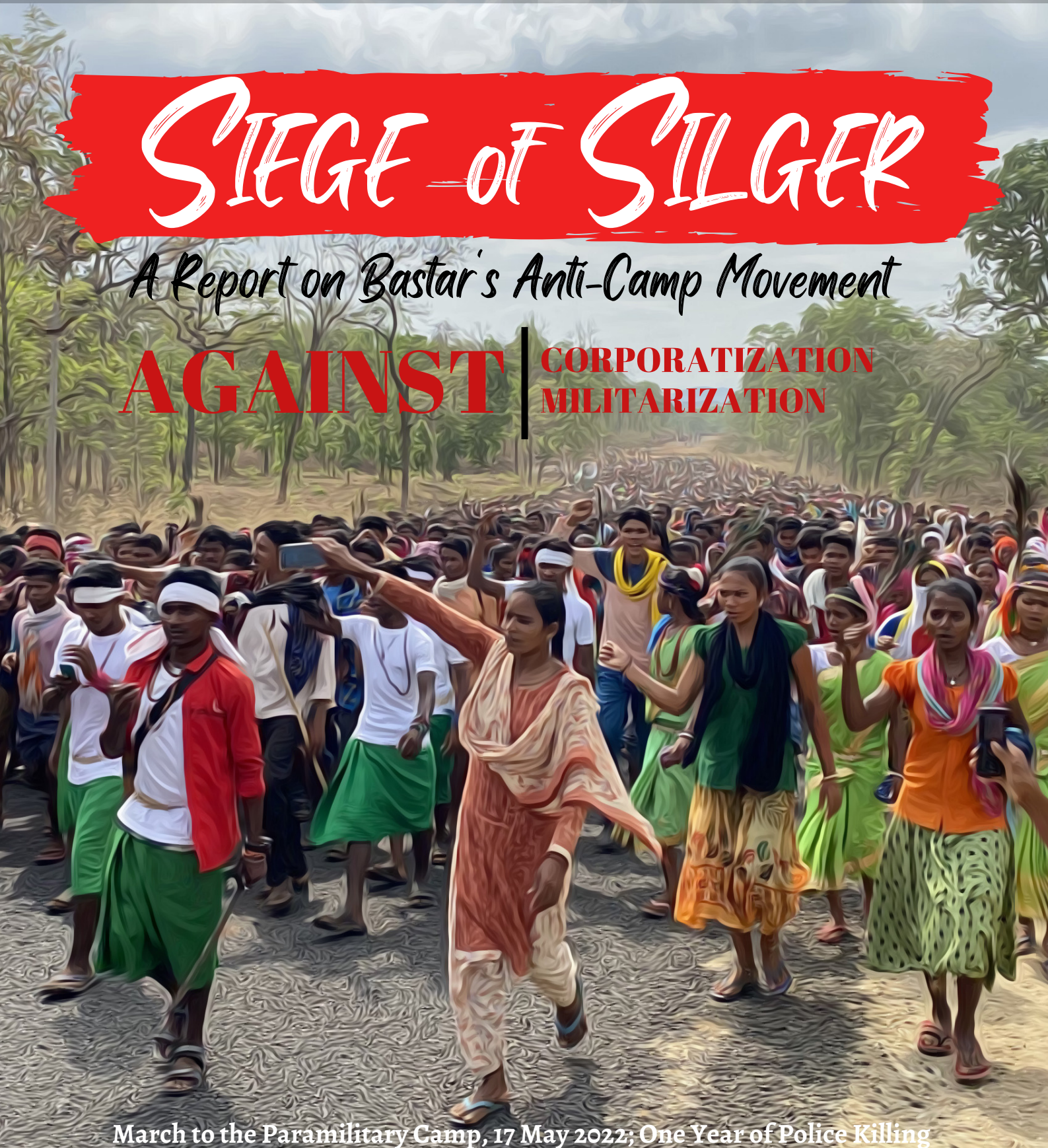


**FORUM AGAINST CORPORATIZATION AND MILITARIZATION  
NEW DELHI**

# SIEGE OF SILGER

*A Report on Bastar's Anti-Camp Movement*

**AGAINST** | **CORPORATIZATION  
MILITARIZATION**



March to the Paramilitary Camp, 17 May 2022; One Year of Police Killing

**RELEASE IN NEW DELHI, 15 JULY 2022**

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# SEIGE OF SILGER

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Silger in Chattisgarh today is witness to a mass protest movement since more than a year — easily, one of the longest movements in recent times. A locally embedded movement, Silger has in significant ways challenged rapacious mining corporations that are today protected by the Indian state’s military scorch-earth policy called “Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar”. It is a movement of the people, a resistance movement against militarization and corporatization. It is in solidarity with the victims of the massacre of Adivasis in places like Sarkeguda, Tadmetla and Gompad by state forces. What the “global middle classes” are watching today through the movie-frames of an RRR or Virata Parvam is unfolding in real time, with Komaram Bheems in its wake.

Silger is like an Occupy movement, a sit-in blockade or dharna. It does appeal and petition the authorities, but also physically sits on and blocks the supply chains of mining corporations and the state — occupying the exact place where the proposed road is to be built and declaring the state forces out of bounds. The proposed road will bring in forces and processes that will destroy Adivasi life, but it is simultaneously about control over the iron-ore mining areas of Bailadila and Dantewara, in order to facilitate the mining-politician-police nexus.

You might think of this area as “remote forests” but iron-ore from here quickly travels to Japan and elsewhere. Conveyor belts criss-crossing the lacerated hills directly load iron-ore onto the waiting freight train rakes that speed off to Vishakhapatnam-sea port and thereon into the global supply chains. Kirandul is the railway station here and this is one of the highest revenues generating rail lines in India. “Made in Japan” diesel engines from Hitachi are deployed for efficiency and ensuring just-in-time-production, the hallmark of logistical capitalism. Apparently, Japan is stocking up iron-ore under the sea for the next hundred years! If not in trains, then, the iron-ore travels in fresh water from the Bailadila hills through what are called “slurry pipelines” initially built by the ESSAR company. The water is then dumped into the sea as “waste”.

