

## CHAPTER-IV

### **DOMINANCE WITH A DIFFERENCE: STRAINS AND CHALLENGES (1962-1967)**

During the severe food movement of 1959 led by the Communists, the Congress did not try to face with the problem politically as if the political stage of the Congress as a party did not exist. At that time, the Communists were always in the limelight as because they were holding processions, meetings, demonstrations and courting arrest. But on behalf of the Congress party there was no meetings and processions to counter opposition propaganda excepting a few press statements made by Atulya Ghosh. It would come out from the activities of the Congress party that it had more or less accepted the Leftist hegemony over Calcutta and the urban areas around it.<sup>1</sup> In that situation, Atulya Ghosh, the then all powerful Congress leader of West Bengal, remarked, “Calcutta has become Communist, but in coming election after winning from rural Bengal we will form the Ministry.”<sup>2</sup> After the 3<sup>rd</sup> general elections (1962) it was found that the words of Atulya Ghosh became true and with the help of rural vote-bank Congress party again had returned in power. Bidhan Chandra Roy became the Chief Minister along with previous set up and Prafulla Chandra Sen took the charge of his former Food and others departments in addition to agriculture.

#### **Vacuum Created Due to Sudden Death of B.C. Roy**

But that set up was not continuing for a long time due to the sudden death of B.C. Roy, the then Chief-Minister West Bengal, dated 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1962. So, a question came up arised tha who would replace B.C. Roy. In that context Smt. Padmaja Naidu, the then Governor of West Bengal convened a conference with legal experts of the State Government at Raj Bhavan to resolve the ongoing constitutional crisis. The Governor had the preveledge to take the valuable advice regarding the complicated

constitutional matter from Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the then President of India. Dr. Radhakrishnan was then present at Raj Bhavan to attend the 80<sup>th</sup> Birth-anniversary of B.C. Roy. After a comprehensive discussion a brief press note was issued from Governor's Secretariat on the same night and announced: "On account of the sudden demise of Dr. B. C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, on July 1, 1962, the Governor of West Bengal has been pleased to order that Prafulla Chandra Sen, a Minister of the Council of Ministers, West Bengal, will temporarily discharge the functions of the Chief Minister."<sup>3</sup>

### **Background of Prafulla Chandra Sen**

Prafulla Chandra Sen, who during the days of freedom struggle was in the forefront in the nationalist movement and was known in his working place as well as home town, Arambagh, as the 'Gandhi of Arambagh' (in Hooghly district).<sup>4</sup> Personally, he was entirely clean in so far as money matters are concerned. Throughout his entire career i.e. from Chairman of Union Board to Cabinet Minister for 20 years and Chief Minister for 5 years, he had not even possessed one katha of land, house or car, and there was no bank balance in his own name.<sup>5</sup> In many occasions it was found that a particular General Secretary who was entrusted for keeping the party fund, calling on him at his residence in the first week of every month in order to collect his salary cheque amounting Rs. 1400/- for crediting the sum to the account of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee. His household expenditure was very small and it was met out from party fund. In his earlier work place at Mayapur in Hooghly district, he had built a modest dwelling house as like as an *Ashram* of the Gandhian type with flower and kitchen garden.<sup>6</sup>

### **Causes behind the selection of P. C. Sen as Chief-Minister after B.C. Roy**

All the important portfolios like Home and Finance along with his earlier departments i.e. Food and Agriculture were given to Prafulla Chandra Sen. Though, Prafulla Chandra Sen was not an all India figure as like as his predecessor but his political stature was very high in his state in West Bengal. His position in West Bengal Cabinet was so important that it was almost unwritten declaration on behalf of

Cabinet as well as Congress party in West Bengal that after B.C. Roy Prafulla Chandra Sen would be the helm of affairs in the state. For example, in the general election of 1957, when B. C. Roy's chances of victory were black, then B.C. Roy was telling his Congress Friends, "Even if I am not elected, Congress will be returned to power, and Prafulla will be there".<sup>7</sup> Not only that, even at the time of the severe food movement in West Bengal, 1959, the main target of the opposition was to humiliate Prafulla Chandra Sen in any circumstances.<sup>8</sup> Keeping in mind his unique position both in party and Government it was common that Prafulla Chandra Sen used to enter into chief minister's room early in the morning and the two together would discuss numerous problems of the State over a cup of tea. But, the other colleagues of B.C. Roy had not enjoyed that privilege. Naturally, after B.C. Roy's death there were none to challenge him among the surviving senior Congress leaders, both in the government and in the party organization.<sup>9</sup>

### **Prafulla Chandra Sen at Helm**

As after the death of B.C. Roy, Prafulla Chandra Sen temporarily became the Chief Minister later he was unanimously elected Leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party on 8<sup>th</sup> day of July 1962. The Sradh ceremony of B. C. Roy was being performed in the morning while in another part of the city Prafulla Chandra Sen, known as the "number two man" in the cabinet of B.C. Roy was crowned as the leader of Congress Legislative Party (CLP) within 10 minutes.<sup>10</sup> The meeting was attended by 186 Congress MLAs and MLCs. The name of P. C. Sen was moved by Atulya Ghosh, the then State Congress President and was seconded by Kalipada Mukherji, Home Minister. It was also a rumour that some of the followers of Atulya Ghosh request the latter to become the Chief Minister of West Bengal. It was not materialized at the end. In the question of leadership, the third name which had come was Kalipada Mukherjee. Kali Babu had a very strong political base in Calcutta. Though, he had a good record as a political sufferer but his performance as Home Minister (Police) roused sharp criticism in the form of his use of police in order to suppress the various movement and assault of pressmen which alienated him from the intelligentsia and the Press. Naturally, he stepped down from the race of leadership. However, in order to solve the question of leadership Prafulla Chandra Sen, Atulya Ghosh and Kalipada Mukherjee had to sit together and decided that Prafulla Chandra

Sen would be the next Chief Minister.<sup>11</sup> Regarding the unanimous selection of Prafulla Chandra Sen as the next Chief Minister of West Bengal, Saroj Chakrabarty, personal assistant of the Chief Ministers observed, “He was perhaps the only fortunate politician in the sensitive State of West Bengal who did not encounter any opposition either from his partymen in the organization or Congress legislators. Analysing the events since 1947, it was found that every Chief Minister beginning from Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, and even the great Dr. B. C. Roy and Ajoy Mukherjee had to face some form of contests within and outside the party. After 1972 general elections Siddhartha Sankar Ray’s unanimous selection as the leader of the Congress Party was possible due largely to the Ajoy Mukherjee’s decline to contest the election.”<sup>12</sup> But the main reason for the smooth sailing of Prafulla Chandra Sen became possible due to the unequivocal support of Atulya Ghosh who had complete control over the party machinery in West Bengal. It is noteworthy that Atulya Ghosh had his grounding in politics under Prafulla Chandra Sen whom he would regard as his political Guru i.e, preceptor. Naturally, it was easy to think that after B.C. Roy, Prafulla Chandra Sen would be in the steering in wheel.<sup>13</sup>

Thereafter, Atulya Ghosh and P.C. Sen drove in to the Raj Bhavan. After an hour’s meeting with Padmaja Naidu, the Governor of the state the personnel of the Cabinet and their respective portfolios were announced. All the members of the Council of Ministers numbering 15 were retained while the vacancy caused by the death of B. C. Roy was not filled up. The new Chief Minister took charge in addition to his ‘pet’ portfolios of Food, Agriculture and Supplies, some of the portfolios held by his predecessor. Among them were General Administration, Political, Anti-Corruption and Enforcement Branch of the Home Department, Finance and Development Department. Kalipada Mukherji was next in line and he was brought to Sen’s adjacent room. He was given the additional charge of the Home (Transport) Department. Actually Prafulla Chandra Sen wanted to have him in close proximity for frequent consultation on administrative and organizational matters. In the beginning of July, 1962 an inner Cabinet was formed with P.C. Sen, Atulya Ghosh and Kalipada Mukherji. They collectively took decisions on the state and party matters. Tarun Kanti Ghosh, a Cabinet Minister of the previous Ministry was raised to the rank of a Full Cabinet Minister and was given the important portfolio of Commerce and Industries.<sup>14</sup>

On assuming office Prafulla Chandra Sen made his first statement which reflected his mood at that time. The statement was as follows: “Today I have been elected Leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party and I seek the blessings of the departed soul. He was a great leader and it will be very difficult to fill the void created by his untimely demise. But I am sure if we can inspire team work amongst us both in the Congress and in the Government we shall be able to fulfill his dreams. The legacy that Dr. Roy has left will certainly show the illumine the path which we will tread with courage, devotion and wisdom so that West Bengal, known as a problematic State, may steer clear of all obstacles through our united efforts”. On the Morning of the following day i, e, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1962, Governor Padmaja Naidu administered Oath taking ceremony at Raj Bhavan in a brief function. The other members of Dr. Roy’s cabinet retained their respective portfolio. <sup>15</sup> From Raj Bhavan Prafulla Chandra Sen went to the Assembly House to attend the second Budget session and later announced to a group of journalists that the “unfinished tasks undertaken by Dr. Roy would be carried on”. <sup>16</sup>

Prafulla Chandra Sen’s apparent modesty charmed anyone who came in contact with him, irrespective of their official status –whether they belonged to the ordinary run of people or to high society. In spite of that, Sen had more affinity for rural people with his long contacts at grass root level. He was out and out a staunch supporter of the Congress party, a lifelong bachelor and free from the burden of a domestic life to devote his whole time and energy for the people. Though he was very much aware about his limitation and used to say, “I cannot fill the void created by Dr. B. C. Roy and all that I shall endeavour to do is to follow his imprints”. <sup>17</sup> In case of his comparison with Dr. Roy, a few months after of his Chief-Ministership one of his overly enthusiastic friends remarked that the administration was going on smoothly in the absence of B.C. Roy. Prafulla Chandra Sen reacted at once and said, “Do not compare me with Dr. Roy. Dr. Roy was Dr. Roy”. <sup>18</sup>

### **Decentralization of power by P.C.Sen**

In comparison with Bidhan Chandra Roy so far as Cabinet colleagues were concerned, Prafulla Chandra Sen made a big departure regarding the essence of governmental power. During B.C. Roy’s regime Ministers would force to discharge

their duties according to the will of the Chief Minister. As a head of the administration of the state though B.C. Roy always thought about the betterment of West Bengal but at the same time he did not like to take any question about his activities. As Saroj Chakrabarty stated, “During Dr. Roy’s regime the essence of governmental power, though exercised by the Cabinet, reflected the policies of which he was the author, and often he was charged with over-centralisation.”<sup>19</sup> As to the achievements of B.C. Roy no body other than Padmaja Naidu, the then Governor of West Bengal described him as ‘Benevolent Patriarch’. So, everybody accepted the attitude of B.C. Roy and acknowledged that ‘king can do no wrong’. Regarding the attitude of the over-centralisation of B.C. Roy’s administration Hemchandra Naskar, Minister-in-Charge of Forest and Fisheries of B.C. Roy Cabinet would jokingly said, “we are all tortoise minister, have to come to Writers Building with slow motion like tortoise and whenever we come Dr. Roy would overturn us and we started to through our hands and legs but could not move. Again at 5.p.m. Dr. Roy would converted us in our former position then we had to leave the Writers Buildings for our home by car in a tortoise motion.”<sup>20</sup> But P.C. Sen did not accept the over-centralise attitude of his predecessor because he would believe in team work and spirit of comradeship. As a result of that differences of opinion occurred in several times and there upon he had resigned from B.C. Roy’s Ministry, though at last due to request of B.C Roy he had to withdraw his resignation. Naturally P. C. Sen was very much aware about the helplessness of the Ministers. He himself was able to form a strong organization at Arambagh in the way of de-centralisation of power and cohesion with various groups which one might call it as ‘team sprit’.<sup>21</sup> So, after becoming Chief Minister P. C. Sen from the very beginning made it clear to his Cabinet colleagues that they were free to take decisions to run their departments according to the decision of the Cabinet. In fact he separated himself from that extraordinary powers and distributed it to his colleagues. The Ministers could approach him for suggestions but it depended on them to take final decision. In this way, he wanted to generate a ‘spirit of comradeship’ as well as ‘team spirit’ and joint responsibility in the Cabinet. On 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1962, P. C. Sen delivered his first budget speech in the House where he firmly asserted steady progress of West Bengal in agricultural production that led the State a self-dependent one. P. C. Sen had brought a change in the use of language in the House. He had switched over to Bengali instead of English in making important statements on behalf of the Government. He was really a fine speaker in Bengali and

would cautious to place his argument with supporting data. From that time onward the practice of the delivering speeches on the floor of the Assembly House were started in the mother tongue.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Aam Darbar***

As a grass root politician it was very much clear to Prafulla Chandra Sen that the original strength of democracy was laid in the well understanding between Government and the common people. Actually, whatever we understand about the term “peoples’ man” P. C. Sen was the finest example of that term. It was no need to mention that the common people had not the courage to go to B.C. Roy easily but peoples could go to P. C. Sen without any hesitation. So, in democracy as a representative of the masses, P. C. Sen started ‘Aam Darbar’ from the month of August in 1962.<sup>23</sup> As per the decision announced by the Chief Minister P. C. Sen in the month of August in 1962 arrangements were made to hear the complaints from the public in the afternoon of every Monday at his residence. Actually from the ancient times the kings of the Indian sub-continent used to maintain direct relationship with the masses through that practice and thereby they would be aware about the error of the administration and take appropriate steps for the interest of the common people. That practices were continued in the Muslim period also. Even emperor Aurangzeb also had heard the problems of the masses through ‘Aam Darbar’ and had taken appropriate measures and if necessary he personally would go to the place of occurrence. Not only that Dr. Sarvapally Radha Krishnan also introduced the same technique to hear the miseries as well as complaints from the masses.<sup>24</sup> The first day of his ‘Aam Darbar’ continued for two hours and any member of the public could come straightly and present his petition directly to the Chief Minister. The first ‘Meet the people’ programme of P. C. Sen attracted headlines in various news papers and created a great awakening among the masses. People, particularly poorer section of the society stood in line in front of his Raj Bhavan residence. On the first day of his Aam Darbar i.e. on 20<sup>th</sup> August, the Chief Minister had talked to 500 men and women individually and taken appropriate steps to solve their petitions. He wanted to redress their grievances on the spot. In that benevolent approach to help the common people, he was assisted by his Cabinet colleagues Jagannath Koley. Though, most of the complaints were related to minor matters such as delaying in Government sanction in respect of tubewells, relief and individual help. So, after hearing the petitioners’

complaints P. C. Sen would give appropriate orders to solve them as early as possible. In that way, P. C. Sen with the help of his couple of personal staff categorized the problems and sent them to the concerned departments for enquiry and report without delay. As a result of taking such type of measures in some cases quick action was taken to relieve the common people. Gradually the number of visitors increased and it touched 1600 and on that occasion the Chief Minister was assisted by his 11 Cabinet colleagues. But, a section of the bureaucracy somewhat did not support the 'Aam Darbar' arrangement of P. C. Sen. It was also reported in the news paper that if that 'Aam Darbar' would continue then the Chief Minister's Relief Fund would dry up very soon if money was sanctioned in so large a number of cases. In spite of that the Chief Minister did not stop the 'Aam Darbar'. However that 'Aam Darbars' were abandoned after a couple of months as the Chief Minister became preoccupied when a national emergency arose in October-November of that year in the pretext of the Chinese aggression against India.<sup>25</sup>

The Cabinet of West Bengal Ministry moved to Darjeeling in the last week of May, 1963 and Government's step 'to meet people' was started in both Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Representatives of Gorkha League, Darjeeling Municipality and Indian Tea Association came in groups and discussed about their various problems with the Cabinet team. This was a changing approach of the Government which raised hopes as well as aspiration in the minds of the long neglected hill people. This was repeated in Kalimpong.<sup>26</sup>

### **Cabinet Meeting in the Districts**

Chief Minister P. C. Sen had taken another important step i. e. holding of the Cabinet meetings in the every districts of West Bengal. There was some Minister in his Cabinet who had no personal conception about all over West Bengal. Besides that they were not well acquainted regarding the special problems of some districts. As a result of that where no need of tubewells or repairing of road but the money would sanction for that area as a part of average assistance for development, but where there was no infrastructure at all from beginning in order to solve that problem no special allocation were made instead of average assistance. So, first of all, P.C. Sen, the Chief Minister of the state wanted that the ministers should understand the problems of all

the districts and after that according to the decision of the Cabinet they should discharge the duties of their own department. Whenever the Cabinet meeting was held in the particular district it would help the ministers to get acquainted the nature of problems of that district and accordingly they would take appropriate measures to solve the problem. That type of Cabinet meeting in the districts was arranged first at Arambagh, the home town of Prafulla Chandra Sen. Naturally after taking those steps a direct communication took place in between the Government and the stakeholders. The opposition smelled their space for politics in West Bengal was going to be crunched. Due to the unhappiness of the bureaucracy and their influence on some Ministers however, P. C. Sen had to stop the Cabinet meeting in the districts later on.<sup>27</sup>

### **First Encounter with Lawlessness**

In response to the citizens' ovation of Prafulla Chandra Sen on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1962 at Calcutta Maidan Chief Minister Sen said, "If I could heartily feel the various complicated problems of West Bengal then it would be easier to solve them. Though I knew that there were so many hindrances in that path but I strongly believe that we must overcome any type of difficulty and would be able to solve the hundreds problems of Bengal." Chief Minister Sen also promised that they must maintain law and order of the city of Calcutta as well as West Bengal even if at the cost of his life. He was well aware about the excitement of Bengal politics and that is why as a "peoples' man" P. C. Sen always wanted cooperation from the people.<sup>28</sup> After long observation of P. C. Sen's connection with the people Pratap Chandra Chaunder, one of the influential leaders as well as former president of WBPCC, has rightly written, "So far as my knowledge about the politicians and administrator of India and among them Prafulla Chandra was the leader of the people. He was really very much sympathetic towards the common people irrespective of caste and creed. He had born for people and sacrificed his life also for the people."<sup>29</sup>

