Chapter VIII

Media and the Industrial Policy of the Left Front: The Climax

8.1 Agenda-setting: The Post-liberalisation Context

Political communication scholars broadly agree upon the proposition that news media, in spite of its robust claim to 'facts and objectivity, endorse plurality of interpretations or versions of ‘reality’ anchored in its own commercial-ideological commitments. That is why news making in modern media is increasingly challenging the logic of a monolithic truth and projecting varied narratives of the same 'story' to the media consumers. The 'selective framing' in encoding process not only brings in fundamental changes in the conventional logos of hard news, but also leads us to the zeal of the modern media in agenda-building or extension roles. Paul Hodkinson has identified (2011:129) news organisations as gatekeepers, enabled with the “capacity to affect what we know, care and talk about and what passes under our collective radar.” Thus, mediation strategies involve different roles of media, linguistic framing, hype making or silencing tactics and business practices.

The increasing strength of news media with massive networks of capital, information or political-cultural impact has brought in crucial changes in Indian media and political landscape in the post-liberalisation period. As mentioned in Chapter IV, the Left Front embarked on a 'review' of its economic strategies since the beginning of the 1990s, prompted by the developments resulting from the launching of liberalisation reforms in the country. The Front government adopted its 'new industrial policy' in 1994 which attempted to 'adjust' its policies with the changing exigencies of liberal economic reforms. Accordingly, the heightened attention around industrialisation was steadily gaining ground in the Front's governing agenda in the second half of the 1990s and reached its peak in the decade-long experiments of the sixth and the seventh Left Front governments. The last decade of the Left Front regime witnessed a central role of Bengali mainstream media in agenda building process and as an extended site of political activism. The aggressive 'great leap forward' to industrialisation in the Left Front
government's agenda of development in this decade and the resultant debates provoked critical traits of mediatisation of politics, prompted by the increasing 'insider' role of the vernacular media in the terrain of political negotiations. The Left Front regime passed through a hitherto unseen turbulence during this phase, marked by change in leadership and 'shifts' in policy strategies inciting contentious politics that culminated in the successive defeats of the Front in electoral battles since 2008. The mediation of the debates on 'massive drive to industrialisation' produced numerous media representations that exemplified interesting features of media involvement in politics and fed the civil-political activism in the state in unprecedented ways.

8.1.1 The Context of the ‘New’ Left Front

As noted in Chapter VI, from the late 1990s, the state politics was not only surged with the hype around economic reforms but also the tussle around the ‘new’ Left Front – the ‘better Left Front’. The slogan predominantly took off from the 'change of guard' in Buddhadev Bhattacharjee having succeeded Jyoti Basu as the Chief Minister in November, 2000, followed by a change in the Front Chairmanship in 2001 as well. The change marked the rise of a new squad to the governmental and party hierarchy, prompting subsequent shifts in the Left Front government’s traditional posturing with agricultural and industrial reforms. The ‘new’ path to development incited great debates on the Front government’s 'deviations’ from the Left ideological commitments to pursue the ‘great leap forward’ to industrialisation. The reforms incited serious public debates on the Front government's 'claim' of 'essentiality' of industrialisation, manifesting increasing features of 'internal' tension in the dissent of the Front partners on several issues. The advocates of the ‘new’, ‘better’ Left Front aimed for an ‘intense’ search for private and foreign capital with a thrust on information and communication technology that raised certain uneasy questions about the Left Front's traditional ideological assertions. The pungency of the polemics can best be identified in the oft-quoted rhetorical framing of the slogan of the Front government − ‘Agriculture is our foundation, Industry is the future’. The Bengali press fed the debate with its active mediation strategies articulating certain readymade schematas for facilitating the public deliberations. The leadership transfer in the government and the Front received mixed reactions in the media framing, drawing attention to the 'continuity' and/or 'discontinuity' in policy making processes,
often resting on personalisation of politics. The mediating role, despite the inherent heterogeneity of framing modes and interests, placed the vernacular media at the core of political processes. The period witnessed both symbiotic and antagonistic relationship between the news media and the Left Front on sharing discourses beyond simple news making, and thereby shaping 'support' or 'dissent' in the process of mediation.

The sixth Left Front government, formed in June, 2001, set the goal of industrialisation as its primary agenda and the Bengali press internalised the 'hype' in their respective mediation strategies, setting the new context of media-politics interface in the state. The process of manufacturing of consent kicked off with the pre-electoral coverage of the Assembly election of 2001, which showed how the Bengali newspapers ensured their agenda setting roles by building up 'trust' or 'antipathy' vis-á-vis the 'goals' and 'performance' of the Front regime in light of their own schematas, particularly in representing the industrial policies.

8.2 Assembly Election, 2001: The Background

Political communication scholars have focussed on electoral campaigns as crucial moments of democratic communication that appeal to the emotive dispositions of the electorate by constantly articulating various interests through public messages. Mass media emerges, in every political system, as one of the critical components of the campaign infrastructure, engaged in decisive or latent articulation of interests and values. Eric Louw, drawing attention to the language of competition, strategy and tactics used by political journalists to report elections, argued (2005: 70): “The ability to play 'the media-game' is reflected in the polls.” Mainstream Bengali press, during elections, played important role in mediating images and counter-images of the ‘better Left Front’, thereby setting grounds for assessing industrial and agricultural policy strategies. The mediation varied on the basis of respective ideological predispositions, profiling or branding of individual leadership or images of regime functioning at different levels. While Bartaman generally downplayed the 'success-story' of the Left Front regime relying more on its watchdog role, ABP and Aajkal welcomed the 'shifting images' and were optimistic of the 'better Left Front'. As the party newspaper Ganashakti depended on its ‘Left’ political gaze and engaged itself in constructing the logos of 'continuity' of
the Left regime negating any assumption of a drastic change in the character of the Front governance. In the process, the Bengali newspapers were competing with each other to build up ‘the image’ or ‘mutiple’ images of the ‘new’ Left Front to feed the electoral debates.

*Bartaman* was actively engaged in ‘the framing of the mind’ by focussing on the critical assessment of the agricultural or industrial policy strategies as against the “claims” of the Front government and gradually building up a ‘positive’ image of the Opposition leader, Mamata Banerjee, the TMC Chief, fighting against the “misrule” (Ghosal, 2001a: 4) of the CPI(M)-led government. Bartaman's framing of the electoral agenda pitched on ‘scandal politics’, especially the 'corruption' of some 'top leaders' of the CPI(M) and its stretch in everyday politics. It played an active role in 'exposing' the involvement of the top leaders of the party like Jyoti Basu or Somanth Chattopadhyay and their close associates, a section of the industrialists as “swindlers and flatterers” (*Bartaman*, 23 January, 2001), in corruption. *Bartaman* held (*Bartaman*, 19 February, 2001) “some opportunist leaders of the CPM, mafia and traders” responsible for the dismal situation in the small and medium sector, negating the claim of “spectacular success” of the Front government in the area. The editorial ridiculed at (*Bartaman*, 24 March, 2001) the “enthusiastic proclamation of the new Chief Minister” as “shilper dhokkanad” (beating the drum of industrialisation) leading the state, as if, “to the previous station of the heaven”. In the process of mediation, it played on a subtle strategy of dissociating the “honest” Chief Minister, Buddhadev Bhattacharjee from his “corrupt” predecessor Jyoti Basu. This ‘branding’ of individual leadership reflected fascinating tenors in ABP’s mediation as well, marking *personalisation of politics* a core practice in Bengali media’s encoding strategy. Though *Bartaman* had earlier rallied with the allegation of the Front of “step motherly attitude” of the Centre to the state government, as noted in Chapter VII, it nonetheless refused to accept the Front government's political crusade against the Centre for the decline as a legitimate claim.

*Aajkal* shared (Ghosh, 2000: 4) some of the observations with *Bartaman* on infrastructural limitations of the state referring to the 'non-performance' of the Left Front governments. At the same time, it posited itself against the anti-Left Front campaign in the state, particularly of a section of the mainstream media, consisted of both the
vernacular and English language press. Despite its 'friendly' attitude, *Aajkal*, did not join the bandwagon with pro-reform media to an unrestricted approbation of industrialisation policies; rather, it castigated the “hypocrisy” of the Front government pointing to (*Aajkal*, 27 April, 2000) the “abundant use” of computers by the ministers and bureaucrats in the then Front government, which they had fought once tooth and nail in the 1980s. The editorial reminded (*Aajkal*, 27 April, 2000) the Left Front of its earlier stand against privatisation in the debate on the transfer of ownership of the Great Eastern Hotel to the private hands.

As argued in the previous Chapters, *ABP*'s encoding strategy was strongly grounded on its predisposition for a development model based on neo-liberal economic order.\(^8\) However aggressive the 'stand' appeared in terms of conventional journalistic intonations, *ABP* consistently pursued the economic predilection, and as argued by the editor, went on assessing the Front regime through their own “ideological” agenda.\(^9\) It is interesting to note here that inspite of its well-known anti-Left stand, *ABP* and the Front government often converged to create a unique narrative of camaraderie on industrialisation agenda during the last decade of the Left Front regime. The pre-poll coverage in *ABP* resided on two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, it gradually built up support in favour of “Left Front’s *bodhodoy* (rise of wisdom)” (*ABP*, 3 March, 2001), that is, a 'shift' in the Left Front's *rationale* of development as reflected in the election manifesto. On the other hand, it exposed the porous areas of the intended shift leading to “contradictions” in its policy objectives, particularly in terms of its 'socialist' commitments. The framing strategy evidently kept faith on the then Chief Minister who “wanted to work in the interest of the state discarding the jargons of bookish Leftism” (*ABP*, 3 March, 2001). To the 'liberal' newspaper the shift was indicative of reducing state subsidies and favouring privatisation or “*biday niti*” (farewell policy). It suggested (*ABP*, 3 March, 2001) that if the “policy makers of the Left Front” did not indulge in “spoiling the austerity of self-reformation” and “can walk into the path of Manmohan Singh-Chidambaram-Yashwant Sinha keeping the Communist Manifesto in hand they would be rewarded with the appraisal of the World Bank in near future.”\(^10\) The editorial emphatically suggested (*ABP*, 14 May, 2001) that “the task of the government is to build up the base of liberal economy rejecting the wrong dreams of socialism.”
It is impotant to note that the ruling Front had always expressed its antagonism to the 'bourgeois' media's role in 'manufacturing of consent' against the Left regime rendering the role as that of “political opposition”. The Left leadership had alleged that a section of the mainstream media, along with the Opposition, had been engaged in consistent “vilification campaign” against the Left Front government which reached its height during election periods. Countering the negative images, Ganashakti built up its support for the ‘better Left Front’ harping on the “success areas” of the Front governance and subtly playing down the issue of ‘shift’ in industrial policy strategies. The electoral coverage of the Bengali newspapers set the ground for encoding the evolution of industrial policy strategies in the last decade of the Left Front rule.

8.3 Sixth Left Front Government: Introducing ‘Reform’

The sixth Left Front government came to power in May, 2001. *ABP* welcomed (*ABP*, 14 May, 2001) the new Front government with a cautious note that “selling dreams was easier than fulfilling them”. The advocacy led the newspaper to welcome (*ABP*, 22 May, 2001) the “symbolic significance of historic entry” of the industrialists in Alimuddin Street, the party headquarter of the CPI(M), just after the election, as “unprecedented” (*ABP*, 21 May, 2001) and relate (*ABP*, 22 May, 2001) it with “evident message of industry-centred intentions”. The editorial slammed (*ABP*, 22 May, 2001) the “suchibayu” (mania for cleanliness) of a section of the Leftists about the visit of the industrialists in the party headquarter, in strong terms, ridiculing their attitude “as if industrialists-businessmen are leprosy patients”. *ABP* proclaimed (*ABP*, 28 May, 2001) its position in clear terms:

“The middle class mentality to avoid them in such a way has percolated deep into the Bengali world of imagination...this mentality is unfortunate and suicidal...now it is time to welcome persons like the CII President, Tarun Das. Alimuddin has rightly followed the trends of the age by welcoming them. Rather, those short sighted, illiberal, narrow-minded persons, who are objecting to this apprehending the purity of Leftism to be in danger, are failing to read the writings on the wall.”

Along with the approbation of the ‘shift’, *ABP*, at the earliest instance, cautioned (*ABP*, 6 June, 2001) about the militant trade unionism as an obstacle to industrial development. Veteran Left trade union leader of CPI, Gurudas Dasgupta, strongly contested (2001: 4) the suggestion in a two-day series op-ed article in *ABP*, arguing that only the workers
should not be made responsible for the decline in production, rather, the industrialists’ illegal operations, violation of labour laws, wage reduction policy, etc. had increased the complexities. *Ganashakti* upholding (*Ganashakti*, 21 May, 2001) the sixth consecutive win of the Front government as a “world record”, associated the “magic” behind the electoral success mostly with agricultural and rural development and the hope of a “resurgent” Bengal. *Bartaman* contested (Basu, 2001: 4) the claim of the party newspaper of the ‘revival of West Bengal’ and mocked it as the “pride of status quoism”. The editorial strongly remarked (*Bartaman*, 20 August, 2001) that the much-publicised rhetoric of ‘industrialisation’, ‘wave of industries’, ‘MOU with the industrialists’ were turned into a “laughing stock”, ridiculing the then WBIDC Chairman, Somanath Chattopadhyay, as the “MOU-dada”. Thus, Bengali media received the ‘victory’ and the context of ‘reform’ with different narratives of performance in their respective coverage to suit the corresponding roles and discourses.

### 8.3.1 Destination West Bengal: The New Image of ‘Change’

The sixth Left Front government embarked on the ‘new’ path of development with its proclaimed thrust on ‘capital’ to build up a strong industrial base in the state and conceived of a “new image” that would facilitate the investment-friendly programmes. The ‘pro-reformers’ in the government and the Front argued for a ‘new brand’ of the state to be projected to attract the private capital with the slogan – *Destination West Bengal*. The branding was poignant with the possible ‘shifts’ in attitudes towards private and foreign capital, role of trade union and prioritisation of large scale investment in the state. The intention immediately created serious tension involving both the ‘Left’ and oppositional politics in the state. The Bengali press instantly appropriated the complexities of the negotiation and craved for its own imprint of the ‘shifts’ in regime functioning, putting a great thrust on *personalisation of politics* in the encoding process.

Resonating with the government’s version, *ABP* identified (Chattopadhyay, 2001a: 4) the main aim of the first foreign visit to Japan by the Chief Minister as “to project West Bengal as a place of investment.” The building up of public consensus in appreciating the ‘shifts’ involved incessant coverage of an *investor-friendly* image of the sixth Left Front government in the pages of *ABP* in subsequent days. It is interesting to note that the then
Chief Minister, Budhdhudev Bhattacharjee also stressed on (ABP, 12 May, 2002; ABP, 3 December, 2002) the “problem of image” and the need to project the “investment friendly” image of the government as a crucial task of his government. ABP found (Chattopadhyay, 2002c: 4) “feel good environment” created in the state under the Chief Ministership of Budhdhudev Bhattacharjee and called for a “brand identity” of the state, strongly propagating for (Chattopadhyay, 2002f: 4) a “mindset change” abandoning the “useless theories and practice of worthlessness”. The applause of ABP found resonance in the Chief Minister’s ‘claim’ (ABP, 12 May, 2002) to have achieved “breakthrough” in certain industries and a “great leap forward” in the IT sector during the first year of the sixth Left Front government. The Chief Minister also acknowledged (ABP, 12 May, 2002) the “problems in attitude” in the state and hoped to “motivate” and “reorient” the trade unions in the new directions. His ‘observation’ found strong reinforcement in ABP’s representations from the very beginning. The optimism of ABP was reflected (Chattopadhyay, 2002b: 4) in the exalted linguistic frames like “unprecedented hope” or metaphorical expression – “there is ray of light in the end of tunnel”. The image-making mediation reflected some unique traits of framing in ABP’s representations that covered not only ‘shifts’ in industrial policies but in the cultural images also. Accordingly, a relatively trivial issue of ‘welcoming’ the Japanese business delegates with saake, the Japanese traditional liquor, was appreciated as “a significant sign of the change in the mentality of the state government” (Chattopadhyay, 2002d: 4) to incentivise industrialisation. Bartaman, from the beginning, contested the government’s claim of the ‘resurgence’ and engaged itself in exposing the fallacies in the official discourse. It challenged the anti-Centre political agenda of the Front government for the consistent ‘decline’ in industrial development.12 In a post-editorial, the author focussed on (Bagchi, 2001: 4) the “gaps” in the “real picture of industrialisation and the languages of government advertisements”. The representations of ‘change’ in ABP and Bartaman’s framing gave birth to the genre of brand-making as one of the core components of the agenda-setting strategies.

