

# LEADERSHIP CRISIS

*CRPF report shows Naxalism is losing steam*

If the CRPF is to be believed, the CPI (Maoist) leadership in Chhattisgarh is losing control over its rank and file. There is growing discontent among the middle and lower levels over the top leadership's lack of commitment to the 'cause'. This means that those supposed to helm the armed resistance and boost the morale of the foot soldiers have got too used to a life full of luxury and are no longer willing to rough it out in the jungles. This is, perhaps, the most difficult time for the Maoists as security forces have upped the ante. Their strength has been depleted, as is evident from the seizures made by the police force. In 2017, the CRPF had recovered a little more than two lakh detonators, while the figure for this year till now is a low 9,500. From 60,000 gelatin sticks (explosives) the previous year, the police's catch has come down to 3,400. Apart from a resource crunch, the lack of manpower is also telling on the capabilities of the Maoists. Last year, 1,888 Naxals were arrested and 685 surrendered. The corresponding figures for this year are 1,178 and 359, respectively. Thankfully for the CRPF, this year has been a lot less eventful than the past few years. The CRPF report points to an interesting aspect: The near-absence of young leaders. This could mean at least two things. One, the power-hungry old leadership has refused to make way for new faces. Second, the young, educated people, who were once inspired by the idealism of changing society through an armed insurrection are no longer drawn towards a violent ideology. Naxalite cadres today are seeking a normal life. According to the CRPF data, 8,000 tribals in Bastar have applied for 188 posts in the CRPF battalion. However, integration of tribals into the mainstream remains a major challenge for the government. The true daughters and sons of the soil are stalked by poverty, malnutrition, disease and illiteracy. Neither the state nor those given to violently resisting it have managed to change this picture enough to create the basis for a harmonious development order.