As a head of the administration of the state of West Bengal, P.C. Sen was very adamant in the field of the maintainance of law and order of the state as well as to encounter any kind of lawlessness. For example, on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1962, a student was arrested by the Railway Police at Sealdah for his travelling in a higher class

without proper ticket of that class only ignoring the established norms of the Indian Railways that led to a major challenge to law and order. As a consequence of that incidence plundering were held at least 17 places, 13 trams were burned and property of lakhs of rupees were destroyed. Before the news reached in Writers' Buildings at 11 O'clock i.e. in the Chief Minister's office, 200 people were arrested and 90 people injured. After hearing the news the Chief Minister promptly sent his Chief Secretary, R. Gupta, to the disturbed area for an assessment of the situation. Gupta returned to Chief Minister's room and after apprising him about the situation a new instruction was issued to the Police Chief, S. M. Ghosh, to arrest the ring leaders of the disturbances by plain-clothes police from the backside. That was the first time i.e. the use of plain cloth police was started to nab the anti socials in order to establish law and order.<sup>30</sup>

### **First Delhi Visit of P. C. Sen as the Chief Minister**

Prafulla Chandra Sen went to Delhi nine weeks after his assumption of office as Chief Minister. After reaching New Delhi on 7<sup>th</sup> September he went straight to 19 Canning Lane residence of Atulya Ghosh,<sup>31</sup> which then had become the hub of Delhi's political activities. After B.C. Roy's death and Pandit Nehru's trouble in health Atulya Ghosh gradually became prominence in all India Congress organization which at a time had come under his grip. His influence was so vast that the Congress Chief Ministers of many other States were frequently seen to come to his house in Delhi for renewal of acquaintance. Some of the journalists of metropolitan used to come regularly to his residence at any times of day and night. The West Bengal Chief Minister, P. C. Sen's meeting with Prime Minister Nehru was held in the morning of 8<sup>th</sup> September for half an hour. Meanwhile at the indication of Atulya Ghosh a felicitation ceremony was organized by the West Bengal M.Ps. in honour of Prafulla Chandra Sen. Most of the Delhi dignitaries were invited to renew the contact with new Chief Minister. In the evening Prafulla Chandra Sen met the President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. Later, a Press Conference was held for the introduction of the new Chief Minister to Delhi journalists.<sup>32</sup>

### **Cabinet Expansion**

After his return to Calcutta the Chief Minister, P. C. Sen expanded his Cabinet by inclusion of Sankar Das Banerji, a very well known Barrister and former speaker of the State Legislative Assembly. The decision of the inclusion of Sankar Das Banerji in the Cabinet was taken in Delhi with the willingness of Atulya Ghosh. In all Cabinet reshuffles during his 4.5 year tenure of Chief Ministership, Atulya Ghosh was the person who had a dominant voice. The portfolios of Finance and Home (Transport) Departments were given to Sankar Das Banerji. At the time of formation of B.C. Roy's Cabinet after 1962 general election, its strength was 16, but after his demise and Kalipada Mukherji's death<sup>33</sup> the number was reduced by two. The strength of the Cabinet became again 16 owing to inclusion of Samarjit Banerji of Nadia, as a Minister of State followed by the inclusion of Sankar Das Banerji.<sup>34</sup>

### **Reaction of Chinese intrusion**

The political scenario of India was undergoing a vast change, as the people in general had been ascertained into a sense of security specially after the signing of Pancha Sheel pact between India and China in 1954, due to a vague feeling that her neighbor country China would never engage herself into any major conflict over the boundary issue. A wave of sensation swept over Calcutta when citizens had read reports about Chinese attacking Indian territory in Thag-La-pass near Dhola on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1962. When China was attacking India, the people of Bengal were celebrating their biggest national festival Durga puja. On that occasion, 'Chinese Aggression Resistance Organisation' (CARO) was formed for the first time in Calcutta under the leadership of a leftist leader, Soumendra Nath Tagore. In a meeting, held on 16<sup>th</sup> October where on behalf of the 'Chinese Aggression Resistance Organisation' Tagore charged Nehru for following a weak-kneed policy which threatened India in the face of its sovereignty. At the same time he criticized the CPI for playing down the Chinese injurious role and observed that it would not be astonishing if China one day tried to attack the whole of India, taking the opportunities of the disintegrating forces within the country. A day ahead of China's extensive attack on NEFA front on 19<sup>th</sup> October, S. A. Dange, the then Chairman of the Communist Party of India, in a statement in Bombay supported that the Government of India's stand that the Chinese had encroached south of the Mac-

Mahon Line and they should be thrown out. Dange also criticized the Chinese anti-Indian policy and remarked: “India was neither aggressive nor expansionist and Mr. Nehru’s foreign policy is not made either by dollar aid or rouble aid. We the (CPI) are neither Peking patriots nor Washington patriots. We the citizens of India are neither aggressive nor expansionist. Anyone who attacks such a country of ours must be rebuffed”.<sup>35</sup>

When fighting broke out in between Indian and Chinese soldiers in NEFA then the Indian soldiers were hurriedly air-lifted without adequate warm clothing to fight in cold, not only that they were not habituated to fight in that atmosphere. In that context, P. C. Sen came to office one morning and expressed that he had been enlightened at midnight by Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Home Minister of India from Delhi and seeking his help to collect warm clothings, woolen jersy, boots etc. from Calcutta market as much as quantities possible for the Jawans in NEFA. As a result of the direct intervention of Chief Minister P. C. Sen whatever necessities for the Army were available in Calcutta market was collected as soon as possible and then rushed to Army authorities. On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1962, in a broadcast over the All-India Radio network the people of India heard the sound of the voice of Nehru which was overloaded with emotion. The Prime Minister denounced the Chinese treachery against a country which had befriended it and worked with sincerity for its admission into the U. N. West Germany and Canada branded China as the aggressor and denounced Chinese attack on India.<sup>36</sup>

### **State of Emergency and Role of West Bengal Government**

As a consequence of the Chinese attack against India a State of Emergency in the country was proclaimed by the President of India on 26<sup>th</sup> October, 1962.<sup>37</sup> In that hour of distress the West Bengal Government announced its decision to raise Home Guards and a resolution in that respect was adopted by the State Defence Committee (SDC) accordingly on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1962. Though the Chief Minister could not attend office on account of his illness during that crucial time for two days in spite of that he issued an appeal to the people to come forward for the necessity of the nation and requested to report to the Commissioner of Police and District

Magistrates for their enlistment as Home Guards. There was a remarkable national emersion in the country. The recruiting centres were crowded by willing men. The mood of the people was revealed when a middle aged man while waiting at the Delhi recruiting centre remarked: "I may not walk fast but I can sit down and shoot".<sup>38</sup>

The West Bengal Assembly unanimously adopted the 'West Bengal Home Guards Bill-1962' and the 'National Defence Fund (West Bengal) Bill-1962' on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1962, before it was adjourned sine die to facilitate the members to go back to their own constituencies to enthuse people in defence efforts. Siddhartha Sankar Ray, an Independent member of the Assembly strongly supported the two measures induced by the Chief Minister and said that it was for the Union Government to consider Chinese cease-fire proposal.<sup>39</sup> But considering the Chinese 'barbarous attack' the country should be ready for worse. As a step to thrive people's morale he suggested foundation of a wing of the Defence Ministry in Calcutta. "India", he said, "should take as much help as possible from USA and UK who were the country's genuine friends".<sup>40</sup> S.S. Ray also thanked the Chief Minister for arresting China's 'friends'. In that connection it should be mentionable that in view of the Chinese attack in India a massive country wide operation went on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1962, which brought under the purview in jail custody of 350 members of the Communist Party of India along with some of the leading workers of the Party on various States. Amongst the arrested persons- some were members of Parliament, 30 of the Members of the Legislative Assemblies and Councils, 5 Ministers of the first Communist Government of Kerala and a Nepali woman of Darjeeling. Madras province headed the list with 100 arrests which followed by West Bengal's 60. In that connection the Leader of the Opposition in West Bengal Legislative Assembly, Jyoti Basu, the Chief Whip of the Communist Party in the Assembly, Ganesh Ghosh, the State CPI Secretary, Promode Dasgupta, along with Harekrishna Konar, Mr. Muzaffar Ahmed and the Editor of the Communist organ, 'Swadhinata', were also arrested. Secret police reports exposed that most of the arrested persons were belonging to the pro-Chinese wing of the C. P. I. in West Bengal. Though, Somnath Lahiri, the then acting spokesman of the C. P. I. in the Assembly lamented that the arrests were made at a time when his Party was trying its best to help defence efforts. Notwithstanding, Somnath Lahiri had come one morning along with a number of his party men to meet Chief Minister in Writers' Buildings and handed over several thousand rupees for the National Defence Fund.<sup>41</sup>

## **Internal Chaos of the C.P.I. and its Impact on the Politics of West Bengal**

In the meanwhile, secret police reports received in Chief Minister's office about the forthcoming split in the Communist Party of the State. According to the reports the West Bengal CPI Secretariat urged its Central Secretariat to take quick disciplinary actions against Promode Dasgupta and Muzaffar Ahmed (they were in jail) and oust them from the Party. The main charges against them were that they liquidated 'Swadhinata', the Party Organ in Calcutta, and as a consequence of that the Communist Party of West Bengal could not implement the resolution of National Council on Indo-China conflict.<sup>42</sup> As a result of the difference of opinions among the leaders of the Communist Party of India specially after the Chinese attack in India, at last at midnight of April 14-15, 1964 the National Executive Council of the Communist Party of India under the Chairmanship of S. A. Dange took the necessary step to expel seven members and suspend 25 others including Jyoti Basu of the West Bengal. In that context, the 32 rebel members walked out of the Council meeting at once on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1964 and declared, "We represent the Communist Party of India, we are confident that the vast majority of the party members and the public will support our principled stand and rally to uphold the honour and prestige and the revolutionary traditions of the Communist movement in India".<sup>43</sup>

### **Achievements of P. C. Sen**

#### **(i). Resounding Victory in the bye-elections**

Prafulla Chandra Sen was possessed with an element of fortune during the first year of his office as the Chief Minister. Successive events proved that the Chinese invasion helped him to raise his dignity as one of the efficient Chief Ministers of the country. The way he organized the State had lighted patriotic feelings in the face of the prime influence of the Communists. Compulsion of events helped in bringing about a lasting cleavage amongst his chief political opponents, the Communists on the pretext of Chinese aggression. As a result of the division within Communist party, the results of the five bye-elections to the State Assembly on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1963, showed that Congress had captured all the five seats. Actually, that was a

'day of victory' for Prafulla Chandra Sen. The Prime Minister's credence about the performance of West Bengal Government as well as Congress Organisation in the State one year after the death of B. C. Roy was steadily rising and as a result of that he made several visits to the State and consented to inaugurate the political convention of the Pradesh Congress Committee (henceforth PCC) at Digha on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1963. It was really a credit for a State Chief Minister to make the Prime Minister available to visit his State. Digha, a small and sea resort in Midnapore district founded by B.C. Roy and inhabited by a few hundred people, but a large crowd of many thousands were assembled to hear Nehru who reached there with Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Union Home Minister and Shrimati Indira Gandhi to participate in the Conference. Nehru's speech was mainly concentrated to India's attitude towards China and acceptance of the Colombo proposals.<sup>44</sup>

### **(ii). Bidhan Chandra Children Hospital**

Prime Minister Nehru came to Calcutta on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1963 to attend the occasion of the first death anniversary of Bidhan Chandra Roy. His programme included laying the foundation-stone ceremony of a Children Hospital in the north-eastern side of Calcutta after the name of Bidhan Chandra Roy. The primary focus of his seven minute speech was concentrated mainly to the various problems of the children and to pay his tributes to great B.C. Roy. Padmaja Naidu, the then Governor of West Bengal, Vijay Luxmi Pundit, Governor of Maharashtra, Dr. Sushila Nayar, Union Health Minister and P.C. Sen, Chief Minister of West Bengal were present in the occasion. The 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday as well as first death anniversary of B.C. Roy was attracted a large convention at the prayer meeting in the park, opposite to his house. Tushar Kanti Ghosh, President of the B. C. Roy Memorial Committee communicated in the prayer meeting that Rs. 50 lakhs had already been collected and the same was invested in the National Defence Certificates (NDC).<sup>45</sup>

### **(iii). Durgapur Gas Grid project**

Prafulla Chandra Sen, the Chief Minister of the state went to Durgapur on 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1963 along with Atulya Ghosh and Sir D. N. Mitra, Chairman of the Durgapur Project Ltd. for the purpose of the inauguration of the gas grid project of the

Government of West Bengal. The 180 miles long gas pipe line in Durdapur was perhaps the longest gas pipe line in the country.<sup>46</sup>

#### **iv). First Indian Electric Locomotive**

The Prime Minister Nehru went to Durgapur and Assansol for the fulfillment of his two pre-schedule important engagements there. Nehru arrived at Durgapur, the 'dream city' of Bidhan Chandra Roy, to open the Indo-Soviet Coal Mining Machinery Project of Rs. 35-crore on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1963. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the creator of 'Rhur' of West Bengal was respectfully remembered by Nehru and the assembled gathering. It was expected that as per the requirement the coal mining industry in India it would produce coal cutters, conveyors and other necessary types of basic machinery. Considering the Coal utmost importance was given by B.C. Roy to materialise the scheme two years prior to his death. Incidentally, at Chittaranjan, the first Indian built electric locomotive was given the name 'Bidhan' by the Prime Minister Nehru. The Prime Minister then got into the locomotive and drove the engine. The workshop of Chittaranjan was turning out steam engines and passenger coaches in a very large scale that it would soon enabled India to enter into the export market. The A.C. locomotive which was turned out from a design that was supplied by a Continental Consortium a few weeks after the imported locomotive introduced on Indian tracks.<sup>47</sup>

#### **(v). Haldia Port in the Making**

P. C. Sen, the Chief Minister of the state had taken special attempt for the fulfillment of Haldia Project. When Union Shipping Minister Raj Bahadur came to Calcutta for an on the spot study regarding the feasibility of the Haldia port, then P. C. Sen along with Humayun Kabir, the then Union Oil and Natural Gas Minister and a group of M.P.s and M.L.As also went there by a special steamer on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1963. The making of Haldia was really a thrilling experience. The first phase of the project was then almost towards the completion. As a result of the efficient pursuance of the Chief Minister P.C. Sen, Raj Bahadur was convinced to declare that the new port would be prepared with five berths for skillfull handling of coal, iron and general commodities and for that Rs. 30 crores including Rs. 14 crores from the World Bank

as the foreign exchange component would be allocated on behalf of the central government. Thereafter, Haldia port gained new life and planned to handle 11 million tons of cargo annually without affecting the cargo movement of Calcutta port.

In the initial stage of the project there were some genuine difficulties regarding the acquisition of land that connected the question of displacement of many families and rehabilitation. It was estimated that approximately about 10,000 people of 54 villages were to be displaced. In that connection due to the very positive approach and adequate measures taken by the Chief Minister P. C. Sen the displaced persons were however, provided lands for their rehabilitation within a few miles distance of the project. In the field of the rehabilitation of the displaced persons from the project area a public meeting was organized by Congress workers where the visiting Ministers addressed about the future of the project and necessity of the rehabilitation. In that meeting Humayun Kabir for the first time announced that “Government of India was considering for the establishment of an oil refinery that was likely to be cost of Rs. 30 crores, thereby opening up the probabilities of establishing new petrochemical industries.”<sup>48</sup>

#### **(vi). Model of the Second Hooghly Bridge**

On 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1964, a gigantic model of the second Hooghly Bridge and details of the design were displayed on the corridor in Writers’ Buildings facing Chief Minister’s room. This model was prepared by the British firm named Rendell Palmer & Triton which was appointed by the State Government for a feasibility study of the proposed bridge at the point of Princep Ghat. To find out the feasibility of its construction the firm had taken two years to prepare the same and the West Bengal Government paid then Rs. 17 lakhs as its remuneration. The firm’s representative, J. R. Otter explained to the Chief Minister that according to the model, the bridge was designed to be of tied arch type, much simpler but longer, than the Howrah Bridge (now Rabindra Setu) which had also been designed by the same firm. The proposed Second Hooghly Bridge would be 75 ft. wide and about a mile long and the tentative expenditure would be the amount of Rs. 12 crores. Though, the proposed work of the Bridge started eight years later during Siddhartha Sankar Ray’s Ministry and the foundation was laid by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, but the credit has to go to P.C.