8.3.2 Constructing Brand Budhdha

It has been acknowledged (Basu, 2007c: 4) that the aggressive brand-making of individual leadership by a section of mass media was integral to the ‘reinvention’ of the
Left in West Bengal during the last decade of the Left Front rule. The individualisation of the Chief Minister found reflections in the encoding strategies of a section of the ‘bourgeois’ press, particularly ABP, that gradually focussed on Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee as the new ‘icon’ of development in the Left-led regime. ABP identified (Chattopadhyay, 2001a: 4) him as “the discovery of the year” and traced the ‘transformation’ of a Left politician shedding off the ideological dogmatism. In admiring the Chief Minister the author drew instances from China to compare him with Deng Xiao Peng, the pioneer of economic reforms in post-Mao China. The Chief Minister, in an exclusive interview with ABP, expressed his strong opinion in favour of ‘capital’ and reiterated the oft-quoted comment of Deng Xiao Peng, regarding investment, that “we should not see the colour of the cat in the society we are living” (ABP, 12 May, 2002).

The personalisation of leadership reached its peaked height in segregating party and government and even isolating individuals within the government. The inclination of the framing was reflected in observations like “West Bengal government and the Chief Minister of West Bengal are not the same” (ABP, 31 December, 2002). While it appreciated (ABP, 31 December, 2002) “the unfettering of the Left ideology and the narrow-minded, short-sighted Bengali parochialism” with the efforts of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee and in his “recognition of the logic of the developmental liberal economy”, it slammed the “negative attitude” of the trade union cadres of the “reluctant CPI(M)” and a section of his Cabinet members “in understanding the essence of the new economy.” This kind of juxtaposing served the purpose of relegating other Left leaders vis-à-vis the ‘liberal’ Chief Minister and segregating his ‘reformer’ image. The then news editor, Suman Chattopadhyay observed (2003: 4) that “the Chief Minister has been able to bring back West Bengal in the radar screen of the industrial space after two years”.

The gradual building of ‘trust’ in favour of the leadership of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee or Brand Budhdha was an integral part of its ideological-commercial strategy that actually fed the requirements of liberal economic model and cosmopolitan outlook. The personalisation of politics in Bartaman’s mediation was also poignant with the assumption (Ghosal: 2001: 4) that the “greatest challenge to Mamata” was the “honest and simple image” of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee, who had come out of the “conservatism of Marxism” and was “adapting to a liberal approach to the industrialists.”
Barun Sengupta, the then editor, in dissociating individual from the party and indulging in *individualisation* of leadership, posited (2001a:1) Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee’s ‘honesty’ vis-a-vis the “corruption” and “treacherous behaviour” of Jyoti Basu. On a later occasion, comparing him with his predecessors, Barun Sengupta found (Sengupta, 2004: 4) Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee more “enterprising” and “honest” than Basu about industrial development in West Bengal, but not comparable to Bidhan Chandra Roy. *Bartaman*’s engagement in this brand-making rested on the personal characterisation of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee in terms of ‘transparency’ as different from *ABP*’s branding of ‘representative’ of liberal reforms. It can be noted here that *Ganashakti*, following the Communist Party’s organisational ethos, did not rally with the personalisation strategies and upheld the collective image of the Front. *Aajkal* also preferred to project (Gupta, 2003: 4) a “Left Bengal” anchored in the spirit of “struggle for Bengali ethnic identity”.

### 8.3.3 Industrial Restructuring Policy

Coming to power the sixth Left Front government worked on a comprehensive road map for “resurgence of West Bengal” along industrial path, primarily based on modern, capital-intensive industries. Though the small and medium sector received attention for its potential in employment generation, the Front government also acknowledged the problem of de-industrialisation in the sector over a long period of time due to multiple factors. The increasing number of closed and sick industries affecting the economic prospect of the state was one of the hotly debated issues in the state politics since 1980s. The problem got aggravated in the post-liberalisation period as the economic reforms aimed for gradual rollback of the public sector investment to suit the needs of open and competitive market. The sixth Left Front government endorsed an industrial restructuring policy to address the problem of closed and sick units that raised serious questions about its ‘intention’.

*Ganashakti* continued with its political charge that “inactivity” of the Centre had caused increasing cases of closed industries in the state citing instances of IISCO or National Fertiliser Corporation. The party newspaper tried to mobilise public opinion against the “false campaign” by a section of media against the Left Front government's industrial restructuring policy and privatisation of state-owned industries. Its justification was built on the counter-claim (*Ganashakti*, 25 July, 2002) that the West Bengal government had
followed an “alternative policy” to “save the industries”. *Aajkal* shared (*Aajkal*, 26 February, 2002) the 'stand' of the government on the need of privatisation in select cases appreciating the “commitment” of the Chief Minister in its Lead — “Workers’ interests will be protected in case of closures: Budhdha” (*Aajkal*, 24 February, 2002). However, the editor, in his special column, strongly criticised (Dasgupta, 2002: 1) a section of media propagating for privatisation “in the interest of a few industrialists” and “for the commercial interest of some countries like America” and “not the countrymen”, citing examples of “sheer incompetence” of some private enterprises. It can be noted here that *ABP* had always been emphatic about leaving the fate of the sick industries to the *rule of the market* instead of state protection. The intra-party negotiation on privatisation in sick industries with the CPI(M) state secretariat persuading the CITU leadership also received special coverage (Mukherjee, 2002: 1) in *Aajkal* indicating the pulls and pressures behind the decision. *Bartaman*, favouring a state investment policy, criticised (*Bartaman*, 27 March, 2002) the “surrender” of the Front government in transferring the responsibility of building infrastructure or services in fifteen cases like roads, bridges to the private enterprises and interpreted it as “escaping” from the responsibility of the state. *ABP*, on the other hand, was convinced (*ABP*, 4 September, 2004) that rejuvenation would be possible only by privatisation and modernisation of technology and not by state acquisition. The framing strategies evidently reflected articulation of inherent ideological assertions of the Bengali press.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, joint enterprise in industrialisation programme of the Front government emerged as one of the contentious issues in the 1980s that centred largely around the Haldia Petrochemical Project. The Left Front government showcased (Document #1: 31) the project as the “symbol” of industrial resurgence of West Bengal. Though the commercial production was started in February, 2000, after a decade of contention with the Centre, the issue of investment and ownership in the Petrochemical project remained as the crucial problem for the Industry ministry of the sixth Left Front government.

*Aajkal* shared the 'glory' with the government and the ruling Front in commencing of the commercial production of Haldia Petrochem after much hassles and described (*Aajkal*, 2 April, 2000) the day as “a bright addition to the history of Indian industries”. It also
published a four-page advertisement supplementary of Haldia Petrochemicals on 2nd April as part of sharing the history. ABP, drawing upon its previous arguments, scrutinised the ‘tussle’ in the share transfer of the Haldia Petrochemicals and appraised (ABP, 5 September, 2001) the state government’s intention to sell its share to IOC as “indicative of a changed attitude” in respect of public investment, which was (ABP, 22 October, 2001) “not only healthy but also an example of exceptional courage.” The tussle ended partially with the transfer of share of Petrochem to Purnendu Chatterjee group and ABP framed (ABP, 14 January 2002) the “Dramatic End of the Crisis” with the eulogy that the solution was possible only because of the initiatives of Budhhdhadev Bhattacharjee, Industry Minister Nirupam Sen and the WBIDC Chairman, Somnath Chattopadhyay. ABP’s faith in market economy extended to the framing of the Lead space that ended with the suggestive comment – “if there is a crisis, it could be meted out only by commercial attitude” (ABP, 14 January 2002). The pro-capital tenor became stronger with the editor being satisfied that “the state government has expressed its intention to follow the natural rule of commerce” (ABP, 16 January, 2002). The then news editor of ABP congratulated the Left Front government for the “most courageous decision” (Chattopadhyay, 2002a: 4) indicating a “sign of change”. Aajkal showed (Aajkal, 29 January, 2002) a reserved attitude in covering the news, with the caveat of the Ex-Chairman of the HPL, Tapan Mitra, in the fourth page who called for “a vigilant attention” of the state government till the project reached its potential production. In the interview, the Ex-Chairman, supporting the government’s allegation, also complained of consistent “negative campaign” against the petrochemical project by a section of media. Aajkal even hinted (Khan, 2002: 5) of the “corporate conspiracy” behind the long-standing tussle in Haldia Petrochemicals. Bartaman rested on its previous stand on the government's inefficiency digging at the “squandering” (Bartaman, 8 September, 2001) in the Haldia Petrochemicals.

8.3.4 Sixth Left Front: Completion of a Year

The first anniversary of the sixth Left Front government gave the Bengali media a chance to revisit their assessment of the Left Front regime. Ganashakti marked the anniversary with a series of articles in the anchor spaces, since 9 May, 2002, reiterating the Front government's slogan – “Bold, new steps while putting legs on the ground”15 and emotion-
filled reportage (Ganashakti, 21 June, 2002) about the attempt to 'resuscitate' the industrial scenario. Interestingly, the narrative of 'performance' did not altogether quash the allegation of 'decline' in industries under the Left Front regime, rather rested on the 'efforts' of the government to recover it. ABP was always emphatic (ABP, 21 June, 2002) in its crusade against the “hegemony of the party” and the resultant “regimented” and “statusquoist” character of the Left regime as “obstacle” to economic development. The editorial resorted to the agenda building role of the newspaper in its more provocative framing of the issue of party-regime with the following comments:

“West Bengal was an ocean; it has turned into a marsh. The pragmatism was unfolded during the regime of Jyoti Basu and Budhadev Bhattacharjee is his successor...but, to turn his words into work he has to strike at the very root of the legacy of twenty five years, to deny the legacy in strong terms...he has to declare that the party-regime (dalatantra) of Promod Dasgupta was a wrong and damaging project.”

While ABP lauded (ABP, 21 May, 2003) the much-discussed ‘Do it now’ slogan of the then Chief Minister, it nonetheless reiterated its criticism of trade union activism in the state, satirically referring West Bengal as the “dhormoghoter mahatirtho” (the great pilgrimage of strike).

Since early 2003 increasing ‘violence’ in rural areas hit the headlines relegating industrial policy coverage to a secondary position. The media war reached its height with Ganashakti dubbing (Chakraborty, 2003a: 4) ABP as the “last and best shelter” of the anti-Communists in Bengal. Aniruddha Chakraborty, a senior journalist of Ganashakti, replied (2003b: 4) to the aggressive criticism of ABP ridiculing the very catchline of ABP – “Read or lag behind” with an inverted judgment – “the reality is, (one) suffers if one reads Anandabazar”. The framing strategies, however, defied any linear course and thus, occasionally produced unique traits of convergence/divergence, particularly in covering the industrialisation programme. This was seen in the coverage of the first budget of the sixth Left Front government. Critiquing the “song of praise for the small and middle level industry” by the then Finance Minister, Asim Dasgupta, ABP expressed (ABP, 9 March, 2002) its strong apprehension about the future of these industries in the state. On the other hand, otherwise known for its critique of the Front government, Bartaman, applauded (Bartaman, 9 March, 2002) the budget for its ‘focus’ on small sector and the “shifting thoughts” of the new government in industrial strategies. The editor justified
(Bartaman, 9 March, 2002) the ‘focus’ by arguing that big industries could not support employment generation, as opposed to pro-big capital stand of the ABP.

The ‘shifting image’ of the sixth Left Front government was, however, mediated in ABP’s encoding with evident heterogeneity as reflected in the post-editorial by Raghab Bandopadhyay, who ridiculed (2002: 4) the contradiction in the “mantra (sacred hymns) of the party-led politics” as “walking down the streets of liberal economy, and at the same time, showering abuses on it at the factory gates or in the villages, markets and party offices”. Bartaman substantiated (Bartaman, 27 March, 2002) the criticism observing how the CPI(M) and the Front was forced to shed off its “old jargons of socialism due to their own inefficiency”. However, an unusual coalescence was manifested in the coverage of ABP and Ganashakti on the hope of ‘rebuilding’ the state in new ways which continued, on occasions, in the subsequent years on industrialisation issues.

8.3.5 The McKinsey Report: Fuelling the Debate

Since late 2002, political debate intensified with the report of the McKinsey recommending certain drastic changes in the agricultural policies to suit the needs of the industrial business and suggesting ‘potential areas' of an industrial take-off. As noted in Chapter IV, the intra-Front debate rose to a high pitch with the partners like the RSP, Forward Bloc or CPI and a section of the CPI(M) itself joining with the civil society activists and the Opposition against the recommendations of the McKinsey on commercialisation of agriculture in favour of large multinational and national firms and massive private investment in industrial sector. The Bengali media was manifestly polarised in addressing the McKinsey Report in their coverage and in the way, did not miss to criticise their respective opponent, political or media community, in strongest terms.

The McKinsey Report received topmost priority in ABP’s coverage which stood stoutly in favour of the recommendations of the McKinsey to focus on agri-business and information technology as the potential sectors to the transition from the agricultural to the industrial economy. ABP published a three-day series of post-editorial by Suman Chattopadhyay, the then news editor, which gave an extensive coverage of the McKinsey
Report terming (2002e:4) it as “a milestone in the regeneration of the state”. He made (Chattopadhyay, 2002d: 4) his conviction clear that “there is a golden chance for West Bengal to establish herself as the market leader”. Chattopadhyay (2002e:4) made an unprecedented eulogy of the ‘efforts’ to appoint McKinsey and remarked that it was an “indomitable desire” to “think in a big way coming out of the traditional short contemplations.” At the same time, the author repeated the ‘apprehensions’ of *ABP* that the success of the efforts by the Chief Minister and the Industry Minister would depend on the cooperation of the party and the government. The framing consciously harped on the segregation of ‘intention’ from ‘practice’ with skeptic notes.

*Aajkal* showed rather a cautious representation of the debate, not wholeheartedly joining the bandwagon with a section of media like *ABP*. Though broadly known for its 'friendly' attitude to the Left government, *Aajkal* was judging each aspect of industrialisation programme from a ‘Left’ vantage point. The positioning led Debes Roy, the well-known Leftist litterateur, to scathingly condemn (2002: 4) the 'language' of the then Industry Minister of the Front government for advocating “minor structural adjustments” replicating the “linguistic frame of the World Bank”. He did not hide (Roy, 2002:4) his apprehension that the 'change' was no more linguistic but indicative of “a policy change”. *Ganashakti* did not place the 'suggestions' in the front pages to avoid the blush of the debate and reported it in the fourth page in a subdued mode. Rather, it tried to divert the criticism indirectly by projecting the 'interest' of the industrialists, even the Japanese, in the industrial investment in the state or how they had praised the “best industrial atmosphere” in CII meeting in those days.

