

JOINT FORCE ALONE CAN NOT COMBAT MAOIST ACTIVITIES

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West Bengal is a late addition to the list of states affected by menace of terrorism in the name of Maoists activities. Prior to West Bengal, other states like Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand were under the grip of Maoist menace for a long time. In continuation to that, terrorist activities and violence have of late erupted in West Bengal, particularly in the western districts of South Bengal, like West Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura districts. Most of these areas are traditionally backward areas, inhabited by Advasis and other backward communities, who have been suffering for decades together due to poverty and deprivation. No appreciable development work in respect of education, health care, roadways, water and electricity supply, housing or food security have been done there during the last three decades, and even during the last six decades. Due to this long standing poverty and deprivation, the poor backward people of those areas have developed a feeling of frustration, as well as anger and ill feeling against the ruling class. The so called Maoists have taken advantage of this situation and rallied the people against the ruling party. But when development is not the real intention, the Maoists have taken the path of disruption of law and order situation and creating complete chaos in public life, indulging in wide spread violence and killings of hundreds of poor innocent people on charges of 'political opponent' and 'police informer'. And this situation has been aggravated when the opposition parties have joined hands with these forces of violence to create a state of imbalance in the state that may accrue political advantage to them and facilitate their objective of gaining further electoral success. This is precisely the reason that caused aggravation of Maoist activities immediately after the Lok Sabha election when the opposition has gained considerable electoral success. But the opposition parties are not aware, what tremendous damage they have done to the society by indulging in violence and state of imbalance promoted by the Maoists. A similar situation was created during the last Seventies when the Naxalities resorted to such indiscriminate violence and killings targeting the Left parties. The epicenter has now been shifted from Naxalbari to Lalgarh, but the target continues to be against the Leftists. Hence this ultra-left adventurism centering around Lalgarh needs to be carefully tackled by the Leftists themselves.

Life and property of the poor people must be safeguarded and the forces of violence must be curbed. Simultaneous fight against the rightwing opposition and the ultra-left violence is urgently needed. Hence the state police force had to join the paramilitary forces sent by the Centre. There can not be any compromise in the duty of the State government to maintain law and order in the state. But unfortunately, the correct course is not being followed all the time. There are grievances and complaints that the joint force is often committing excesses and unnecessary harassment to the common villagers. They are reported to continue to occupy public schools in wide areas causing disruption of education work in those areas. All such unwanted situation must not be allowed to develop. But that does not mean that the government should concede to the demand for withdrawal of joint forces. The joint forces should be there until the violence is curbed.

But we can not avoid the reality. The joint forces alone can not combat the Maoist activities. The problem has also to be tackled politically. The poor villagers rallying behind the Maoist leaders are not after all our class enemies. They appear to be misled by the ultra left leadership, which is to be exposed politically. Attempts should also be made to open dialogues with the Maoists to find out some rational way out.

In combating menace of terrorism, the Centre insists on implementing fully the UAPA. But we can not accept that. There are many draconian provisions of the aforesaid Act to which we are opposed. We would like limited application of the Act and welcome assistance of central forces at the state for combating violence and terrorist activities in the western part of the state.

But the basic problem of age-old poverty, deprivation and sufferings of the tribal and other backward class people of the areas can not be avoided or ignored. A determined effort for urgent implementation of target-oriented development programme is needed. The deployment of joint force for curbing violence and targeted development programmes should go parallel and simultaneously. And above all, a political approach to combat the Maoist activities is urgently by needed.