Sen who is said to have done the grounding work for the said Bridge during his regime.<sup>49</sup>

## **Problems Faced by P. C. Sen**

### **(i) Angry Opposition and No-Confidence Motion**

P. C. Sen, the Chief Minister of the state had to face such a situation in the Assembly for the first time of his chief ministership for which he was not mentally ready at all. It was on 16<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1963 that a war of words at one point tended to deteriorate into a physical clash. The excitement started over a statement of the Chief Minister that he did not believe in the correctness of the statement made by Hemanta Kumar Bose, the Forward Bloc leader about the deaths on account of starvation in Purulia, the drought-prone district in West Bengal. Though, the Chief Minister admitted that the Food situation was not up to the mark and at the same time he accused the surplus growers for the store of food grain for more profit which was the main cause behind the rise in food prices. The Chief Minister also expressed his helplessness in taking any drastic action against the said profiteers owing to the changed policy of the Union Government regarding Defence of India Rules (DIR) against profiteers. As the Chief Minister did not accept the statement of Hemanta kumar Basu as correct, so, in protest the opposition stopped the business of the House for that day, not only that the opposition members of the Assembly resorted to a token three-day hunger-strike in the Assembly House in order to draw the public attention towards the demand for a 'radical change' of the food-policy of the Government of West Bengal.<sup>50</sup>

At last, at the end of the three day food debate as well as token hunger-strike the Chief Minister defended his Government's policy and firmly stated that there could not be any basic change in the food policy of the Government as because was formulated on the basis of long experience and numerous trials. Finally the Opposition Group brought a notice of no-confidence motion against the P. C. Sen's Ministry.<sup>51</sup> Naturally, the Assembly Hall was resounded with exciting speeches on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1963 both from Treasury and Opposition Benches regarding the question of no –confidence motion. But, surprisingly the Chief Minister remained unperturbed

entirely the long eight-hour debate. Chief Minister gave suitable answer against any kind of question and queries of the opposition. Thereafter, when the Chief Minister sought the confidence of the House, the House again showed its confidence on the Ministry of P. C. Sen, by rejecting the no-confidence motion of the opposition by overwhelming majority. But, the most significant event of the motion was that the Independent Member of the House, Siddhartha Sankar Ray's efficient summing up of the P. C. Sen Ministry's achievements which had done the Chief Minister's task very easy. Introduction of adult franchise in municipal elections, release of political prisoners and the setting up of the Estimates Committee of the Assembly were mentioned by S.S. Ray as the instances of the Sen Ministry's remarkable achievements. Before ending his speech Siddhartha Sankar Ray pointed his finger to the Forward Bloc and other non-Communist groups and threw a straight question: "Supposing your non-confidence motions are carried, would you be prepared to cooperate with the Communists in forming a Government?" But, the oppositions were not in a position to give a suitable reply to the question of S.S. Ray because the Communists were still unacceptable to the other opposition parties also.<sup>52</sup>

### **(ii). No Confidence Motion in Assembly**

P. C. Sen, the Chief Minister, had to face another no-confidence motion tabled by the opposition parties on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1964. The visitors' galleries were filled up to hear the debate on no confidence motion. A storm had burst in the House over a remark of the Chief Minister P. C. Sen that Opposition members "had come down on their knees and begged him to drop the adjournment motion on food". K. C. Basu, the speaker of the House had already accepted the motion. By centering no confidence motion disorderly scenes were manifested for the first time in the House and thereby the visitors' saw hanging of shoes by a member of the Forward Bloc. From the very beginning of the session it was the Forward Bloc party which spearheaded the attack on the Chief Minister as well as his Government. At last the no-confidence motion of the opposition was defeated by a voice vote.<sup>53</sup>

### **(iii). Food Crisis**

West Bengal experienced one of the lowest positions during the year of 1952-65 so far as the growth of agricultural production is concerned. In the field of food grains the rate of growth was much lower. The growth rate of productivity in case of rice was 0.03 per cent in West Bengal as against 1.40 per cent of the country. The scarcity of food grain also added fuel following the partition of British India in the name of independence, 1947 and thereupon a large number of refugees migrated to West Bengal. According to one estimate that more than 3 million refugees crossed the border of East Pakistan during the year of 1947-67.<sup>54</sup> On 7<sup>th</sup> February 1964 Chief Minister P. C. Sen apprised Pandit Nehru regarding the impending food crisis of West Bengal. Chief Minister, Sen communicated to Nehru that due to partition of the country as well as Bengal already 31 lakhs people had migrated from East Pakistan to West Bengal and at the beginning of the year of 1964 as a result of the fresh communal violence more 11 lakhs people had come in West Bengal, so, it was very difficult for the state of West Bengal to give shelter as well as supply food grains to all (31+11)= 44 lakhs people along with West Bengal's own population without the help of Central Government. Pandit Nehru, however, assured P.C. Sen about giving adequate financial help from Central Government and remarked, "Prafullababu, West Bengal is perhaps the only state in India which can claim to be secular." The reason behind the statement of Nehru was that as 42 lakhs Hindus came to West Bengal after partition and in response to it only 2 lakhs Muslim had to go to East Pakistan from West Bengal.<sup>55</sup>

Actually, when Prafulla Chandra Sen was taking the charge of the Chief Ministership of West Bengal then there was no sufficient stock of food grains for feeding the people of the state. At that time mustered oil would imported from Uttar-Pradesh, fish from East Bengal i.e, West Bengal had to depend on import in the field of food grains.<sup>56</sup> Naturally, the Chief Minister who was also the Food Minister from 1948 was very much worried over the rice position owing to unexpected reversal of policy by the Orissa Government. Biju Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Orissa declared imposition of ban on rice export from his State to West Bengal. Though Nehru personally took the initiatives to solve the food problem of West Bengal by the discussion with Biju Patnaik, but it was seen that Orissa herself was suffering from acute drought. In that situation the rationing system of West Bengal was almost going to collapse. Chief Minister was always keeping contact with the central government

for sending food grains. So, as a result of that the Union Cabinet decided to supply 20,000 tons of rice to West Bengal immediately. In that way the acute food problem of West Bengal was settled for the time being.<sup>57</sup>

### *Dum Dum Dawai*

Due to scarcity of food grains the price of rice started increasing and as a result of that in the month of September and October in 1963 the price of rice hiked up to that level amounting Rs. 42 and Rs. 47 per maund. That time some big cultivators and profiteers would stock the food grains for gaining more profit which no doubtly created artificial crisis in the market. Government supplies in the fair prices shops were inadequate. In that chaotic situation, some young men of Dum Dum region raised their voice of protest against some profiteers and forced them to distribute the commodities among the people as per the rate of fair price shops. That action of the Dum Dum youths popularly came to be known as Dum Dum Dawai.<sup>58</sup> Following the example of the *Dum Dum dawai* the people in a point of their desperation took law into their own hands and forced rice traders to sell commodities in below the prevailing prices. Groups of young men started raiding shops and demanded sale of rice at the minimum price. So, frightened shop owners downed their shutters. In that context, on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1963 an emergent Cabinet meeting was called by the Chief Minister to review the situation. The situation was very confusing. Union Deputy Minister along with the Food Secretary had to come to Calcutta from Delhi to measure the food crisis. The Chief Minister summoned delegates of rice traders and after long discourse a consensus was reached between the traders and the Government. As per that agreement as well as consensus it was decided that the dealers were to sell Bengal medium and fine varieties of rice at the rate of Rs. 35 per maund and imported Orissa and Andhra Pradesh rice for Rs. 32 at retail price. It was found that whenever Government tried to control over the prices of consumer goods like rice, wheat, cloth, edible oil, sugar, fish etc, excepting controlling the sources of supply the attempt in those cases was foiled by cunning tradesmen. Nearly 8,000 licensed fish merchants were affected and among them there were 374 wholesalers in Calcutta, Howrah and the suburbs. Towards the end of the November a kind of price war in Calcutta continued between shopkeepers and consumers. In respect of fish,

more than half of Calcutta fish market stalls had become empty leaving the consumers in the lurch.<sup>59</sup>

#### **(iv). Crackdown on Rice Millers**

Despite opposition the West Bengal Government strongly enforced anti-profiteering and food grains licensing orders relating to the distribution of rice in January and February, 1964. Government recruited 1,000 more employees in order to materialize it in the food department. Although, enactment of that orders meant the deviation from the previous policy of the Government in the rice trade because previously it was decided that Government would not interfere into the trade of food grains. Naturally, when the traders of the food grains communicated their grievances to Mr. Swaran Singh, Union Food Minister, but considering the situation the Minister also supported the steps taken by the Chief Minister. The Government would think that the crisis was created by ‘unholy combination of a section of *Jotedars* and rice mill owners who wanted to defeat the Government policy through the methods of coercion’.<sup>60</sup>

#### **(v). Fair Price Shops and Statutory Rationing System**

Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri was also vary much aware about the acute food problem of West Bengal which was manifested in a comment made by him to the reporters at Raj Bhavan in Calcutta on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1964 in the form of ‘food is my greatest worry’. Even in a letter addressed to Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Sen from Cairo, dated 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1964 Prime Minister Shahtri expressed his great concern regarding food situation. Not only that with the consultation with the Prime Minister P.C.Sen introduced the system of selling of necessary commodities through fair-price shops and consumer co-operative.<sup>61</sup> Considering the urgency of the situation of Calcutta statutory rationing in the city was introduced by the state Government. In order to tackle the food crisis as well as protect people from hoarders-profiteers and save the State from a disaster as similar to the Bengal Famine of 1943, P.C. Sen introduced cordoning system in the state.<sup>62</sup>

## **Intelligence Report on Food Movement**

About that time the Intelligence Branch of the State Government submitted a report to Home Secretary about a brief profile of six pages of the food movement in West Bengal during the years 1950 to 1963. As per the report, it was stated that agitation over food was an annual device of the Opposition i.e. Communists in West Bengal politics. The real reason behind the food movement organized by the Communists was not economic but political. The report stated, “The consideration is really political and not economic, as the organizers loudly proclaim. Shortage due to occasional crop failure and the natural rise in the price of rice and other foodstuff in September-October every year and exploited by the leftist political parties to work up a movement and to turn the people against the Government with vain hope of dislodging the Congress from power. Attempts are made to capture the sentiments of the people by stories of deaths due to starvation (unreal).”<sup>63</sup> The Intelligence report also mentioned, “The Food Minister (P. C. Sen) has sometimes been personally the target of attacks (particularly in 1959) as the political parties feel that he is the life-wire of the Congress Organisation in this State and his removal from the Ministry may hasten the fall of the Government.”<sup>64</sup> The main aim of the movement was to create an atmosphere so that the Food Minister P. C. Sen would be bound to resign. According to the report, “The Leftist party hoped that if the food Minister could be removed, not only the Government but the Congress party itself would be substantially weakened.”

65

## **P.C. Sen’s Food Policy and Congress Party**

Actually, Prafulla Chandra Sen wanted to stop contraband keeping rice collection and supply system in Government’s hand. Though his intention was honest but in order to implement that system he did not get support even from others leaders of his party. The majority of his partymen had reservations regarding monopoly procurement and cordoning. The cadres of the Congress party even tried to dissuade him from the process in which he engaged himself. There was rising discontent within the Congress parti in West Bengal and organizationally the Congress separated itself from that type of activities of its own Chief Minister. When food collection campaign was going on under Government initiatives then Atulya Ghosh, most powerful man in

West Bengal Congress and one of the influential All India Congress leaders wrote in a daily news paper that the monopoly collection of the food grain was not the only way to solve food problem. He pleaded for the introduction of whole rationing system and the peasants had to be encouraged for more production with giving fertilizer and seeds of rice.<sup>66</sup>

### **Police Firing at Basirhat and Lost of Two Lives**

So, naturally, when food policy of P. C. Sen was going on as a failure then from the month of February 1966 due to several regions in mofussil areas the movement started for the demand of food and kerosene oil. As the School Final and Higher Secondary examination were coming but due to lack of kerosene oil the students of the village areas were not able to make their studies. Therefore the demand for kerosene was incorporated with the demand of food. In that context, the food movement in Basirhat started on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1966 from a public gathering at Sub-divisional office. When the Sub-Divisional officer refused to meet with the aggrieved people as well as youth-students then they after being furious went to attack the Sub-Divisional office. In that situation police fired 11 rounds and thereby 6 person received bullet injuries and next day one person named Ali Hafez was succumbed to death.<sup>67</sup> That incident no doubtedly added fuel to the fire.

After reaching the news of police firing at Basirhat on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1966 in Calcutta the Students Federation declared that a protest day will be observed the next day i.e. on 17<sup>th</sup> February. Naturally, protest-day was observed accordingly all over the State and a strike was called at Basirhat on that fateful day. The people of Basirhat particularly School and College students were assembled in front of the B.D.O. office at Swarupnagar. A scuffle was happened on that day also in between police and the students and as a result of that Nurul Islam, a student of class five of Tentulia Multipurpose School died due to police firing. Though the police claimed that the students went to attack Thana but the Headmaster of the school of departed Nurul Islam gave his statement in newspaper that the police was firing first.<sup>68</sup>

## **Impact of Basirhat Police Firing**

However, after police firing of Basirhat and death of school boy resulted a heavy public upsurge which gradually led to the situation out of control of the state government and lowered the image of its chief minister badly. As a consequence of Basirhat incident, the aggrieved people of the different regions of 24 parganas started showing their grievances. On 18<sup>th</sup> February the people of Baduria demanded all the confiscated rice had to be distributed through rationing system in a cheap rate. On 19<sup>th</sup> February the common people gheraoed B.D.O. office of Habra. There was huge demonstration at Beldanga in the district of Murshidabad. But each and every field police had fired on the people. In Baduria Kalu Mandal and Abdul Hamid had lost their lives due to police firings. In Beldanga Sushil Sen and Tapan Dey died due to same reason.<sup>69</sup> After that incident the police firings became as if a day to day affairs. Upananda Mukhopadhyay, the then I.G. wrote that after being furious Prafulla Chandra Sen used to remark, 'Why the police personnel were not firing, they should do that'. But at the beginning the police were not agree to fire on the fasting people.<sup>70</sup>

Actually, in that time Prafulla Chandra Sen became unstable. He himself acknowledged that the collection of rice was not up to the expectation and if that situation would continue then the State might have to face the 'shadow of famine'.<sup>71</sup> Though, it was not officially declared about famine in West Bengal but actually the shadow of famine gradually swallowed the State as because the price rate of rice became Rs. 2 per k.g.<sup>72</sup> Most of the people would maintain their livelihood only consuming half-meal in a day and the demand for supply of rice at the rate of ten anna raised from the famish people. In that situation, when for the demand of food on 10<sup>th</sup> March Krishnagar-Ranaghat and Shantipur of Nadia district became bloody then Prafulla Chandra Sen jockingly commented to the Press men that 'Shantipur dubu-dubu, Nade bhese jay re'(i.e. Shantipur on the point of drowning, it is floating in the river) which certainly tarnished the image of Chief Minister Sen who once the freedom fighter and pro-Gandhian leader.<sup>73</sup> In that connection Prafulla Chakrabarty in his book 'The Marginal Men' wrote, "In the winter of 1966 Sen was perhaps the most unpopular man in West Bengal, there can be no doubt, the measures he took to mitigate the food shortage were well meaning."<sup>74</sup>

## **Joint Oppositions and 8-Points Charter of Demand**

In that circumstances the leaders of the opposition parties, 'Rastriya Sangram Samiti' of the trade unions, the 'Council of Action' of SFI, AISF, PSU and DSO jointly decided to observe 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1966 as Martyrs' Day. The day was observed by organizing rallies, meetings and demonstrations throughout the State. They also made it a great success the 'All Bengal Demand Day' by holding street corner meetings in all the important road junctions in Calcutta on 21<sup>st</sup> February. So, Martyrs' Day was observed all over the State accordingly by organizing meetings and demonstrations. In Calcutta a meeting was organized at the Maidan on that day. In that meeting leaders like Somenath Lahiri, Jatin Chakrabarty and others condemned the food policy of the State Government and demanded a judicial inquiry into the police firing of Basirhat. The leaders urged the Government to accept the demand of 8-points charter of the Joint Opposition Front which included:-i). Supply of rations to all non- producer in rural areas, ii). Liberal issue of ration cards, iii). Stoppage of servicing of levy notices on landowners with less than seven acres of holdings, iv). Equitable distribution of kerosene and other essential commodities,v).Lifting of the emergency, vi). Withdrawal of D.I. Rules,vii). Unconditional release of political detainees those arrested in connection with food movement and viii). Judicial inquiry into the recent police firings in 24-Parganas.<sup>75</sup>

## **Stormy Budget Session and Clash Among the Legislatures**

In the meantime, Saila Kumar Mukherjee, State Finance Minister had an extraordinary experience at the time of his budget speech on 21<sup>st</sup> February, for the financial year 1966-67. When the Finance Minister had commenced his budget reading then it was forcibly snatched away by Kamal Guha, a Forward Bloc member, within four minutes. The reason behind that action of Kamal Guha was mainly as the Government arrested three Opposition members' in connection with food movement.<sup>76</sup> Not only that an untoward incident also happened in the assembly following the impact of the police excesses in 24 Parganas. A violent fight broke out in the Assembly between the opposition members and the ruling party on 22<sup>nd</sup> February that never happened before. Two members were injured as a result of

boxing, torn microphone rods, stools and portfolios. Due to the gravity of the situation the Houses was adjourned for 90 minutes. Battle cries and attacking mode were seen in the House on that day in lieu of the day's agenda of discussion on Governor's Address. The Chief Minister was not present in the House on that day. For three days there were no business at all could be transacted in the House. As a consequence of all that the angry Chief Minister cancelled his dialogue with the Opposition Leaders regarding Basirhat happenings.<sup>77</sup>

### **Krishnagore Police Firing and Death of a student-Ananda Hait**

The initiation of the Krishnagar agitation started on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1966 by centering a student processions. Actually the environment was so explosive that in the pretext of the student strike and the observance of the martyr day on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, all the Schools and Colleges were closed from 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1966. That time the opposition members would enter into the Assembly House wearing black badge. In that circumstances when police blocked the processions of the students in front of the Krishnagar Collegiate School and Post Office then the conflict started in between students and the police personnel. As a result of that conflict Ananda Hait, a youth of 17<sup>th</sup> years old died due to police firing. Besides more two persons named Anath Paul and Paresh Banerjee became injured due to the same reason. Police had used tear gas and lathi-charge along with bullet firing in order to disperse the processions. But the furious people had thrown stone on police personnel and thereupon the agitation gradually transferred from the hands of the students to the masses.<sup>78</sup> After being furious due to police atrocities and death of Ananda Hait, the common people then set on fire in Ration Office and Collectorate Office. Due to the gravity of the situation, even the lawyers also came out from the Court to show their protest. Not only that as the Government Bhawan bears the symbol of State power, therefore, the agitated people would set on fire even on School Board, Electricity office, Train compartment and Rail Station also. So as a result of wide scale setting fire even the Fire Brigade was unable to extinguish the fire.<sup>79</sup>

On the other hand, after receiving the news of the police firing in Krishnagar demonstrations started at different places in Calcutta. The Cinema Halls were

shutting down. Trams and Buses were setting fire. The tram line was uprooted by the youths at the corner of Hedua of North Calcutta. Scuffle started in between police personnel and the masses at Sealdah. As a result of that after promulgating 144 Crpc.in Calcutta schools and colleges were declared closed for sine die. The Higher Secondary examination was also declared suspended.<sup>80</sup> After considering the depth of the situations of Nadia and Calcutta the Chief Minister was so worried that he started talking to General Manekshaw, Commander-in Chief of Eastern Army on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1966.<sup>81</sup>

