

Arrested Nandigram suspects remanded in police custody

The 10 suspected Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) activists arrested Saturday along with arms and ammunition from a brick kiln near Nandigram by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team have been remanded in seven days' police custody.

They were produced Sunday before Contai Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Joyprakash Singha. A mob outside the court bayed for the blood of the arrested men and scuffled with police.

The CBI team arrested the men from Ma Janani Brick Field at Khejuri adjacent to Nandigram and seized from them 20 firearms and a huge cache of ammunition, besides six helmets of the type used by police - almost corroborating the claim of villagers that the CPI-M men had attacked them posing as cops on March 14 to recapture Nandigram.

On that day, 14 people were killed and 71 injured as police opened fire to quell mobs protesting the takeover of farmland for industry.

Two CPI-M flags were also found in their room. The men were later handed over to East Midnapore police.

If the helmet haul and party link are confirmed, this would be the first piece of evidence that the party cadre did, or intended to, take part in the 'recapture' of Nandigram.

The CBI got a tip-off at Adhikarypara in Nandigram about the men and arms when some villagers told the probe team they had seen the police move some bodies from one vehicle to another. Trailing the bloodstains from the spot, the sleuths reached three brick kilns near Tekhali bridge at Sher Khan Chowk, seven km from Nandigram.

They found the gang at the first kiln, Ma Janani Brick Field, and overpowered them, news reports said.

'They are not criminals and had subversive motives. We were shocked to find thousands of rounds of live ammunition. Around 20 arms, including 9-mm improvised pistols and 11 Japanese-make sophisticated rifles and live bombs,' an officer of the CBI was quoted by a local daily.

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