

## **General**

A seminar on 'Left Wing Extremism: Meeting the Challenge' was held on 03 May 2012 at the CLAWS Seminar Hall. The Seminar was chaired by Lt Gen VK Ahluwalia (Retd), Former GOC-in-C Central Command. Ms Shoma Chaudhury, Editor Features, Tehelka spoke on current situation and trends. Col RSN Singh, (Retd), defence analyst, spoke on the Government view and state response and Maj Gen Dhruv Katoch, SM, VSM (Retd), Addl Director, CLAWS gave out recommendations for problem resolution. The seminar was attended by a large number of serving defence officers, officers from the Central Armed Police Forces, veterans and members of the strategic community.

### **Welcome Address: Maj Gen Dhruv Katoch, SM, VSM (Retd), Addl Director CLAWS**

With the kidnapping of government officials and elected representatives of the people, concerns with respect to the spread of Left Wing Extremism have once again come into prominence. These kidnappings represent a direct challenge to Indian democracy and to the authority of the state. The nation's ability to respond to the challenge will directly impact on the future of Indian democracy.

### **Chairperson: Lt Gen V K Ahluwalia, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, VSM (Retd)**

Deprivation, exploitation, poverty and social injustice are the real threats to internal security. Naxals resort to violence to showcase their power with the intent to highlight the ineffectiveness of the state and central governments. There have been a number of uprisings in earlier years also. The rebellions of Ho, Mundas, Santhals were the result of economic deprivation and social injustice. Even the indigo revolt of 1859 under British rule or the Bhumkal rebellion of 1910 in the region of Bastar was due to poverty and exploitation. Another causative factor was the feeling that the British were interfering in the way of life, customs and traditions of the tribals. The above simply highlights the fact that we need to be sensitive to the customs, traditions and way of life of our tribal population.

Since Naxalbari incident of 1967, the Naxal threat has gone through various phases, much akin to a sine curve with numerous ups and down. The merger of PWG and MCCI in 2004 gave to the movement a pan-India characteristic. Post merger, the PLGA became a potent force. Daring acts such as the 'Rani Bodli' post raid in 2008, and the Jehanabad jail break of 2005 reflected the seriousness of the threat posed by Maoists. The year 2009 was the bloodiest with Maoists killing many state and central police personnel. 2010 followed suit with incidents like attack on Eastern Frontier Rifles at Silda camp and Chintalnar ambush where seventy six police personal lost their lives. The year 2011 saw the Maoist taking Deputy Commissioner of Malkangiri as a hostage thereby using kidnapping as a bargaining tool. The year 2012 has already witnessed

three kidnapping incidents besides killings, thereby setting a dangerous trend. The Maoist threat is hence of serious concern and needs to be urgently addressed.

### **R S N Singh: Government response in tackling LWE Challenges**

The core points of the stated national policies of the government are as under: -

- (a) National policy of the government is based on the concept of good governance and granting social justice.
- (b) Taking all needed administrative actions to ensure writ of the state runs in the LWE affected areas.
- (c) Continue to carry out intelligence based police operations in LWE affected areas. The prime target will be the Naxal leadership. Simultaneously, the government is willing to restore dialogue with Naxals even if they do not surrender their arms. They must however abjure violence.

Having seen the Naxal problem very closely and travelled to many of the affected areas, it is apparent that the recent incidents of abduction of two Italians, deportation of French nationals, abduction of the MLA of Orissa, a tribal himself and that of the Collector of Sukma District of Chhattisgarh including killing of his two guards of which one was a tribal and other belonged to a minor community seem to be interlinked. It appears that the movement has entered a very dangerous phase. The Maoists now have acquired encryption devices and are well equipped with weapons like AK-47. This has increased the threat potential of the Maoist.