### **Bandh on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1966**

In the meanwhile, from the Maidan rally of 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1966, the opposition declared that West Bengal Bandh would be observed on 10<sup>th</sup> March as a protest against the faulty food policy of the Government and the police firing on the agitators as well as arrests of the opposition leaders in connection with food movement. The top Congress leaders became afraid remembering the September disturbances of 1959, i. e. the mob had attacked houses of Congress leaders and Ministers. So, instead of making elaborate preparation to face the storm which was about to outburst that *The Statesman* analyst called 'a surrender to the inevitable'.<sup>82</sup> So, a good number of police force deployed to protect the lives and houses of eminent Ministers and Congress leaders. On Bandh Day Calcutta and most of the places in the districts were completely paralysed. Railway property was mainly marked out for destruction. The Government wanted to run the trains but the demonstrators in order to dislocate the train uprooted rail tracks, set fire to railway coaches and godowns and ruined other railway installations. The skirmish started between the police and the demonstrators which resulting in two deaths in Calcutta and eleven in the districts due to police firing. Several policemen had also injured in mob-police clashes. At least 100 persons were injured only Calcutta and considering the situation Army had to call to maintain normalcy in all the disturbed areas.<sup>83</sup>

### **Attempts of the Central Leaderships to Normalize the Trouble-Prone Situation**

When West Bengal was blazing in the wake of food movement in 1966 and the helplessness of the State Government was closely watched by the Central Government. In that critical juncture, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi talked to the Chief Minister P. C. Sen over telephone and advised that the Home Minister, G.L. Nanda should visit Calcutta to help him in that trouble period. But the Chief Minister considered the suggestion of Prime Minister as an interference of Central Government in matters which solely concerned the State and he also took it as to undermine the prestige of the State Government. But very efficiently the Prime Minister took that internal disputation by making a personal visit to Calcutta on her way to Guahati on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1966. Worried Prime Minister discussed the whole matter with the Chief Minister and his colleagues throughout the day and made certain suggestions namely, release of Opposition leaders and resumption of talk with them. But the proposals of Prime Minister were not acceptable to P. C. Sen and his colleagues. Naturally the events were permitted to take their own course of action for the time being.<sup>84</sup> But after her return to Delhi she pursued an opposite course of action very wisely. She had the capability to feel the pulse of Bengal. So, Prime Minister herself convened a meeting of the Opposition M. Ps particularly from West Bengal. She discussed with Hiren Mukherjee, N. C. Chatterjee and others about the situation and boycotting the Budget session by the Opposition M.L.As. (All Opposition M.L.As had been arrested and put in prison.) Meanwhile, due to the state wide disturbances of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> March, as many as 39 persons had to lose their lives and 5,500 persons were sent to jail. The losses of property in terms of national income at that time was amounting Rs. 6.5 crore.<sup>85</sup> It should be mentionable that some eminent personalities of West Bengal like- Dr. Triguna Sen, Satyajit Roy, Bivekananda Mukhopadhyay, Shaibal Gupta etc. apprised Prime Minister Indira Gandhi through telegram regarding the deplorable conditions of public life in the State.<sup>86</sup> As a direct impact of the said incedents as well as the outcry in Parliament prompted Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister to adopt a strong line regarding the State of West Bengal. She sent a Central team on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1966, comprising of two Minister- G.L. Nanda, the Home Minister and Subramaniam, Minister for Agriculture to investigate the situation and advice the State Government for restoring normalcy. In spite of reservation of Chief Minister P. C. Sen it became impossible for him to resist the flying visit of Nanda and Subrahmaniam as Central Government representatives. They came with indications from the Prime Minister to help neutralize the abnormal situations continuing in the

state. They discussed about the ongoing situation with the Council of Ministers and also with the Opposition M. Ps. (M.L.As of ULF were all behind prison bars), Vice-Chancellors of Universities (it was mainly a student movement), Newspaper Editors and some Congress leaders. Their immediate intentions were to reopen the dialogue between the Chief Minister and the State Opposition M.L.As.<sup>87</sup>

### **P. C. Sen's Threat to Resign From the Chief-Ministership**

During that disquieted period the Chief Minister was fighting alone the battle with the help of security forces. He was confused with the magnitude of the task. It has already been mentioned that the Congress did not try to face with the problem politically as if the political stage of the Congress as a party did not exist. Moreover, Atulya Ghosh also started criticising the food policy adopted by the chief minister. In that circumstances the masterly persuasiveness of the Central Ministers and the criticism of a section of his colleagues and the organizational attitude developed in P. C. Sen's mind a sense of helplessness. So, he took an unexpected resolution regarding his firm decision to resign from the post of the Chief Ministership. He sent a letter to the Secretary of the Parliamentary Party expressing his 'irrevocable' decision to resign accordingly on 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1966. The explanation behind his resignation was given by him was that he would be more capable to serve the poor people better by staying outside the Government. The decision was taken by him personally. Considering the ongoing situation, P.C. Sen felt that it was the only way to end the political deadlock for restoring peace in the state. Following the incident the Home Minister Guljaril Nanda and Union Food Minister, C. Subrahmaniam both of them rushed to Calcutta at once after hearing the decision of the resignation of P. C. Sen. When the news of his decision to summon a party meeting and his wish to resign were known to them and to Atulya Ghosh, then all the three together drove to the Assembly buildings and entered into the Chief Minister's room. Even the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was also sought to soothe him. However, all the four leaders were closeted for an hour. After a significant discussion they succeeded in changing his decision and withdraw the resignation letter as a face saving formula of the congress party in West Bengal.<sup>88</sup>

## **Chief Minister's Surrender to the Opposition Demands**

The above mentioned developments had taken place before the House met on that day. As soon as the House commenced its function the Chief Minister with the permission of the Speaker proclaimed his decision to release of the Opposition legislators including Jyoti Basu, the Leader of the Opposition, held dialogues between the Government and the Opposition and thereby a Commission was appointed for the Enquiry of police firing. In another announcement in the House, P. C. Sen declared that all members of both Assembly and Council and 12 others belonged to the different political parties were held under D. I. Rule-30 had been released. After the surrender to the Opposition demands by the Chief Minister, the Opposition i.e. ULF announced its decision to continue their food movement and boycott the legislature. They could not abandon the threat of the political movement that brought them huge dividends and unity in their ranks. Thereafter, Jyoti Basu went to Delhi to talk with the Prime Minister separately. As a pragmatist politician he thought that unless the Centre made sufficient supply the State Government would be powerless, although their main target of attack was the State Government. As a result of the meeting with the Prime Minister, wheat quota was increased for West Bengal and issuing of ration cards started for kerosene supply.<sup>89</sup>

## **Food Movement in 1966 and Role of the Congress Party in West Bengal**

The food movement of 1966 was different from similar movements what happened in the past in two respects: (1). The forthcoming general election in the early year of 1967 and (2). Change in the character of the movement owing to massive mobilization of the people. It may be noted that the new food policy of Chief Minister P. C. Sen was supported by the all Left parties on principle but only with the aim of a State-wide movement on various policies of the government such as food, D.I. Rules, release of detainees and so on- the Left parties choose the month of March in 1966 for the inception of the food movement.<sup>90</sup> It would be justifiable to mention that before commencing the vigorous food movement the Left parties had gained adequate strength and consolidated their political base among the various segments of the people in west Bengal. After the formal division of the Communist Party of India,

meanwhile the CPI (M) had infiltrated into the different segments of the people and established its influence over them. For example- the ABTA (All Bengal Teachers' Association), the WBCUTA (the West Bengal College and University Teachers' Association), the Co-ordination Committee of the State Government Employees' Unions and Associations etc.-all these CPI(M) controlled organizations helped it to maintain its mighty presence in all the segment of the middle classes in all over West Bengal. Besides, the students front like SFI (CPM-controlled), AISF (CPI-controlled), PSU (RSP-controlled), DSO (SUCI-controlled) etc. came under the control of the Left parties. But from the entire said front the Congress party was almost disappeared. The Congress party still then only maintained its presence within the working class through the INTUC (Indian National Trade Union Congress), though an important section of the working class already came under the banners of CITU (CPM-controlled), AITUC (CPI-controlled) and the UTUC (RSP-controlled). But, still then the CPI and the CPI (M) Kishan Sabhas were not in a position to capture the authority of the Congress vote bank in rural Bengal.<sup>91</sup> It became therefore possible for the Left parties to bring their entire controlled organisation in the forefront of the state politics. On that point, it is clear that if all these segments were united in any massive onslaught against the Government then it would be certainly very difficult for the Government to resist the assault with the help of the inadequate police force as well as without the support of an organized political party. Needless to say that at that time there was as such no party behind the Government and the Congress as a political party which 'had gone behind the purdah' in 1953, not reappeared at least up to that period.<sup>92</sup>

So, in that context popular displeasure was also increased many fold against the Government due to shameless police action who discharge their duties as per the instruction of the Government i.e. led by the Congress party.<sup>93</sup> In that critical circumstances Congress as a ruling political party could organise the people and stand against the atrocities of the police personnel. Regarding the food policy of the government, at least, as a political party Congress was supposed to explain to the people that the Joteders, hoarders and Profiteers were primarily responsible for the deplorable condition of the masses. Not only that, Congress could easily explain the government's policy of equitable distribution of the available food stocks which was being scuttled by the big landholders for more profit. But the class composition of the

followers of the Congress in the State made it impossible for the party to play such role. As a result of that contradiction within the Congress as a party it could not persuade the Chief Minister P. C. Sen to lift the Paddy Levy Order or support the strict implementation of that order. Therefore, as an organization, Congress party became completely perplexed as well as paralysed. Naturally, it was almost impossible for the Government to face the problem politically.<sup>94</sup>

In the light of said incidents one may recall that the people of West Bengal as if took the decision to remove the Congress party from the power. It is noteworthy that the movement was not organized only for want of food but against the mal administration also. At that critical time of the Government, the style of functioning of the Congress party particularly its disappearance from the entire scenario can not be out of question. The entire scenario convinced the people of West Bengal to bring about a political change in West Bengal.

### **Scenario of All India Politics and its Reflection in West Bengal Politics**

The 1960s were turning point in terms of a series of political crisis which exacerbated the political instability both in West Bengal as well as in India. The death of Jawaharlal Nehru (27<sup>th</sup> May, 1964) and subsequent passing away of Lalbhadur Shastri (on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1966) both Prime Minister of India created a vacuum to lead the country. In order to tackle the situation a so-called Syndicate group<sup>95</sup> was formed and the task of the group was to find out to overcome the chaotic situation. In the meanwhile, a leadership crisis was there in West Bengal after the death of B.C. Roy. Incidentally, the situation was successfully handled with the selection of P.C. Sen as Chief Minister of West Bengal and Indira Gandhi became the best alternative choice of the Syndicate group as Prime Minister of India.<sup>96</sup> In all these developments, Atulya Ghosh a prominent member of the said Syndicate group played a significant role to scale down the crisis. But so far as West Bengal was concerned P.C. Sen could not tackle the situation as was expected. Moreover, some of the acute problems especially the food crisis was not solved rather it remained unheeded by the Congress party in spite of its expected attention. The cumulative results of all these were exposed with the food movement. In fact, it was a climax of the cracks that became inherent in the

organization level of the congress party. Neither the Central Government nor that of the West Bengal was able to ameliorate the crisis. It has already been mentioned above how P.C. Sen and his cabinet members took steps to handle these movements but his efforts ended in fiasco. On the other hand, the crisis within the organization invited misunderstanding among the members of the party and gradually the trend became so unbearable that some prominent members had to leave the party and eventually to form a new party. The case of Ajoy Mukherjee and the emergence of a new political party named Bangla Congress were the ultimate result of the on-going political crisis of the then West Bengal. The subsequent development was to find out a political mechanism how to save West Bengal and an alternative solution was found with the formation of United Front Government.

### **Bangla Congress and Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee**

It has already been mentioned that at the climax of the food movement (1966) and kerosin oil, organized by the combined Oppositions that ultimately led to the breakdown of the West Bengal administration and in other words it may be called that the administration as if went behind the curtain and oppositions virtually dominating the political affairs in West Bengal. In that circumstances, as a protest against the corruption or highhandedness of some top leaders of the Congress party in West Bengal, when 'Bangla Congress' a rival organization of ruling Congress was going to originate under the leadership of Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee and exposed the real nature of West Bengal Pradesh Congress before the common people which was considered a great setback for the Congress party in the upcoming election in 1967. In that context before going for in detail regarding the formation of 'Bangla Congress', we should look back at a glance some other subsequent development in the state which were as under:

### **Kamraj Plan vis-à-vis Reshuffle of the State Ministry**

The endorsement of the Kamraj Plan by Congress working Committee and the AICC (10<sup>th</sup> August 1963) had its certain reactions in Calcutta and other State

capitals. At that time the picture in West Bengal was quite different from some other States. The West Bengal Congress Organization and Government administration were free from group hostility and thereby a harmonious relationship existed between them because the relation between Atulya Ghosh, supreme leader of Congress party in West Bengal and Prafulla Chandra Sen, the Chief Minister of West Bengal were very close. It was well-known to political circles that the voice of Atulya Ghosh would determine the various important issues or in another word it may be called that the politics as well as administration in West Bengal would function according to the instruction of Atulya Ghosh.<sup>97</sup>

Following the announcement of the Kamraj plan, on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1963, P. C. Sen, the Chief Minister of West Bengal summoned a meeting of the State Ministers in the Assembly House. After almost one hour discussion with the Ministers he announced that some Ministers would resign from their office in accordance with the Kamraj Plan.<sup>98</sup> The Chief Minister himself expressed his desire to resign along with other Ministers. All the Ministers expressed their willingness in writing to the Chief Minister and offered their resignations.<sup>99</sup> In that context, some Ministers were worried about the acceptance of their resignation from Ministry. But, who would remain in the office of the Ministry and whose resignation would be accepted that was only known to Chief Minister P. C. Sen and Atulya Ghosh.<sup>100</sup> Naturally, there was a flow of discussion in official and Press circles regarding the names of the ministers who were going to be dropped from the Cabinet. One Minister, however, expressed to his close circle that under the Kamraj Plan the Congress Chief (meaning Atulya Ghosh) would find out a plea to get cleanse him from the Ministry. He was no other than, but Ajoy Kumar Mukherji whose unparalleled position and hold in his own home district Midnapur, was looked upon with uneasiness and jealousy by some Congress hierarchy of West Bengal. They wanted to displace him by a junior person, a lady i. e. Ava Maity who was very close to the party machinery. On 17<sup>th</sup> September 1963, as per the Kamraj Plan the resignation of some Ministers were accepted by the Cabinet in its meeting which was held at Chief Minister's room in the Assembly House. Among the Ministers most 'casualties' were Shri Ajoy Kumar Mukherji and the most skillful as well as capable Minister, Sankar Das Banerji. The latter had to pay the cost for his impartiality and resistance party interference in the administration affairs of his departments. The Governor accepted the resignation of both the Ministers on 1<sup>st</sup>

October 1963. But people in general and particularly the political circles knew the motive behind the dropping of these two Cabinet Ministers.<sup>101</sup> It is noteworthy that if the Kamraj Plan could be viewed as a device at the hands of the party's ruling coterie to weaken its rivals, then the Hooghly Group was successful in the case of utilizing it. Ajoy Mukherjee's resignation of course drastically cut his power of patronage what he was enjoying as Minister. The name of Sankar Das Banerjee was comprised probably to avoid the charge of discrimination.<sup>102</sup>

### **Bye-Election**

However, in the midst of the discontent regarding the dropping some ministers in the pretext of Kamraj Plan, the Congress party and the Opposition groups were directly engaged in the bye-elections of two Parliamentary and two Assembly seats in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. The date of the bye-elections in West Bengal was scheduled on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1963 that was exactly after a year of the Chinese aggression. We have already discussed that as consequence of the Chinese aggression a rapid political changes in the country particularly in West Bengal had been taken place. It has also been mentioned that in the previous bye-election results which were published on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1963, the Congress party won all the seats due to the impact of foreign aggression and thereby a spirit of nationalism swept over the country. Although the Congress leaders claimed their credit for the victory, but actually the credit to a great range went to China for her devilish attack on a friendly country like India which brought about the electoral turn over that ultimately led to the total failure of the Communist Party in that previous bye-elections. But this time that was not repeated. In spite of large-scale arrests of the leaders and alienation of the Communist Party from the common people and not only that despite internal dissensions, the leaders of that party were trying whole-heartedly to build up a bridge with opposition groups like Forward Bloc, R.S.P. and P.S.P. for the purpose of electoral understanding in order to fight against the common enemy i.e. Congress.

