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## Fresh strategy for Lalgarh

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KOLKATA: After admitting a month ago that Operation Lalgarh had failed, the state government on Wednesday chalked out its future strategies to combat Maoists in the area. With the joint operations to continue, there is an urgent need to work out new ways to deal with the situation because the Maoists are clearly enjoying an upper hand right now.

Home secretary Ardhendu Sen said new strategies would include night patrolling, since most of the murders in the past few months had taken place between 6 pm and 9 pm. "There will also be surprise patrolling and change of camp positions. Patrolling is also being increased," Sen said at Writers' Buildings. He met the top police brass supervising the operation, including DG Bhupinder Singh.

But how much the ground situation would permit all this is yet to be seen. The morale of policemen working in the area is not high. In the camps, jawans are not even confident to stay at night due to fear of attacks.

Over 30 people mostly CPM men and some from Jharkhand Party (Naren) have been killed by Maoists since security forces moved into the area. On the other hand, only two Maoists have been killed so far and three deaths are yet to be confirmed.

While Sen said 40 active Maoists have been arrested in the operations, the situation will be under control only when the figure rises close to 75 or 80. He also conceded that Maoist leader Koteswar Rao, alias Kishanji, was in Lalgarh over the past seven days, and he had been moving between West Bengal, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand in the past few months.

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