The centrality of the debate in *ABP*'s coverage found expressions in diverse messages – observational, interpretative or satirical – reflecting no linearity, and often composed with strong inferential accent and symbolic cues. While it welcomed the government's 'intention' to consider the recommendations in the hard news or editorials, the schism over the ‘shift’ in policy-strategies was not unattended. In a post-editorial Raghab Bandyopadhyay drew on (2003:4) the metaphorical trope – “*Ma ja chilen, ja hoyechen* – Marx theke McKinsey” (What Mother was, What Mother is now: Marx to McKinsey) to catch the glimpses of the ‘war’ between the two CPI(M)s – “the CPI(Marxist) versus CPI(McKinsey)”. The op-ed article commented (Bandyopadhyay, 2003:4) sarcastically
on the “new renaissance of the Bengalis”, especially of the middle-class Bengalis, and their “noble dreams of getting the topmost place in the world community”. He found (2003:4) the “fraternity of the four agents – industrialists, media, middle class and the government” to fulfill the “aim of Bengali capitalism” as a “rare incident”, and did not hide his cynicism – “Is the Party ready for the change?” Bartaman also predominantly shared the 'stand' against ‘deviations’ in the CPI(M)’s traditional political-ideological posturing on economic development or private capital and pitched on the greater coverage of the ‘dissenting’ Front partners and the Opposition over the McKinsey Report.

The 20th State Party Conference of the CPI(M), held in February, 2002, intensified the debate on 'shifting strategies' or 'deviations' of the Front government. The intra-party negotiations over the different aspects of the 'reform' negated monolith of voices rendering the 'shift' a complex and multi-layered process, even within the ambit of the regimented Communist party. The debate over industrialisation, embarring the projected solidarity of the Front leadership, emerged as integral in the encoding strategies of the ‘bourgeois’ media.

ABP interpreted (ABP, 23 February, 2002) the “two aims” of the State Party Conference as incentivising the private capital and reducing the expenditure by cutting down state subsidy, gearing up its criticism against state control and the “obsolete ideology” of the Left. The editorial caustically advised the Chief Minister to become independent of the party. The Lead report of ABP appreciated (ABP, 24 February, 2002) the document – ‘The Left Front and Our Task’, placed by the then Industry Minister, Nirupam Sen, for acknowledging “the real context of globalisation”. Rangan Chakraborty, political and media analyst, termed (2004a: 4) it as “soft capitalism” in a subsequent post-editorial in ABP. ABP went (ABP, 26 March, 2002) to the extent of praising the “successful experiments” of the CPI(M) with the capitalist system in the context of “near non-existence of the international communist movement”. The exalted note, however, was reviewed in an opinion article by economist Sutanu Bhattacharyya, who found (2002a: 4) some ‘mistakes’ in welcoming the “one-sided view of globalisation ignoring the importance of localisation”. As the excerpt below reveals, the radical Left leadership like
the CPI(ML) found (Bhattacharyya, 2002a: 4) the occasion to make disparaging attack on the 'reformist' CPI(M) and the Chief Minister who welcomed the 'rule of the game':

“It is nothing but a game of bourgeois parliamentarism, which has its own, built-in ‘rule’ – making promises, gaining votes, capturing power and then forgetting everything in the name of the ‘changed situation’, ‘Centre’s apathy’ or ‘impact of globalisation’.”

People's Democracy, the CPI(M) organ, on the other hand, confirmed (Prashant, 2002: 4) that “replying to the discussion on the document on the Left Front government...Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee made it clear that the document did not represent any deviation from basic line of the CPI(M) and that at no stage could there be even the slightest of dilution in the party's goal of achieving the people's democratic revolution.” Ganashakti preferred an ‘official’ reporting of the conference upholding the suggested roadmap for the Front government by the leadership. Aajkal, reiterating the stand, highlighted mainly two dimensions – one was a verbatim report of the 'argument' by the then Industry Minister on the “compulsions” to go for private investment; another was a corresponding 'assurance' of the then Chief Minister that workers' interests would be protected at any cost.

8.3.6 Drive to Capital: Shifting Strategies

The sixth Left Front government stepped up its 'search for capital' for industrialisation and the ‘activism’ was manifested in the Chief Minister and the Industry and Commerce Minister’s meet with the industrialists' on several occasions and arranging foreign tours for prospective investment of multinational firms. The meetings and the foreign tours aroused critical attention of the media and the political Opposition, thereby encouraging public debates on the ‘shift’ of attitudes of the Left-led government to ‘capital’. Buddhadev Bhattacharjee met some of the leading industrialists of the country in Mumbai on 2 June, 2003. He made his much-talked foreign tour to Italy on 9 June 2003. The party newspaper described (Ganashakti, 4 June, 2003) the changing situation in West Bengal as “the new destination of trust” for the industrialists reverberating the government's claim and shared the 'optimism' with the government leadership about the “increased query and interest” of the industrialists about the state. The exalted tone undercut any cue of discomfiture of the Left regime to the ‘capital’, especially foreign capital, once equated with the Left politics in Bengal. Thus, a highly spirited coverage
framed (Ganashakti, 14 June, 2003) the ‘success’ of the Italy tour metaphorically – “All roads of Italy lead to Bengal”, reporting how the premier leather enterprise, Gucci, had showed interest in investment in Bengal. The spirit was incorporated in the lead spaces of both party newspaper and ‘friendly’ newspaper, Aajkal. ABP gave the Mumbai Meet an enthusiastic six-column Lead coverage, recognising (ABP, 3 June, 2003) the ability of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee “as an individual and administrator” in “glorifying the image of the state”. Its correspondent from Mumbai went to the extent of commenting (ABP, 3 June, 2003) that it was the “highest recognition” of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee in his two and half years of Chief Ministership and drew the oft-quoted phrase ‘Iron Fist in Velvet Gloves’ associated with Margaret Thatcher, the former Prime Minister of Britain in the 1980s, in comparing his achievement. The reporter, reiterating the newspaper’s stand, located ‘iron fist’ in the assertion of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee that he would not ‘tolerate’ labour troubles in securing the favourable environment for industrial investment in the state. Ganashakti negated (Ganashakti, 24 July, 2003; Ganashakti, 23 August, 2004) any such assumption in the “new false campaign” by the opposition reiterating that the Chief Minister had assured to support the “just movement of the workers”. The appreciative framing was substantiated (Chattopadhyay & Chattopadhyay, 2004: 1) in ABP in referring to the statement made by Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee in a meet with the industrialists – “I’ll follow my own wisdom, we want foreign investment in the state” and placing the news in a banner heading with a four-column coverage to project the ‘shift’ in the attitude of the government with a welcoming spirit. Such an assertion, however, fitted well with post-editorial satires that “the satan of the thirty years past comes now as the saviour” (Sarkar, 2003: 4) for the Left Front. The eulogy of the ‘shift’ was, however, not to be treated as absolutely unabashed as ABP pronounced its displeasure on the investment strategies on several occasions.

Bartaman visibly avoided the hype around the Meet and gave the event just a routine coverage in the front page, not even placing it as a Lead. It took the clue from Ganashakti’s acclamation of “West Bengal as a new destination of trust to the industrialists” in countering (Bartaman, 4 June, 2003) the ‘claim’ of any breakthrough in industrial development. Barun Sengupta, despite putting trust on the Chief Minister’s “personal honesty”, “intention” of the foreign tour, commented (Bartaman, 10 June,
2003; 2003a: 4) strongly that West Bengal had turned into a “pre-historic dinosaur” in the industrial enterprise during the Left Front regime with the growing number of closed industries. Sengupta sarcastically remarked that the wrong automation policy of the Front had adversely affected the prospect of computer technology based industries in the state and the same rulers were craving for the foreign investors in software industries. Bartaman published series of articles on the twenty-six years of the Left Front rule in West Bengal by representatives of different political parties from 24 to 30 June, 2003, which predominantly upheld the declining conditions of industries in the state. The then State Secretary of the SUCI, Prabhas Ghosh, critiqued (2003: 4) the “fake Marxists” in strongest tone and discussed how the Front government failed in the industrial performance. He strongly criticised the Front for using force in suppressing workers’ movements in the pretext of the “slogan of peace in industries” (Ghosh, 2003: 4). Saugata Roy, leader and the then MLA of TMC, commented (2003: 4) that the industrialisation programme in the state had been a victim of “theoretical blunders” of the CPM. Anil Biswas, the then State Secretary of the CPI(M), responded (Bartaman, 30 June, 2003) to these ‘criticisms’ in an interview on 30 June. He related the crisis in West Bengal’s industrial sector with the general crisis in the industries all over India, reiterating on the role of the worker’s movements in contributing to the development of the industries.

Aajkal was a bit restrained in covering the industrialists' meet and foreign tour of the Chief Minister. The editor, Ashok Dasgupta, in his column, rather critiqued (2003: 4) the 'market-friendly' media for their exalted tone about the meet with the industrialists. However, it noted the appreciation of the Chief Minister’s approach by the leading industrialists like Tata, Mahindra and Godrej. The editorial strongly responded (Aajkal, 6 June, 2003) to the comment of the BJP leader, Tathagata Roy, in Bartaman that the Mumbai meet was just a “gimmick”. The reporting of the foreign tour in Aajkal was poignant with a 'different' angle to the 'search for capital' narrative vis-á-vis 'market-friendly' newspapers, reflected (Aajkal, 13 June, 2003) in the headline of the anchor story — “Italy listened to the Story of Left Movements in Bengal”.

On 1 January, 2000, the Left Front government declared the IT policy and extended it to include IT and IT-enabled services in August, 2002. In September, 2003 the government
amended the old Act to declare the IT companies as ‘public utility services’ and Ganashakti shared (Ganashakti, 27 September, 2003) the pride of the government in being the “first state in the Country” in this respect. Bartaman dismissed (Gangopadhyay, 2004a: 4) the ‘success’ with the remark that the IT sector was no “magic lantern of Aladin” as it was not a labour-intensive industry and its growth depended on whims of the foreign companies. In a metaphorical framing, the post-ed author critiqued (Basu, 2003: 4) the industrial strategy of the state government in favour of IT-centred vision and commented: “Along with chasing the far-off rainbow one can also pay attention to the wings of the butterflies in the vicinity like the tourism industry.”

Since 2003-2004, the party newspaper was intensively building up the ‘industry-friendly’ image of the sixth Left Front government prioritising the ‘Destination West Bengal’ frame in its coverage. The agenda prompted a campaign mode with recurrent projection of ‘appreciation’ of the industrial ambience in West Bengal at different levels – quoting global media like the Far Eastern Economic Review, The Economist or New York Times or Economic Survey by the Central government, reporting the Road Shows on the Front government’s industrialisation programme organised in other states or seminar on ‘A Resurgent West Bengal’ by the platform of the foreign consulates. Bartaman challenged the party newspaper’s narrative of ‘success’ as an “exaggerated information” (Bartaman, 27 July, 2003) on industrial investment in the state and prioritised the issue of declining work culture, militant trade unionism and ‘tolabaji’ (illegal extortion) of the CITU in its everyday coverage. The editorial expressed (Bartaman, 1 January, 2004) his conviction that “it was nearly impossible to pursue business or industries in West Bengal in an honest way” as the industrialists were to pay nazrana to the harmad bahini of the CPI(M) from the very first day. Bartaman coined it as “red tax” (Bartaman, 15 March, 2004). Since 2003, Bartaman, as opposed to Ganashakti or even ABP’s imagery of a “resurgent Bengal”, was engaged in ‘exposing’ the declining state of industries in the state with consistent coverage of the precarious conditions of the traditional industries like tea industry in North Bengal, the state of work culture in the Left Front regime and the “disgust” of the industrialists on the frequent strikes, bandhs in the state. Accordingly, it gave a prompt coverage to the ‘admission’ of the Chief Minister to the members of the Confederation of Indian Industries, of the strikes or bandhs as the “biggest headache”
(Bartaman, 27 September, 2003) of the government. Barun Sengupta in his post-editorial even rebuked (2003b: 4) Ganashakti for not letting this statement proper coverage. As mentioned in the previous chapter, ABP and Bartaman had always been vocal about the militancy of the Left trade unions and the ‘bandh’ culture in West Bengal. But, on occasions, Bartaman supported the workers’ grievances as well against the ‘contractual jobs’ and ‘exploitation’ of the workers in terms of low wage or working conditions and found no difference between the central government and the “worker-friendly” Left Front government in this respect. In an editorial titled - “dhappabaji (bluffing) in the name of industrialisation”, Bartaman, mocking at the “sympathy” of the Left Front government to the workers, rebuked (Bartaman, 10 January, 2004) the government for its “indulgence” to some “bewasayee” of other states in extracting excessive profits by exploiting the workers in the industrial belt of Burdwan. The displeasure about the “dishonest” businessmen and “extortion” of the ruling party cadres was repeatedly reflected in Bartaman’s coverage of industrial policies, placing the issue of deteriorating industrial ambience in the state at the core of its adversarial framing strategy.

The ‘active’ engagement of media in setting agenda for development reflected a unique trait in Bengal in the example of the media house organising events to ‘facilitate’ investment in the state, going beyond the routine task of newsroom. One such hyped event was the Chief Minister’s meet with the industrialists and delegates of industrial firms in Mumbai organised by the Anandabazar Group in 22 August, 2004, which got special coverage even in the party newspaper. The House organised an interactive meet – Doing Business in Bengal, of the government and the industrialists where, as reported, the then Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Bimal Jalan praised West Bengal “as the role model in investment in the country” (Ganashakti, 23 August, 2004). ABP’s banner headline reporting the event was poignant with the cue of “self-chosen path” (ABP, 23 August, 2004) of Buddhdhadev Bhattacharjee in pursuing development in the state and his “insistence” on foreign investment. In the meeting, the Chief Minister urged for “responsible trade union movement” in the workers’ front. Ganashakti, while giving the ‘urge’ an importance, lent (Ganashakti, 23 August, 2004) the opinion space to the veteran CITU leader, Shyamal Chakraborty, to respond to the ‘different narratives’ of ABP and other mainstream newspapers and explain the ‘stand’ of the workers’ front on
industrialisation. He emphatically declared (Chakraborty, 2004b: 4) that the CITU would support the industrialisation programme on certain conditions. But, if the sectors like airport, telecom, bank were open to avail foreign investment the organisation would call for militant movements like strike, *Bangla Bandh* or *Bharat Bandh*. *Aajkal* also supported the party newspaper’s stand by relying on the front page coverage of the CITU state conference (*Aajkal*, 20-22 November, 2003) taking resolutions to not place any ‘unjust demand’ in setting new industries. However, Pracheta Gupta, the news editor, quoted (*Aajkal*, 3 December, 2003) Shyamal Chakraborty that the Front had not given any bond on labour movement. The respective stories suggested inherent tensions within the Front in reaching any projected consensus on capital-investment and different schemas in framing the tussle in the newspapers.

### 8.3.7 Foreign Investment: The Bone of Contention

As noted in Chapter IV, foreign investment in industrial sector emerged as one of the main contentious issues in the last deacde of the Left Front regime. The Front was virtually divided into two polarised camps on the issue of foreign capital investment in the industrial development of the state. The issue received much attention in the state politics with the ‘eagerness’ of the then Chief Minister and the Industry Minister to attract capital, along with a section of Bengali media endorsing the hype.