Naxal problem is not new to this country and has been dealt with effectively in the past. There are about 192 districts affected by LWE. Today the Central Government is in a support role and not in a pro-active role, which may be due to shortcomings of the constitutional mandate. At the apex level, there is apparently a sound mechanism to address the Maoist problem. There is a chain of consultative bodies i.e. the Standing Committee of CMs (Chairman – Home Minister), Review Group (headed by Cabinet Secretary), Coordinating Centre (headed by Home Secretary, other members being chief secretaries and DG police of states), Task Force (headed by Secretary – Internal Security, and includes senior officers of Intelligence Agencies, CPMF and state police), Inter Ministerial Group (headed by Additional Secretary to coordinate development schemes in Maoist affected areas). There is also the Consultative Committee of Parliament, which has met on few occasions to discuss the Maoist menace.

These organisations and mechanisms exist for policy coordination and to decide on measures to deal with the problem on security and development fronts. However the truth is that consensus has been elusive because of political exigencies of various

states and Central Government. The compartmentalised approach by the centre/states has adversely impacted the fight against LWE.

The attempt by some intellectuals to continue to see LWE as primarily a law and order problem has acted as an impediment for a holistic implementation and adoption of policies. It is not the absence of development but quantum of development which is a problem. Connectivity has improved considerably in last few years in many of the Naxal affected areas wherein even link roads have come up; however the process is slow in the areas under the control of the Naxals. In such areas, the government writ is either symbolic or non-existent. The interaction with service personnel of Naxal affected areas of mainly Jharkhand highlight the fact that about 40 per cent of the populace has two wheelers and a large majority of them use cell phones. Despite this, a district collector of district like Latehar has to extensively deploy CRPF before venturing into areas of his district.

The benefits of the MGNREGA schemes do not reach to about 35 per cent of panchayats in Narainpur district of Chhattisgarh due to Maoist diktats. Also, about 192 panchayats in Chhattisgarh have been rendered dysfunctional due to Maoist pressure. On the other hand the Maoist permit movement of food through the Public Distribution System (PDS) as it is crucial for their logistics.

Under the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) the central government directly allots the funds to 78 districts covered under this scheme. The committee headed by deputy commissioner along with SP and forest officer as its members, is empowered to utilise the funds. The young bureaucrats and SPs of districts are very motivated, dedicated and well meaning officers; however unless you clear the area, how can you bring in the development? Maoists do not want development to take place. They have destroyed transformers and electric poles to prevent electricity reaching the villages under Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Viduyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY) because it will make people aware of the benefits they are being deprived off by Naxals in their strong holds.

Development and emergence of any counter organisation hurts the Maoists the most. Therefore, Maoists used all means at their disposal to stymie the Salwa Judum movement in Chhattisgarh which was aimed at fighting against the atrocities of the Maoists especially of the Maoist diktat that each family would provide one member to fight for the Maoist. They also force people to grow opium and prevent them from mixing with others to maintain their hold over the people. The white collar intellectuals who champion the Maoist cause are perhaps the biggest threat to Indian democracy and the government understands this. There is no problem in someone being sympathetic towards Naxals cause but there is a problem in case they organise rallies at their behest. The Naxal threat is no longer one of law and order. The problem can however

be overcome provided we understand the complexities and sophistication of the movement.

**Shoma Chaudhury, Editor Features, Tehelka**

As we mull over this situation which has issues lined with complexity and dissent, I wish to state that I am not a Maoist sympathiser. I also believe that though violence is a limited necessary means however nothing positive flows out from the barrel of the gun in the long run. Besides me, my women reporters like Tusha Mittal and Sanjana have been to Abujmahd, Malkangiri, Lalgarh, Dantewada, Madira, Gond, and many other affected areas. The Maoists are violent outlaws; the terrorists are ideologues. The tribals however have more every day concerns. They are bothered about their forest produce, huts, hens and rice. They are unfortunately caught between the Maoist and the police forces.

