

## State to ask for fresh forces for Maoist control

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**Kolkata:** A month after the Centre withdrew six companies of BSF from the Lalgarh-Jhargram tribal belt, the state government has decided to ask the Centre for ten companies of Central Paramilitary Forces.

The troops will be deployed in the Maoist-dominated districts of Purulia, Bankura and West Midnapore.

On Tuesday, Union Home Minister P Chidambaram will chair a meeting in Delhi on the Maoist problem with police chiefs from all states. The state plans to put forward the request at the meeting.

“We need more companies of paramilitary forces to control the situation in these districts,” said Director General of Police Bhupinder Singh. “We will ask for 10 companies of CPF during tomorrow’s meeting. The situation in the state will also be discussed.”

The six companies of BSF had been withdrawn from the state to be deployed in Jharkhand for the assembly elections. There, however, was no replacement for the 420 jawans who had been stationed in the Lalgarh-Jhargram areas of West Midnapore.

The Central announcement for the troop withdrawal had come as a shock to senior police officers of the state.

A senior officer of West Midnapore district said: “We are running short of forces to flush out the Maoists. We receive intelligence inputs, but our forces cannot be deployed everywhere. By the time our forces reach a particular spot, Maoists strike elsewhere.”

A couple of months ago, the state police had sent a proposal to the Centre for having a Special Intelligence Branch (SIB) similar to Andhra Pradesh.

The unit in Andhra operates in close coordination with the state’s Greyhounds. It is a dedicated intelligence wing which collects information about top Naxals and their strategies.

“We have proposed to have a SIB-like intelligence wing in the state dedicated to collect information on Naxals,” said Singh. “In the proposal, we wanted a sanction from the Centre to form a full-fledged force like Greyhounds here as well. We will raise the issue in tomorrow’s meeting.”

A three-member committee has already been set up to look after the formation of the Greyhounds and SIB in the state. The committee includes Vageesh Mishra, ADG, administration, Vivek Sahay, IG, state armed police, and Sanjai Singh, DIG, training.

The committee is reviewing the proposal and making necessary arrangements for getting the sanction from the Centre, said a senior police officer.

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