*ABP* strengthened its criticism against the ‘conservatives’ in the Left leadership, appraising the “pragmatism” of the Chief Minister in welcoming the foreign investment. Its coverage projected a ‘duel’ between the party and the government on the issue. The newspaper, in covering the Partnership Summit organised by the CII in Kolkata in January 2005, noted that the Prime Minister had also appreciated the ‘shift’ in the state. *Ganashakti* rallied with *ABP* in projecting the ‘appraisal’ of the Prime Minister and ‘excitement’ of the industrialists but gave the story a different dimension by quoting the Chief Minister’s insistence on “self-sufficiency” (*Ganashakti*, 13 January, 2005). Negating *ABP*’s narrative it had assured (*Ganashakti*, 16 December, 2004) the supporters/readers of an ‘alternative perspective’ of the Leftists with the “emphatic pronunciation” of the Chief Minister in the meeting of the Chamber of Commerce – “We do not want foreign investment incurring loss to the country’s economy”. The Chief
Minister, responding to the allegation of ‘duplicity’ against the Left Front on foreign direct investment, made it clear that they were not against globalisation, but it should not be directed in the interest of the developed countries only. The ‘position’ was substantiated (*Ganashakti*, 16 December, 2004) in the party newspaper in Jyoti Basu’s comment on private capital on the same day – “one has to utilise everything in this social system”.25 *Ganashakti*, in its coverage, consistently sustained the Front government’s rhetorical battle “against globalisation” with an insistence on “comprehensive perspective” (*Ganashakti*, 25 January, 2005) on the global economic processes. At the same time, it reiterated (*Ganashakti*, 12 February, 2005) the commitments of the Front to the “class direction” of the “struggle for alternative” in “treading into an alien path”. On several occasions, the Chief Minister Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee advocated (2007) for moving onto the *untravelled path*, “taking into account the reality of the situation in India and the constraints of the Left forces”. The West Bengal government also acknowledged the “new path of advancement” in its advertisement on industrialisation (Document#2). Mocking the Chief Minister and *Ganashakti*’s postulation of the “new path” and drawing attention to the ideological ‘deviation’ of the Front, *Bartaman* wrote (Gangopadhyay, 2005a: 4):

“Red salute to the overdaring adventurer of an unknown path. The adventurer is Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee...What is that indomitable attraction that has led him to this unknown path discarding his long-known track?...But, it has to be admitted that by strongly declaring the abandonment of the old path and making his party surrendering to that decision, he has put the example of wisdom and political honesty.”

Accordingly, downplaying *Ganashakti* and *ABP*s exaltation, *Bartaman* negated the ‘success’ story of the Partnership Summit in Kolkata as producing “insignificant result in spite of much hype” (Ghosh, 2005a: 4) and undermined the ‘acclamations’ of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee by industrialists like Azim Premji26 with taunting remark – “Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee was crowned as the role model in the fashion parade of the Chief Ministers” (Gangopadhyay, 2004b: 4). Comparing Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee with some “best Chief Ministers in the eyes of industrialists”, an op-ed article remarked (Sarkar, 2005a: 4) that the trade union leadership of the CPI(M) were not pleased with the “comments and body language” of the Chief Minister in the industrialists’ meet, hinting evidently at the ‘discomfiture’ of the ‘conservatives’ in the party over foreign and private
investment. The editorial mocked (Bartaman, 22 August, 2005) the “begging” of the Left Front government to the World Bank, forgetting its legacy of fiery meetings and processions against the ‘neo-liberal’ international monetary organisations. Pabitra Kumar Ghosh, one of the senior journalists of Bartaman, rebuked the ‘hypocrisy’ (Ghosh, 2005b: 4) – “The Left Front government has proved that it is possible to fool the people27 for long by wearing the namabali28 of democracy.” Following this stand, the editorial raised (Bartaman, 9 June, 2005) questions, reiterating the ‘objections’ of the Front partners like Forward Bloc and RSP, about the “conditions of foreign loan” and demanded transparency in dealing with the process.

As early as 2003, while supporting the industrial enterprise of the Left Front government, Aajkal showed its reservations in indiscriminate welcoming of foreign capital in the state. Explaining its assertions of “the goal of the Left Bengal”, the newspaper-led Nabajagaran movement proclaimed its intention to expand Bengali domination in industries and business but rejected any appeasement of foreign capital. The op-ed author, invoking the Bengali sentiment, suggested (Gupta, 2003: 4) that the Left leadership “should have revised Marx’s Capital from their almirahs” and hoped that “Nabajagaran will fight to achieve a real Better Left Front government...it will maintain Bengal as Bengali and Left.” However, Aajkal gradually endorsed the hype by welcoming the proposal of foreign investment as the “ray of hope in the new horizon of investment” (Aajkal, 7 October, 2003). Aajkal’s framing of the ‘breakthrough’ in investment was anchored in personal achievement of the Chief Minister that sanctioned ABP’s Brand Budhdha frame in an indirect way. In its daily opinion poll, jonomot29 Aajkal, on 30 October, 2003, posed the question — “Is Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee taking enough effort in the development of the state?” Sixty eight per cent of the respondents answered in affirmative, thirty two per cent in negative. In another opinion poll on 22 November in the same year, fifty three per cent respondents supported that “West Bengal was performing better in industrial situation” and forty three per cent respondents negated it. At the same time, it retained its ‘inclination’ for a ‘worker-friendly’ stance by covering the grossly underrepresented sectors like the deteriorating conditions of the bidi workers in West Bengal due to lack of investment.
The debate over foreign investment gave ABP the chance to revoke its old narrative of a tussle between the ‘pragmatists’ in the ‘Bengal party’ and the ‘hardliners’ in the central leadership of the CPI(M). ABP nurtured this separation consciously in its coverage as part of its predilection of ‘liberal reforms’ at the heart of its long-standing mediation strategy. The editorial caustically urged (ABP, 25 January, 2005) the Chief Minister to maintain distance from “the shadow of bookish, capital-centred comrades” of his party. The overtly suggestive framing of ABP wished (ABP, 21 August, 2005) for a change in the slogan of the Left Front in the next election from ‘Better Left Front’ to “the Left Front will fulfil the dreams of the new generation of the 21st century”. With the predisposition for an aggressive industrialisation agenda, ABP strongly criticised (ABP, 4 August, 2005) the “pressure” of the peasant front and the Front partners in omitting the ‘debated’ amendment on the fixation of the upper limit of land in the proposed land reform bill in the Assembly and the decision of the West Bengal State Committee of the CPI(M) to utilise the land of the closed factories for industrialisation. On this occasion, ABP spearheaded (ABP, 8 August, 2005) its attack against the “the hardliners” inside the ruling Front once again for obstructing the opening of the land market to the private investors. Ganashakti, upholding the rationale of the land reform programme of the Left Front and dismissing ABP’s claim, appreciated (Ganashakti, 5 August, 2005) the ‘strong tenor’ of the amendment in the Act to resist “indiscriminate change in the character of land” in the state.

8.3.7.1 Beginning of Controversy over Salim Project

The ‘search for capital’ by the sixth Left Front government opened up the ‘prospect’ of substantial investment in establishing a SEZ in the South 24 Parganas district by the Salim group and led to corresponding foreign tours in Singapore and Indonesia by the Chief Minister to attract investment, which hit the headlines since August 2005 and created much uproar in state politics. While ABP welcomed (ABP, 10 August, 2005) the development as a “new” and “unparalleled” instance in the profile of industrialisation in the state, Ganashakti covered (Ganashakti, 1 August, 2005) it in a rather subdued way. Bartaman’s stand reflected (Bartaman, 7 March, 2005) an evident divergence with ABP in its critique of the foreign tour as “pleasure-trips on shallow pretexts” and locating it as
“a culture set by the Ex-CM, Jyoti Basu and Ex-Chairman of the WBIDC, Somanth Chattopadhyay”.

*ABP*’s visible overtone in representing the Chief Minister’s foreign tours to attract foreign investment was reflected in the linguistic framing of the Lead reports that defied the common claims of objectivity or informational frame of hard news and reflected feature or narrative mode, overtly inferential and interpretative in nature. The reports were anchored with visual projections of the Chief Minister and the investors or specially designed box format as an integral component of the encoding style. The coverage brought in (*ABP*, 24 August, 2005) Bertrand Russell’s observation on the tortuous course of history to explain the “continuous reanimation of thought” and appraised the ‘adjustments’ of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee “with time”. The special correspondent quoted (*ABP*, 24 August, 2005) Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee: “The world is changing. We are not foolish. So, we do not pursue any orthodox stand.” He discovered the implicit ‘message’ in this statement as – “either follow the path of reform or perish”. Its affective framing concluded (*ABP*, 24 August, 2005) that the Chief Minister was no more interested to stick to orthodox thoughts or theories “in the interest of the state” or the “conventional Marxism of *Das Capital*”. It is interesting to note here that the phrase “in the interest of the state” had been abundantly used in speeches, statements by the ruling Front leadership in their political mobilisation which was appropriated in mainstream Bengali newspapers’ framing designs to support or oppose the industrial policies from different perspectives. *Bartaman* took the occasion to dig into the ‘silence’ of the party newspaper *Ganashakti* in covering the statement of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee on foreign capital, and dubbed (*Bartaman*, 26 August, 2005) it as “double-dealing” of the “revolutionary” party. The editor was convinced (*Bartaman*, 26 August, 2005) that the news had been “censored” in the party newspaper otherwise the “paper-balloon of revolutionary jargons would have been burst”. *Ganashakti* published (*Ganashakti*, 24 August, 2005; *Ganashakti*, 28 August, 2005; *Ganashakti*, 2 September, 2005) the explanation of the Chief Minister, State Secretary and Politbureau leaders of the CPI(M) about the ‘new path’ or transfer of agricultural land in the hands of multinational companies and rejected the “complaint of the large bourgeois press” of the “duplicity” of the CPI(M) on economic reform. The party newspaper, however, did not endorse any
high-pitched coverage of the “prospective investment” in particular. ABP also joined the debate reiterating (Sarkar, 2005b: 4) its evident support to the “necessity of utilising agricultural land to build up large scale industries or service economy”.

Bartaman, from the beginning, ‘exposed’ (Bartaman, 24 August, 2005; Bartaman, 26 August, 2005; Gangopadhyay, 2005b: 4) the “double-dealing” and lack of transparency in the process of “land acquisition in the name of Satellite Township”, “keeping the partners in complete dark” and the “strong resistance” of the Front partners on the issue. As in the case of ABP, the coverage of the foreign investment and trips in the front pages of Bartaman did not adhere to the sanctity of ‘objectivity’ of the hard news, rather integrated with personalised style of narration or use of committed expressions by the correspondents, evidently reflecting its disapprobation of the foreign investment deals. It incited the public distrust by consistently de-meaning the industrialisation attempts by arguing (Bartaman, 20 January, 2004) that West Bengal had been turned into the “shilper bhagar (graveyard of industries)” or “moger muluk”30 (Bartaman, 4 March, 2004) instead of the “destination of trust”. 31 One of the traits of Bartaman’s adversarial framing was to sustain a negative image of the foreign capital and investors in public mind. As part of this strategy, it went on (Bartaman, 25 August, 2005; Bartaman, 29 August, 2005) providing a consistent coverage to the “land scandal” of the Salim group in its own country. The framing strategy rested on placing the movement of the jomi banchao moncho (Platform to Save the Land) established by the Opposition against the proposal of land acquisition at the core of mediation.

Ganashakti, negating the media-created assumptions of the split between the hardliners and the liberals on the issue, assured the supporters of justice to the agriculturists in cases of land acquisition for industrial purposes. Throughout this period, Ganashakti’s framing consistently relied on the strength of rhetoric to draw on support in favour of the policy of foreign or private capital investment and thus, logos like “interests of the poor”, “tactical line”, “rights of the workers” or “class direction” built up the rationale of the coverage. The animosity against the mainstream ‘bourgeois’ media got strengthened with the State Secretariat and Central Committee member of the CPI(M), Gautam Deb, responding on (2005: 4) the debates on ‘new path’ of reform and commenting that “ABP-Star Ananda starts shouting if the worship of capital gets obstructions”. Ganashakti editorial reiterated
(Ganashakti, 6 September, 2005) the ‘faith’ on “proper information” to counter the “waves of slander” that “mix up amabasya (No moon) with purnima (The full moon)”.

8.3.8 Framing the ‘Resistance’: The Initial Phase

The political battle against foreign capital and the proposed SEZ was gaining strong ground since September, 2005, as the Opposition led by Mamata Banerjee took to the streets the resistance to the Front government’s industrial policy. The staunch dissension of the Front partners, other than the CPI(M), provided the protest movement a critical dimension. The agenda-setting role of the Bengali media emerged significant in the debate as the CPI(M) leadership rebutted (Misra, 2005: 4) the Opposition’s role, supported by a section of ‘large commercial business and newspapers’ as “kumbhirasru”32 mixed with “deception and extreme wickedness”. From the beginning of the debate, Bartaman played a manifest role in delegitimising the reform strategies and building up public opinion in favour of the critique within and outside the Front. It forcefully articulated the position to give the ‘resistance’ a shape in media agenda and thereby intervene in public deliberations. Both ABP and Bartaman’s representations of the debate often followed the codes of opinionated journalism to appreciate second-level in agenda setting to influence public opinion in a directed way. In subsequent days, Bartaman relentlessly raised questions about the “truth” in the claims of the CPI(M) leadership about the Salim project or foreign assistance. The ‘dismissal’ of the ‘Note on Salim’, prepared by the CPI(M), by the three Front partners, RSP, CPI and Forward Bloc accordingly found prime coverage in the news. On the other hand, both Ganashakti and ABP insisted on (ABP, 21 October, 2005; Ganashakti, 21 October, 2005) the “consent of the Left Front” in the building of Satellite Township and the investment of Salim in motorcycle industry. While Ganashakti tried (Ganashakti, 21 October, 2005) to ensure that “the confusion among the partners had been mitigated by deliberation”, ABP, from the beginning, endorsed a staunch criticism of Mamata Banerjee’s crusade as a “fruitless effort”. Despite this occasional convergence, however, the two newspapers, exhibited their evident ideological differences on certain issues as was the case in the ‘stand’ on strikes in the IT industry.
As the political contention on industrialisation and opposition against the Left Front regime intensified, *ABP* tried to spinning the debate reinforcing its aggressive brand-making of the then Chief Minister projecting his ‘success’ in “marketing” the state properly.33 While *ABP* was building (*ABP*, 12 November, 2005) the shifting imageries of the sixth Left Front government on the dominant note of “swagata bodhodoy” (welcome enlightenment), *Ganashakti* preferred to sustain the rhetoric – “The Left Front is the only alternative” in its representations.

### 8.3.8.1 Agenda-building: Development to Climax

Amidst the rising tension around ‘new path’ of industrialisation programme of the Left Front government, the fourteenth Assembly election, scheduled in the state in May 2006, gave the Bengali media a great opportunity to expand the standard journalistic practices to ensuring its ever-growing ‘activist’ role in state politics. The pre-electoral and the post-electoral tortuous course of politics characterised by intense ‘conflict’ on agrarian and industrialisation programmes of the Front government were, to a large extent, mediated by the mainstream vernacular media – print and electronic, that exemplified remarkable traits of mediatised politics in West Bengal. The political battle intensified to an unprecedented height around land acquisition for industrialisation purposes and private capital investment during the seventh Left Front regime and the Bengali print media reinforced its agenda-setting and *manufacturing of consent* role utilising the conjuncture of hostile politics heightened around Assembly election.

As noted in Chapter VI, *ABP*’s encoding style reflected an integral strategy based on evident framing and priming modes of advocacy journalism – for example, incessant coverage of the then Chief Minister as the ‘brand’ of the new economic reforms in the state isolated from his party, rationalising the changing discourses of the Communist party to provide the ‘reform’ and the ‘reformers’ a wide coverage and at the same time, spinning a negative image of the ‘Opposition’ resisting the new model of development. *Bartaman* countered this ‘branding’ with a framing strategy that consistently questioned the rationale of the ‘shifts’ to the liberal economic model of industrial development of the Left Front government. *Aajkal* reinforced (Dasgupta, 2006:1) its ‘friendly’ posture to the Front government preferring it as “comparatively acceptable” with its own ‘Left’
suppositions. *Ganashakti*, as the voice of the Communist party and the Left Front, rallied with (Biswas, 2006a: 4) the “slogan of development and struggle propagated by the Leftists to settle the leverage of political power more in favour of the Leftists”. In this context of heightened media activism, the then Industry Minister Nirupam Sen, in his speech in a youth rally, provided (2006: 1) the critical cues to the vigorous mediatisation of politics with the statement – “The people decide the win and loss, not the media”.