*Look at these “most respectable captains of industry” involved in predatory mining operations, mostly in constitutionally “protected” lands:*

<b>Adani:</b>	Hasdeo Aranya for coal and Dantewada for iron ore, Chhattisgarh;
<b>Aditya Birla, L&amp;T, Utkal Alumina:</b>	Bauxite mining in Rayagada/Kashipur, Odisha;
<b>Vedanta:</b>	Bauxite mining in Lanjigarh, Niyamgiri, Odisha;
<b>Tata Steel, POSCO:</b>	Iron-ore mining in Jajpur, Kalinganagar, Odisha;

Other illustrious names are ArcelorMittal, Jindal Steel, Kohinoor Steel, Bhushan Steel, Jupiter Cement Factory. As we write this, we are getting news of the ongoing repression by Jindal Steel in Orissa’s Jagatsinghpur.

Big capital and the state have unleashed a dirty war against those resisting this loot and plunder. Extra-judicial killings and state impunity seem like an understatement. It is a permanent state of emergency, normalised and routinised. Even incarceration seems like a better option, as with those like Soni Sori who are thrown in jail after IPS-rank police officers are done with meting out their “punishment” and revenge often through brutal sexual violence. Judicial custody after torture and revenge by the police is routine. Whether the political regime is “liberal” or “right-wing” makes little difference.

One is forced to come to the conclusion that what the Adivasis are facing is nothing less than a genocide against their life and existence. A silent genocide secretly sanctioned at the highest levels of the Indian political class and state power since at least 2005 (the time of *Salwa Judum*) in Bastar. Others prefer to call it a process of internal colonisation, or simply “War on the People”. Not just torture, displacement and violent attacks, including sexual violence against women, but also violence with an intent to degrade and debase Adivasi lives, treating the Adivasi as sub-human. Normalising the process of mass destitution of Adivasis at near-starvation levels in detention camps manned by security forces as well as across the social body. An upper caste Brahminical mindset reinforces the militarization and corporate destruction of Adivasi culture and identity.



*At the Barricades on 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2022*



*Iron ore Mine, Bailadila Hills*

The implications and significance of a movement like Silger are therefore much bigger than those in power — and many activists — are willing to admit. This mass democratic resistance movement has secured a huge area from attempts at “area domination” by those in power. With an adjoining camp of hundreds of paramilitary forces who have recently shot and killed five villagers and injured many, it is an eye-to-eye ball fight with the armed machinery of the state and companies.



*Martyrs Column Right in Front of the Camp*



*Martyrs Family on Stage*

Silger has also pushed its way to become a “talking point” in the media and an important rallying point in mainstream politics, and surely for Adivasi leaders and ministers in the government. Embedded in a specific area, it has tremendous resonance across Chhattisgarh. It might be the bridge between workers in mines looking for secure employment and the Adivasis who fear that these mines will only



displace them in the first place. Is the trade union worker of the Bailadila mines an ally of the local Adivasi — or not? If it is any indication, we can to start with, recall that the representatives of some labour unions do extend support to the Silger movement.

For those in power, Silger has proved to be the weakest link in the chain of domination and exploitation of the land, resources and people of Bastar. They are desperate to crush it.



*The March Arrives at the Barricade in Front of CRPF Camp Camp, 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2022*

## PARAMILITARY CAMPS AND ROADS

**P**aramilitary camps, fortified and secured like in a war zone, are built by the government everywhere in Bastar. Every 2 to 3 kilometres you have a camp. This is part of what the Home Ministry calls “Forward Operational Bases” meant for areas of “Left-wing Extremism” (LWE). Built in a short time, the camp, once it comes up, seeks to control everything around, be the power centre, impose diktats, doing great violence to life and resources. The camp is a terrible eye sore to every Adivasi, to even a passer-by.

Villagers have stopped using the big, new roads in order to avoid being harassed — or arrested and killed — by the paramilitary. The roads have an eerie silence about them, unused by the people around but so well maintained, so much money put into them. Once in a while you see a huge military vehicle pass by, or an ambulance only meant for paramilitary.

Silger is between Tarrem and Jagargunda. The road has come past Tarrem till the point where the camp has been built. But now the road cannot be extended to Jagargunda. Why? Because there is Silger, because there is the Silger resistance.

The camps and roads go together. Earlier this was part of the Indian state’s Operation Green Hunt, now it is called the Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar. Road construction contractors and labourers live in the camps and they go out to work with an elaborate security cordon around them, fearing attack by



*Under the Banner of Mulvasi Bachao manch, Bastar Division*



*March towards Camp*

Maoists. Villagers watch the construction with a stony silence and a cold distance. No permission is taken from the local people, no *Gram Sabhas* held to seek the community's permission.

**O**n the intervening night of the 11th and 12th May 2021, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) came to Silger and started building a camp on the 10-acre agricultural field besides the road. The land for the camp was taken without due process, that is, without prior consultation and consent of the Gram Sabha as mandated under the Panchayats (Extension to the schedule areas) Act, 1996.

On 13th of May, villagers and representatives of Gram Sabha went to the under-construction camp site, looking for a dialogue with the CRPF officers regarding the issue of camp being built without the *Gram Sabha's* prior consent and to mark their protest. The villagers were beaten up and heckled by the CRPF personnel. Next day, 14th of May 2021, saw huge amassing of Adivasi villagers, who came in protest.