However, 23<sup>rd</sup> December of 1963 was fateful day to the Congress Party in the State. The Congress candidate Narayan Chowdhury was defeated in the

prestigious Burdwan Parliamentary seat by Hindu Mahasabhaite candidate Nirmal Chandra Chatterjee with the support of the Communist by 11,000 votes. The Congress candidate for the other parliamentary seat in Cooch Behar became victorious defeating his Forward Bloc opponent B. K. Das Chowdhury by 60,000 votes. In the case of two Assembly seats i.e. Burdwan and Siliguri, the Congress and Communists shared the victory. At Siliguri Congress candidate Arun Moitra who later became the President of the PCC, defeated his rival Communist candidate Charu Majumdar who subsequently became the famous theoretician of the Party but in 1967 he founded the CPI-ML. Benoy Chowdhury, who was high rated leader in the Communist Party due to his profound knowledge in economics won the Burdwan Assembly seat. Therefore, the victory was shared 50-50 in between Congress and non-Congress parties.<sup>103</sup>

The results of the bye-election was clearly indicates the come down of the support base of the Congress party in West Bengal due to growing discontent against the leaders as well as administration. The encouragement and enthusiasm among the people which was seen in the initial years of Independence were somehow disappearing. A powerful group of West Bengal Congress party as well as all India ruling hierarchy instead of following the path of sacrifice, were setting examples of luxurious living, dampening the spirit of common men and earnest followers of the Congress. The faith in Congress in West Bengal started deminishing because of erosion both in the administration and the Congress Organization which was moving towards corruption. The State Congress Organization and the rulers were in the hope that major opponent i. e. the Communist Party would not be able to show a serious threat afresh because of internal disagreement regarding the issue of China.<sup>104</sup>

## **Story Behind the Creation of Bangla Congress**

### **Midnapore Congress Factionalism**

Formerly undivided Midnapore was the southernmost district of Burdwan Division in West Bengal. At that time politics in Midnapore district was dominated by the Congress party. Its internal cohesion was however began to dilapidate due to the

rise of two strong factions centred round two eminent Midnapore Congressmen, namely, Charu Chandra Mahanty and Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee. Factionalism within the Congress party in Midnapore started in the year of 1962 over the question of 'corruption and nepotism' in party organization. As a PCC chief, Ajoy Mukherjee received some complaint from various sources that Prabir Jana, the general secretary of the Midnapore District Congress Committee (MDCC), was not at all the member of Regional Transport Authority (RTA), but he recommending the name of the applicants to the Regional Transport Authority (RTA) for route permits instead of taking bribes. It might be noted that Prabir Jana was the nephew of an influential Midnapore Congressman Nikunja Behari Maity and cousin brother of a leading Minister of the State Ava Maity who was an ardent follower of the contemporary most powerful Congress leaders in the State as well as Centre i.e. Hooghly Group leaders like Atulya Ghosh and chief minister of West Bengal P. C. Sen.<sup>105</sup> To stop such 'corruption' Ajoy Mukherjee and his followers like Sushil Kumar Dhara and Mrityunjay Jana both were M.L.As. requested Charu Chandra Mahanty, the then president of the MDCC, to set up a new committee which would be consisted by the 'neutral and honest' Congressmen and power would be given to them to recommend candidates for Bus route to the RTA.<sup>106</sup> But, when it was found that due to the opposition of Prabir Jana and Ava Maity no such committee was constituted, then Ajoy Mukherjee remarked, "Charu is soft on the nephew of Nikunjada. Ignoring our proposal he only tacitly allowed the general secretary to indulge in corruption".<sup>107</sup>

### **Mohanty Group and the Mukherjee Group**

At that stage the MDCC was divided into the Mohanty Group and the Mukherjee Group. Having failed to free the party from corruption, the Mukherjee Group determined to convince the public opinion against the corrupt leadership of the MDCC and a general campaign was launched accordingly. It is widely known to all that the accused Midnapore Congress leaders were also belonged to the Hooghly Group. In other words, Ajoy Mukherjee's bid to fight against the Mahanty Group means to hostile the Hooghly Group which was the operator of the Congress party in West Bengal politics. Though the Mohanty Group condemned the charges which were leveled against it as 'baseless and untrue' but it became difficult for the group to

ignore Ajoy kumer Mukherjee as because he was after all a senior Congressman and had a comparatively strong support base in Midnapore. Ajoy Mukherjee had also good rapport as well as huge acceptability among the old Congressmen specially the freedom fighters for his devoting role in the freedom movement particularly as an architect of 'Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar' in the pretext of Quit India movement.<sup>108</sup> However, the Mohanty Group wanted to undermine the strength of Ajoy Mukherjee and that opportunity came in the form of the implementation of Kamraj Plan which was endorsed by CWC and AICC on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1963.<sup>109</sup>

The Kamraj Plan was started to execute by the AICC throughout the country with the acceptance of the resignation of six Central Ministers by Prime Minister Nehru on and from 24<sup>th</sup> August 1963. Towards the end of the year i.e. on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1963 Kamraj became the All India Congress president as per the recommendation of Atulya Ghosh who was also holding the portfolio of treasurer of the AICC and one of the influential members of the Sundicate. During that time Kamraj-Atulya were so powerful that no body had anything to say against their activities—that mentality was prevailing into the mind of the people of whole country. In that context, Atulya Ghosh of his own told Ajoy Mukherjee to resign from the Ministership in accordance with Kamraj Plan and ultimately it was accepted.<sup>110</sup>

Rabindralal Sinha stepped down from the post of West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee (WBPCCC) after being inducted into the Cabinet of P. C. Sen as Education Minister in the month of June 1964. Since all others outgoing Ministers were given some organizational responsibility in accordance with the aim of the Kamraj Plan. So, top Coingress leaders of West Bengal particularly Atulya Ghosh and Prafulla Chandra Sen were thinking to give a dignified organizational liability to Ajoy Mukherjee as per his capability. In that context, considering the organizational skill as well as according to the wish of Atulya Ghosh and Preafulla Chandra Sen, Ajoy Mukherjee was unanimously elected WBPCCC President in June 1964. Ajoy Mukherjee gladly accepted the new responsibility with the hope that eradicating corruption he will restore the glory of the West Bengal Congress.<sup>111</sup> Being PCC President within few months it was very much clear to Ajoy Mukherjee that some Congress leaders who were misusing power and doing corruption for their selfish own interest neglecting the common interest of the party and thereupon as an all India

organization Congress party was losing its reputation. The Congress party which had gradually developed by the ideal as well as devotion and sacrifice of Gandhiji, Nehru, Pattel, Deshbandhu, but now it was rapidly losing its past heritage due to misuse of power, nepotism and selfish attitude of some leaders. After seeing such type of activities of the leaders many people in the meantime disillusioned to Congress and forced to cut off their relation with that glorious organization. So, taking into account the above fact as PCC chief Ajoy Mukherjee was determined to reform Congress and make it free from corruption in order to bring back the lost glory of the party.<sup>112</sup>

### **Corruption within the Congress Party and Role of Nirmalendu Dey**

It should be noted that as President of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, Ajoy Mukherjee's scope for free activities was limited because the various organizational component of PCC, particularly its executive committee remained under the direct control of the Hooghly Group as well as Atulya Ghosh. Ill-feeling began to intensify between the Mahanty Group and the Mukherjee Group on the question of the distribution of forms for the enrollment of new membership. Ajoy Mukherjee received a number of complaints from various quarters regarding the fake membership as well as corruption about the distribution of membership forms by the general secretary i.e. Prabir Jana who belonged to Mahanty Group, the ruling faction of the MDCC. On that point to minimize corruption in the field of the enrolment of new members, Ajoy Mukherjee requested Nirmalendu Dey, the then general secretary of the PCC to supply the adequate number of membership forms at the Midnapore party office. At that time in case of the enrollment of membership the forms which would be used that must be signed by the general secretary of the PCC. But the request of PCC chief, Ajoy Mukherjee was unheeded time and again by his subordinate office bearer i. e. general secretary.<sup>113</sup> It was found that Prabir Jana and his group i.e. Mohanty group had a very close proximity with PCC general secretary Nirmalendu Dey alias Bodu Babu who would ultimately control West Bengal Congress politics in the behest of Atulya Ghosh. It might be mentionable that as Bodu Babu was the nephew of Sukumar Dutta, a wealthy and influential Congress MLA of undivided Bengal. As Sukumar Dutta was a very good orator and had a wide acceptability in the social as well as political circle of Bengal and had a friendly

relationship with Atulya Ghosh, that's why Bodu Babu would call Atulya Babu as his mama (meternal uncle). Not only that though Bodu Babu came from a very well to do family in spite of that he had no good fame as well as honesty regarding the financial matters were concerned. But Ajoy Babu's honesty relating to financial matters was always above question.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, it was not impossible to imagine that all the corruption committed by the Prabir Jana and his group regarding the enrollment of membership, collection of money in the name of the party, expenditure, Bus route license permit through RTA, giving the job of primary teachers instead of getting Rs. 250-500 per candidate etc. were known to Bodu Babu and he would extend his supporting hand to protect them as because he himself enjoyed the brain trust of Atulya Ghosh.<sup>115</sup>

In that situation, it was very difficult for Ajoy Mukherjee to continue his work without external help. So, he met All India Congress President Kamraj in the VIP lounge of the Calcutta air port along with Satish Chandra Samanta, M. P. and Sarbadhinayak of Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar during the time of Quit India movement (1942) and Sushil Kumar Dhara, M.L.A. and August revolutionary as well as Commander-in-Chief of 'Bidyut Bahini' of Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar, and informed him about the Midnapore situation. After hearing all the events Kamraj strongly instructed PCC chief to print the membership form in his own name and distribute it according to his necessity. It was astonishing that after getting Kamraj's approval to print the membership form then Nirmalendu Dey agreed to supply the said form according to the instruction of PCC President Ajoy Mukherjee.<sup>116</sup>

### **Ajoy Mukherjee's Quit MDCC Office**

Actually the internal displeasure between the two factions came into surface in the form of an open conflict on 23 July 1965. On that day, when Ajoy Mukherjee and Charu Chandra Mohanty, both were President of the PCC and president of the MDCC respectively checking the enrolment of 'primary' and 'active' members in the party office then a large crowd appeared and alleged that 'bogus' members had been enrolled.<sup>117</sup> Ajoy Mukherjee then requested Charu Chandra Mahanty to make a joint statement asking the agitators to disperse. But unfortunately his appeal was undone by

Mahanty and later Mukherjee said, “Charu-da left the room, held talks with some of his followers, and asked me to leave the party office. I departed in order to avoid any undesirable turn of events”.<sup>118</sup>

### **Dismissal of Nirmalendu Dey by Ajoy Mukherjee**

Actually, the Mukherjee Group had no any kind of intention to capture the seat of power only to rid the party from ‘corruption’. Therefore, after being driven out from the Midnapore District Congress (MDC) office on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, next day i.e. early morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1965, Ajoy Mukherjee went to Calcutta in order to appraise the whole matter to Chief Minister P.C. Sen. After hearing everything P. C. Sen did not take any action rather he preferred to remain silent. Thereafter, Ajoy Mukherjee came to a conclusion that the leaders both from the District and also some from the State were jointly involved in hatching conspiracy against him. But Ajoy Mukherjee was not a man to surrender himself under pressure or illegal activities. He felt that in order to free the Congress party from corruption the Pradesh Congress Committee had to be reformed. As general secretary of the PCC Nirmalendu Dey was involved with the illegal activities of the MDC leaders i.e. Mohanty groups, so, to eradicate corruption as well as conspiracy Ajoy Mukherjee as President of the PCC served an order of dismissal to Nirmalendu Dey from the office of the general secretary of PCC on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1965. He alleged in the order that the general secretary ignored his instructions to send membership forms to the MDCC office.<sup>119</sup>

### **Hunger Strike of Suhil Dhara in front of the Office of Midnapore District Congress Committee**

On the other hand, as the Mukherjee Group was very much displeased over the driving away of its leader Ajoy Mukherjee from the MDC office so, they resolved to draw public attention to it. Sushil Kumar Dhara, a close associate of Ajoy Mukherjee and an MLA, staged a hunger strike, in front of the Midnapore District Congress party office accompanied by thirty Congressmen at 5 p.m. on 25<sup>th</sup> July.<sup>120</sup> As a result of the propagation by the supporters of the Mukherjee group through

microphone, within two hours after the commencement of the hunger strike the whole town of Midnapore came to know that ‘revolutionary leader and M.L.A. Sushil Dhara started hunger strike in the office of the MDCC to remove corruption from the Congress party.’ After that the stream of people of the Midnapore city started coming to see Mr. Dhara. During the days of hunger strike each and every evening after offering prayer for half an hour, then Mr. Dhara would address the public gathering for 10 to 15 minutes over the caption of ‘why that hunger strike and sit on demonstration’?<sup>121</sup> Not only the common people but also some M.L.A.s also came to the venue of hunger strike to show and prove their solidarity. Those M.L.A.s who joined with Suhail Dhara were Mahendra Nath Mahato, Abdul Bari, Mrityunjay Jana and Mahatab Das. The incidents of hunger strike was published in the daily news papers and thereupon all over West Bengal the people particularly the Congress activists were informed regarding the corruption of MDC party. Without assuring to solve the problem Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Sen telegraphically requested Mr. Dhara to end his fast. He also wrote a letter to Dhara wherein he narrated that hunger strike would undermine the party’s internal solidarity.<sup>122</sup> Later on with the request of many congress leaders of West Bengal specially Ajoy Mukherjee after seven days of his fasting Mr. Dhara ended his fast.<sup>123</sup>

### **Ajoy Mukherjee’s Appeal to Kamraj’s Intervention**

In the meanwhile, when the hunger strike was going on against the corruption then Ajoy Mukherjee felt the need for external help to control the situation. In a letter to AICC President Kamraj he accused the MDCC president and his supporters of indulging in ‘unfair practices’ with regard to the enrolment of new party members. He also sought to Kamraj’s personal intervention in it.<sup>124</sup> Mukherjee’s efforts to enlist external help invited reaction to the Mahanty Group. One of the spokesmen of that group remarked that the PCC president Ajoy Mukherjee identified himself with a faction. He also refuted the charge of ‘unfair practices’ and blaming the hunger strikers said that they had “no other way to capture” the party organisation.<sup>125</sup> Ajoy Mukherjee sent a telegram to Kamraj again which stated, “Midnapore situation is fast deteriorating. Excitement was rapidly increasing. Your intervention is immediately solicited”.<sup>126</sup> But, Mukherjee’s hope of enlisting Kamraj’s

help had faded away in the ground when T. Manean, general secretary of the AICC, informed Mukherjee that the complaints regarding the enrolment of bogus members were vague. Only after getting the specific charges the Congress President “will look into them and take appropriate measures”.<sup>127</sup>

### **Role of the Hooghly Group**

When the possibility of Kamraj’s intervention was of no use then the Hooghly Group directly intervened into the Midnapore situation. Midnapore Congress factionalism reached its climax at a meeting of the executive committee of the PCC in Arambag on 3 August. As PCC President, Ajoy Mukherjee was also present there but the determining voice was of Atulya Ghosh. The committee carried a resolution denouncing “the anti-organisational activities of some Congressmen who were squatting before the district party office in Midnapore”. Ajoy Mukherjee had to give his consent to that resolution due to severe pressure created on him. Not only that, he had to leassion some abuse language in that meeting. At last a three-man committee was set up consisted of Atulya Ghosh (vice-president of PCC), Prafulla Chandra Sen (chief minister), and Rabindralal Sinha (minister-in-Charge of education) and empowered it to inquire into the Midnapore happenings.<sup>128</sup> As per the recommendation of the three-man committee a meeting of the MDCC was summoned to resolve the factional dispute. The committee also requested its members to attend the meeting. For obvious reasons, the recommendation of the committee was not acceptable to the Mukherjee Group. Mukherjee’s argument was that “The (Midnapore DCC) authorities were the accused. So how could they sit for judgement”? In spite of that the meeting took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> September unattended by Mukherjee. Charu Chandra Mahanty made a statement in that meeting regarding the happening of 23<sup>rd</sup> July and said “if he had addressed in a moment of excitement any improper words to Ajoy Mukherjee he was tendering “unqualified apology”.<sup>129</sup> After the end of the meeting immediately Prafulla Chandra Sen informed Mukherjee about Mahanty’s apology. In response to the information of P.C. Sen regarding Mahanty’s apology Mukherjee replied its o. k, but the issue of question was “the unconstitutional and fraudulent” methods adopted by the Mahanty Group regarding the enrolment of party

members, and that it was yet to be settled.” In that situation, the factional conflict in the MDCC remained unsolved.<sup>130</sup>

### **Reaction of the Dismissal of Nirmalendu Dey**

On the other hand, The Hooghly Group was so furious by centering the order of removal to general secretary of PCC Nirmalendu Dey, that as a counteracting it resolved to remove Ajoy Mukherjee from the office of the PCC president. As a calculative measure regarding the removal of Ajoy Mukherjee from the office of the PCC President a requisition meeting of the general committee of the PCC was convened by Suhrid Dutta, one of the three secretaries of PCC which was scheduled to be held on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1965 at Kumar Singh Hall, Calcutta. It was signed by 111 members including Prafulla Chandra Sen and Atulya Ghosh. In a statement, Ajoy Mukherjee remarked, “There is almost no democracy in West Bengal Congress and instead of that a ‘Proto Fascist Dictatorship’ has been established here. The meeting was not convened by general secretary and at the time of the convening the meeting I was not consulted as PCC President, therefore it is illegal.”<sup>131</sup> However, the meeting was summoned on 11 September 1965. For Ajoy Mukherjee it was no doubt a serious threat to his position. Anticipating the outcome of the trial of strength in the PCC meeting, Ajoy Mukherjee again drew the attention of Kamraj. In a telegram to Kamraj Mukherjee wrote that the general secretary of the PCC had ignored his order of removal served on him, and as a consequence of that a move was under way to oust the PCC president.<sup>132</sup>

Meanwhile the Hooghly Group made another attempt to squeeze out Ajoy Mukherjee. On 7 September a meeting of the executive committee of the PCC was summoned by Suhrid Rudra, to consider the order of removal served to the general secretary. But Ajoy Mukherjee as the PCC president questioned regarding the validity of the meeting and commented that Rudra’s action was ultra virus.<sup>133</sup> Ignoring the remarks of the PCC President the executive committee met on 7 September and it condemned the action of PCC president considering the fact that he had “exceeded his powers” thereby the PCC president had ordered to remove the general secretary Nirmalendu Dey from his office without giving him any chance to explain his case.<sup>134</sup>

The executive committee of the PCC taking a resolution permitted Nirmalendu Dey, general secretary of the PCC to continue his work as usual. As the President of the PCC was unattended that is why Vice-President Labanyaprovra Dutta conducted the meeting.<sup>135</sup>

On the other hand, the requisition meeting of the PCC, held on 11 September, carried a resolution expressing lack of confidence on the PCC president.<sup>136</sup> As the notice of the requisition meeting for the removal of Ajoy Mukherjee was issued by Nirmalendu Dey and Suhrid Rudra on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> September, so the next day claiming the proposed meeting was unlawful and against any precedence, Binay Krishna Bag, one of the members of the PCC filed a suit in Calcutta High Court against Atulya Ghosh and Suhrid Rudra. Hon'ble Justice A.N. Roy in his ruling on 10<sup>th</sup> September said that 'whatever resolution will adopt in the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> September not be executed untill the final verdict of the suit.'<sup>137</sup> It is needless to say that as Ajoy Mukherjee earlier declared that meeting illegal, so he did not attend it but went to Delhi to meet Congress President Kamraj. The Delhi meeting ascertained fruitless and that ultimately paved the way for the emergence of a new party known as 'Bangla Congress'.<sup>138</sup> Ajoy Mukherjee's attempts to gain help from central Congress leaders thus fuled. The central Congress leadership was either unconvinced by Mukherjee's course of action or reluctant to back Mukherjee to go against the Hooghly Group led by Atulya Ghosh who was not only a very powerful Congressman in the State of West Bengal but also an commanding party leader at the centre.<sup>139</sup>