From the beginning of 2006, *ABP* gave wide coverage to the ‘campaigns’ of the ruling Front, especially the changing intonations of the slogans and posters of the Left Front. The opinion articles invoked their much-used narrative frame of “old CPI(M), new CPI(M)” (Ghosal, 2006a: 1) or “party versus Chief Minister” frame utilising varied journalistic tropes like interpretive modes, narrative forms, stereotypes etc. Defying the Front and CPI(M)’s claims of collective leadership, *ABP* attributed (*ABP*, 14 March, 2006) the ‘success’ of the government as that of “team Budhdhadev” and the “non-Leftist behaviour” of the Chief Minister. As noted previously, the CPI(M) state leadership, terming the ‘bourgeois’ media as the “main opposition” (Deb, 2006: 4), strongly objected against their attempts in smelling ‘discord’ within the party and the government from the beginning. The framing strategy of the party newspaper targeted (*Ganashakti*, 20 February, 2006) the “*bazari*” (commercial) newspapers for their “evil plan” in downplaying the “success of the government” and isolating the Front government from the Left Front which, it believed, was the product of the “class interest of the big ‘bourgeois’ newspapers”. The media war between the leading newspapers like *ABP*, *Bartaman* and *Ganashakti* illustrated its heightened level with the following scathing comment of the editorial in party newspaper (*Ganashakti*, 19 March, 2006):

“The newspaper claiming to be the highest circulated paper is found to be more anxious about the prospect of the alliance of the Opposition than the respective parties...in fact, this newspaper has willingly accepted the only *thikadari* (contractorship) of the anti-Left *mahajot* (grand alliance). It has entered into the competition of being the main opposition force of the Left Front wearing the mask of neutrality. However masked it is, the ugly face of the newspaper is well-known to the people of the state.”

The hostility widened the division in the Bengali news world in representing the Front regime. *Bartaman* mocked (*Bartaman*, 7 February, 2006) “the party newspaper of CPM and some fraternal news media” for failing to expose the incidents of electoral corruption
in the Front regime “perhaps out of gratitude, fear or devotion” and contrasted it with Bartaman’s “watchdog role in keeping a vigilant eye on the wrong doings of the ruling party”. In a special column, in the first page, Barun Sengupta spearheaded (2006a: 4) the attack against the ‘role’ of Anandabazar Patrika by invoking a comment of the proprietor-cum-editor of ABP, Ashok Kumar Sarkar — “Journalism and brokerage are not the same thing. Brokerage cannot be given the status of journalism”. The ‘anguish’ broke the barrier of the oft-quoted fraternity of the ‘bourgeois press’ that continued in subsequent period with Bartaman satirically describing (Basu, 2007a: 4) ABP as “Budhdhapujari” (worshiper of Budhdha), who “sway their tail” in support of Buddhadev and his group. The author did not mention ABP directly but gave enough clues for the reader to decode the hint by reiterating the word ananda – “Budhdhajibi ananda zindabad” (Long live Budhdha-sourced happiness) or “Ei ananda dirghajibi hok” (Long live this happiness).

The role of the Bengali newspapers in ‘shaping politics’ gathered tempo during the election. ABP’s manifest perceptual frame in favour of industrialisation projected the submission of Buddhadev Bhattacharjee in a press conference – “We are not practicing socialism. (We) want friendship with the industrialists” or “(we) will not tolerate shutting down the factories with slogans”, on the eve of election, in (ABP, 13 April, 2006) banner heading. The party newspaper gave (Ganashakti, 16 April, 2006) prominence to the ‘limitations’ of the Left Front and the ‘tactical stand’ reiterated by the Chief Minister in the interview, strengthening the alternative narrative vis-à-vis ABP, as follows:

“We cannot build socialism in West Bengal. We are trying to experiment with development in a federal province within a capitalist structure…development and struggle at the same time.”

Aajkal went beyond journalistic neutrality to ‘mobilise’ public opinion by citing the ‘support’ of famous personalities in this debate, propagating for ‘inevitability’ of industrialisation. The luminaries included Bangladeshi economist and Nobel Laureate, Muhammad Yunus, Indian economist and Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen, Ex-Captain of the Indian football team, Baichung Bhutia or Ex-captain of the Indian cricket team, Sourav Ganguly. Like the previous years, Bartaman’s coverage was centred around the issues of ‘corruption’ and ‘land scandal’ of the ruling CPI(M). Throughout April, as many as fifteen post-editorial articles strongly substantiated the essence of Bartaman’s
crusade against the Front rule, interrogating the government policies, in the preceding month of election.

The blaze of the debate was not limited to the hard news space in Bengali press but forced a way through the opinion pages to energise an emerging discursive battle, accommodating some critical representations that debated over the rationality of the industrialisation model. Inspite of the well-known ‘liberal-capitalist’ stand, ABP’s opinionated articles accommodated ‘dissensions’, reflecting probable negotiations at various levels of encoding as well within the media institution. Anirban Chattopadhyay, senior member of the editorial board, represented the critical voice in his op-ed articles. Though broadly addressed to the Left Front and its development policy, the pungency of the self-critique treatment of the author was reflected (Chattopadhyay, 2006: 4) in the title of one of the articles and its linguistic tenor that even satirised his own institution, Anandabazar. The headline read:

“ananda = package deal
bazaar phank rakhbe na”
(happiness = package deal: market will not leave space)

The voice of ‘dissent’ was reflected in the op-ed article by economist Kalyan Sanyal, one of the well-known critics of the Front’s development model, who perceived (2006: 4) the illusion of pushing back the politics behind the craving for ‘unanimity’. He expressed his conviction that the industrialisation programme would necessarily breed political conflicts and thus, would demand a political solution. At the same time, ABP’s editorial appropriated (ABP, 14 April, 2006) the genre of advertorial framing with a strongly committed tone terming the transition of the regime as ‘Nutan juger bhore’ (the dawn of new era) and bantering of the “conservatives of the party...who wanted to follow the rhetoric of the Stone Age like class struggle against enemies, dictatorship of the proletariat”. This kind of framing served two purposes for the public opinion making role – putting the agenda of capitalist reform at the core of media’s own propaganda and rallying behind the ‘realist’ Chief Minister dissociating him from the regimented logos of the Communist party and the Left Front. The post-editorials, during those days, however, were more multi-dimensional in content deliberating over the ‘disjunctions’ between the political-ideological positions of the Front and the government’s policies and strategies.
Side by side with ‘appreciation’ of the ‘industrial reform’, ABP intensified its criticism of the performances of the government in other areas of governance like health or education sector and showed its strong disapproval for ‘dalatantra’ (party-regime) in education and ‘inefficiency’ in health sector. Aajkal went overboard in mobilising support for the industrial policy of the Front government in an indirect way by projecting possible ‘figures’ of investment proposals and employment generation to validate its stand.

8.4 The Seventh Left Front Government in Power

The electoral victory of the Left Front marked (ABP, 12 May, 2006) an euphoric tone in ABP’s coverage commending the “victory of forward movement”. The dominant tone of the framing in general defied any appreciation of the victory of a ‘Leftist’ government, rather brought down the whole success to the “industrialisation-centred development model”. The tenor was reflected, in the Lead report, in highlighting the ‘congratulatory messages’ from Ratan Tata and Salim, the two prominent names in the industrial roadmap of the state. Senior correspondent of ABP, Jayanta Ghosal, pointed to (2006b: 4) the ‘disjunction’ citing the congratulatory notes of Tata and Salim as “unimaginable in 1977”. As noted in Chapter VI, while Aajkal attributed (Aajkal, 12 May, 2006) the victory to the performance of the Left Front government, Ganashakti reinforced (Ganashakti, 12 May, 2006) the ideological struggle with the banner heading – “Lal Bangla aaro Lal” (Red Bengal deeper Red).

The agriculture versus industry debate reached its climax with the seventh Left Front government articulating the ‘drive to capital’ more intensely after the victory. In an interview with ABP, the newly elected Chief Minister, Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee, reiterated on (ABP, 16 May, 2006) learning from the experiences of the failures of Soviet Union or experiments in China and Vietnam to practice socialism in a capitalism-surrounded society and harped on the “harmony between workers and industrialists”. On 24 May, the then Industry Minister, Nirupam Sen, and the Land Reform Minister, Abdur Rezzak Mollah, declared the acquisition of 32000 acres of land for “future industrial purposes” and the compensation packages for the farmers. Despite variations at different levels of negotiation in the encoding process, Ganashakti, ABP and Aajkal predominantly bought the ‘official’ versions of the Left Front government on land acquisition debate,
whereas *Bartaman* challenged the hegemonic logic of the ruling party. It can be noted here that the sixth and seventh Left Front governments put significant stress on official propaganda of the ‘drive to industrialisation’ as the goal and the Information and Cultural Ministry gave a wide coverage to a series of advertisement posters in billboards, dailies or pamphlets. The framing of the advertisements tried to include sort of explanation to the debate and critiques on industrialisation in the state. The most widely circulated and oft-quoted slogan was – ‘*Agriculture is our foundation, Industry is the future*’, negating any assumption of contradiction between agrarian and industrial policies.

While a section of media sustained the hype around industrialisation subscribing to the ‘official’ argument that “agricultural market would expand with industrialisation”, *Bartaman* stepped into (Dutta, 2006: 4) the discursive battle on the ‘prioritisations’ and rationality in this model of development with arguments like “development-eviction-compensation or compensation-eviction-development?” It alleged (Dutta, 2006: 4; Sengupta, 2007a: 4) that from the “three platforms of power-regime — politics, economics and mass media” there had been fierce campaign in the “Goebblesean mode” to describe ‘development’ as a “holy affair” and the ‘eviction’ only as “a small side-effect” of it. Negating the supporters’ ‘claims’, post-editorial authors initiated discussions on the ‘impact’ of land acquisition on food security, self-sufficiency in agriculture or questioned the ‘transparency’ or ‘efficiency’ of the government programme in Singur. *Aajkal* contradicted critic’s apprehensions, rallying with the Front government’s ‘assurance’ of preservation of agricultural land, especially multi-cropping land. The party newspaper reinforced the stand with the commitment of the peasant leadership to pursue industrialisation preserving food security in the state.

### 8.4.1 ‘Conflict’ in Singur

Coming to power for the seventh term, the Left Front government directed its attention to Singur to acquire land for the proposed car factory of the Tata Motors and the state politics was immediately surged by the resistance against such land acquisition. The civil society and the political forces including the Front partners other than the CPI(M) raised strong objections against the *essentiality* of state acquisition for private industrial houses and got embroiled in the debate over _willing-unwilling_ farmers parting with their
agricultural land in Singur. Political barracking against the construction of the Nano factory reached its height with the protestors forming a broad platform – *Krishijomi Banchao Committee* (Committee to Save the Agricultural Land) led by the TMC and a number of parties and groups, and embarking on violent resistance against the project. The movement spread to Nandigram in the Purba Medinipur district after the government decided to build up a chemical hub there and farmers organised themselves against the proposal of land acquisition. The intense conflict over the Singur project and chemical hub in Nandigram in subsequent period gave Bengali media another chance to rejuvenate its agenda-setting role by influencing the terms and scope of public debate with its own frames of representation telling people ‘what to think about’. The Bengali press gradually constructed the hype around the Singur project or land acquisition proposals in Nandigram and other areas, either by rationalising or challenging the government efforts and in the process, became an integral part of the political negotiation process itself.

From the beginning *Aajkal* widely covered the prospect of the Tata motor’s car factory in Singur with a positive note while strongly criticising the protest of the Trinamool Congress against land acquisition as a “concocted one” (*Aajkal*, 27 May, 2006). Both *Aajkal* and *Ganashakti* attempted to marginalise news of any ‘dissent’ on the issue inside the Front and insisted on “spontaneous” transfer or achieving the ‘consent’ or ‘willingness’ of the farmers in the land acquisition process. This strategic intervention prompted the party newspaper to project a ‘conspiracy’ frame to denigrate the “Mirzafari tradition” (*Ganashakti*, 30 September, 2006) of the Opposition thwarting development. *Bartaman*’s Lead, however, offered a different story by concentrating on the “resentment of the Front partners against Budhhdhadev in the Front meeting” (*Bartaman*, 4 November, 2006). *Ganashakti*’s framing rested on (*Ganashakti*, 25 September, 2006) the rhetoric — “Singur wants industries” vis-à-vis *Bartaman*’s representation (Sengupta, 2006b: 4) of the Singur project as “jomir horir loot”*. Barun Sengupta drew on (2006b: 4) metaphorical trope like “flocks of land-greedy vultures are flying in the sky of West Bengal” to express his strong disapprobation of the land acquisition policy. The pro-active framing strategy of *Bartaman* was reflected in these instances by the deliberative and repeated use of committed expressions or words like ‘dakhol’ (forcible acquisition), ‘monobol bhangte’ (to destroy confidence) even in hard news. This encoding strategy
framed the ‘resistance’ of the farmers in the same manner with expository languages and visuals in construction of news that led readers to the intended meaning. The framing also attempted to expose the narrative of conflict between two opposing camps – government and its supporters on the one hand and the farmers and their well-wishers on the other with a manifest hint at its own positioning in the war.

One of the distinct framing strategies adopted by Ganashakti and Aajkal was the coverage of ‘big’ rallies and meetings in favour of industrialisation with suggestive phrases and visuals, amidst controversies, to project the spontaneous ‘support’ of the masses to the programme. Thus, Aajkal did not hide (Aajkal, 30 November, 2006) its overwhelming emotion in covering the “overflowing Singur with streams of two lakh people” in the Front meeting “swaying against any opposition to industrialisation”. Ganashakti supplemented (Ganashakti, 30 November, 2006) the tenor with its description of “massive rally” or the “people’s wave” in reports and features anchored with the visual ‘extent’ of the gathering. Bartaman’s adversarial framing, on the other hand, reflected interesting mode of intertextuality in borrowing comparisons from novels or films. One op-ed article quoted (Biswa, 2006b: 4) from a famous Bengali novel, Aranyak, written by Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay, to conclude that ‘Satyacharan’ asked for forgiveness but those who attempted to destroy agricultural land in Singur would never be pardoned. Another article drew from the well-known Hindi film, Sholay, to explore a ‘remake’ of the film in Singur. The author made (Gangopadhyay, 2006a: 4) a very caustic interpretation of the Singur incident returning to the characters of Sholay:

“Sholay is getting filmed once again...Singur has been chosen as the outdoor...Who is the Director? Nirupam Sen? ...Who is the Fight Master? Binoy Konar? ...Who is playing the character of Gabbar Singh? Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee?”

The intensification of protest by the Opposition in Singur gave ABP a scope to steadily strengthen its spin-doctoring role by articulating polarising images of the ‘industry-friendly’ state government on the one hand, and ‘unconvinced’ Opposition on the other. ABP’s exalted coverage (ABP, 26 November, 2006) of the prospect of the “people’s car” project to “create history”, converging well with Ganashakti’s predicament, accused the “politically motivated” Opposition of obstructing the prospect of industrialisation. ABP also shared the party newspaper’s framing strategy of maintaining the attention on
‘continued work’ in the proposed land and ‘multifaced development’ programmes taken by the government in Singur. While the mainstream Bengali media was caught into the unidirectional hype around the Nano car project, the party newspaper sustained its rhetorical campaign of “the interest of the workers” by providing consistent coverage to the state government’s “efforts” to open the closed or sick industries like Dunlop, side by side with the hyperbolic mediation of the Singur issue. It is interesting to see that the otherwise marginalised sector of small scale industry received greater attention in Bartaman’s framing along with the party newspaper during the period.

8.4.2 Intensification of Protest

The intense heat of the protest against the Nano car project was felt in the aggressive political programmes of the Opposition, especially the TMC, manifested in violent clashes, calling of general strikes and hunger strike by Mamata Bandyopadhyay since December 2006. ABP and Aajkal openly stepped in condemning the “unparalleled ruckus” (Aajkal, 1 December, 2006) in West Bengal Assembly and “provocation” (Aajkal, 1 December, 2006) of the TMC leadership. While Ganashakti projected (Ganashakti, 1 December, 2006) the “incivility” of the Opposition, Bartaman insisted on (Bartaman, 1 December, 2006) the “undemocratic treatment” to the Opposition leadership.