On 17th May 2021, CRPF opened fire on the large crowd of the protestors who were marching up to the camps. 3 protestors fell to the bullets of the forces, who claimed that the slain were Maoists amid the protesting crowd and tried to attack the CRPF. The three killed were **Kawasi Wagha** aged 37 years, **Korsa Bhima** aged 32 years and **Uike Pandu** aged 22 years. A pregnant woman, **Punem Somli** was heavily injured in the stampede that ensued after the firing and later succumbed to her injuries a few days later. Apart from those who lost their lives, 18 people were injured, 11 admitted in Sukma Field Hospital and 7 were admitted in Bijapur District Hospital.

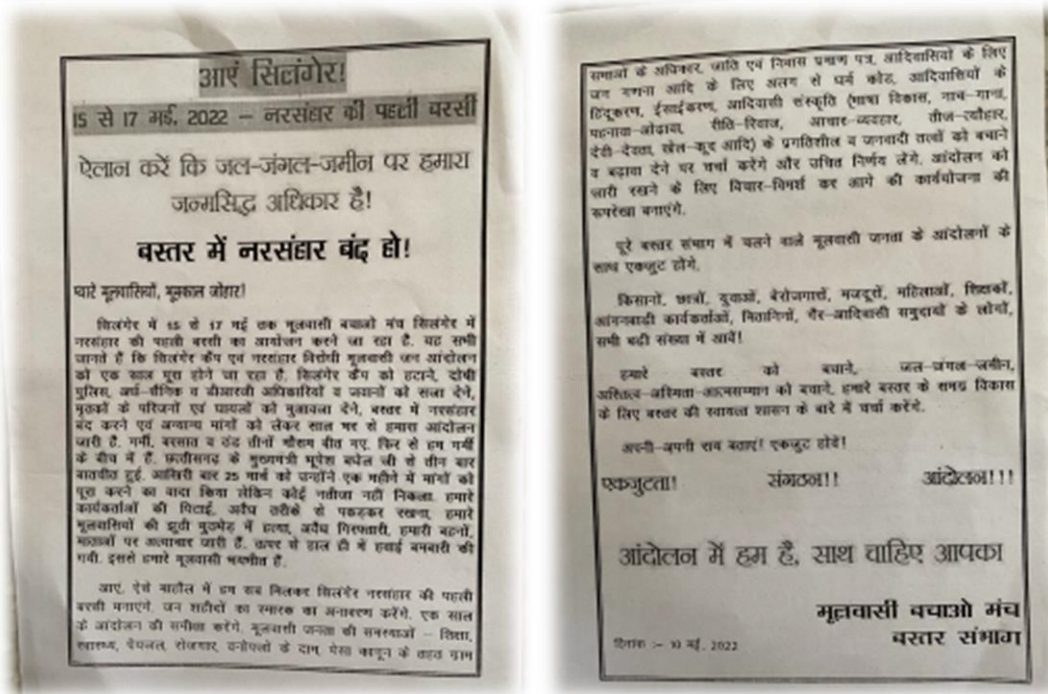
The protestors kept the bodies of the four at the protest site among huge gathering of shocked Adivasi villagers, in order to demand judicial enquiry into the killing. On 22nd May, the CRPF killed **Midiam Masa** from Tolervati, another Adivasi villager of the same area, when he and two others were collecting mangoes near the CRPF camp. In all, five people were killed between 17th and 22nd May.

The rising rage of the Adivasis against the killings and their constant effort pushed the Chhattisgarh government to order a magisterial probe. Nothing significant has come from this probe and the deadlock continues.

Since then, the movement against the building of the paramilitary camp in Silger has been continuing for a year now, expanding into a bigger movement against the setting up of multiple paramilitary camps every 3-4 kms. On 2nd Nov 2021, joint squad of Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA)



and Sukma District Police detained 55 Adivasi villagers as part of their ‘area domination operation’ at Morapalli Village in the Chintalnar police station area. All except 8 of them were released, booking the 8 under Arms and Explosives Act and several other penal acts by labelling them ‘Maoists’. All of the 55 villagers were coming back from Silger, after attending the celebration ceremony of Chhattisgarh’s 23rd formation day, joined by thousands of Adivasi villagers and multiple organizations from across the state and the country.



Mulvasi Bachao Manch Pamphlet

On Jan 19th 2022, a group of nine young people, seven men and two women set out to the state capital, Raipur, to meet the governor of Chhattisgarh, Anusuiya Uikey (an Adivasi herself). At Kondagaon bus stop, 150 km away from Silger, they were dragged out of the bus, their documents confiscated and forcibly sent to ‘Quarantine centres’ but the locals allege they were illegally detained and were also beaten in custody. They were only released after much uproar from the public.

One significant development was the founding around this time of the **Mulvasi Bachao Manch** (Aboriginal Defence Forum), an Adivasi platform. The Silger movement as well as many mass protests in Bastar are now being spearheaded under the aegis of Mulvasi Bachao Manch. This is a significant development, as it points to a new form of mass resistance.

## TEAM TO SILGER

Upon completion of one year of Silger anti-camp movement and the 1st anniversary of Martyrdom of the five Adivasis killed by the CRPF, the Mulvasi Bachao Manch gave an open call for a mass gathering and events from 15th to 17th of May 2022. Soon after the call, a team was formed by **Forum against Corporatization and Militarization** in New Delhi to visit Silger. An invite was extended to professors, writers, public intellectuals, journalists, lawyers, students



and working-class leaders from various parts of the country to visit Silger as part of a ‘Solidarity Visit Team’. An eight-member team was formed.

The team reached Raipur on morning of 15th May 2022 at around 10 AM and left for Geedam, in Dantewada district, about 75 km away from Jagdalpur on NH 63 highway. We got information on our way that despite having intimated the District Collector about the event, activists and journalists were stopped from visiting Silger and had to return back.