### **Ajoy Mukherjee's exit from the Chairmanship of the Medinipore Zilla Parishad**

Whenever due to the ruling of the Hon'ble High Court a stalemate condition of the PCC was going on, in the meantime in an another requisition meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1965 to oust Ajoy mukherjee from the post of the Chairman of the Medinipore Zilla Parishad. Rashbehari Paul, Vice-Chairman of the Zilla Parishad presided over the meeting. No-confidence proposal against Ajoy Mukharjee mooted by Santosh Kumar Mukhopadhyay and seconded by Prodyut Kumar Mahanty and ultimately Ajoy Mukherjee had to leave the Chairmanship of Zilla Parishad.<sup>140</sup>

## **Removal of Ajoy Mukherjee from PCC Chief**

During the unresolved situation of the suit and as per the ruling of the Hon'ble High Court Ajoy Mukherjee remained PCC chief as usual but Nirmalendu Dey's function as general secretary was stopped. The suit was carried on for last five months. In the meantime, Ajoy Mukherjee appeared to all through a statement in a newspaper that who were considered to be thoughtful as well as old congressmen of West Bengal had to leave the Congress party for various reasons and ex-revolutionaries to help him in his efforts to reform Congress from the corruption. During that time the hon'ble High Court ordered to give penalty of Rs. 50 to Suhrid Rudra for showing his arrogance and instructed Atulya Ghosh to be present in the Court personally. However, on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1966, Justice Shri G.K. Mitra and Shri Arun Kumar Mukherjee in their verdict clearly stated that the date of notice on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1965 regarding requisition meeting and the resolution of that meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> September would not be executed. The Hon'ble Court also ordered that within 9<sup>th</sup> January 1966 a fresh notice had to be issued through daily Ananda Bazar Patrika and Hindusthan Standards to resolve the question of the removing of the PCC president. The meeting would be held at Kumar Shing Hall of 46 no. Indian Mirror Street, Calcutta. The meeting would be presided over by a person nominated by the Indian National Congress and present members implement their voting right through secret ballots. In that context, on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1966 Ajoy Mukherjee again went to Delhi and met with Kamraj and after comprehensive discussion he requested Kamraj to help at the aim of ending anarchy in the PCC, but Kamraj was not agree with the proposal of Ajoy Mukherjee. Therefore, as per the order of the Hon'ble High Court the meeting of the PCC was held on 20<sup>th</sup> January at Kumar Shing Hall. Dr. Ram Suvag Singh presided over the meeting as Central representative. In that meeting PCC passed a resolution over the no-confidence motion by a majority of 296 against 40 (they were adherents of Mukherjee) exposing lack of confidence in its President, Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee, the 65 years old veteran Congress leader and thereby he had automatically removed from his post.<sup>141</sup>

In response to a question asked by the press reporters Ajoy Mukherjee remarked, "The offender did'nt know what was his offence, but judgment was over."

<sup>142</sup> He furthermore stated that he did'nt know what was the reason behind that no-

confidence motion. In proposal there was no reason and even the proposer also did not mention anything. If there was a mention any reason then there was a question of answering. He narrated with an emotional voice that he was serving the Congress party for 45 years but today without showing any reason why he had been deposed from the seat of the PCC president that would be deeply considered by the members he hoped. It is mentionworthy that those members who had given their vote against Ajoy Mukherjee showing their absolute loyalty to Atulya Ghosh and his coterie after coming out from the meeting room some of them expressed their original mental state of affairs by uttering 'whatever had done with Ajoy Mukherjee was not only excessive but also unlawful.'<sup>143</sup> In that connection Sukharanjan Sengupta a press reporter is said to have asked Sankar Das Banerjee (one of the voting members of that day) almost secretly with a very low voice due to his personal intimacy, "whom did you cast your vote? Barrister Sankar Das Banerjee answered whisperingly and said that I had given my vote to the Judas"<sup>144</sup> It was the enough indication that though most of the members would believe that whatever Ajoy Mukherjee had done, no doubtly for the interest of the Congress and whatever was doing by the Atulya Ghosh and his coterie would damage the Congress party in near future. The most unfortunate things was that inspite of knowing the fact the majority members had to cast their vote against Ajoy Mukherjee as well as interest of the congress party because during that time Atulya Ghosh was so much powerful that most of the members had no courage to go against the will of Atulya Ghosh.

### **Congress Workers Conference and Ajoy Mukherjee**

Inspite of happenings all the above said matters, Ajoy Mukherjee was not ready to surrender himself before the nexus without doing anything. Therefore, in order to alert the old and sincere congress activists about the upcoming crisis of the Congress party in West Bengal a 'Congress Workers Conference' was convened on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> February in 1966 at Shyam Squire as well as Subash Bag in Calcutta. A reception committee for that conference was formed consisting Moitrayee Basu and Sushil Kumar Dhara as President and Secretary respectively. Almost six thousand and above Congress activists attended the conference from the all districts of West Bengal. With the inaugural Speech delivered by the old congress worker Ramnalini

Chakrabarty the function of the conference started. Most notable speakers of the conference were Ramnalini Chakrabarty, Surendranath Sarkar, Satish Chandra Samanta, Basanta kumar Das etc. After the long discussion a chorus voice was raised from the conference i.e. “We are the Congress, not the corrupt Atulya-Prafulla coterie”. A preparatory committee of 30-35 members were also formed which covered the representative of all the districts of West Bengal. Ajoy Mukherjee and Sushil Dhara were selected President and General Secretary respectively and they were empowered to take any decision according to the necessity. But the most significant decision which was taken by the Conference was to make a separate list of candidates that made by the ruling faction of the party, for the coming forth general elections. In spite of the happenings of the above matters, Ajoy Mukherjee and his adherents were not thinking about to quit Congress with the hope that the Central leadership would do somethings in order to end that deadlock in West Bengal congress.<sup>145</sup> In that Congress Workers Conference Ajoy Mukherjee also declared that his main aim was to free the country as well as Congress party from corruption. In order to consider the matters relating to corruption and to take appropriate step a “Corruption Resistance Society” was formed under the presidentship of Shri Ramnalini Chakrabarty and Shri Binay Jiban Ghosh was selected its Secretary.<sup>146</sup>

But, the decision to prepare a separate list of candidates for the ensuing 4<sup>th</sup> general election was not entertained by the Central Congress leadership. AICC President Kamraj told newsmen that only one list which would be forwarded by the PCC might be deserved consideration. He also added that the disappointed Congressmen could make complaint separately and not in such a fashion.<sup>147</sup> In that circumstances, Ajoy Mukherjee’s tour of all over West Bengal and his open criticism of the Congress Government in the field of food crisis and the Subhag-Bag’s conference in Calcutta collectively provoked the State Congress leadership to charge Ajoy Mukherjee with having violating the party rules and acting in a manner that calculated to bring the party into disrepute. Ajoy Mukherjee’s answer was that “I am afraid I have nothing further to say in self-defence against your charges”.<sup>148</sup>

### **Birth of Bangla Congress**

However, within few days after the end of the Shyam Squire conference Ajoy Mukherjee went to Jaypur in order to attend the annual conference of AICC in 1966. But in the meantime, the ruling faction of the WBPCC declared null and void of AICC membership of Ajoy Mukherjee. However, in Jaypur Ajoy Mukherjee tried his best to meet with Congress President Kamraj again, but Mukherjee was not able to meet Kamraj after waiting for long time. Ajoy Mukherjee also met with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and narrated her about the happening in West Bengal congress politics. But it was difficult for the Central leadership in that sensitive pre-election year to put down any decision which was against the pleasure of Atulya Ghosh and Prafulla Chandra Sen to satisfy Ajoy Mukherjee and his group.<sup>149</sup> So, being neglected by the Central leadership time and again Ajoy Mukherjee had no other option but to come out from the Congress fold and to form a new party at the earliest. Thereafter, with the consultation of some old Congress leaders who had to leave the congress party due to the disagreement with Atulya Ghosh such as Nirmalendu Mukherjee, Indu Sengupta etc. Kamada Kinkar Mukherjee, former MLC also inspired Ajoy Babu and Sushil Dhara to proceed with their desired goal. As a result of that a preparatory meeting was held to take decision about the pros and cons regarding the formation of a new party.<sup>150</sup> In the second preparatory day of the formation of the new party it was unanimously resolved that a new party would have to be formed, but the final decision would have to be taken in the next extensive meeting. The last preparatory meeting was held on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1966. In that meeting as the name of the new party 'Bangla Congress'<sup>151</sup> was accepted by all and a unanimous decision was also taken up as to the party flag, constitution and other preparatory programme of the party. It was also decided that the present preparatory committee would act as the executive committee of the party. Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee, Sushil Kumar Dhara and Kanailal Bhattacharya were unanimously selected as its President, General Secretary and Treasurers respectively.<sup>152</sup> It may be noted here that Pranab Mukherjee, son of Kamada Kinkar Mukherjee was attended one of the preparatory meeting of the formation of Bangla Congress.<sup>153</sup> Though, Pranab Mukherjee himself claimed that he would attend the Shyam Squire meeting of the congress workers convened by Ajoy Mukherjee on 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> February 1966.<sup>154</sup>

It is noteworthy that the fact as it stands was in the subsequent days, the series of reverses at the hands of the left parties in the previous months on food movement, the split in the Congress, the combination of all left forces, all these led to one result – the inevitable defeat of the Congress party. However, what circumstances led to the decline of the Congress party in West Bengal in the general election of 1967 were as under:

### **Making an Alliance Against Congress Party**

In the midst of above said circumstances S.A. Dangey, CPI (R) leader came to Calcutta with the hope to make an alliance with the left Communists and other left parties on the basis of a common programme to defeat Congress party in West Bengal. Dange also considered about the formation of the Bangla Congress as a very good sign of ‘healthy split’. It was an inevitable impact on people’s movement at the aim of dethrown the Congress party from the seat of power.<sup>155</sup>

### **Humayun Kabir Quits Congress**

Actually the year of 1966 was an eventful year from the various point of view in West Bengal politics. As like as the case of Ajoy Mukherjee; former Petroleum and Chemicals Minister, Humayun Kabir was also completely disillusioned about the Congress leadership in West Bengal. It may be noted that when Moulana Abul Kalam Azad was in- charge of the Education Minister of India, Humayun Kabir was the education secretary to the Ministry and later on he had to take up the portfolio of the Union State Minister in- charge Education and Cultural Department. But, Humayun Kabir was not inducted in the Indira Gandhi’s Ministry. As long as Humayun Kabir was the Minister of the Central Government he used to maintain a very close relation with the West Bengal Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Sen and spent hours in his room whenever he came to Calcutta. He had exerted his influence for a petro-chemical complex in Haldia and for the development of metropolitan Calcutta. A tireless worker and a first rate intellectual Humayun Kabir had a very clean image and commanded respect from both Hindu and Muslim intelligentsia. When communalism

usurped Bengal before Independence, he as a Member of the Upper House of West Bengal Assembly, fought for Hindu-Muslim unity and violently attacked Muslim League top leaders as well as Ministers like Nazimuddin, Suhrawardy and others leaders of the Treasury benches.<sup>156</sup>

It has already been mentioned that Humayun Kabir had good relation with Prafulla Chandra Sen but he was not in good terms with Atulya Ghosh. According to the opinion of some leaders that Humayun Kabir had a strong conviction as to a fact that he would never get a berth in Indira Gandhi's Cabinet and it was due to the conspiracy of Atulya Ghosh. From a source it is now clear that as Humayun Kabir was the selection of Pandit Nehru in his Ministry and a man of high caliber, a man like Atulya Ghosh could not comply with him. Naturally Humayun Kabir had also some negative impression about Atulya Ghosh.<sup>157</sup> However, after his exit from Central Cabinet Humayun Kabir noticed the developments of West Bengal politics for a while and decided to quit Congress and the Congress Parliamentary Party on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1966. In a letter to the Congress President he said, "Congress in West Bengal is completely isolated" and being disgusted with "the discredited leadership and its hired supporters the people have lost all confidence on the Organisation".<sup>158</sup> Humayun Kabir had a forecast about the certain defeat for the Congress party in West Bengal in the next election and taking into account the happenings he ultimately joined in Bangla Congress and tried his best to overthrow the Congress party and its leaders namely Atulya Ghosh and Prafulla Chandra Sen from the seat of power in West Bengal.

### **Impact of Transport and Reserve Bank Strike**

Apart from these very remarkable defections in the Congress party i.e. the formation of Bangla Congress and Humayun Kabir's quit from Congress, the month of September, 1966 was noted for the transport strikes in the city of Calcutta. The transport strike continued for 44 days. During that time the employees' of Tramways and Calcutta State Transport Corporation and others transports were also a parties of that strike. Not only that 16 days long strike in the Reserve Bank also paralised the running of the State administration. The mass absenteeism of non-gazetted

Government employees due to the influence of the Left-dominated Coordination Committee was a great blow to the smooth running of State administration. Therefore, it was found that an unfavourable wave for the ruling Congress party was blowing which after a while developed into a hurricane that revealed in the result of the crucial fourth general election.<sup>159</sup>

### **Political Stand of Bangla Congress**

Amidst of every unfavourable atmosphere of the Congress party the most widely speculated question relating to the policies of the newly formed Bangla Congress in the upcoming fourth general election whether it would act as a rival of the Pradesh Congress as a iron hammer or a mild one. Though, both the Chief Minister and the leaders of the Congress were not at all ready to entertain or give due importance to the Bangla Congress. Yet, some of the people within the Government and the pro-Congress mentalities were hoping about the some sort of reconciliation might happen between the Congress and Bangla Congress against the Communists.

Following the circumstances, Ajoy Mukherjee justified the formation of his party as a kind of crusade not against the Congress party as such but against the 'corrupt and dictatorial' PCC leadership. Since the birth of Bangla Congress was endorsed by thousands of people all over the State and its object was to ensure so that the leaders who were then controlling the P.C.C. did not come back to power again. Moreover, after the formation of the Bangla Congress, it was found that a parallel Congress was set up not only at the State level but its organisation also at the district, subdivision and village levels. The office bearers of the various stages of the Bangla Congress were manned by the old and active Congressmen who had detouched from the parent Organisation. That is why Ajoy Mukherjee then made a very meaningful statement. He said, "As it is impossible for his new party i.e. Bangla Congress alone to defeat the Congress party and restrain it from coming into power, for that reason his party would had to come into an understanding with the other opposition parties to avoid triangular contests in election and to ensure the defeat of Congress."<sup>160</sup>

## **Political Stand of the Congress Party to Counter the Oppositions**

The West Bengal Pradesh Congress leaders felt the necessity for organizing “a counter display of strength”. A large public meeting was organized by the Pradesh Congress in Calcutta Maidan on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1966 but regarding the attending of number it could not thrash the recently held Left Communist assemblage in the same place. The principal speakers of that meeting were Atulya Ghosh and Prafulla Chandra Sen. Both leaders predicted a Congress majority in the forthcoming general election in the State. They actually expected with a great hope that the opposition parties were not be able to set up candidates for the all 280 Assembly seats in the coming election of West Bengal. They also expected that the alliance of non-Congress parties would not be effective as like as a chariot pulled by a heterogeneous group of animals. That was the technique of the West Bengal Congress leadership for the face the coming general election to rely mostly on the divisions of the opposition instead of building up a potential and viable force within the congress party by enacting a bold and revolutionary policy to revitalize the congress workers.<sup>161</sup>

## **The Alliance - the story behind the emergence of PULF and ULF**

In the last three general elections, as the opposition parties fought the election battle separately and division of the opposition votes-no doubtly helped Congress party to come back power again and again. But it was first attempt to consolidate the all opposition votes against the common ‘enemy’ the Congress party in the coming fourth general election. So, keeping in mind to resist the division of the opposition votes, the leaders of the 13 opposition in West Bengal conducted a series of negotiations to arrive at an electoral understanding between them. But only due to the dire animosity between the two sections of the Communist Party, C.P.I. and C.P.I. (M) the attempt of understanding was broken down. The two senior leaders who were not belonging to the Communist fold i.e. Ajoy mukherjee of Bangla Congress and Hemanta Kumar Bose of the Forward Bloc took special initiative to settle the understandings by their personal contacts and appeals. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, the first chief Minister of West Bengal and Humayun Kabir also volunteered their services with a view ti achieve unity. At last there emerged two groupings i.e. ULF

(United Left Front) and PULF (Peoples United Left Front) among the Opposition parties. One i.e. ULF centred round the CPI (M) and the other i.e. PULF on Bangla Congress. The former group comprised of CPI (M), RSP, SSP, SUC, RCPI, Forward Bloc (Marxists) and the Workers' Party. The other group i.e. PULF comprised of Bangla Congress, CPI, Forward Bloc and Bolshevic Party. Humayun Kabir worked as like as bridge between the two fronts.<sup>162</sup>

### **Declaration of the Date of Election**

On 12<sup>th</sup> January 1967, the Election Commissioner of India announced the date of election of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly along with Loke Sabha which was scheduled to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> February (one day) between 7-30 a.m. to 4-30 p.m. In that fourth general election in West Bengal there were 280 Legislative assembly seats and 40 Parliamentary seats. According to the declaration of the election commission it was decided that the counting of votes would be held on 21<sup>st</sup> February both all the Assembly and Lok Sabha seats.<sup>163</sup>

### **Country's Attention to Arambagh poll**

A few days later when the possibility of the formation of a United Front between the ULF and the PULF was dashed then it was announced in the Press that PULF (which comprised the Bangla Congress, CPI(R), Forward Bloc and the Bolshevic Party) would contest 190 Assembly and 25 Parliamentary seats. The CPI was given the permission to set up 57 candidates, Bangla Congress 80, Forward Bloc 47 and Bolshevic Party 4 Assembly seats respectively. Out of 25 Parliamentary seats the CPI fielded 10 candidates, Forward Bloc 6 and Bangla Congress 8. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, the former Chief Minister, filed his nomination paper as an independent candidate from Jhargram Assembly Constituency in Midnapore district with the support of the PULF.<sup>164</sup> As the Bangla Congress was formed as protest against the corrupt leadership of Atulya Ghosh-Prafulla Chandra Sen and their coterie, so it was intended from the opposition bloc that a candidate must have to be filed against Prafulla Chandra Sen in Arambagh. In that case when Jyoti Basu of CPI (M)

and Hemanta Basu of Forward Bloc, the two famous leader were not agree to contest against Prafulla Chandra Sen for the supposed defeat in the hands of Prafulla Chandra Sen. But it was Ajoy Mukherjee who first raised his voice against the corrupt leadership of PCC and decided to contest against Prafulla Chandra Sen. He also filed his nomination paper in his home constituency Tamluk.<sup>165</sup> Naturally, following Ajoy Mukherjee's announcement to contest him reflected widespread interest in the political circle in West Bengal.<sup>166</sup>