The Indian State has presented the force route. This single minded violence complicates the issue of the cycle of violence. The CRPF soldier at times silently echoes the heartbeat issues of the Maoists. They too come from the poorer segments of society and at times empathy develops for fellow sufferers. The guards of Alex Menon whose throats were slit have not garnered any attention as compared to him. Things move only when the blue school boys are involved and hardly any blue school boys are involved. There was a sad case of nine tribal women who were raped and who publicly named the rapists. Nothing has happened till date against the accused. Can this happen in Delhi? Binayak Sen who was trying to understand Salwa Judum and broker peace was arrested. Soni Seri a Government school teacher from Dantewada, who twice saved CRPF personnel from attacks found her husband termed as Maoist, her father was shot by the security forces. Himanshu's ashram in Dantewada was raised to the ground. In OP HAKKA, UAVs were used with ground forces in Abujmahd. This merely resulted in destroying the mud huts and meagre property of India's poorest people.

People in general don't even know of the 2/56 Act, the 1/70 Act or the 5th schedule. The Naxals now understand that for PR value it is better to kidnap and release politicians and bureaucrats rather than killing them. To keep the pot boiling however, they will continue to kill lower level persons and functionaries. The Army should not be drawn into this conflict; if we bring on the Army, what will happen to our democracy? The issues which need to be addressed are the illegal mining. It needs to be noted that individuals who are wronged feel differently than the broader societal view that the societies make mistakes. This is a morally ambiguous war with the tribal stuck in between. We need to win the moral battle against the Maoists.

## **Maj Gen Dhruv Katoch, SM, VSM (Retd), Addl Director CLAWS**

CPI (Maoist) methodology of spreading their influence follows a mix of coercion and collusion. Over the past few decades they have achieved varying degrees of success in many parts of the country and unless checked, will create ever increasing circles of influence. Fault lines in society are effectively used by them to promote their agenda. All societies have fault lines and India is no different. But the Maoists, by propagating the cause of the downtrodden have taken ownership of such issues and are now perceived by many as being the sole representatives of the marginalised and weaker sections of society. They have filled the vacuum caused by a lack of governance in many of India's remote areas and are well entrenched in their strongholds.

The ideological battle can only be countered by an alternate ideology. If our democracy is to be projected as the alternate, then it must be seen to be a functional entity. This would require a visible and effective justice delivery mechanism, transparency in governance, empathy on the part of government officials and targeted socio economic development.

Interventions are required in terms of constitutional mandate for placing law and order on the concurrent list to enable taking on the Naxal challenge at a pan India level. Constitutional provisions in respect of protecting the rights of the local inhabitants need to be enforced in case of existing enabling provisions such as The Panchayats [Extension to Scheduled Areas] Act (PESA). The state must also ensure that the provisions of the Fifth Schedule under Article 244 of the Indian Constitution are implemented in letter and spirit. Tribal and forest rights need to be restored in full measure.

A vexed problem remains the issue of ownership of the anti-Maoist operations as law and order is a state subject, but the Naxal problem has to be addressed at an all India level. While the Maoists cadres have time and again displayed tremendous mobility in the Red Corridor, the affected states are severely hamstrung by boundaries and territorial jurisdiction issues. The 'law and order' approach being propagated both by the Centre and affected state governments requires to be revisited and the threat dealt with holistically across the length and breadth of the country. An amendment to the constitution to put law and order on the concurrent list would be an important step in dealing holistically with the problem.

Both at the centre and at the state level, a vision statement must spell out the goals to be achieved. This must then be translated into a long term perspective plan. One of the key challenges for development in these states is delivery. While this is a challenge across the whole of India, in the affected states the situation is far worse. Capacities for governance need to be created at the grass root level. There is a requirement of

boosting up administrative cadre substantially in numbers as well as through training, supervision and accountability. When taken as a whole, government is bloated and over staffed. However, in core areas it is embarrassingly understaffed, leading to a crisis in capacity where it actually matters. This needs to be rectified.

Accountability and prevention of corruption are well established keys to good governance as well as development. A ground check is essential to see that government schemes have been implemented and are not merely paper exercises.

In the tribal heartland, industrialisation must not be mistaken for development. Few benefits of the economic exploitation of Central India's mineral wealth have trickled down to the tribals living in those areas. This must be rectified. In addition, tribal and forest rights need to be restored in full measure.