The team split into two, comprising 6 people and 2 people. Team One headed for



Silger in a SUV at around 11 am. Team Two left on motor bikes via kaccha roads through the forest.

Team One crossed Bijapur at around 1 PM and it was only 11 kms away from Silger when it was stopped by the soldiers of CRPF’s 168th Battalion near Chinna Kodepal CRPF Camp. Team members were asked to step out of the vehicle, their details were noted down, pictures taken, Identification cards collected and were sent to the ‘superiors’ sitting in Bijapur. We were told after sometime that the ‘superiors’ are not authorizing our passage beyond the checkpoint, citing ‘security reasons’. We insisted that it was our democratic right to go to any democratic protest and that we were responsible for our own safety if there is any ‘threat’ whatsoever. The CRPF personnel didn’t agree and advised us to talk to the District Collector at Bijapur. The team even approached the collector at Bijapur Collector Office but he left without addressing our issue.

The team, therefore, released a publicity video statement on social media condemning restrictions on our entry to Silger and calling upon the administration to let us exercise our democratic rights. The team then headed back towards the checkpoint at Chinna Kodepal with an intention to stage a protest then and there against the curb on democratic rights. Amid much uproar from the activists and journalists working in the area, Sunderraj Pattilingam, IG Bastar range, denied having stopped anyone and said that this is a ‘routine exercise’ and everyone is allowed to pass. Crossing that check point, according to the security forces, was entering into a ‘highly sensitive zone’ or the ‘Maoist stronghold. This type of designation of an area finds the underlying tone of India’s Ex-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s proclamation that ‘Maoists are India’s single biggest internal security threat’.

Once we were allowed to move, what we experienced was nothing short of a war-like preparation or deployment of security forces, with a camp every few kilometres, heavy Mine Protected Vehicles (MVPs) that are being built by Motor Giants like TATA and Mahindra, soldiers carrying sophisticated weaponry with Under Barrel Grenade Launchers mounted on deadliest assault rifles. It looked like war-torn Jaffna or Laos or Cambodia.

## AT THE PROTEST SITE

**A**fter Chinna Kodepal, we crossed the controversial CRPF camp, now quite close to Silger our final destination. Right by the camp, challenging it, we saw the Martyrs memorial column. It is a green concrete structure with the names of those killed with a flag on top. It is as if those martyrs are resonating with the slogan '*Jaan denge, par zameen nahi*' (we will give our lives but not our land). The structure has a green flag atop with a sickle and an axe symbolizing the Adivasi culture and struggle. Looking at it from a distance easily reminds one of the hammer and sickle found on a red flag — we do not know if this proximity is intentional! Green colour, sickle and axe — that is the combination.

Silger, the village of the protest site, is a flat forest area with houses scattered around. The village is not separate from the forest but in it, merged seamlessly. A straight and wide kachha road cuts through, which apparently was earlier in use till the displacements by the *Salwa Judum* led to its disuse. Now the government wants to develop this into a wide metalled road for military purposes. We got on to this *kachha* road and went straight to the site of the event. It was already late in the day and the day's program had ended. We gathered that the road ends one kilometre beyond the event site. After that the road is unusable and only motor bikes or big four-wheel drive SUVs can ply.



We met Raghu, the leader of **Moolvasi Bachao Manch** and he introduced us to other members of the Manch and briefed us about the programme.

Large tarpaulin sheets are spread across the arena, under shade of huge tamarind and mango trees. A large enough hut, the size of a volley ball court, is the ration store and the kitchen, where the provisions are kept and food prepared. Volunteers, men and women, are engaged in fixing things, providing for food, essentials, making sure people who have come from outside get rest, water, food.

We are now united with Team Two, our other two members who took the bike route through the forest and kaccha roads and rough terrain. They saw multiple road opening parties of CRPF heavily armed, wearing bullet proof jackets, with land-mine detectors, protecting the road construction teams.

We are told that the next day's program will have a march in the morning from the protest site to the Martyrs Memorial in front of CRPF camp. Then in the afternoon, a public meeting to be addressed by activists and leaders of various organizations across the country and cultural performances by their cultural brigade. The distance to be covered by the march is almost up to 6 kms.

That night we slept under the trees in those tarpaulin sheets, all of them blue. We were a bit surprised that there were no birds at all resting in the trees and showering us with disagreeable stuff!

On 17th may 2022, morning starts early in the forest-cum-village. Its 5 AM and people are already on their duties doing their part to prepare the breakfast.

To the mining corporations and state, owing to people's resistance, it has been clear for a long time that it won't be easy to just reach the mining blocks with their big machinery and just get on with extraction. Therefore, a complex web of security apparatus akin to a proto-state mafia network is propped up by India's parliamentary democracy, in the name of countering the Maoist movement and maintaining peace for development.

*You get a sense of the security apparatus being built if you look at the places where the protest movements are going on. Here is what we could find out so far:*

- a. Silger**
- b. Bechapal**
- c. Pusnar**
- d. Elmagonda**
- e. Empuram**
- f. Gompad**
- g. Singaram**
- h. Potali**
- i. Tettem**
- j. Nahodi**
- k. Karrepura**
- l. Minpa**
- m. Mankapal**
- n. Bana**
- o. Bechaghat**

We gathered that almost 60 camps have been built in last 5 years in Chhattisgarh. According to a report published in the Indian Express dated April 27, 2022, seven districts have seen 42 camps coming up in less than three years. These seven districts include Sukma, Bijapur and Dantewada, where there are multiple protests going on against the building up of CRPF and Police Camps.



## MARCH TO THE CAMP, 17 MAY

People started gathering at around 7 AM, dozens of people roaming around, cultural troupe rehearsing their songs and discussing among themselves, people at kitchen duty preparing food, or some folks going off to take a bath at the lake (talaab) and tube-well. Announcement on loudspeakers can be heard, calling on the villagers to assemble for the march, as slowly people start pooling up in hundreds at a time. Such is the discipline that within half an hour of the announcement to assemble for march, people started joining in, ready and waiting for the trumpets to blow.

