewed violence in the volatile region.

Before the elections the West Bengal police will carry out raids across Nandigram to seize hidden firearms.

'We are sure that there are many firearms hidden in Nandigram. Raids will be carried out in May before the elections to ensure peaceful elections,' said District Superintendent of Police S.S. Panda.

Panda said check posts would be set up on all roads after the raid to prevent supply of new weapons.

The total voters at the two blocks in Nandigram is about 176,000.

The votes will be counted May 21.

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