

# Monsoon Hampering Anti-Maoist Operation in Lalgarh Area

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Operations against Maoist rebels in West Bengal's tribal-dominated western districts has hit the monsoon roadblock - fields full of water and flooded jungles hampering force movement.

"We're facing obstruction in some [areas](#) because of the heavy monsoon rains. Most of the open fields are now full of water and we just can't march through them as we were doing two months back," West Midnapore Police Superintendent M.K. Verma told IANS.

"The rainy season has made the dense forest areas inaccessible, impacting the speed of [the operation](#)," he said.

More than two months have elapsed after central paramilitary troopers and crack units of the [West Bengal](#) police launched the anti-Maoist campaign aiming to free Lalgarh and its surrounding areas in West Midnapore district from the left-wing rebels. The operation was later expanded to two other Maoist-affected districts of Bankura and Purulia.

According to sources, the security forces have changed their modus operandi and are now advancing in a 'go-slow' mode due to the arrival of the monsoon.

"It's a part of the security forces' tactics, and we need to change our strategies from time to time to attain success in a long-drawn operation," state Additional Director General of police (Criminal Investigation Department) Raj Kanojia told IANS.

Kanojia was one of the strategists of the operation in his earlier posting as Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) ever since the push to reclaim the rebel-held areas began June 18.

"The area is densely covered by forest; so we have to keep everything in mind and consider the weather also while conducting any security operation," he said.

Despite being equipped with the GPS ([Global Positioning System](#)), the police and central forces are not able to move deep into the forest areas considered as Maoist strongholds.

"We accept that the Maoist rebels know the entire forest region very well and they can navigate much faster than us through these areas. As the region, mainly Lalgarh and its adjacent places, are relatively new to the joint forces, they can't manoeuvre as quickly as the Maoists," a senior state police official said on condition of anonymity.

Another major hurdle is that many villagers are not cooperating with the forces - a major constraint in gathering local intelligence.

The lack of tarred roads is another drawback. "There's no metalled road in Lalgarh and other forested areas of the district. So free and safe movement is also not possible every time. There is always some risk factor involved for the security personnel," he said.

A few days ago Chattradhar Mahato, leader of the Maoist-backed tribal body People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA), demanded immediate withdrawal of the forces from Lalgarh and its adjacent areas, accusing the personnel of torturing innocent villagers in the name of nabbing Maoists.

Mahato also appealed to the state's ruling Left Front to resolve the issue by accepting the 21-point demand of the tribals, who were victims of police excesses last November after a landmine explosion targeted Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's convoy.

"There are a few rural pockets in and around Lalgarh where armed Maoists are still operating even though security forces are carrying out flush out operations. These particular areas are still inaccessible to the forces," a police source said.

The state government had launched the massive security operation against the left-wing extremists, who had virtually made areas in and around Lalgarh, about 200 km west of Kolkata, a "free zone" since November. Despite the security operation, rebel activities have been going on unabated. Several Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) cadres and tribals have been killed by the Maoists on suspicion of being police informers.

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