Thereafter, the Chief Minister had to put forth his best efforts to effective his election machinery in Arambagh. On January 17, a month before of that polling the Congress party organized a mamath meeting at Arambagh which was to be addressed by Atulya Ghosh and Prafulla Chandra Sen. Union Finance Minister, Sachin Chowdhury was also contesting for the Parliamentary seat as a Congress candidate from that area. The first meeting was disturbed due to the student demonstrations of the 'Netaji College' of Arambagh. At that crucial time a bulk of students under the leadership of very enthusiastic and joyous student leader Mannan joined Ajoy Mukherjee's camp. Though Bangla Congress had no as such strong organization in Arambagh, inspite of that by dint of extraordinary organizational capability of Sushil Dhara, general secretary of Bangla Congress, a strong support base in favour of Ajoy Mukherjee was established. In that case by centering Bibhuti Roy, a Madhyamick school teacher, Abani Hota, Nukul Pal along with student leader Mannan – a strong election campaigning group was organized which helped to create a crack in the stronghold of Prafulla Chandra Sen's Arambagh constituency and as a result of that the smooth sailing was not going in the Assembly election of Arambagh.<sup>167</sup>

As Prafulla Chandra Sen was the Chief Minister and doing his political work from pre-independence days that is why he had also diehard followers in Arambagh. Naturally there was a kind of phobia among the people to go against Prafulla Babu. But that phobia had gone away after the resistance of some atrocities on behalf of the congress party by the student-people joint effort and organized an ever biggest election meeting in Arambagh which was addressed by the famous press reporter Vivekananda Mukhopadhyay, Humayun Kabir, Satish Chandra Samanta, Hemanta Basu, Somenath Lahiri and others. Naturally there was a tough election fight started between Ajoy Mukherjee and Prafulla Sen in Arambagh. Therefore, according to the

demand of the followers of Prafulla Chandra Sen, he had to give more attention towards his own constituency and as a result of that he had no enough time to address the election meeting throughout the West Bengal.<sup>168</sup>

#### **Fourth General Election**

However, in the light of above mentioned situations, the crucial Fourth General Election<sup>169</sup> in West Bengal commenced on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1969. On the whole the general pattern of the electoral fight all over the State was mainly triangular i.e. Congress, the Peoples United Left Front (PULF) and the United Left Front (ULF). The ruling party was in the mood to take advantages from the divisions of the two left fronts. The polling throughout the State of West Bengal was generally free from violence which many had feared. Obviously, it was indicated the growing political awareness among the voters who cast their votes. With the end of the polling in an almost a peaceful manner, the Peoples as a whole were eagerly waiting for its results particularly the outcome of three constituencies i.e. Arambagh where Ajoy Mukherjee and Prafulla Chandra Sen were the main contestants, Bankura Parliamentary constituency where Atulya Ghosh<sup>170</sup> and Jitendra Mohan Biswas were fighting their electoral battle against each other and Baranagar from where Jyoti Basu was contesting against Congress candidate Amarendranath Bhattacharya.<sup>171</sup>

#### **Results**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1967 the results of 36 West Bengal Assembly constituencies including seven in Calcutta showed that the Congress party captured 17 seats against 19 seats obtained by the opposition parties. Around 5 O' clock in the afternoon a message was spread that in the Bankura Parliamentary constituency Atulya Ghosh, the Congress candidate was trailing behind his contestant Jitendra Mohan Biswas by several thousand votes. If Atulya Ghosh was defeated then what remains in the Congress party of Bengal? After hearing that news the Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Sen's prompt reaction was-"What, Atulya is suffering a reverse? I am going to Congress office".<sup>172</sup> The news spread as like as wild fire in the Press

room as well as from mouth to mouth and reached the ears of VIPs who were in writers' Buildings in the afternoon that Atulya Ghosh had been defeated by J.M. Biswas, CPI candidate with a margin of 29,770 votes. The number of votes cast in favour of J. M. Biswas was 1,20,590 against 90,820 of Atulya Ghosh.<sup>173</sup>

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February was a very tragic day not only for the Chief Minister P. C. Sen but also for the ruling Congress party. That day counting of votes decided the fate of many stalwarts which was a turning point in the political scenario of India. By about 8.30 a. m. it was almost clear that Chief Minister P.C. Sen was going down and expressed an opinion that he was going to defeat. With a low-spirited face the Chief Minister slowly said, "The Communists are coming. The prospects of Congress victory in this State are bleak".<sup>174</sup> However, after a neck to neck fight, at last defeating P.C. Sen with a margin of 881 votes, Ajoy Mukherjee came into victorious in the prestigious Arambagh constituency.<sup>175</sup> Besides, the defeat of Atulya Ghosh and Prafulla Chandra Sen, the embarrassment of the Congress Party was not completed. More than half of the Cabinet Members such as Saila Kumar Mukherjee, Jagannath Koley, Tarun Kanti Ghosh, Maya Banerjee, Shyamadas Bhattacharjee, Samarajit Banerjee and even Deputy Speaker Naren Sen were also rejected by the electorates.<sup>176</sup>

The Congress party secured 127 seats and the 14 non-Congress political parties and independents collectively captured 153 seats. The People's United Left Front (PULF) led by Ajoy Mukherjee had secured 65 seats (Bangla Congress 35 of which Ajoy Babu himself won from two constituency i.e. Tamluk and Arambagh, CPI- 16 and Forward Bloc- 14). The United Left Front (ULF) led by the left Communist leader Jyoti Basu had captured 64 seats (CPI-M,- 43, SSP- 07, RSP- 07, Socialist Unity Centre- 04, Workers' Party- 02 and Marxist Forward Bloc- 01.)<sup>177</sup>

### **Peoples - the Last Word in Democracy**

On the basis of the above said matters one may claim that the real architects of the victory against the Congress party led by Atulya Ghosh were not mainly the political leaders, but the common people who had decided to farewell Congress from power. The crucial role played by the Bangla Congress and its leader Ajoy Mukherjee

was also a very undeniable matter behind the defeat of Congress. In that connection, it may be mentioned that though the oppositions particularly the two left parties were not able to unite themselves against the Congress party in order to oust from the power, but it was the people of West Bengal who had defeated Congress. The entire matter had been reported in the contemporary Weekly news paper as the title of "People's Initiative" in the following way, "However, even as the rank and file was expressing regret at their leaders' refusal to confront the Congress unitedly and debating which among them was more responsible for Left disunity, more results poured in which to the surprise of many people indicated that the Congress was on the point of overthrow despite all the circumstances favouring it. The common voter had evidently taken matters in their own hands. Soon the gloom was lifted and as the people had learnt of the defeat of Congress boss Atulya Ghosh at the hands of the CPI's J.M. Biswas and that of Chief Minister P.C. Sen by the Bangla Congress chief Ajoy Mukherjee, joyous crowds poured into the streets of Calcutta celebrating the two events." <sup>178</sup>

On 24<sup>th</sup> February the PULF and the ULF after meeting informally made a joint statement announcing in view of the serious obligation imposed on them by the electors to unite and form a non-Congress Government.

### **Causes behind the Fall of the Congress in Fourth General Election, 1967**

In this respect let us look at the overall position of the Congress and the symptoms of decline. The causes that led to the downfall of the Congress party in West Bengal for the first time after Independence was a very significant question to the researchers. There were so many questions which had arisen behind the fall of Congress party in the fourth general election. There was popular displeasure against administration run by Congress leaders and gradual isolation of the Party from the common people specially after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru in national level and B. C. Roy in West Bengal which ultimately led to the debacle in the poll. Not only that, when P.C. Sen Ministry was in a very odd position regarding the controlling of food movement and transport strike almost at the same time misbehavior with veteran Congress leader Ajoy Mukherjee and as an inevitable consequence of that matter- the

split among Congress as well as emergence of Bangla Congress also played vital role behind the fall of Congress in the election of 1967. In that context it is proper to mention that regarding the formation of Bangla Congress Prafulla Chandra Sen himself acknowledged, “Ajoy Babu was dropped from the Cabinet in the plea of Kamraj Plan and he was dismissed from the Congress party for the interest of narrow group politics. West Bengal Congress had done great unjust and tried to defame Ajoy Baby without any reason and as a result of that he formed Bangla Congress with deep sorrow and sufferings.”<sup>179</sup> In one of his writings entitled, “Atulya and Myself” Prafulla Chandra Sen confessed that at the time of dismissal of Ajoy Mukherjee from Congress he had committed a great mistake following the Atulya Ghosh’s attitude.

There was another reason which crippled the vitality of the administration. Some important figures of the party machinery and their associates used some of the Ministers and their department as honeycomb to fulfil their personal ends. People’s money instead of welfare activities were being drained into their pockets towards the end of the Ministry. However, the reputation of the Congress Government was submerged and people were losing faith gradually in the Party and in the administration which reflected in the election of 1967. Apart from the above reasons—cordoning system during the time of severe food shortage, levy system as well as collection of food grain from the big cultivators instead of government prices, growing discontent among the business classes and common masses, inactive of the Congress party before the fictitious propaganda of the opposition parties particularly the Communists against many auspicious measures taken by the Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Sen in order to soothe the people of over-crowded problem ridden State of West Bengal. Another most important factor which led to the fall of Congress party in that election was Muslim votes. As after the partition most of the Muslim League leaders had joined in Congress party with the hope that Congress would at least protect the interest of the Muslim community. But the communal riots in the year of 1964 had broken the hope of the Muslim community. Not only that during the India-Pakistan war in 1965, many Muslim leaders were arrested under D.I. rule by West Bengal Government which enraged the Muslim people. That displeasure of the Muslim community people were consolidated mainly in the district of Nadia and 24-Parganas under the leadership of Kabir brothers i.e. Humayun Kabir and Jahangir Kabir and had given their verdict against the Congress party in the election of 1967.<sup>180</sup>

## Notes and References

1. Prafulla Kumar Chakrabarty, *op.cit.*p.361.
2. Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *Nilkantha Prafulla Chandra* (in Bengalee), Janaswartha Barta, Kolkata, 2015, p. 291; also see Amalendu Dey, *Bidhan Chandra Karnadhar...*, p. 104.
3. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 1.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
5. Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p.7.
6. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 05.
7. *Ibid.*, p.2.
8. Prafulla Kumar Chakrabarty, *op.cit.*p.359.
9. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.3.
10. Prasanta Sengupta, *op.cit.*p.46.
11. Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*pp.295-296.
12. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 2.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
15. Prasanta Sengupta, *op.cit.*p.46.
16. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 9.
17. *Ibid.*, p.6.
18. *Ibid.*, p.7.
19. *Ibid.*, p.10.

20. Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p.297.
21. *Ibid.*, pp.297-298.
22. *Ibid.*, pp.10- 11.
23. *Ibid.*, p.298.
24. *Ibid.*, p.299.
25. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 14-15; also see *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300.
26. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 50.
27. Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p.300.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.
29. Dr. Pratap Chandra Chaunder, *Amar Suhrid P.C. Sen, Janatar Katha* (in Bengali), p. 37, cited in Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p. 302.
30. Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p. 303; also see Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 15.
31. see Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 16-17.  
Instead of 42 Ratendone Road, New Delhi where former Chief Minister Dr. B. C. Roy used to stay while at Delhi.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-22.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.
37. That was the first time since India became Independent that Government declared a State of Emergency. See *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.
39. On November 21, a Chinese Govt. statement issued from Peking to foreign correspondents said: "Beginning from December 1, 1962, Chinese frontier guards will withdraw to positions 20 kilo miles (12.5 miles) behind the lines of

actual control which existed between China and India on November 7, 1959".  
See *Ibid.*, p. 32.

40. *Ibid.*, p.34.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85. The expelled members were P. Sundaryya, M. Basavapunniah, P. Rammurthi, A. K. Gopalan, Hare Krishna Konar, Promode Dasgupta and H. S. Surjeet. Amongst those suspended were Jyoti Basu and E. M. S. Nambudripad. See Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 84-85. On the other hand a nine member Secretariat was set up on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1964 with Bhowani Sen as Secretary by the minority rightist section of the C.P.I.'s West Bengal Council. (Of the 96 members 23 were present at the meeting.) The deliberation was carried by Rajeswar Rao and P. C. Joshi of the Central Secretariat. The foundation of the parallel Secretariat was predicted in political circles as the first necessary step towards the formal recognition by the Party's top leadership that possibly the split in the C. P. I. was unbridgeable. It might be noted here that West Bengal was the only State Party Unit which was dominated by the leftists. See Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 102.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49. Actually, the Colombo Conference of six non-aligned nations, consisting of Indonesia, Burma, Cambodia, Ghana, U. A. R. and Ceylon, with the object of carrying on negotiations with Peking and Delhi about their proposal which was kept very secret at that time. See Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 38. The aim of the conference was to ensure a truce between the two warring countries. The Conference had given charge to the Prime Minister of Ceylone, Mrs. Bandarnaiké to carry on discussion with the Chinese and Indian leaders and their recommendations in this respect. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.42.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

48. *Ibid.*, pp.72-73; also see Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p.312.

49. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp.104-105.
50. Proceedings of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1963.
51. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 53-54; also see Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p. 305.
52. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 54-55; also see Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p. 304.
53. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 104.
54. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.* 88.
55. *Shatang Jibatu*, Durdarshan, *cited in*, Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p. 313.
56. Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p. 316.
57. *Ibid.*, pp.50, 308.
58. *Ibid.*,p. 309.
59. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 66-67.
60. Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p. 314. As per Government records, during that time there were 60 thousands stockiest in the state and each and every stockist had at least 100 maund of rice as stock. Besides, rice would produce almost 1.3 million tons in 6 hundreds rice mill and in 7 thousands rice breaking machine in the state. Moreover, the agricultural production of that year was almost satisfactory. So, it was not possible for the state government to accept the price hike of the food grains and considered it as a men made crisis. The Government would think that if the stockists as well as growers remained under control then the gradual price hike of the food grain may be controlled. Considering the above fact 177 raids were carried out in Calcutta on rice shops and 206 fish stalls simultaneously and as a result of that 43 offenders were arrested. At the aim of the fixing of food market Government ordered fixing of prices of mustard oil at the rate of Rs. 3 and meat at Rs. 4 per kg. Despite vigorous attempts taken by the State Government it was found that in the month of May-June the prices of three essential commodities i.e. rice, fish and mustard oil again started rising. Therefore, every attempt in the field of the price fixation by the Government failed miserably to achieve its ultimate goal owing to

conspiracy of the immodest profiteers. see Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 87-88.

61. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.98; also see Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.* p. 315.
62. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 112-113.
63. *Ibid.*,p.82; also see Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.* p. 318.
64. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.82.
65. *Ibid.*, p.83; also see Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.* p. 319.
66. “*Bharater Khadyaniti*”, a Bengali article by Atulya Ghosh, in *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1966; also see Prafulla Kumar Chakrabarty, *op.cit.* pp. 370-373.
67. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1966.
68. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1966. In the meanwhile, after reaching the news of the death of Ali Hafez (one of the six persons who received bullet injuries on 16<sup>th</sup> February) due to police firing on 16<sup>th</sup> February the people of Basirhat burst into anger and that grudge had extended in Bongaon, Barracpur and in Naihati. The death of Nurul Islam naturally led to the observance of protest day on 17<sup>th</sup> February that turned into a field of direct conflict between police of the Government and the common people. After that the movement gradually spread in Nadia, Murshidabad and Calcutta. However, on 17<sup>th</sup> February in the day of students-strike the students along with long procession from Calcutta University went to Assembly House in order to submit a memorandum to Chief Minister. Addressing the students Somenath Lahiri, Dr. Narayan Ray, Ila Mitra, Nikhil Das etc. delivered their speech in front of the entrance gate of the Assembly House. See *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1966. Before reaching the procession of the students at Assembly House the opposition leaders demanded judicial enquiry of the police firing at Basirhat. But as soon as when the Chief Minister rejected the opposition demand for judicial enquiry Kamal Guha, a Forward Bloc leader torned the wire of microphone. After that the opposition walked out from the Assembly House and thereafter coming back when they were observing silences in the memory of the martyr then Dr. Maitryee Basu of Congress party joined with them. Somenath

Lahiri after congratulating to Dr. Maitree Basu stated in his speech that ‘this Assembly Session started with police firing’. He also stated that the incident of Basirhat was only initiation and its protest just started now. See *Somenath Lahiri Rachana Sangraha*, vol. iv. (in Bengali), 1995, p.156.

69. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1966.
70. Upananda Mukhopadhyaya, *Ei Police Jiban* (in Bengali), 1987, p.73.
71. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 19, 20 and 23<sup>th</sup> February, 1966.
72. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1966.
73. *Saat Dashak, Samakal O Ananda Bazar, Ananda Bazar Patrika Sankalon*, 1999, p.122; also see *Dainik Basumati*, 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1966.
74. Prafulla kumar Chakrabarty, *op.cit.*p.372.
75. *Ibid.*,pp.383-384.
76. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 151.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
78. *Rakte Ranga Krishnagar* (in Bengali), Nadia Mukur Prakashana, April, 1966. pp.21-22; also see *Dainik Basumati*, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1966.
79. *Rakte Ranga Krishnagar, op.cit.* p. 22-23. Following the death of Ananda Hait, the aggrieved people of Krishnagar ignoring the instruction of state administration organized a mourning procession with the dead body of Ananda Hait on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1966. see *Rakte Ranga Krishnagar, op.cit.*p.7; also see *Ananda Bazar Patrika, Dainik Basumati*, 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1966. The people of Krishnagar were so furious that the demonstrators started setting ablaze the Krishnagar railway station, police out post at Anandamayeetala, Bank, Settlement Office, Cooperative Office and more some Government Offices. Not only that the house of the Fazlur Rahaman, Minister-in-Charge of Fisheries and Khadi Bhawan were also attacked. On the same day the railway station of Madanpur and Payradanga in Nadia and at Birati and some other rail station in 24-Parganas were set on fire. Violent mobs burnt railway coaches, cut off telephone and telegraph wires and created barricades in the National Highway which leading to Krishnagar and adjoining areas isolated for a while from the rest of the country. The teen-age agitators also burnt the offices of the Life Insurance Corporation, District School Board and the Refugee Rehabilitation

Ministry at Krishnagar. See Prafulla kumar Chakrabarty, *op.cit.*pp.384-85. In that situation whenever police intended to fire to disperse the agitated mobs then the youths instead of retreat they had opened the buttons of their shirt and welcomed the police in shouting voice to fire themselves as much as they could. As a result of the police firing in Krishnagar on 5<sup>th</sup> March two teenagers namely Hari Biswas and Arjun Ghosh was lost their lives. On the other side two police personnel namely Jatin Dutta and Sudarshan Ghosh also had been died in the hands of the violent mobs. See *Rakte Ranga Krishnagar,op.cit.* pp. 6-11 and 23-24. After considering the nature of the agitation of Krishnagar, Hiren Dasgupta thought that the Student unrest of Krishnagar had converted into ‘Student Revolt’. It was easy to assume that the demands of the movement were not confined for food, actually the agitators as if wanted to destroy the whole Government. see, Hiren Dasgupta O Harinarayan Adhikary, *Rajnaitik Patabhumite Bharatiya Upmahadesher Chhatra Aandalon* (in Bengali), Radical Impression, Calcutta, 1993, p.466.

80. *Ananda Bazar Patrika, Dainik Basumati*, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1966.

81. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1966.

82. *The Statesman*, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1966.

83. *The Statesman*, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1966. The main disturbed centres in Calcutta on 11<sup>th</sup> March were Subodh Mallick Squire, Chittaranjan Avenue, Ahiritola, Bagbazar, Dum Dum, Entally, Bhwanipur, Behala, Metiaburuj etc. Barricades were made on the road by the dram, branches of trees and other general carriers. Severe scuffle broke out between police and demonstrators at Bidan street in north Calcutta and Bowbazar-Wellington in Middle Calcutta. Besides these two areas police firings were also broke out at Howrah, Kashipur, Agarpara, Sodepur, etc. The house of prominent Congress leader Pratap Chandra Chunder at Nirmal Chandra Street was attacked. Asit Gupta and Jiban Ghosh of Hidaram Banerjee Lane and Ashim Mitra, Bhanu Paul, Shanti Ghosh, Jagadish Thaper and Alok Majumder of Howrah were also lost their lives due to police firing on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1966.see *Dainik Basumati*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1966. Not only that that Post offices, thanas, mobile police vehicles, trams, State bus goomties and milk distribution were also attacked. The most affected areas were mainly Barisa, Sarsuna, Thakurpukur, Jinjrapole and Sakherbazar. The Behala Thana was attacked three times and a teen ager was killed in police firing. Belghoria and

Panihati Thanas were attacked with bombs and crackers. Police bullets killed a man at Beliaghata. Barricades were put up at Sealdah and other places to prevent the movement of police vehicles and fire engines. See Prafulla kumar Chakrabarty, *op.cit.*p.387. In North Bengal at Alipurduar in the district of Jalpaiguri disturbances were broke out in several places. The railway station at Alipurduar was also set on fire. At Falakata the B.D.O.'s office was attacked and side by side telephone and telegraph wires were cut off. See Prafulla kumar Chakrabarty, *op.cit.*p.387.

84. *The Statesman*, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1966; also see Prafulla kumar Chakrabarty, *op.cit.*p.388.
85. *The Statesman*, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1966.
86. *Ajishnu Bhattacharya-r Rachana* (in Bengali), published in the '*Parichaya*' *Magh*, 1372 (B.S.), cited in *Bikshubdha Bangla*, p.73.
87. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp.153-154.
88. *Ibid.*, pp.154-155. After emerging from Chief Ministers room Atulya Ghosh told the waiting Pressmen, "Nobody has said anything behind the Chief Minister's back. Whatever contrary views some of his fellow workers had held were placed before him and his final decisions have been accepted by all". P. C. Sen remarked that he had no allegation against the Centre as well as the party or the administration. His colleagues those who were present there expressed full confidence in the political judgement of P. C. Sen and hoped that as a loyal and devoted leader he (Sen) would be led by the counsel of his party men and friends apart from the organization.
89. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.
90. Prafulla kumar Chakrabarty, *op.cit.*p.381.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 380.
92. *Ibid.*
93. It was the State food procurement policy and the cordoning system that had brought the West Bengal in such a position that the police could capitalize of the peoples adversity. Police created obstruction in the way of common people if they would carry a little amount of rice from one place to another place. Police would generally snatch the rice and torture them, whereas in lieu of getting money they silently allowed many lorries which were filled with rice. So, the

general anger of the common people were directed against the Government under whose control police would discharge their duties. See Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p.340.

94. Prafulla kumar Chakrabarty, *op.cit.* p. 380; also see Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p.340.

95. Bipan Chandra and others, *India After Independence-1947-2000*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2000, p. 261. As per the implementation of the Kamraj plan\*, after the withdrawal of the six Union Ministers including Morarji Desai from the Central Cabinet - some senior Congress leaders from the South Indian States and Bengal included Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, the Andhra leader, Nijalingappa, the Chief Minister of Mysore, Kamraj, the then President of Tamilnadu Pradesh Congress Committee, Member of Congress Working Committee and Parliamentary Board of Indian National Congress, became famous throughout the country for his plan and Atulya Ghosh of Bengal met at Tirupathi outwardly to offer worship at the famous Vaishnavite shrine of South India in September 1963, but mainly to take consultation together about the problems facing the country. That was the beginning of what later entitled by a section of the Press as the 'Syndicate' which had been played a significant part in the election of K. Kamraj as the President of All India Congress party as well as Lal Bahadur Shastri as leader of succession to Nehru. They were also the mastermind behind the selection of Indira Gandhi as the next Prime Minister of the country after the death of Lalbahadur Shastri. S. K. Patil also became closely associated in that group from its inception. See V. K. Narasimhan, *Kamraj- A study*, National Book Trust, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, pp.104-105.

\*Kamraj Plan: In the mid-1950s the cry of 'after Nehru, who?' was first heard. It became more pointed in the spring of 1962 when Nehru's serious illness was reported. Though he recovered in quick time but Nehru acquired a slight gravitate and 'probably he will never be the same again'. See *The Statesman*, August 3, 1962. Besides serious upset about India's military reverses in 1962 in India-China war, the most astonishing event for the Indian National Congress was the party's defeat in three crucial bye-elections to Lok Sabha in U.P. and

Gujrat i.e. Amroha, Farukhabad and Rajkot in the spring of 1963. See Michael Brecher, *Succession in India: A study in Decision Making*, Oxford University Press, London, 1966, p.7. In that context, a 'simple but revolutionary plan' was presented to Nehru at Hyderabad in July 1963 by Kumaraswami Kamaraj Nadar, the then Chief Minister of Madras, (present Tamil Nadu) as well as topmost Congress politician in South India. Kamaraj apprised Nehru about his desire to leave the office of the Chief Minister for the necessity of party work. The plan, masterminded by Kamaraj, demanded the resignation of senior Congressmen in Government at the Centre as well as in the States on the ground it was not proper for the organization, if the top ranking Congress leaders preferred to remain in Ministerial office for long and lost proximity with the masses. The idea was originated into the mind of K. Kamaraj Nadar out of the feeling that he was getting out of contact with the mass people and that if he would give up the Chief Ministership and engaged himself to the organizational work then it would be very much effective to revitalize the party organization which will be better to face the next elections. Kamaraj also worried after feeling over the factions and competitions for power in the Congress party in many States and felt that in order to set up an example some top leaders should giving up office willfully and devoting themselves to the party work to keep touch with the common people. See V. K. Narasimhan, *op.cit* pp.97-98. The Prime Minister Nehru welcomed the idea and thought that if that practice would be applied on a large scale throughout the country then a new image of the Congress party would be reflected in the public mind. {Note: Though many commentators claimed that the whole 'Kamaraj Plan' was developed with a very tactful move of the Prime Minister Nehru to get rid of the some Cabinet Ministers whom he wanted to give up and also revoke some of the Chief Ministers who were inventing problems in their States. See V. K. Narasimhan, *op.cit*. pp. 99-100. However, the Congress Working Committee and All India Congress Committee in its meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1963, endorsed the 'Kamaraj Plan' which was considered a great personal triumph for Kamaraj. Not only that with the endorsement of Kamaraj Plan, the AICC carried the 'party before post' resolution at the same time on 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1963. see Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit*. pp. 48-49; also see V. K. Narasimhan, *op.cit*. pp.101-102.

96. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 147-149; also see V. K. Narasimhan, *op.cit.* pp.132 -139).
97. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *Ajoyeo Purush- Ajoy Kumar* (in Bengali), on behalf of Tamralipta Swatinata Sangram Itihas Committee, Parvatipur, Tamluk, Midnapore, Banirupa Press, Calcutta, 1990, p.139.
98. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.*p.49.
99. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.56.
100. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.140.
101. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.59; also see Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.* pp.140-141.
102. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.*p 50.
103. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp.70-72.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
105. Sushil Kumar Dhara, *Prabaha* -Vol. II, (in Bengali), Janakalyan Trust, Mahishadal, Midnapore, 1995, pp.104-105, 128.
106. *Ibid.*
107. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.*pp.47-48.
108. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.110.
109. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.* p.48.
110. Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*p.101.
111. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.141.
112. *Ibid.*,p.142.
113. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.*p.50.
114. Personal interview with Sukharanjan Sengupta, a veteran journalist of West Bengal, on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
115. Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*pp.109, 121.
116. Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*pp.122-123.
117. *The Statesman*, July 27, 1965.
118. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.* p.51. In other words- as alleged that the bogus membership form was pouring into the Mednipore District Congress party office, so according to the allegation of Sushil Dhara after keeping the deposited form into a room until last date of submission the key of lock of that room was remained in the hands of MDCC President in presence of PCC president in order

to stop the entry of the further bogus form. Though District Congress President, Charu Chandra Mahanty had extended three days one by one for the submission of membership form according to the need of Prabir Jana and his coterie. It was also mentionable that a kind of contest was going on between two factions of the Midnapore district Congress party over the question of enrolling high number of active member. Therefore, before counting the actual figure of the both factions the supporters of the factions and their leaders also remained in the office premises and above all Ajoy Mukherjee and Charu Chandra Mohanty would remain in the party office to observe the situation. In that context, when Sushil Dhara went to the office of the District Magistrate to inquire over the question of the deployment of police in the party office. In the meantime some followers of Prabir Jana and his group forced Ajoy Mukherjee to leave the party office in presence of Charu Chandra Mohanty 10 p.m. on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1965. It is amazing! how dare they were to oust the PCC President from the district party office by his subordinate party leaders. It was clearly understood that those who had done that nefarious work their main source of strength was Bodu Babu and his closeness with Atulya Ghosh. See Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.* pp. 125,128.

119. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.143; also see *The Statesman*, September 2, 1965; Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.140.
120. *The Statesman*, July 27, 1965.
121. Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.* pp. 129-131.
122. *The Statesman*, August 1, 1965.
123. Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*p.134.
124. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, July 28, 1965.
125. *Ibid.*
126. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* , July 29, 1965.
127. *The Statesman*, August 1, 1965.
128. *The Statesman*, August 4, 1965; also see Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*p.135.
129. *The Statesman*, *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, September 4, 1965.
130. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.* p.53; also see Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.144.
131. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.146.
132. *The Statesman*, September 3, 1965.

133. *The Statesman*, September 4, 1965.
134. *The Statesman*, September 8, 1965.
135. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p. 147.
136. *The Statesman*, September 12, 1965.
137. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.148; also see Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*p.139.
138. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 140.
139. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.*p.55.
140. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.* p. 149; also see Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.* p. 136.
141. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 149; also see. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.* p. 149; Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*p.139.
142. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.150.
143. *Ibid.*
144. The word 'Judas' implies in case of treachery. Actually Judas was one of the desiples of Jesus Christ and due to his conspiracy Jesus had to suffer and was crucified to death. See Personal interview with Sukharanjan Sengupta, a veteran journalist of West Bengal on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
145. *The Statesman*, February 6, 1966; also see Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.153; Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*p.144.
146. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.154.
147. *The Statesman*, February 8, 1966.
148. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.*p.58.
149. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 160-161.
150. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.*p.154; also see Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*pp.137, 140.
151. Bangla Congress was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1966 by Ajoy Mukherjee and his adherents, see Mihir Gangopadhyay, *Mati Theke Shikhare' Atulya Ghosh Smarane* (in Bengali), *Kheal Khushir Bisesh Sankhya*, Bidhan Sishu Uddyan, Kolkata, August, 2012, p.64; also see Pranab Mukherjee, *The Dramatic Decade - The Indira Gandhi Years*, Rupa, New Delhi, 2015, p.6.

152. Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*p.150.
153. Personal interview with Sukharanjan Sengupta, a veteran journalist of West Bengal on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
154. Pranab Mukherjee, *op.cit.*p.6.
155. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 167-168.
156. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173; also see Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p.346.
157. Personal interview with Sukharanjan Sengupta, a veteran journalist of West Bengal on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
158. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 172-173.
159. *Ibid.* Also see Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.* pp. 346-347.
160. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp.168-169.
161. *Ibid.*, p.170.
162. Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.* p. 155; also see Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.* p. 153; *Governor Padmaja Naidu's letter addressed to President Dr. S. Radha Krishnan, dated, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1966, cited in Saroj Chakrabarty, ... Chief Ministers*,p. 183.
163. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*,p. 185; also see Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* pp,133, 884-885. `
164. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*,p.188.
165. The Arambagh Assembly Constituency in Hooghly District which was the home constituency of Prafulla Chandra Sen since Independence from where he was defeated in the first general election in 1952, by an independent candidate, named. Radha Krishna Pal by a margin of 29000 votes. But after that due to the mediation of Bidhan Chandra Roy, Radha Krishna Pal had to leave Arambagh with an unhappy mind for Prafulla Chandra Sen and thereafter P.C.Sen elected

from Arambagh in 1957, 1962 respectively. see Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.* p. 154; also see Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*,pp.187-188.

166. Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.* p.154.

167. Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.*p.155. When Congress supporters would pull down Bangla Congress flags and attack its office then Bangla Congress supporters also had paid back their own coin. In a meeting of the election campaign, Atulya Ghosh in a choking voice thundered, "I do not regret Mr. Ajoy Mukherjee's desertion of the Congress. But I am ashamed of having worked with him as a comrade." However the violence and counter-violence in Arambagh in between Congress and Bangla Congress became the day to day affairs which widely circulated in details through news papers in their front page columns. See Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*,pp.187-188.

168. Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.* pp. 155-156.

169. On 15<sup>th</sup> February 1967 the Fourth General Election was started in the country when 50 million voters in eight States went to exercise their voting rights. The first day's polling was peaceful and smooth which commenced in Andhra, Bihar, Gujrat, Maharashtra, Madras, Mysore, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Manipur. At the same way no violent incidents were took place on the second day of polling also. Excepting certain isolated occurrences in some parts of Bihar the third day of polling was generally peaceful. But the temperament of the people of the problem-ridden State of West Bengal was something difficult to predict when polling was commenced on 19<sup>th</sup> February. Actually the situation of West Bengal that created by acute food shortages, high prices of essential commodities and anarchy in educational institutions were collectively unfavourable for the ruling party. In that election total numbering of 2,02,36,424 electorates had decided the fate of 40 Lok Sabha members including 8 reserved for scheduled castes and two for scheduled tribes along with 280 Assembly members including 55 reserved seats for scheduled castes and 16 for scheduled tribes by exercising their voting rights. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*pp, 885,133.

170. It is appears that most colourful character of the West Bengal Congress as well as highest dominating voice of PCC, Atulya Ghosh contested for the Parliamentary seat in the first general election in 1952 from Burdwan. But in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> general election which was held in 1957 and 1962 respectively he had filed his nomination paper for Parliamentary seat from Asansol and became victorious. But in the 4<sup>th</sup> general election which was held in 1967, Atulya Babu decided to contest from Bankura Parliamentary seat leaving his two time winning seat i.e. Asansol. See Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* pp,136,141,149,154. It is noteworthy that Bankura Parliamentary constituency was comprised 3 Assembly Constituency of Purulia District along with 4 Assembly Constituency of Bankura District. Actually due to the acute food movement in the year of 1965-66 an anti establishment wave was blowing all over the State specially the labour class influential area of Asansol, so that is way Atulya Babu probably decided to leave Asansol in order to avoid his supposed defeat and as a main face of the Congress party in West Bengal he choosed Bankura, comparatively safe seat for his winning. But in order to counter Atulya Ghosh, the opposition selected Jitendra Mohan Biswas of CPI to file his nomination paper for Bankura Paliamentary seat. See Sushil Kumar Dhara, *op.cit.* pp. 154-155.
171. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 191-192; also see Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*p.401.
172. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 193-194.
173. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* p. 154.
174. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 194.
175. There was some excitement in the afternoon at around 3 p.m. when the difference was brought down from 1000 votes to 300 and after sometime to nine votes only. One time it was found that P.C. Sen was ahead with 20,601 votes against 20,592 votes in favour of Ajoy Mukherjee. But all possibilities of victory of Chief Minister P. C. Sen were dilapidated with the outcome of the final voting figures which had given Ajoy Mukherjee a lead of 881 votes.

Actually the number of casting votes in favour of Ajoy Mukherjee was 27,916 against Prafulla Chandra Sen's 27,035 votes. see Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*p.406.

176. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp. 196-197.

177. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*p.882; also see *Weekly Link*, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 1967.

178. *Weekly Link*, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 1967.

179. *Prafulla Chandra Sen's acknowledgement in his Bhumika (Preface) in Ajaya Purush Ajay Kumar, (ed). By Shree Radhakrishna Bari.*

180. Dr. Binay Krishna Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.*p.359.