Everyone is ready for this big day, some anticipate a crackdown, whereas the Adivasi people along with their cultural troupe and their leaders of Moolvasi Bachao Manch march ahead, with no signs of stress on their faces. Definitely it's the years of long struggle and resistance against brutal state repression during *Salwa Judum* and Operation Green Hunt that have made them steel-tempered, resilient to any threat and determined to fight for their Jal-Jungle-Jameen.

People are falling in line, no one is cutting anyone's path and no one is pushing each other in this march of thousands. According to **Moolvasi Bachao Manch**, 48,503 people from over 1000 villages attended the 3-day ceremony. Asked about how do they know the exact number of people attending the protests, they said that they receive information from the head of each village of who and how many people will be attending the event, so as to keep a record, in case any unfortunate event of arresting or detention takes place. Hundreds of villages are woven together to organise such protests, giving a sense of the deep social base of the Silger movement and indeed of similar mass protests in Sarkeguda, Gompad or Bechapal. Nobody seems to be convincing the other of the rightness of their cause — meaning that they all silently connect with each other and the task at hand. There is an inner, deep connect, beyond the usual notions of “solidarity” and “unity” or even “struggle”. They all seem to understand each other so well, without much words being exchanged, just gestures and slight promptings. Be it the logistics and organising of the kitchen or forming the procession line, or the management of the podium and stage — very little hierarchy, a lot of free movement and yet very smooth operation and clear line of action.

The march started from the protest site, 2 kms away from the memorial, with slogans like “*Jaan denge par zameen nahi*”, “*Bastar se police camp khali karo*”, “*Bastar mein narsanhar band karo*”, “*jungle pe drone hamle karna band karo*”, “*Sarkeguda-Edesmetta ke shaheedon ko nyay do*”, “*na lok sabha na vidhan sabha, sabse upar gram sabha*” ( we will die but won't give away our lands, remove police camps from Bastar, stop massacres in Bastar, stop drone attacks in forests, justice for Sarkeguda-Edesmetta Martyrs, neither Lok Sabha nor Vibha Sabha, supreme is the Gram Sabha, respectively) among many others. The whole forest echoed with the slogans of thousands of Adivasis stretched across in a rally almost a kilometre long. There were people as far as the eyes could properly see, walking like ants on their mission.

The march reached the camp site, barricades were put up and concertina wires were laid by the CRPF men carrying sophisticated assault rifles with UGBL mounted on it. Scores of camera-men with DSLRs were taking pictures from the front, probably to keep a record and identify protestors later, in order to harass. Some officers seemed to be working on prior tip off and were looking for specific members. It is very revealing how protests at the barricades are a convenient site of surveillance and data gathering for the state - **It is a dirty war.**

## ‘REVOLUTIONARY’ SONGS

The cultural troupe started their performance at the barricades, the songs call upon the soldiers and police men to abandon the side of the oppressors and stand with the struggling, oppressed and exploited people of the country. Some of the lines of the song goes as such:

*Suno Jawano, pyare sathiyon*

*Suno Bharat ke itihās ke dekho re!*

*Suno Janvirodhi Neetiyon ko Chhodo re!*

*Suno Jansangharshon se naata jodo re!*

(Listen O soldiers, dear friends,

Look at the history of India,

Abandon the anti-people policies,

Make ties with the struggle of the people!)

Obviously, the lines of the song are so strong and so threatening to the officers and bureaucrats that they were trying to stop the performance as they considered it “revolutionary”. One would wonder, **whether something being revolutionary is illegal and incriminatory? Whether the revolutionary poem or literature is a threat to the powers that be?**

The people now turned away from the barricade, towards the martyrs’ memorial, painted in green colour. Names of the five martyrs are inscribed, one goes unmentioned as the child was in the mother’s womb when she died, didn’t even get to see the world its mother was fighting to build. The child died with her, adding on to the numbers of many children killed in their mother’s womb by the state repression. The masses are shouting slogans like “*Ursa Bhima Johar lo!*”, “*Punem Somli Johar lo!*”, “*Uike Pandu Johar lo!*”, “*Kawasi Wagha Johar lo!*” and “*Midiam Masa Johar lo!*” (Johar to Ursa Bhima, Punem Somli, Uike Pandu, Kawasi Wagha and Midiam Masa). The respect and love for the martyrs is such, the whole crowd is surrounding the martyrs’ memorial and their slogans are so loud that they can be heard from miles away.

The march is now on its way back, continuing their slogans. The last afternoon session of the public meeting will take place after some rest and food. As we noticed, this stretch of the road has multiple under-construction bridges that are left incomplete. Several attempts have been made by the police to build the wide road, but not been entirely successful so far due to the protests.

## SPEECHES AGAINST ROADS

Various Journalists and Activists like Arvind Netam, Manish Kunjam, Bela Bhatia, Sudesh Tikam, Surju Tikam from Sarva Adivasi Samaj, leaders from CPI, Adivasi Mahasabha and others are present to witness the conclusion of the three-day long program. Main stage is built on an elevated platform made of mud, with a wooden structure as its shed. The whole area, where the masses are to sit and listen to the speakers are made like a huge thatched hall, with its roof made

of branches and leaves of trees supported by wooden logs as pillars. No tents, no steel rods, everything that is there, apart from some solar panels to provide electricity for the mic and the speakers and some chairs, is from the forest itself.

Sudhesh Tikam, an Adivasi Kisaan leader from Rajnandagaon, while addressing the people, spoke about how Congress and BJP have joined hands with the big corporates in a bid to exploit the resources of Chhattisgarh and are trying to snatch the Jal-Jungle-Jameen of the Adivasis. Speaking about the need to build up strong mass movements like Silger and Hasdeo protests, he stressed on the unity of these mass movements as being crucial for any transformation from the exploitative system.

