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Maoists dare govt to weed them out

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Top Maoist leader Koteswar Rao alias Kishanji has thrown the gauntlet at the government following Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Home Minister P. Chidambaram's promise to weed out the "Maoist menace" in the country.

Kishanji, speaking from an undisclosed location in Lalgarh on Tuesday night, said the Peoples Liberation Guerrilla Army of the rebels would reply to the police "onslaught on the people bullet for bullet". The Maoist politburo member in charge of West Bengal, Jharkhand and Orissa alleged that the governments, both at the Centre and in the states, were whipping up anti-Naxalite propaganda to distract attention from their own failure to eradicate poverty and under-development.

"No government, either at the Centre or in the states, ever attempted to eradicate poverty. Now, when the people are becoming restless, the governments are trying to suppress the people's movement by letting lose the police" Kishanji said.

The Maoist leader, who is also in charge of the party's central military commission, reacted to the government's attempts to label the rebels as terrorists.

"Our only interest is to serve the people, stay among them and liberate them from the clutches of oppression. No government in the world has ever won a war against the people. We will reply the government's planned onslaught bullet for bullet," he said.

Indicating a change in the Maoist strategy in West Bengal, Kishanji said they would no longer keep silent on the Trinamool Congress and Left Front allies such as the RSP, Forward Bloc and CPI and concentrate their attack only against the CPM. "In West Bengal, all the Left Front partners have ganged up with the CPM to annihilate the peoples' struggle in Lalgarh. At the Centre, Trinamool Congress has ganged up with the Congress to crack down on us. Why hasn't Mamata (Banerjee) resigned from the Cabinet if she is sincere about her opposition to deployment of paramilitary forces in Lalgarh?" Kishanji asked.

The top rebel leader's presence in Lalgarh, despite 50 companies of security personnel hunting for the man, coincided with the Maoists stepping up their armed activities and the Peoples' Committee

Against Police Atrocities clamping an indefinite strike in the three districts of West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia demanding immediate withdrawal of the central forces.

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