In framing the warp and woof between the government and the Opposition on the return of acquired land in Singur, ABP applied a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, it portrayed every kind of ‘ga joari’ (application of undue force) of the Opposition on land acquisition issue or the trade union front of the CPI(M), CITU on strike issues in strongest negative terms. On the other, it appreciated the “resolute stand” of the Chief Minister and ‘support’ to his policy from different quarters of the country. ABP did not hide (ABP, 20 December, 2006) its anxiety that the continued conflict and violence would destabilise the prospect of investment in the state and a resultant transfer of intellect from West Bengal like the past years. Ganashakti narrowed down its attack on the “forces against industry” as well and raised questions about the “desparate suicidal opposition” (Dey, 2006: 4) or “fishing in the troubled water” (Ghosh, 2006a: 4) by the consortium of opposition forces. The party newspaper waged an informational battle as
well to counter the propaganda relying on “real facts” on Singur incident sourced on the state government as well as the press statements of the top party leaders like politbureau member Brinda Karat. *Aajkal* added a different angularity to its representations by placing the news of ‘construction’ in the factory site or ‘support’ of the TMC panchayat leaders in the project in the same frame to undermine the hype around resistance. Its disgust became evident in the linguistic tropes, unnatural for hard news, in snubbing (*Aajkal*, 22 December, 2006) the “irrational” opposition of the TMC as ‘*Trinamooli protibader chiri*’ (the low-grade form of TMC’s protest) in bold caption.

As mentioned in Chapter VI, *Bartaman’s* representations, in covering the political resistance, insisted on (*Bartaman*, 28 November, 2006; *Bartaman*, 4 December, 2006) the ‘state terror’ in Singur with acrimonious expressions like “horrible carnage”, “riotous”, “barbaric” activities or “*gundami*” (hooliganism) of the police and the CPM “cadres from outside” or “*lethelbahini*”(the armed cadres) to capture farmers’ land in Singur, describing (Ghosh, 2006b: 4) Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee as “*Buddhadanab*” (monster Budhdha). In encoding the ‘dissent’ against the land acquisition policy, *Bartaman* cited “a strongly-worded article” by Subhasis Gupta of the Coordination Committee in the *Sangrami Hathiyar* expressing his disapprobation of the “Andhra-styled” reforms of Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee and Nirupam Sen and also the “editorial of *Ganashakti*” that supported the model. Reinforcing its inclination to intertextual tenor, the post-editorial authors compared (Rakshit, 2006: 4) Singur incident with the context of *Neeldarpan* or drawing on (Gangopadhyay, 2006b: 4) the popular Hindi film song *Korbani* to portray the ‘sacrifice’ of the farmers. The framing of the articles represented a unique storytelling mode poignant with harsh critique of the Front government through satirical and metaphorical tropes. To mention instances from the post-editorial article (Gangopadhyay, 2006b: 4):

> “Two aristocratic mujrowali (courtesan) entered the jalsaghar (the musical soiree). One of them is named as Budbudhibai Kolkattawali. The other is named as Pompombai Bardhamanwali... though Kolkattawali is a great artist, she does not proceed to work without the consent of the Bardhamanwali.”

Following this spirit of framing Barun Sengupta, the editor, described (*Bartaman*, 25 December, 2006) Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee and his government as “broker of the
Tatas”. The allegation, on a later occasion, found reverberation (Bartaman, 19 February, 2007) in the then State Secretary of RSP, Debabrata Bandyopadhyay’s comment that the government had turned the state into the ‘sebadas’ (servant) of the Tatas. Bartaman’s engagement in the discursive war relied on a consistent disapproval of the industrialisation policy by highlighting loss of job in land acquisition with the ‘figure’ of probable jobless persons to project the gravity of the situation as against Ganashakti and Aajkal’s projection of ‘amount’ of investment.

The political tussle reached its dramatic height in December, 2006 with the much-circulated statement of Ratan Tata – “I won’t leave Singur even if someone puts a gun on my head”. The ‘stand’ attracted hyperboles in ABP’s coverage in a banner heading with eight-column Lead and a three-column photograph of Ratan Tata at the centre. Ganashakti also internalised the pungency of the ‘threat’ and put the comment in the eight-column Lead followed by the Chief Minister’s frustration about the course of events in Singur. Bartaman incited (Basu, 2007a: 4) the media war immediately by sarcastically commenting on the “self-acting”, “salutary advice like headline” of the “Buddhapujari” (worshipper of Buddhadev) newspapers, hinting especially at ABP.

8.4.3 Framing the ‘Resistance’: Media War at its Height

As discussed in Chapter VI, the increasing political tension in the state on the issue of land acquisition for industrial purposes in Singur and later in Nandigram gave the mainstream Bengali media a central position as one of the prime forums of the public debate, often sustaining the agency role in the political mediation process. The competitive framing increasingly went beyond dispassionate coverage of ‘reality’ with ‘objectivity’ to appropriate evident propagandist role and thus, enjoying media’s evident ‘insider’ role in the political contention. The nuances in everyday framing of the ‘conflict’, however, did not follow linear mediation processes but exhibited multi-layered encoding of the debate. For example, though ABP centred its representations in favour of indispensability of private capital over a considerable period of time, it did not miss the subtlety of mediation by acknowledging the ‘other’ voices on occasions. Accordingly, the post-editorial page accommodated (Chattopadhyay and Chakraborty, 2007: 4) the critical excerpt on ‘universal development’ by Anirban Chattopadhyay and Rangan
Chakraborty framed on a unique conversational style that dealt with the issues of sustainable development, inclusive politics, human resources or rhetoric in development in the context of the Singur and Nandigram debate.

On 4 January, 2007, resistance against the proposed chemical hub breaking into a violent clash between a mob and the police in Nandigram hit the headlines. The linguistic and visual framing of the respective representations of the Bengali newspapers carried obvious traits of intended appeal to the readers in describing and interpreting the events, thereby confirming the newspapers’ ‘stand’. The polarisation in the state politics was replicated in the news world as well with big media taking obvious positioning in the issue. In the subsequent days, the ‘violence’ dominated the front pages and Aajkal and ABP’s coverage increasingly banked on official sources like the Chief Minister’s ‘hint’ or the ‘statement of the government officials. Corroborating Ganashakti’s strategy, ABP also insisted on (ABP, 7 January, 2007) the “full support” of the Krishak Sabha and CPI to SEZ referring to the press meets of K. Baradarajan, the then All-India President of Krishak Sabha and A B Bardhan, the then All-India Secretary of the CPI. Bartaman, contradicted (Bartaman, 22 January, 2007) this version by highlighting CITU’s 'apprehension' about turning the SEZ into “real estates in the name of industrialisation”.

The editor of Aajkal, Ashok Dasgupta, advised (2007a: 1) the Front government to go for “positive industrialisation” where people should be aware about the process and there should be political and administrative preparations.

The land acquisition issue received new turn in state politics when the then Chief Minister, Buddhadev Bhattacharjee acknowledged (2007) that “we did commit the initial error and we need to proceed with great caution”. The admission of ‘mistake’ in Nandigram by Buddhadev Bhattacharjee and the decision to combat the problem politically received noticeable projection in the banner headlines in ABP, framed in an appreciative tinge and was immediately anchored (Pathak, 2007: 4) with the observation that “trust of the industrial sector” had been achieved, the necessity was to “build up public consent” in favour of the industrial policies. Its active intervention in the debate prompted (ABP, 12 February, 2007) the exalted tone in reporting the press conference of the Nobel Laureate, Muhammad Yunus, in Kolkata, stressing on the need to move for land acquisition for industries or the SEZ instead of being restricted to agriculture only.
The post-ed authors in ABP argued that the situation had opened the opportunity to deliberate over the issue of ‘compensation’. In the situation of political crisis, the effort of the major partner, CPI(M) to ‘manage’ the ‘dissent’ of the smaller partners of the Front invariably hit the front pages of Bartaman along with the ‘retreat’ of the state government in the land acquisition or SEZ issue. Bartaman’s encoding of the debate reflected (Bartaman, 23 February, 2007) a unique inferential mode of reporting as well, found even within the ‘objective’ frame of hard news in apprehending the “secret support” of a section of the CPI(M) top leadership to the Front partners’ dissent, by sending “feeler or necessary messages” through the medium level leaders. Bartaman cited (Bartaman, 12 February, 2007) Prakash Karat’s note on the SEZ to substantiate its inference on ideological crisis within the ruling party on the issue. The context gave Bartaman the opportunity to incite public debate by locating (Bartaman, 13 and 14 February, 2007) defiance of the Front partners like RSP and Forward Bloc against nuclear power plant and land acquisition against the “desperate”, “obstinate” attitude of the CPI(M), at the centre of its coverage.

Ganashakti utilised the scope to deliberate over the “different” stand of the Left Front on SEZ and demanded “a fundamental change” in the Centre’s Act on SEZ.\textsuperscript{50} It claimed (Chakraborty, 2007b: 4) to have kept the “class direction” intact in understanding the relations between the agriculture and industry and focussed on achieving “people’s consent” instead of rushing to the decision. Marginalising the ‘dissent’ at different levels, especially by the Left intellectuals, the party newspaper concentrated on (Ganashakti, 15 February, 2007; Ganashakti, 24 February, 2007) prospects of “huge” investments in agribusiness, steel, health city or leather business, etc. during the same period or “prioritising the compensation and rehabilitation packages for the affected farmers”. At the same time, it waged a relentless battle against the “obstructions”, “hothokarita” (impetuous), “mayakanna” (false cry) of the “bahurupi” (polymorphic) Opposition, “kutsa” (slandering) against the Front government or “pseudo-sympathisers” of the farmers, with the emphatic political ‘conviction’ to assure (Ganashakti, 6 February, 2007) the supporters that “the incitement of the Opposition would fail” in the “transition from agriculture to industry”.

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The propagandist framing of both ABP and Ganashakti converged well with the ‘official’ campaign frame of the Department of Information and Cultural Affairs of Government of West Bengal with a regular publication of the public advertisements in their front pages. ABP, with its “highest” circulation potential, had always been successful in getting the major share of the advertisements of the ‘big’ industrial houses, particularly the automobile companies including the Tata group. Interestingly, Bartaman, side by side with its adversarial framing, also published the government advertisement on the “waves of industrialisation in the state” in the front pages, manifesting a distancing from its own ideological posturing in respect of commercial polices. Its consistent support of the ‘small scale industrial sector’ as against ‘big’ industrialisation, particularly on the ground of employment generation, however, continued at the same time. The commercial policy of the House reflected even more interesting angularity with Bartaman receiving the full-page advertisement of the Maruti-Suzuki Private Limited, a leading name and a strong contestant of the Tatas in Indian automobile industry, on 30 January, 2007.51

8.4.3.1 Violence in Nandigram and the Aftermath

The resistance against the proposed chemical hub in Nandigram reached its climax on 14 March, 2007, with a clash of local people with the state police forces leading to the death-toll of fourteen. The Opposition, led by the TMC, called for a state-wide bandh on the next day and demanded an immediate investigation of the incident by the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation). The state politics was instantly surged with unprecedented civil and political activism on the issue in subsequent days.

The event incited a hitherto unseen communication warfare in the state involving both the Bengali and non-vernacular media, political and civil society, on the chronicles of the everyday resistance and rationale of the industrialisation process adopted by the Left Front government. The media war was fought on competing agenda of the respective Houses, manifesting undisguised interpretative or ideological frames of their choices. The continued violence in Nandigram virtually divided the Bengali media in two opposing camps, taking ‘sides’ in favour of or against the Front government and rupturing the perceived myth of objective journalism. The Bengali press became one of the obvious
sites of the ‘battle’ and enjoyed the pitched attention of the agitated civil and political society.

ABP’s immediate response to the conflict in Nandigram incorporated the languages of battlefront in the semantic framing of the headline (ABP, 15 March, 2007) – “rokte dokhol muktanchol” (the capture of the liberated zone by blood-bath), severely criticising the ‘failure’ of the administration to tackle the situation or condemning the “arrogance of power” (Basu Raychaudhuri, 2007: 4). In this context, it is interesting to note that ABP’s reporting of the ‘admission’ of mistake in Nandigram incident by Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee was anchored in the Lead report side by side with his “determination” to build chemical hub elsewhere. Bartaman led the blitz against the state government joining the Opposition to severely condemn the “mass killing by the police” (Bartaman, 15 March, 2007) and advanced its watchdog role in projecting ‘truth’ in the daily briefing of the events. Bartaman's framing strategy indulged in the personalisation of politics portraying (Bartaman, 17 March, 2007; Basu, 2007b: 4; Gangopadhyay, 2007: 4) Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee as responsible for the massacre, distancing from its previous appreciative assessment of the Chief Minister as an “honest” administrator. Ganashakti, describing the ‘massacre’ as attempts to “create anarchy” (Ganashakti, 16 March, 2007), ridiculed the “insight of the journalists” (Chakraborty, 2007a: 4), especially ABP and Bartaman, in reporting the ‘reactions’ of the Front leadership. Ganashakti’s attempt to minimise the reaction against the Front government reflected in covering the otherwise unattended news of “unique achievement” of the government like stricter amendemnts to include ‘punishment’ in the Industrial Dispute Act against the violation of the law by the owners. Aajkal also shared the same strategy by projecting the “unique’ proposal” (Aajkal, 1 June, 2007) of the Jindal group to provide ownership to the landless farmers and joint partnership of the state government in the proposed steel factory in Salboni in the Lead news. At the same time, Aajkal’s coverage was built up on critiquing the ‘subversion’ against the Front government’s industrial strategy, endorsing the government and the party newspaper’s stand and in the process, mediation of the debate rather shifted to the editorial or opinion pages reflecting the traits of advocacy journalism. Beyond respective agenda-setting and ‘manufacturing of consent’ roles, Bengali media's mutual rivalry was pitched at its height with the beginning of violent resistance against
industrialisation policies. It showed some unprecedented convergence as well. Despite obvious antagonism, *ABP* and *Ganashakti* shared strong unanimity against the “politics of negativism” (*ABP*, 1 August, 2008) of the Opposition leading to an ‘impasse’ in the industrial development of the state. *ABP*’s framing denounced the legacy, terming (*ABP*, 5 August, 2008) the Opposition as ‘Kalidasa’ for spoiling the “preparation for the twenty-first century”. *Ganashakti* participated in the process with repeated articulation of the much-quoted rhetoric “against the interest of the state” and the allegation of ‘political subversion’ of the Opposition. It gradually pitched its rhetorical battle high, following the slogans of the Left Front, against the “obstruction” to industrialisation programme and sustained the campaign, till the Lok Sabha election, to 'expose' the “political conspiracy” of the Opposition against the Front government. The ‘conspiracy’ logic of the newspaper covered (Deb, 2007: 4) the ‘allegation’ of Ratan Tata with much importance that his “business competitors” had instigated the anti-land acquisition movement in Singur. At the same time, the traditional enmity between ‘bourgeois’ media houses and the Left Front reached at its unprecedented height, engaging the party newspaper in the media war. Madan Ghosh, the then State Secretariat member of the CPI(M) and a leading peasant leader, remarked (Ghosh, 2007: 4) about the ‘bourgeois’ media’s role: “In the disguise of the words like ‘neutral’, ‘bhu’t (ghost) or ‘bhogoban’ (God), the main purpose is hiding the truth.” The party newspaper strongly criticised (*Ganashakti*, 16 May, 2007) the “ill intented slander campaign” of a section of newsmedia “to create disunity within the Left Front” and led (Roy, 2007: 4) its readers to the inevitability of the industrialisation programme with the slogan – “There is no alternative to the resolution of industrialisation in West Bengal”.