Saroj Giri, a professor at Delhi University and member of Forum Against Corporatization and Militarization (FACAM), New Delhi, spoke about the importance of the Silger Anti-Camp movement in the present scenario. Stressing on fact that the roads and camps are being built to bring in the paramilitary forces, crush the movements against corporatization and extract the resources of Chhattisgarh, he said that Silger and many such similar protests are the walls that protect the environment and the Adivasi culture from destruction by the mining corporations. Extending solidarity to the struggling masses, he added that the Adivasi people are not alone in this struggle as this struggle is not just limited to struggle for Jal-Jungle-Jameen of Central India, rather, its ambit is very broad and



people everywhere are learning from the uniqueness of this struggle. He reiterated the FACAM's commitment in campaigning about the struggles against Corporatization and Militarization and said that the struggles of Adivasi people have rejuvenated the spirit in us to speak about the issue in other spaces.

The families of Martyrs came forward on the stage and rejected the state's foul propaganda that the families were rejecting

compensation and clarified that they were offered 10,000 rupees each for the loss of their loved ones. They reiterated their demand of enquiry and action against the CRPF personnel responsible for the killing and said that only after the said action, they will accept a compensation of Rupees One crore each. They also rejected the foul propaganda that the Maoists were threatening them not to take any compensation from the state. It is important to point out that after the Firing and subsequent killing of 3 people on 17th of May, 2021, the CRPF claimed that those killed were 'Maoists' who tried to attack the CRPF personnel, after which the forces opened fire. The question that arises is, whether the cost of a person life be measured as low as 10,000 rupees, if at all it can be measured in monetary terms? And is it so easy for the Forces to kill anyone and claim that they were "Maoist" who attacked the forces? Looking at the track records of forces present in the region, the answer is apparently affirmative.



## NEW MODEL AND LEADERSHIP

The movement against camps, particularly in Bastar region, led by Mulvasi Bachao Manch, brought forth a new line of leadership. The members of Moolvasi Bachao Manch are mostly young men and women not above the age of 25 and are very dedicated and unflinching in their resolve. These are the youngsters who have experienced the horrors of *Salwa Judum* in their early age; they saw, either someone from their families or someone from their village getting killed or raped by vigilantes of *Salwa Judum*. These young leaders of today have themselves faced sexual harassment and torture at the hands of the security forces.

Shanti Punem, Leader of Mulvasi Bachao Manch from Gangloor, has been active in protests against sexual violence and state repression from a very young age. She has assisted various fact-finding teams in detailing sexual harassment cases. Shanti is barely 25 years of age and she is fluent in Hindi, which enables her to communicate the issues of the area with other activists and journalists. Some of these young boys and girls have studied in towns like Bijapur and Sukma and are well versed with their rights and are aware about the intricacies of dealing with the officials.

Speaking about the reasons to oppose the Camps, Raghu Midiam, Leader of Mulvasi Bachao Manch at Silger, told us “these camps were built by forcefully acquiring the agricultural land of villagers of Silger; no consent of gram sabha was attained as mandated by PESA and 5th Schedule of the Constitution. These camps bring large number of forces in the region and they commit atrocities on the villagers. Women are sexually harassed and even raped, people are detained illegally and any protest against mining companies are crushed by these very forces; they are not here to protect us but loot our Jal-Jungle-Jameen and hand it over to the mining companies”. Asserting the demands of the people, he adds “we don’t want camps; we want schools and hospitals, there are very less schools in this region and that too very far off. For good medical facilities, we have to travel to Bijapur therefore, what we need is good healthcare and education facilities not camps”. Raghu is just 22 years old and has completed his intermediate education. Raghu is among those who witnessed the brutalities of the state and vigilante militias during the period of *Salwa Judum* and Operation Green-Hunt. His own sister was sexually abused by the forces.

What would Birsa Munda, Gunda Dhur and Komaram Bheem be like in today’s world? The struggle they waged was for their Jal-Jungle-Jameen and against the exploitation of resources and the struggle being waged by Adivasis of today, by Shanti Punem, Raghu Midiam and thousands of other Adivasis, for the protecting their Jal-Jungle-Jameen is similar in its essence. Earlier, the exploiters were the British Colonisers, today it is Indian Corporates like Adani, Jindal and Tata. The difference is today’s Gunda Dhur and Birsa Munda are learning and adopting new tactics of struggle and in turn, teaching the world how struggles against big corporations and Mighty Repressive state should be waged. The Adivasis of today, particularly the youth, are well aware about technological use that can help the movement propagate its ideas and issues to a new level. The video invitation released by the Mulvasi Bachao Manch for the event is one such example.

The mode of struggle used by the Adivasis during *Salwa Judum* and Operation Green-Hunt is different from the model, in place today. Earlier, big rallies and protest demonstrations were held at important urban centers and were concluded in a day or two. The present model of protracted sit-in strike is a new one for the region. We have seen this form of struggle, where thousands of people gathered at a

strategic point and continued their sit in for months in Shaheen Bagh and elsewhere during the Anti CAA-NRC-NPR movement. Kisan Andolan carried forward Shaheen Bagh's 'Chakka Jam' model and blocked 3 important highway entry points to the Capital city at Singhu Border, Tikri Border and Ghazipur Border around Delhi.

The Silger movement started when the Kisan Andolan was midway and Adivasi villagers of Silger extended solidarity to Kisan Andolan, pointing out the commonality of the struggle. They said that Kisan Andolan was a struggle of farmers to protect their land from being grabbed by corporates, similar to the struggle of Adivasis against the land grab and destruction of Jal-Jungle-Jameen for building camps and mining of mineral resources in the region. A few leaders of Kisan Andolan also expressed solidarity with the people of Silger. The Silger Anti-Camp movement implemented model of protracted mass movement but in an entirely different setup and within a more repressive environment, where whatever happens, hardly gets reported owing to the large-scale media blackout.

