

'Big crackdown against Maoists' overground supporters planned'

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NEWDELHI: A first-time concerted crackdown has been launched against 'overground' Maoist supporters in various states and about 500 such people have been apprehended by the security forces in Chhattisgarh alone over the last one year, the chief of country's lead anti-Naxal operations force, the CRPF, has said.

CRPF director general RR Bhatnagar told PTI in an interview that this fresh action is being undertaken in coordination with the state police to deny 'space' to the so-called left-wing extremists (LWE), and to counter them beyond the field operations.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has deployed close to one lakh armed personnel and a heavy assortment of weapons and gadgets to tackle the LWE.

"We are now going to the villages to see action is taken against (Maoists') overground supporters and workers, 'jan militia' and other people who give them the intelligence and local support.

"More than 500 people have been taken into custody in past one year in Chattisgarh. We are seeing to it that (Naxals') overall



■ RR Bhatnagar

support is also reduced," he said.

A senior official heading a special combat unit later said all those found to have helped the Naxalite cadres in planning, aiding and executing an attack on security forces are the ones primarily on their radar, and are being tracked and apprehended or arrested as part of this new strategy to counter the LWE.

Bhatnagar, a 1983-batch IPS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, said the CRPF was increasing its footprints in core Naxal areas, and has opened at least 15 new camps in the highly impenetrable and inhospitable jungles and terrains of south Bastar region.

"...160 Naxals have been neutralised in various states and the number of incidents (anti-Maoist

operations) are maximum in Chhattisgarh, after Jharkhand."

The DG said he has taken some major policy decisions to better orient his combat units for success in operations without suffering major reverses. "We have also hardened our defences... placed emphasis that it is not only special forces like the CoBRA (specialised jungle warfare unit of CRPF) who have to be competent but also the GD (general duty) battalion troops that need to be properly trained as they are the ones who are mostly deployed and face maximum attrition."

"We have focussed to make our general duty battalion component very strong. We have infused the concept of young platoons, boys who are fit and well-trained and able to counter. We have also recently introduced about 5,000 new young recruits after their training," the DG said.

Bhatnagar added that as a result of these policy and operational changes, the force has been able to successfully "break" the killing ring without suffering any casualty within during three or four severe attempts of ambush by the Naxals this year, the force has been able and they affected injury to the attacking party.