

## Protest against Centre's anti-Maoist operation



**Protestors termed it a ploy of the State to exert control over the mineral-rich regions of the country inhabited by the tribal populace**

November 3, 2009

The central government's plan to launch an offensive against the Maoists is facing stiff opposition from all quarters. A students' group held a protest at Jantar Mantar in Delhi against the Operation Green Hunt. Apart from students, the gathering saw workers and professionals raise their voice against the offensive and in support of the development of the tribals. The agitators claimed that it's a war of the people against exploitation by the neo-liberal State. The protest was organised by the Forum against War on People, a newly formed initiative of students, teachers and other professionals and the Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF).

Even as the home ministry is urging a section of intellectuals to rethink their pro-Maoist stand, the agitators seemed undeterred. "Much like the US government which sent 1.5 lakh soldiers to occupy Iraq and one lakh troops to Afghanistan, the Indian government, too, is sending one lakh troops to wage a war against its own people," a statement by RDF said.

The protestors termed it a ploy of the State to exert control over the mineral-rich regions of the country inhabited by the tribal populace. "The booty of the war will be handed over to imperialist countries, particularly the US," the statement by RDF read. According to them, if the tribals don't pick up arms they will end up facing extinction like the Red Indians of America.

Post-2001, state governments have been competing for foreign direct investment. Subsequently, several MoUs were signed between big business houses and various state governments. "The Maoist movement has successfully organised the masses to fight for the scrapping of these agreements," the statement by RDF read. "We demand that the State withdraw the army, stop the war, revoke all MoUs and prevent multinationals from plundering the mineral resources. The main aim of the Operation Green Hunt is to forcibly evict the tribals for foreign investors because," said SAR Geelani.

He claimed that the Maoists are adivasis, who are being forced to abandon their lands. They have suffered due to brutalities of the State for decades. Geelani, however, said that the Maoists shouldn't have any problems in having unconditional talks with the Centre. "The government has laid a condition for the Maoists to shun violence and then hold talks. Why should Maoists do that when the State hasn't shown any interest in shunning violence?" Geelani said.

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