

Maoist offensive sparks protest

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Maoists began their two-day shutdown on Wednesday with their usual show of muscle power in West Bengal, Orissa and Chhattisgarh.

The shutdown call was in protest against the Centre's decision to mobilise a massive Centre-state combined force for Operation Green Hunt against the Maoists.

In West Bengal, the Maoist-backed Peoples' Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA) started an indefinite roadblock in three western districts - West Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura, while the Maoists killed four people in Chhattisgarh.

In Orissa, the Maoists kicked off the shutdown by putting up roadblocks in several tribal-dominated districts of Orissa. They burnt down a guesthouse of the private sector Essar Steel in Malkangiri district, 450 km southwest of state capital Bhubaneswar. They assaulted two engineers in the guesthouse and locked them up in a room. The guesthouse was located near the Orissa-Andhra Pradesh border town, Chitrakunda, where the Maoists had killed 38 Grey Hound commandos in June 2008.

Bengal's PCAPA activists felled trees and blocked roads at multiple points on the roads leading to Lalgah in West Midnapore district, around 180 km west of Kolkata.

But National Highway 6, commonly known as Bombay Road that provides the arterial connection between Bengal and Jharkhand, is still free. Another road that connects Bengal and Jharkhand, however, was blocked.

PCAPA workers also dug up internal roads around Lalgah, cutting off the region.

Asit Mahato, PCAPA spokesperson, said, "We have been forced to impose another indefinite blockade because the joint forces have not stopped torturing innocent tribals."

Former PCAPA spokesperson Chhatradhar Mahato was arrested on September 26 by two cops posing as journalists.

The blockade started just three days before chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's visit to Midnapore town. On June 18, the combined forces were deployed in Lalgah.

In south Chhattisgarh, the Maoists killed four villagers in two separate incidents.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/india/Maoist-offensive-sparks-protest/Article1-472817.aspx>