

NOTE

Leftwing Extremism

Bharat Jhunjhunwals writes :

Home Minister Shivraj Patil declared in the Rajya Sabha in March 2007 that Naxalite incidents increased by 47 percent in Chhattisgarh during 2006. He claimed there was a decline of six percent in incidents in the country as a whole but the massacre of 55 policemen indicates the problem shows no sign of abating. The situation appears to be getting worse after the launch of *Salwa Judum* movement under the leadership of Mahendra Karma, the Congress leader of Opposition in the State. There were few incidents of violence in the state before the launch of *Salwa Judum* in June 2005. Villages that provide support to Naxalites are forcibly relocated near the roads under the programme in order to deprive the Naxalites of local support *a la* Vietnam model. This military strategy is not delivering, however. Naxalite violence continues in 'sterilized' areas. Moreover, nearly one-half of the people of the state will have to be relocated if the State Government persists with this strategy so wide is the Naxalite penetration.

A report titled *The Adivasis of Chhattisgarh* by the Asian Centre says: "Naxalites took over the tasks meant to be done by the State and provided protection to the Adivasis against exploitation by the corrupt officials, police, forest department officials, timber mafia, money-lenders etc." This fact has been recognized, albeit meekly, by the Government. In March 2006, Home Minister Shivraj Patil tabled in Parliament, a *Status Paper on the problem of Left-wing Extremism in India* which said, "The focus areas should be to distribute land to the landless poor as part of the speedy implementation of the land reforms, ensure development of physical infrastructure like roads, communication, power etc. and provide employment opportunities to the youth in these areas... Naxal groups have been raising mainly land and livelihood related issues. If land reforms are taken up on priority and the landless and the poor in the Naxal areas are allotted surplus land, this would go a long way in tackling the developmental aspects of the Naxal problem." In the same tone Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said while addressing the Chief Ministers of Naxal-affected states in September 2006: "It is in the most neglected areas of the country that Left wing extremism thrives today."

It is clear that Naxalites are raising their voice against the exploitation of the poor by corrupt government officers in connivance with landlords and contractors. It was expected then that the Government would first try to solve this problem. Alas! That is not to be. The Central and State Governments are focused more on repression of the people by military action. While addressing the Chief Ministers, the Prime Minister said, "Capacity-building at the State level is most crucial, and if there are any financial constraints, the Centre would be willing to provide necessary assistance. Our understanding, however, is that the States are not doing enough even regarding the filling up of existing vacancies in the Police and other law and order agencies, or improving the quality of the State Special Branches, or toning up the law and order administration." There is no mention of removing the corruption among the government officials. Rather, the Prime Minister seeks to give more police power to the very officers who are the real problem.

Prime Minister, Home Minister and Chief Ministers—all are focused on a military solution of the problem and none is giving attention except lip service to the main

problem of corruption of Government officers, land reforms and employment generation. This will only lead to more bloodshed.

Neither the Left nor the Right has any clue about how to create jobs in a globalized economy. As a result there is much talk but little action. The solution is to partially withdraw from global economy where labour-intensive products are involved. But they won't do that. In truth they are ready to wipe out their own people to woo foreign investors.

The present military approach against Naxalites is bound to fail in absence of affirmative action addressing the problems affecting the grassroots people. □□□