The Kisan Andolan and Anti CAA-NRC-NPR movement, though being defamed by the corporate media, was widely covered and propagated by alternate media channels as well as international media houses. One could only imagine what all could have happened, if the media was not reporting each and every moment from Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur Borders just after the 26th Jan 2021 'Tractor Parade'. Similarly on 15th Dec 2019, if the civil society, media houses and people at large had not been able to reach Jamia or immediately respond by protesting in large numbers at Delhi Police Headquarters, how long would the siege of the Jamia Campus have continued and how many more students would have been brutalised and picked up; one can only guess and be thankful that such wasn't the case.

But when it comes to places like Bastar, places like Silger, flow of information becomes a privilege the Adivasi people have not been bestowed with. Freedom of press becomes an imaginary word and the only "freedom" press has, is to publish the narrative of the police, mining officials and compromised politicians. Silger Anti-Camp movement, despite being one of its kind in this region, continuing for a year with mass mobilization of thousands of villagers, has gained very little media attention than it was due. The state has been deliberately trying to curtail the realities of these regions from coming out, by intimidating and harassing the journalists working on ground, in order to create an information blackout. This information blackout helps the state to carry out its brutal state repression on the people, which is nothing less than a war unleashed by the state on its people, without any outside observers and witnesses.

## THE GENOCIDAL WEAPON: OPERATION SAMADHAN-PRAHAR

The state has been using the iron fist in its approach to “tackle” the Naxal question since a long time now and this whole period has witnessed various genocidal initiatives and policies like *Salwa Judum*, Operation Green-Hunt, Operation Anaconda in Jharkhand, Mission 2016, Mission 2017 etc., all claiming to wipe out the movement from these regions to pave the way for “development” of the regions affected by the Maoist movement. Building of paramilitary camps and network of roads in those regions are also a part of state’s policy to crush the people’s resistance and pave the way for corporate loot of resources by heavily militarizing the region in the name of countering LWE.

Initiated in 2017, Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar is one such policy aimed at launching massive offensive on the people of the country. Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh Launched the fancy policy, in a review meeting held in the month of May, 2017 at New Delhi, in the presence of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Union Home Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi, Director of Intelligence Bureau, Heads of State Police and Central Paramilitary Forces. Home Minister, Singh Said, “The fight against Left-Wing Extremism is a coordinated battle on security and development front that has to be fought to the finish and won. Who could be more suitable and competent than you all? Let your action speak for itself”, the Economic Times quoted. The statement itself speaks a lot about the state’s approach in tackling the questions raised by the movement and the people of the region. Home minister’s imagination of Development is more militaristic than civic. SAMADHAN expands to – ‘Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation and training, Actionable intelligence, Dashboard based key performance indicators and key result areas, Harnessing technology, Action plan for each theatre and No access to financing’.

The words like Smart Leadership tell us of the thinking behind promoting notorious IPS officers like SRP Kalluri or Abhishek Pallava. The aim is to build ambitious leadership, capable of devising ruthless policies like Lone Varattu (Surrender Policy devised by Dantewada SP Abhishek Pallava), in order to suppress the people and support the state’s narrative of winning the war with the Maoists. Through SAMADHAN, the state aims to gain ‘Actionable Intelligence’ by gathering information from “surrendered Naxals” as well as deploying them in the form of “Gupt Sainiks” (Shadow Intelligence Officers). Consequently, the state is committed in Installation of 2343 new mobile towers with additional 2542 towers in upcoming years, to assist the desired work these “Gupt Sainiks” are supposed to do. “Surrendered Naxals” are also inducted as auxiliary forces such as District Reserve Guards and Bastar Fighters, despite Supreme Court banning the use of civilians and surrendered Naxals in Counter-Insurgency Operations.





Further, ‘Harnessing Technology’ part of the Policy means use of sophisticated weaponry, GPS and satellite tracking, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs or Drones) to monitor the movement of rebels and devise operations accordingly. The policy of using drones has been corroborated with the recent air strikes in the villages of Bijapur and Sukma Districts and a similar aerial strike on villages of Bijapur in April, 2021. Key performance indicators (KPIs) and key result areas (KIAs) are parameters through which each mission or operation is judged based on the “kill ratio”, setbacks to Maoists in terms of arms and ammunitions, destruction of Adivasi way of life, and sexual assault of women, among others. The whole acronym and the policy contain generous use of corporate style terminology to sweep off the Maoists.

The policy of Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar, which the state envisages as antidote for Maoist Movement, provides for Building 400 fortified police/paramilitary stations also referred to as Forward Operational Bases, Building of Roads under Road Requirement Plan (RRP-I) and Road Connectivity Program for Left-Wing Extremist Areas (RCPLWEA). The paramilitary camps being opposed by Silger and various other protest movements are built under the very policy of SAMADHAN. Further the road constructions that are facing protests by the Adivasi people at various places are also being built under the aforementioned plan. The state has sanctioned total 17,600 kms road, out of which 9,343 km of road has been built already.

