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Kolkata, December 27, 2009

First Published: 00:01 IST(27/12/2009)

Last Updated: 00:06 IST(27/12/2009)

Maoists eye Telangana comeback

The political turmoil in Andhra Pradesh over Telangana has rekindled Maoists' hopes for a comeback in a state that was once their stronghold.

As a first step, Communist Party of India (Maoist) leaders are planning to initiate "peoples' committees" to participate in democratic movements demanding a separate Telangana state.

Telangana is the traditional Naxalite heartland of Andhra Pradesh. But a savage counter-attack by the Greyhounds, a specialised anti-Naxal security force, in 2005 has weakened their dominance in this region.

"People want Telangana and we support it fully. Our cadres will participate in joint democratic movements along with other political parties," said Koteswar Rao alias Kishenji, a CPI(Maoist) politburo member, last seen publicly at a rally in the Telangana region in 1978.

He claimed to have spoken to some pro-Telangana politicians over telephone over the last couple of days but declined to reveal their identities.

"As the Maoists are planning to infiltrate the democratic mass movements, it has become necessary for us to keep vigil on activists with whom the Maoists may have some links," a senior intelligence officer told Hindustan Times on conditions of anonymity.

Four of the 13-member CPI(Maoist) politburo formed in 2007 are from Karimnagar district, a part of the proposed Telangana region. They are Ganapati (general secretary), Koteswar Rao, Vasav Rao (alias Vasav Raj) and Cherkuri Rajakumar.

"We discussed formulating a common strategy for the movement," said Kishenji, but refused to divulge further details.

"We made a strategic retreat in Andhra but it doesn't mean we have no presence there. Though we lost several leaders our support-base has remained intact," he added..

The Maoists have successfully employed the strategy Kishenji was hinting at.

In West Bengal's Lalgah, the Maoists engineered the formation of the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities in November 2008 and then took its reins in their hands.

The Maoists dominate three districts in the state – West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/kolkata/Maoists-eye-Telangana-comeback/Article1-491013.aspx>