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‘Since When is Arresting People Illegal?’

‘I Don’t Know What Phone Kishenji Uses’

TUSHA MITTAL *questions West Bengal DGP Bhupinder Singh on why the police has failed to nab one of India’s most wanted Maoists*

CPI(Maoist) Politburo member Kishenji is hiding in Lalgarh. What is the West Bengal police doing to catch him?

We aren’t going to tell the media what we are trying. But be assured he is our target. We are certainly looking for him.

Why have you not been able to catch him yet? He’s talking live to TV channels every other day. TEHELKA had a two-hour phone conversation with him.

We know that. It is not simple. You have to find the person physically. Just because he is able to talk on the phone doesn’t mean he can be found easily. That he is able to talk to the media doesn’t mean anything. It only means he’s in a certain location in a vast jungle. It is difficult to locate him unless there are other inputs. It’s much easier to locate people in built-up urban areas; you can pinpoint the exact place. I don’t know what phone he uses. We are not tapping his phone. It is illegal.

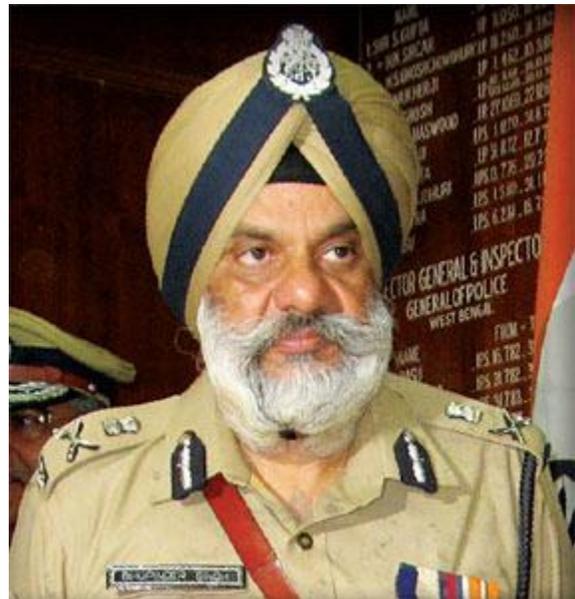


Photo: PINTU PRADHAN

Do you have enough ground intelligence? Do you know what he looks like?

We have a reasonable idea of how he looks, but that is not so relevant. He is always protected by his security people. The level of intelligence is relative. There is an issue regarding intelligence. It will take time, but we’ll find him.

When TEHELKA spoke to him, he wasn’t inside the jungles. He said he’s two kilometres from a police camp.

If you believe what he says, that’s up to you.

Is the lack of local support for the police a setback in credible intelligence? Are locals protecting him?

There are some locals who are supporting the CPI(Maoist). But most are being forced to support them. They have terrorised the local public. We cannot behave with them like the Maoists do; they are our own people. After an encounter, the Maoists just hide their weapons and slip away. A person without a weapon doesn’t have Maoist written on his face. How can we say he’s a Maoist?

Then what was your rationale for picking up 14 tribal women? They were later released from jail only in exchange for a police officer kidnapped by the Maoists.

The 14 women were picked up after they [gheraoed](#) and attacked a police camp. They were picked up from the spot, not their houses. Since we had video footage, we could screen the role of each person.

So the video footage proves that all these 14 women were armed members of the CPI(Maoist)?

No. You can be without arms and still attack the police. You could have traditional weapons – [lathis](#), bamboo logs.

But how does that make them Maoists? There was a 70-year-old widow among these women.

Are you in favour of the Maoists or are you in favour of the State? There are people who believe in the State and the Constitution, and there are the Maoists who don't. So where is the issue? Since when is arresting people illegal? I cannot get into specific cases. So many people get arrested all the time, throughout the country.

Are you with the State or are you with the Maoists? Since when is arresting people illegal?

Are you convinced you are catching the real Maoists?

It is not for me to be convinced. It is for the court to decide.

There is a feeling that development will be more effective than military operations in solving the Naxal crisis.

The Maoists are blowing up doctors' jeeps and setting government offices on fire. How will development take place? It won't fall like manna from heaven.

http://www.tehelka.com/story_main43.asp?filename=Ne281109incoldblood.asp