There is a need to reform the justice delivery system to ensure a better rate of convictions in the court of law. There is also a need to establish fast track courts/ mobile courts in inaccessible areas on priority to address the grievances of the local people on priority and to prevent them from seeking redress from courts run by the Naxals.

A strong check on the activities of various NGOs and social organisations must be established. While it would be inappropriate to interfere in their functioning, there is certainly a requirement to ensure transparency in their functioning especially with respect to the flow of funds and types of activities undertaken.

Today, we need to provide good government in the worst of law and order environments. To that purpose, a better civil administration structure must come up in place of the model we presently have. Perhaps it is time to constitute a new All India Service, similar to the former Indian Frontier Administrative Service (IFAS) for the LWE affected areas. Police reforms are also urgently required. But more than reform, the role and structure of police forces need to be looked into de novo, especially the aspect of its leadership. We need to look into structural changes in the Indian Police Service to make it more responsive to present day challenges.

Education must remain the principal intervention, particularly in Bihar and Jharkhand and in the entire tribal belt. While emphasis on infrastructure development such as roads, electricity and so on is important, it must be in conjunction with investment on development of human capital in terms of education and work skills. This will reduce pressure on migration and also provide substantial intangible gains in terms of social cohesion and reduction of conflict and tension within society.

A holistic approach to include development, security and rights (DSR) of the people needs to be incorporated instead of merely emphasising the dyad of development and security. Once 'rights' are incorporated into the development paradigm, the economic

well being of the people can be progressed along with the protection of their identity, language, culture and way of life.

The corporate sector has been a major beneficiary of the wealth of these areas but has done precious little in terms of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Leave alone CSR, most corporate have not even fulfilled a small percentage of their laid down contractual obligations. This factor needs to be addressed on priority with heavy financial penalties being imposed on defaulters. In addition, the local people must be central to the development effort and not the industry.

The Integrated action Plan (IAP) has been well received. However, the policy in the IAP of allotting equal amounts of money to each district needs to be reviewed as districts vary greatly in size and capacity to absorb funds and have different development requirements. In many parts of rural India, MNREGA has been effective and active. However, in the LWE affected areas, due to Maoist terror, a nexus between contractors, district officials and the Maoists have emerged in implementation of the MNREGA schemes. This needs to be curbed.

The Naxal challenge primarily remains that of development, governance and rights delivery. However, for the state to carry out its functions, it would have to neutralise the PLGA. The state police forces must remain the primary instruments of addressing security concerns within the state. They could be assisted by central police forces such as the CRPF and the BSF. However, leadership and training concerns must be addressed. If the situation gets out of hand it may require the employment of paramilitary forces, in this case the Assam Rifles (AR) or even the regular army. For the employment of AR or the Army, the state would have to declare specific districts as disturbed areas and hand over the situation to the Army.

The Naxal problem has afflicted the country for over four decades. The root causes for lack of progress in problem resolution lies both with the functioning of Government as well as the competence and capability of the police forces. In essence, for the people affected by LWE violence, the democratic model must be made attractive enough for them to voluntarily discard the Maoist route to what they perceive to be their road to emancipation.

## **Discussion**

We should endeavor to present the soft face of the Government as this would ensure that the local populace would not support the Maoist in the long run.

In certain states there are no joint operations. On the state boundaries and junctions there are policing and administration issues. There is also illegal mining and there are reports of the Maoists taking cuts from the locals. The Chinese, French and Italians are looking into this area with a view to support the Maoists. The Pakistan ISI is also assisting Maoists through Bangladesh. Nepal and Rajasthan are getting sucked into the issue.

Dr Bandopadhyay's report highlights that 55 million have been displaced in the garb of mining, SEZs and HEPs etc. 40 per cent of these are tribal's of which only 20 per cent have been relocated. We need participative development and perception management.

We need to have performance budgeting and also look into issues of human terrain mapping in order to make a success story of this like on the lines of Malaysia , Tripura and Mizoram.

The 'Greyhounds' were a successful model. Specialist training needs to be imparted to own central police forces and state police on the Andhra Pradesh Greyhound model.