

Express Buzz

Centre deploys UAV aircraft in Maoists areas

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NEW DELHI: The Centre has deployed unspecified number of unmanned aerial surveillance (UAV) aircraft to survey the unmapped swathes of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand forests before going for whole hog operations against the outlawed CPI-Maoists.

“The field trials are on and we plan to map every bit of the unknown terrain, including hamlets and villages that are located deep inside forests like Abujhmarh.

This would help security forces prepare better for the final push by knowing the topography as well as the areas of tribal habitation,” a Home Ministry official said.

Sources say they plan to have enough data of Maoists’ hideouts in jungles before starting large-scale operations in the two states once the results of Jharkhand Assembly elections have come.

The UAVs would also be used to provide real time information of Maoists’ assembly points which would prove crucial for the security forces to launch surprise assaults with the help of helicopters. “It is being perfected to get the desired results,” a source said.

Developed and supplied by HAL on special orders from the Centre, each of these non combat UAV costs around Rs 80 lakh and can fly at tree-level altitude to remain undetected. The small size of the UAVs (three to 10 feet wing span) allows them to get inside deep jungles and even beneath the tree cover in some cases. They are equipped with state-of-art technology, including high powered cameras and thermal imaging cameras to take pictures even at night.