As mentioned in Chapter VI, *Bartaman* gave unqualified coverage to the prospect of an emerging “mini Front” within the Front, led mainly by the three partners, the CPI, FB and RSP, and the 'uneasiness' of the CPI(M) regarding the internal tussle over industrialisation programme, particularly land acquisition issue. *Bartaman*’s framing of the 'dissent' in the front pages constantly preferred, what Michael Schudson described as 'interpretive lead', directing the reader to a kind of prejudiced understanding through the narrative of news. The advocacy journalism culminated in *Bartaman* in sustaining a negative image of the Front government by de-legitimising the regime with reports of
“false accounts of the government” (*Bartaman*, 21 and 24 April, 2007; Chanda, 2007: 4) on industrialisation and land acquisition or severe resistance of the CITU. Despite the predominant ‘friendly’ stand, *Aajkal* did not hide its anxiety in the growth of a ‘front within the Front’ as a result of dissent on industrialisation. However, *Aajkal*’s camaraderie with the Front government, in the situation of crisis, continued with putting trust on Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee as the “most capable Chief Minister of West Bengal”. On 21 April, 2007 the Chief Minister addressed a public gathering of intellectuals in the Science City auditorium to convey his government’s ‘stand’ on industrialisation and deliberate over the debates that had rocked the state particularly after the Nandigram incident. *Aajkal* gave (*Aajkal*, 22 April, 2007) the meeting a front page Lead with the banner headline – “The Chief Minister again called for a deliberation to the Opposition: the Opposition aimed only at Opposition”. It expressed satisfaction in the “overflowing gathering” (*Aajkal*, 22 April, 2007) of the meeting and appreciated the positive ‘intention’ of the Chief Minister. The editor, in his special column, echoed (Dasgupta, 2007b: 1) the Front government and the party newspaper’s allegation of the “slandering of the Opposition” avoiding any deliberation. The mediation strategy incorporated visual framing as well to articulate its ‘support’ and thus, placed the picture of a hawkers’ rally in Kolkata “demanding industrialisation” at the centre of the front page.

**8.4.4 Framing the Negotiation Process**

The political crisis was renewed with the ‘tussle' between the government and the Opposition led by the TMC over the 'transfer of land' to the farmers of Singur and multilateral negotiation attempts to solve the impasse over land acquisition that dominated the front pages of the newspapers. Since mid June 2007 the crisis reached to its unprecedented height with claims and counterclaims by the political leaders on 'numbers' of willing farmers, 'statistics' of probable employment in the proposed units and above all, the 'determination' of the government to pursue with its industrialisation proposals. The mainstream Bengali press took active interest in the pulls and pressures of the negotiation between the ruling party and the Opposition to start deliberations on the crisis. The Singur and Nandigram incidents witnessed unprecedented mobilisation of the cultural world with the Bengali intellectuals (especially writers, theatre and film
personalities, educationists) rallying to the street condemning the state government’s highhandedness and continued violence. The anti-land acquisition movement deepened the crisis of governance in the Left Front rule at different levels and divided the civil society almost vertically into two opposing camps – pro-government and anti-government. The civil society was also engaged in deliberating over the *agriculture versus industry* debate and models of development in general, and thus, played a catalyst role in the public opinion formation. The Bengali media emerged as one of the crucial sites of public deliberation lending its space to the civil society. The op-ed articles in the print media and talk shows in the electronic media contributed greatly in civil society’s participation in and spin-doctoring the debate.

*Aajkal*, known for its continued association with the Bengali cultural world from its inception, especially the ‘progressive’ section of the Bengali intellectuals, strengthened its active mediation by committed opinionated articles along with evidently assertive editorials. *Aajkal* did not align with the adversarial position taken by the intellectuals against the government; instead, fraternised with *Ganashakti* or the Front leaders’ hint at ‘conspiracy’. *Aajkal*’s advocacy represented interesting stanchion in mediation, reflected in the opinion articles by the well-known Leftist litterateur Debes Roy or radical Left politician Azizul Haque vouching in favour of land acquisition. Documentary film maker and critic Saumitra Dastidar urged (2007: 4) the intellectuals to not “compare Nandigram incident with that of Gujarat” in his post-editorial article in *Aajkal*. The post-ed authors in *Aajkal* expressed their deep frustration in the role of the intellectuals, particularly of the “rootless intellectuals having no connection with common people” (Rakshit, 2007: 4) or “the vulgar attribution against the pro-government intellectuals in some newspapers” (Jalal, 2007: 4). In inciting the battle, *Aajkal* introduced feature columns, for few days, by leading Bengali intellectuals or political leaders, which, though varied in content, rested on the common assumption about the potential benefits of industrialisation from different aspects.

*ABP* used the opportunity to mediate the tension by shifting attention from merely a casual political conversation on violence to a more serious public discussion on issues like compensation, desired role of the state in land acquisition, etc. involving panel of experts. The renowned Indian economists like Pranab Bardhan, Kaushik Basu, Dilip
Mookherjee, Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee, Maitreesh Ghatak, Ashok Sanjay Guha, Mrinal Dutta Chaudhuri, Mukul Majumdar and Debraj Roy jointly presented (Banerjee et al, 2007: 1487) a note on the ‘lessons’ of Nandigram starting with the premise that there was “no alternative to industrialisation”. The scholars refuted the oft-mentioned ‘demand’ from different quarters, including ABP, of keeping the government away from the process of land acquisition for industrial investors and cited a number of reasons for proposing such ‘involvement’. The note also focussed on (Banerjee et al. 2007:1489) the “design” and “credibility” of the compensation process in cases of land acquisition for industrial purposes.

Ganashakti also rallied the ‘Left’ intellectuals in supporting the cause of industrialisation in its op-ed pages. Besides the veteran party leaders, economists, historians debated on the “prudent outlook” (Das, 2007: 4) in development and rationalised the essentiality of industrialisation in the state. The then Finance Minister of the Left Front government and much-known economist, Asim Dasgupta, explained the ‘gap’ in information in the agriculture versus industry debate with statistics to justify the industrialisation programme of the Left Front.

Throughout the period of ‘violence’ and ‘resistance’ in Singur and Nandigram, the post-editorials in Bartaman, often by the editor himself, became an extended site of ‘struggle for saving agricultural land’ feeding the rationale of resistance of the Opposition. The authors included senior journalists, retired administrators or academicians who scathingly critiqued the capital-intensive model of development and exposed the ‘corruption’ in the government’s deals with the industrialists in the process of industrialisation. During the heated days of January-March, 2007, as many as thirty op-ed articles were published in the newspaper which played significant role in building ‘support’ for the anti-land acquisition movement. As mentioned earlier, Bartaman’s crusade did not spare the pro-government civil society and media fraternity as well ridiculing (Basu, 2007a: 4) them as “Budhdhapujari” (worshipper of Budhdha).

Though the government’s drive for industrialisation received serious setback after the Singur and Nandigram tensions, the debate remained vibrant in the public sphere with the civil society’s active engagement to search for a solution. The Front government also
showed its reluctance to slowdown the industrialisation programme and thus, strived for achieving support in its favour. With this spirit, the state government organised a public seminar on *Whither the Development of West Bengal?* on 31 December, 2008. The speakers were eminent economists Amartya Sen, Amiya Bagchi, Pranab Bardhan, social scientist Partha Chatterjee and the then FICCI President, Amit Mitra. The coverage of the seminar reflected evident traits of ‘selective framing’ of the media to feed a predetermined mediation. *Ganashakti* reported (*Ganashakti*, 1 January, 2009) the event in the Lead space with the self-assertive headline – “There is no alternative to industrialisation in the development of the state: argued the eminent economists”. The report highlighted (*Ganashakti*, 1 January, 2009) the ‘conviction’ of Pranab Bardhan and Amartya Sen that there was “no alternative to land acquisition for industrial purposes to arrange for employment” or “the industrialisation requires conducive atmosphere” respectively. *Bartaman* inverted (*Bartaman*, 1 January, 2009) the focus, quoting Amartya Sen’s observations that “the government has not taken the right decision in acquiring land for the Tatas in Singur”, in a banner Lead with a five-column report. It also upheld his opinion that “the industrialists should buy the land directly from the farmers”, subscribing to ABP’s arguments. Barun Sengupta, on this occasion, intended (*Bartaman*, 2 January, 2009) to pay the government-friendly media back for their 'brand-Budhdha' campaign, in his editorial, endorsing Amartya Sen’s line of argument. He, at the same time, found (*Bartaman*, 2 January, 2009) a “murky intention” of the government in organising the seminar as the party newspaper, *Ganashakti*, had sidelined the 'criticism' of the economists in its edition.

### 8.4.5 Mediation in Post-Nandigram Days

Inciting the heat of political tension, fresh controversy erupted with the remark of Ratan Tata blaming the “vested interest” behind the delay in the Singur project and terming land acquisition debates as “politically motivated”. The pugnacity of the comment received immediate reactions from the political parties and that of the Bengali newspapers. *Bartaman* questioned (Sengupta, 2007c: 4) the “truth” in the allegation and put (*Bartaman*, 12 August, 2007) the 'rebuff' of the Front partners in a banner Lead to denounce the spirit of the comment. *Ganashakti* published (*Ganashakti*, 11 August, 2007) a six-column news of the annual meeting of the Tata Tea in Kolkata where Ratan
Tata had made the comment with a headline – “The Tatas will start the production in Singur in scheduled time”, assuring the readers against any pessimistic assumption of the Opposition of the cancellation of the project. ABP downplayed the adversarial coverage of a section of media by consistently building up (ABP, 12 January, 2008) the support for the Tata’s Nano car project by covering the “determinant” Ratan Tata fulfilling the “challenges” with the efforts of “Team Nano”.

The political contentions around the industrialisation programme threw the state into serious crisis in governance and disstabilisation in the relatively stable rule of the Left Front governemnt over three decades. The subsequent elections in the state – the panchayat election in May 2008, the Lok Sabha election in 2009 and in the end, the Assembly election in 2011, witnessed high-pitched political battle that involved hitherto unseen dimensions of popular engagement in the state. The Bengali press and electronic media provided the catalyst the public needed in this battle for political space intensifying its agenda-building role. As noted in Chapter VI, agriculture versus industry debate formed the core agenda in the panchayat election of 2008. During the period Bartaman consistently covered the 'unfruitful' negotiations between the Front partners and the CPI(M) leaders on the 'formula of industrialisation' in the lead spaces, sharing (Bartaman, 11 January, 2008) the RSP leadership's strong comments like “the state is not a zamindari of the Chief Minister”. A senior journalist of Bartaman upheld (Bhattacharya, 2009: 4) the newspaper’s dominant conjecture in this debate that “CPM hates capitalism, not the capitalists or the capital”. Ganashakti brushed aside (Ganashakti, 15 January, 2008) any such story of internal ‘difference’ with the firm ‘conviction’ of the CPI(M) leaders that “West Bengal is the example” in the “struggle for alternative”.

ABP’s unabated censuring of the ‘resistance’ of the Opposition “from pollution of auto to chemical hub”, strongly hinted at (ABP, 7 February, 2009; ABP, 8 February, 2009) the coveted purpose of “electoral gain” of the opposition parties. The editorial went (ABP, 20 February, 2009) beyond the conventional journalistic resilience to term it as a game of “kumir danga” by the Opposition “to create a hitch” in the way of industrialisation in the state. However, in the context of the volatility of the on-going debates, it, at the same time, was suggesting (ABP, 23 May, 2008) for a “whole-hearted consensus” in initiating
the industrialisation programme, distancing from its previous stand of aggressive support to the Front’s policy of industrialisation. *ABP*’s eagerness in mediation to the debates on industrialisation reflected a unique activism, quite unusual in conventional agenda-setting role of the press. It arranged for a 'conversation' between the renowned economist, Pranab Bardhan and the then Industry Minister of the Left Front government, Nirupam Sen, on “how to create the politics of development”, published on 17 and 18 March, 2009. Both of them were engaged in a discursive deliberation over the 'path of development', referring to an earlier article of Pranab Bardhan in *ABP*, published on 8-9 December, 2008, on the industrialisation programme in the state. The discussion rolled into the issue of 'rising problems' around the process and role of the government in the development programmes, particularly in industrialisation. *ABP*, shedding off its observer-commentator role, took an active intervening part in mediating between the civil society and political forces in thriving for a ‘solution' to the dissent on development.

Since November 2008, Bengali media's attention shifted to the political turmoil in Lalgarh, as the state government and the ruling CPI(M) confronted the united resistance movement of the radical Left forces, tribal organisations and the Opposition parties. The focus on industrial policy accordingly was sidelined in the lead space of the newspapers with that of a virtual breakdown of the law and order situation and governance in that area and the civil and political resistance against the government in the state in general.

**8.4.5.1 Public Appearance of the 'Nano car'**

An interesting epilogue in the encoding of the industrialisation programme by the mainstream Bengali press could be seen in framing the first public appearance of the 'Nano car' in Mumbai in March 2009. Ratan Tata unveiled the ‘first’ car publicly in a grand event that received hyped public gaze in the country, especially in West Bengal due to the long-standing turmoil over the project in Singur. The event gave *ABP* an occasion to reiterate (*ABP*, 24 March, 2009; *ABP*, 25 March, 2009) its strong critical stand on the “disease of negative opposition” of the Bengalis. The editor caustically remarked (*ABP*, 5 April, 2009) that “good politics” was never the usual practice of the Bengalis; instead, they preferred “immediate excitement” and the pioneers of this kind of politics were both the Rightists and Leftists in Bengal. The pungent observations were
tuned with a nine-column Lead coverage of the event in the front page framed in a visibly appreciating tenor of the ‘achievement’ of the Tatas in introducing Nano car at the “lowest price of one lakh” (ABP, 24 March, 2009). Interestingly, ABP upheld 'Nano' as the icon in automobile industry in its commercial policy as well with the endorsement of big advertisements of the Nano car by the Tata group in its editions for a number of days in April, 2009. Bartaman, however, provided a rather subdued coverage of the event and sidelined the report in the front page to a small box in the anchor space. Contradicting ABP’s exalted tone, its encoding rested on (Bartaman, 24 March, 2009) the 'counterclaim' that despite the hyped promise Nano was priced more than 'one lakh'. Ganashakti shared the 'frustration' of ABP by boldly framing the news as “breaking of dreams” (Ganashakti, 24 March, 2009) of the people of the state and posing the phrase in the backdrop of a picture of the unfinished factory of the car in Singur to incite the public sentiment. The emotive framing of the front page news did not hide its 'conviction' that people would give a “befitting reply” (Ganashakti, 24 March, 2009) to the Opposition for the whole incident.

8.4.6 The Lok Sabha Election, 2009: The Setback

The state politics reached the climax of political tension with the Left Front regime witnessing a severe setback in the Lok Sabha election in mid 2009. ABP returned to its unqualified pro-capital defence in the context of the publication of election manifestos of the political parties on the eve of the Lok Sabha election scheduled in April-May 2009. Responding subtly to the provocative hype around ‘change’ insisted by the Opposition, ABP refreshed (ABP, 19 March, 2009) its own rhetorical stance – “change is the ultimate truth of life”, in assessing the CPI(M) manifesto with its oft-quoted metaphor, “Jurassic”. In the same spirit the editor discarded (ABP, 26 March, 2009) the TMC's manifesto as reflection of “kupomonduk” (narrow-minded) mentality as it expressed its opposition to privatisation or foreign investment in insurance and retail business. Ganashakti's coverage of the election manifesto, quite naturally, renewed the Left parties' rhetorical mobilisation for “a government of alternative principles” (Ganashakti, 17 March, 2009) and reinforced the CPI(M)'s political-ideological opposition to neo-liberal policies. The party newspaper summarised (Ganashakti, 17 March, 2009) the basic tenet of the
manifesto as “to ensure equity in economic development and social justice”, without indulging in any ‘review’ of the emerging controversy on industrialisation.

