

Ration Card Gift for Maoist-hit Districts

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KOLKATA: Ration cards for a majority of tribals that's the state government's latest policy to appease residents of Maoist-affected Bankura, Purulia and West Midnapore.

The Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee government, which seems to have drawn a blank as far as subduing the Maoists is concerned, wants to address the core issue: development. But development can't happen in a day [funds](#) will have to be disbursed, schemes sanctioned and distributed among local bodies for implementation. "To do something here and now, what better way than to distribute ration cards, which are highly valued in the villages?" reasoned a senior official at Writers' Buildings.

The government is planning to issue the cards to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as the two primitive communities of Birhore and Lodha. The official said, "The idea is to ensure that each person from these communities has a valid ration card. This way, they will have citizenship rights as well something which is very important if the government were to distribute patta rights to tribals living in forest areas."

The source added that the Lalgarh trouble had been "an eye-opener" and the CM had made it a point to monitor the functioning of the task force formed for the [development](#) of the backward areas, especially Lalgarh. "On August 4, the task force, under chief secretary Asok Mohan Chakrabarti, held a meeting at Bankura to discuss the must-do schemes. Magistrates of all three Maoist-hit districts attended the meeting."

It was decided at the meeting that secretaries of panchayat and rural development, irrigation, backward classes welfare, animal resource development, housing, western region development and food would submit reports on an integrated development programme for SC and ST. The schemes will include drinking water, housing, irrigation [loans](#) and construction of hostels for tribals among others.

These recommendations along with those compiled by the three DMs were put together and the final report was submitted to the chief secretary, this week. A senior official said, "The government will have to disburse at least Rs 500 crore for the integrated development programme, which will be launched within the next few months."