

Green Hunt: Forces employ Naxal tactics, win over locals

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KOLKATA/EAST SINGHBHUM/BHUBANESWAR: Operation Green Hunt has been launched with bullets in Jharkhand and a healing touch in Bengal.

The CRPF personnel have started massing under the cover of medical camps on the Bengal side — the same tactics as the Maoists used to get a toehold in the state. Preparations are on to link up with the forces driving Maoists out of strongholds in East and West Singhbhum in Jharkhand.

The operation that started on Sunday seems to be giving desired result — winning the trust of the locals — claimed senior police officers.

Villagers, in West Midnapore and Purulia (Bengal) and Ghatsila (Jharkhand) are coming forward with information on Maoists.

State police and CRPF units have started getting local intelligence inputs even in areas such as Jorma, Jamaimari, Sakhabhanga on the Bengal side and over a dozen villages like Basodera, Burudih, Dayanmara and Digha in Jharkhand. These are the areas where the Maoists had the final word until Operation Green Hunt started.

It is clear by now that this operation is taking place under direct orders of the Centre and the supervision of CRPF. Home secretary Ardhendu Sen said, "This is no reconnaissance. It was an operation. We are analysing the results."

There may not have been any gunfights yet on the Bengal side but hundreds of Bengal policemen are fighting shoulder to shoulder with their Jharkhand counterparts and 5,000-odd CRPF jawans in combat operations across the border, said sources.

The forces have changed their tactics this time. Instead of moving in large numbers, they are operating in small groups, increasing mobility and stealth. At the same time, CRPF is setting up medical camps in far-flung forest hamlets in Gidhighata, 15 km from

the border, said CRPF deputy commandant P K Mandal. Maoists had penetrated these villages in the same way.

This is part of the "build-up" that Bengal IG (law and order) Surajit Kar Purakayastha had hinted at before forces go the whole hog against Maoists. According to police, 10 more CRPF companies, including two COBRA units, will be deployed.

The pressure is telling on the Maoists. Many of them are trying to flee to Sundergarh in Orissa. Out of frustration, the rebels blew up a deserted police camp at Sutan in Barikul on Tuesday, achieving little.

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