Since April, a slow but steady shift was visible in ABP's framing strategy that was gradually lowering down the aggressive projection of the Left Front's industrial policy to accommodate the discursive battle around 'dissent' voices of the civil-political society to a greater extent. The shift was probably prompted by the growing public support to the Opposition’s battlecry of ‘change’ in the regime and continued failure of the government to tackle the crisis. Kalyan Sanyal, an economist, appreciated (2009: 4) people's “courage to say no” to the ruling regime. Human Right activist Tapas Sinha wrote (2009: 4) a two-day feature series on the 'precarious' state of the workers of the closed factories in the state. Coverage of the Opposition leader Mamata Banerjee was also replacing the Left Front government in the front pages and ABP's predisposition for a Congress-led government at the Centre was getting clear. In the context of an emerging animosity between the 'pro-change' and 'pro-Left Front' civil society, ABP’s shifting strategy became clear (Pathak, 2009: 4) in sharing Bartaman’s oft-quoted stand against the support of the “obedient” followers of the Front government. The electoral coverage of Bartaman appropriated the linguistic twinge of hostile politics in drawing upon phrases/usages/frames that reinforced the tales of antagonism. It is noteworthy that Bartaman throughout this period published regularly the Front government's advertisements projecting the 'achievements' in industrialisation and agrarian development released by the State Information and Cultural Affairs Department in the front pages, thereby indicating a crucial disjunction between its ‘political’ and ‘commercial’ stand. Ganashakti spearheaded its attack against the hype around the slogan of 'change’ and engaged the Left intellectuals, in the feature column in the front page, in questioning the rationality of the demand and the ‘rights’ of the Opposition in raising such cry. To contest the ‘bourgeois’ media’s narrative of ‘failure’ of the government the party newspaper showcased the ‘achievements’ of the government in industrial development.

The result of the Lok Sabha election was declared on 17 May, 2009. The massive electoral mandate in favour of the Congress-TMC coalition in West Bengal and the Congress at the Centre marked the final outcome of the hype for change in West Bengal politics. Mainstream Bengali 'bourgeois' media did not miss the tenor of the political drift
in its coverage. *ABP* immediately appropriated the signal of “change of wind” in Bengal and attributed (*ABP*, 17 May, 2009) it as “a verdict against lack of governance”. Incidentally, as noted in previous sections, *ABP*’s consistent priming for *change* was always integrated into its aggressive agenda of liberal economic reforms and thrust to become “voice of Bengal”.\(^{59}\) It hardly appreciated the Opposition’s urge for a *change in regime* demanding the roll back of that liberal model of development. The encoding strategy of *ABP*, therefore, reflected an attempt to legitimise a kind of agenda-setting role that, on occasions, grew on negotiating with the dominant public opinion. *Bartaman*'s unmistakeable exulation was reflected (*Bartaman*, 17 May, 2009) in the dramatic code and metaphorical framing of the headline – “*CPM gohara\(^{60}\), Mamata jhor e lal durgo churmar*” (Massive defeat for the CPM, Red fort smashed by the Mamata-storm), sustaining the high-pitched temper of competitive politics in its hard news and opinion pages. The ‘victorious’ mood of the newspaper brought in an interesting composition of the fourth page on that day which had a compilation of article excerpts on the Front regime written by Barun Sengupta on different occasions. The selection was titled (Sengupta, 2009: 4) with the strong note — “Is the Headquarters of Alimuddin Street more powerful than Kremlin?” The pungent remark attempted to incite the memories of the *fall* of Soviet Union, known as the bastion of socialism in the world, in the 1990. *Bartaman*'s provocative framing ridiculed the 'Brand Budhdha' campaign of fellow newspaper houses in an indirect manner by commenting in the Lead news that the party had failed miserably wherever Budhhdhadev Bhattacharjee had gone for campaigning. The media war reached its climax with *Bartaman* projecting (*Bartaman*, 20 May, 2009) the “dismissal of the *Bengal line*” by the Politbureau or the Front partners, countering *ABP*’s predisposition for the ‘Bengal line’ within the CPI(M) on occasions.\(^1\)

The 'unexpected' electoral defeat of the Left Front received (*Ganashakti*, 17 May, 2009) a very subdued and undemonstrative kind of headline, tactically framed, in *Ganashakti* that reported, in big font, “the return of the Congress in power”. The ‘defeat’ of the Left Front to the TMC-Congress coalition was relegated to (*Ganashakti*, 17 May, 2009) a rather secondary place in terms of lead news framed in consonant with the Politbureau statement describing it as “a big setback for the Leftists”.

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8.5 Conclusion

The last decade of the Left Front’s regime witnessed the climax in the *agriculture versus industry* debate, marking an evident posturing of the government to review its development strategies. Since mid 1990s, the Front government was propagating the shift towards ‘new industrial policy’ to adjust with the changing requirements of liberalisation programme in the country, provoking some political-ideological debates in the state. The intention of the government to reframe the focus of its development agenda in favour of industrialisation programme prompted sharp internal dissensions within the Front and opposition from the civil and political society. The inherent tension in implementing industrialisation programme as against the Left Front’s traditional catchment of the rural population with its strong base of land reform programme was appropriated in mainstream Bengali media’s versatile framing that contributed greatly in building certain images of the Front regime in general and industrialisation policy in particular. The nuances in mediation strategies, negating any unilinear assumption, marked the encoding process as multidimensional, often exhibiting mutually opposing modes of framing and priming. While a section of the Bengali media upheld a positive, ‘industry-friendly’ image of the sixth and seventh Front governments, the other section preferred to focus upon the ‘anti-peasant’ nature of the industrialisation programme. *ABP* and *Aajkal*’s mediation of the debate converged, to a large extent, with the party newspaper, *Ganashakti* in substantiating the governments’ stand on ‘essentiality of industrialisation’ in the state. *Bartaman*, on the other hand, consistently articulated the concern of the Opposition about the collateral damage, particularly of the farmers and rural population, in the industrialisation programme. *ABP* welcomed the ‘pro-capital’ stand of the Front government and a section of the Front leadership as ‘pragmatic’ and *Bartaman* critiqued it as ‘ideological deviation’. *Aajkal* and *Ganashakti* broadly marginalised the issue of ideological shift and tried to rationalise the policy strategies in line with the Left Front’s political-economic agenda. In the process, the Bengali press emerged as one of the crucial sites of the polemical battle in the last decade of the Left Front rule with its active role in mediation.
Notes

1. Roger Silverstone argued (1999: 41): “Storytelling is permanently in subjunctive. It creates and occupies the territory of the ‘as-if’: inviting wishes, possibility, desire; raising questions, seeking answers.”

2. CPI(M) leader Biman Bose became the new Front Chairman after the death of Sailen Dasgupta in July 2001.


4. Pabitra Kumar Ghosh, a senior journalist, upheld (2001b: 4) Mamata Bandyopadhyay as the only “viable alternative” of the Left Front.

5. Somanth Chattopadhyay was the then Chairman of the WBIDC.

6. The government claimed (Document#3: 89) that the number of running units in the small industrial sector rose to 27.7 lakhs in 2000-01 from 19.1 lakhs in 1994-5 and the employment increased to 58.7 lakhs from 43.8 lakhs respectively.

7. The Left Front’s anti-Centre political mobilisation throughout 1980s was largely sustained on the articulation of provincial sentiments. Many scholars, however, argued (Sinha, 2005: 197): “The consequences of this mobilization for industrial activism were negative; such a political strategy contributed to regular political and electoral support but declining licenses and domestic industrial investment.”

8. On the seventy-fifth anniversary occasion of ABP, Aveek Sarkar, the editor, articulated (1997) the predisposition of the House manifestly as follows: “We support the free market...we believe in capitalism. But we cherish the rights of the individual. When political parties follow these principles, we endorse them.”

9. Aveek Sarkar, on the seventy-fifth anniversary occasion of ABP, acknowledged (1997): “Today, Ananda Bazar Patrika is among the more rigorously ideological publications in the country”.

10. Manmohan Singh and P. Chidambaram from the Congress (I) and Yashowant Sinha from BJP were the leading proponents of liberal reforms in India.

11. The West Bengal State Committee of the CPI(M) in its post-poll Review Meeting, held on June 30-July 01, 2001, summed up (Document#4) its observations on the 'activism' of mainstream media in setting and articulating political agenda, during electoral coverage, favouring the Opposition as follows:

“The role of a few mass-circulated newspapers and TV channels has been alarming during the Assembly polls. They went ahead to fix the line of campaign of the opposition here. Their activities included: falsification and “creation” of news, publishing organised photo-shoots, suppression of news that would favour the Left Front, spreading the canard that West Bengal under Left Front has deteriorated into a hell compared to the rest of the country, assisting the creation of terror directly, identifying the terror created by the Trinamul Congress as “people wrath” and dubbing all resistance as “goondaism” on our part...The mass media tried to whip up a storm about “change everything” against us and hoped that the Left Party and the Left Front get blown away by that storm.”
12. It can be mentioned that Bartaman, on occasions, rallied with the allegation of stepmotherly attitude of the Centre to the state government in the 1980s, as described in Chapter VII.
13. Roger Silverstone called (1999: 123) it “commodification of trust”, seen “in the packaging of presidents and prime ministers and in the spinning of political webs”.
14. The Central government declared Navaratna policy or established disinvestment department to sell public sector enterprises as part of the liberal reforms.
15. The slogan was created and circulated in public advertisement by the Information and Cultural Affairs Department, Government of West Bengal.
16. ABP popularised the term dalatantra to mean the systemic domination of the party in the society.
17. The author used the excerpt – jagatsabhay shreshta asan lobe, from a well-known Bengali song, written in the context of colonial domination of India, by the eminent Bengali lyricist Atul Prasad Sen.
18. The editorial used the Bengali colloquial expression, bostapocha, which bears contemptuous connotation.
19. Here, it resorted again to a popular Bengali metaphor, derisive in nature, “aanchal chara”. Aanchal means ‘the over-the-shoulder part of saree and ‘leaving the aanchal’ would metaphorically mean to become independent.
20. The then Director of the Lokneeti Research Council of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Yogendra Yadav, on a later occasion, termed (2004: 4) these experiments as “pragmatism” in analysing the ‘success’ of the Left Front in the 2004 Loksabha election.
21. The then foreign Consul-Generals in the state took initiatives to draw investment by establishing a forum – Consular Corps of Kolkata in 2004.
22. Nazrana, an Urdu expression, means gift or extra payment made to a dignitary for a favour or grace.
23. The expression was popularised by the mainstream ‘bourgeois’ newspapers like ABP and Bartaman to describe the ‘aggressive cadres’ of the CPI(M).
24. This Hindi expression was used to a derogatory identification of Gujrati/Marwari businessmen in Bengali colloquial parlance in informal conversations.
25. The 18th Party Congress of the CPI(M) adopted the document – ‘On Certain Policy Matters’ as part of its political-organisational report in 2005. The most important areas incorporated in the document were the guidelines for the Left-led governments on the issues of foreign capital investment and public sector investment in the state’s economy.
26. Azim Premji is one of the tycoons of the IT industry in India and the proprietor of Wipro.
27. The author used a popular Bengali saying – porer mathay kanthal bhanga to describe the situation.
28. Namabali is a piece of scarf with the names of deities printed on it used by the Hindu priests and Brahmins. It is associated with sacred religious practice of the Hindus.
29. Jonomot was published as one column box in the front page.
30. The expression implies, in Bengali parlance, a lawless regime.

31. The much quoted advertisement of the sixth and seventh Left Front governments depicted West Bengal as the asthar thikana or “destination of trust” to the industrialists.

32. The literal translation is crocodile tears which indicates fake sympathy.

33. In a survey (ABP, 6 November, 2005) on 200 persons by ABP, sixty-eight per cent of the respondents found him more capable than Jyoti Basu, seventy-six per cent found him more acceptable; ninety-one per cent were convinced of his transparent image and sixty-four per cent believed in his success to free the government from the control of the party.

34. Most of these personalities were idolised in the Bengali community for their achievements in respective areas of expertise.

35. The phrase has been borrowed from a poem by Rabindranath Tagore broadly implying a locality with narrow streets.

36. The title used the Bengali phrase Budhdhar sharane, reminding the reader of the Budhdhist chant Budhdham sharanam gachchami.

37. Political Scientist Bidyut Chakrabarty substantiated the argument in analysing the poll verdict. He wrote (2006: 3521): “The efforts at industrialisation and securing investments for the state by Bhattacharya seem to have paid electoral dividends to the front that he leads.”

38. On 13 May, 2006, Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee declared that the Tatas had agreed to set their new automobile factory in Singur. The project was much publicised in the country.

39. The Tata Motor decided to build up the much-publicised Nano car factory in Singur in Hooghly district.

40. Mirzafar was the commander of the Bengal Nawab Siraz-ud-daulla in 18th century, who conspired with the British rulers to dethrone the Nawab. His name has been equated with ‘betrayal’ in the history of Bengal.

41. ‘Horir loot’ is sourced on a Hindu religious practice in Bengal, that is, scattering of sweet drops in honour of Lord Hari to the devotees assembled in a prayer. The coinage is metaphorically used here to mean indiscriminate distribution of land.

42. Satyacharan is the protagonist of the novel, Aranyak.

43. The word ‘chiri’ in Bengali is a colloquial figurative expression, used in a derogatory sense, denoting shape.

44. The Coordination Committee is the state government employee’s union led by the CPI(M) and Subhasis Gupta was one of the state leaders of the organisation. Sangrami Hathiyar is the organ of the Coordination Committee.

45. The then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu from TDP, was popular for his liberal economic reforms based on IT and foreign capital based model of development.

46. Neeldarpan is a well-known novel by 19th century Bengali author Dinabandhu Mitra based on the stories of oppression of the indigo cultivators by the British planters in India during the colonial regime.
47. The reader accustomed with the state politics immediately catches the hint of the persons and their caucus behind such figurative names as Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee from Kolkata and Nirupam Sen from Burdwan.

48. Anirban Chattopadhyay is the editor of the fourth page in ABP.

49. Rangan Chakraborty is a media analyst.

50. The Left parties and the Front government were propagating for a ‘change’ in the central SEZ law since 2005, particularly in the compensation policy.

51. During the Singur debate, Ratan Tata, the then owner of the Tata industrial empire, hinted at the ‘tacit support’ of the ‘rival companies’ in the resistance against their Nano car project in Singur.

52. Kalidasa was a famous Indian poet. The comparison drew from the hearsay about him narrating that in his young days, once he was found to be cutting a twig of a tree sitting on the same branch. The story actually described his foolishness and is cited as popular Bengali metaphor.

53. Aajkal, in its readers’ poll, jonomot, published on 31 March, 2007, projected the positive image by showing ninety per cent respondent polling for Budhdhadev Bhattacharjee as the “most capable Chief Minister of West Bengal” and only seven per cent negating it.

54. The Bengali media popularised the much-debated Bengali term ‘sushil somaj’ to describe the civil society rallying to the street in protest.

55. Saumitra Dastidar is well-known for his documentary film on Gujarat riot of 2002.

56. Many civil and political activists drew a comparison between the Gujarat carnage of 2002 induced by communal tension and the ‘state terror’ in Nandigram to criticise the government action.

57. The group of economists presented their views on the industrial strategy for the state in June, 2001 in ABP. This paper was published in ABP on 25 April and 26 April, 2007. Both of these papers were also published in the Economic and Political Weekly.

58. Kumir danga is a popular traditional game among the children of Bengal that centres around touch-and-out mode.

59. Aveek Sarkar, the editor of ABP, claimed (1997) its place as “the sole spokesman of its race” and “voice of Bengal” in the 75th Anniversary function of the ABP.

60. The word gohara is a colloquial Bengali term, used in derogatory sense, implying massive defeat.

61. ABP popularised the phrase Bengal line in its coverage to identify a rather liberal outlook of a section of the CPI(M) leadership in Bengal against the conservative ideological position of some of the Politbureau members. The CPI(M) leadership had, however, all along denied of any such conflict present within the party.

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