In April 2022, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, informing the Lok Sabha in written reply stated “Rs. 1,623 crores have been released to the LWE affected states under the SRE scheme during the last five years. Under the Special Infrastructural Scheme (SIS), projects worth Rs 371 crores for strengthening special forces (SF) and Special Intelligence Branches (SIB) and for 250 Fortified Police stations worth Rs. 620 crores in Vulnerable LWE affected areas have been approved since 2017”. The Minister went on saying “in previous SIS/FPS scheme, the Central government released more than Rs 1,180 crore for construction of 400 Fortified Police Stations and upgradation of police infrastructure in the states”. Further, the funds for construction of these roads are also being allotted by the center to the states under Various Security Related Expenditure (SREs) and Special Infrastructure Schemes (SIS). Additional Funds are also provided by the Center in the name of Special Central Assistance (SCA) scheme. It is pertinent to mention that these fancy schemes, allotting thousands of crores for ‘development and security’ expenditures are withdrawn once the area is considered “Naxal Free”. Clearly, the governments at the center as well as state level are more interested in militarizing the whole region to crush any resistance against the corporate loot than “developing” the area in the interest of the Adivasi people.

Furthermore, starting from *Salwa Judum* to Operation Green-Hunt, the state has been hell bent in creating a war without witnesses by harassing the activists, lawyers and journalists working on ground to bring out the grim realities of these regions. This narrative control is a well devised mechanism of Public Perception Management that the state is using as part of Operation SAMADHAN-PRAHAR in order to present itself as generous, solution-seeking and development friendly agents struggling with the decadent, anti-development and violence frenzy Adivasi masses led by the Maoists. This Public Perception Management allows the state to cancel out any debate and criticism of state’s actions and policies, by portraying such attempts as anti-development, anti-national and even pro-maoist, thereby leaving close to no space for any scrutiny by the larger civil society and the masses. This in turn allows

the state to carry out its brutal repression with impunity to displace and disinherit the Adivasi masses of their Jal-Jungle-Jameen in the interest of the big corporates.

Rajveer Kaur from Forum against Corporatization and Militarization stressed on the importance of recognizing Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar's role behind the construction of these paramilitary camps every few kilometers. She pointed out that these anti camp movements like Silger are, in essence, also a movement against Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar and she said that it is very important to speak about this policy from such spaces and stages like Moolwasi Bachao Manch in Silger.

Firoz Alam, student activist read the Forum's Solidarity statement reiterating its position on the movement against the paramilitary camps, the aerial strikes, the fake surrenders and killings and sexual violence, among many other atrocities being committed against the people of the country in general and in this case, Adivasis in particular. He reiterated the Forum's call to join the struggle against the brutal repression and atrocities on people fighting against corporate loot and stand united against the Genocidal Military Operation SAMADHAN-PRAHAR.

*The fight continues...*

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## **UNION HOME MINISTER CHAIRS THE REVIEW MEETING OF LWE-AFFECTED STATES SHRI RAJNATH SINGH GIVES NEW DOCTRINE OF “SAMADHAN’ FOR USE IN SECURITY OPERATIONS**

The Union Home Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh carried out a review of the Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) situation in the ten LWE affected States here today. The meeting was attended by Chief Ministers of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh. Other States were represented by senior ministers from the States. Chief Secretaries and DGPs of States were also present. From the Centre, the Ministers of State in the Home Ministry, the National Security Adviser (NSA), Home Secretary, Director, Intelligence Bureau and other senior officers were present. For the afternoon session on development, Ministers of Power & New and Renewable Energy, Railways, Civil Aviation, Road Transport and Highways and Communications were present along with senior officials of the ministries. On specific directions of the Home Minister, Districts Magistrates and SPs of the 35 worst affected LWE districts were also invited to provide inputs and feedback from the cutting-edge level and understand their problems.

In the morning session issues related to security were discussed. The Home Minister enunciated an operational strategy ‘SAMADHAN’ to fight Left Wing Extremism. The elements of this strategy are S for Smart Leadership, A for Aggressive Strategy, M for Motivation and Training, A for Actionable Intelligence, D for Dashboard-based Key Result Areas and Key Performance Indicators, H for Harnessing Technology, A for Action Plan for Each Theatre and N for No access to Financing.

During the meeting, important issues and requests of States included the following;

- a) Continuation/resumption of LWE specific schemes like Security Related Expenditure (SRE), Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS), Integrated Action Plan (IAP)/ Additional Central Assistance (ACA), Counter Insurgency and Anti-Terrorism (CIAT) Schools and Fortified Police Stations.
- b) Inclusion of some new districts under the SRE Scheme.
- c) Deployment of additional Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) Battalions. Some States have also sought exemption from payments for CAPF battalions provided by the Centre.
- d) Most States requested for helicopter support for operations.
- e) Use of modern technology by the State Police and the CAPF was also discussed.
- f) Issues related to inter-State coordination, intelligence sharing, setting up of Joint Task Forces for operations along inter-State boundaries were deliberated upon.
- g) The Chief Minister of Bihar suggested that the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) needs to be reviewed to ensure effective choking of fund flow to LWE groups.
- h) Measures to prevent repetition of incidents such as at Sukma on April 24, 2017 was discussed at length with suggestions from SPs of the 35 worst affected LWE districts.



During the session on development issues, the following points were discussed:

- a) Minister of Road Transport and Highway informed that various new technologies like pre-fabricated slabs and soil stabilization were been examined. States can initiate pilot projects for construction of roads with these technologies. He has also assured that the States can project any requirement for dispensation in LWE areas.
- b) Minister of New and Renewable Energy Resources informed that the Ministry was undertaking several Solar Parks, Solar Lighting and Solar Pumps schemes for providing low cost energy to LWE affected States.
- c) Minister for Power informed that the electrification of villages in LWE areas is being undertaken on a war footing with Dec, 2018 as the target.
- d) The Airport at Jagdalpur in the heart of Maoist core area will be operational very soon.
- e) Phase-II of Installation of Mobile Towers is being initiated after incorporating the experiences and problems of Phase-I.
- f) Minister of Railways informed that line Hajipur-Sagauli, Giridih-Koderma, Deoghar-Sultanganj is nearing completion.

In his concluding remarks, Shri Rajnath Singh said that the meeting had been very purposeful and the participants made very valuable suggestions which have been noted by the MHA. He said that he will personally monitor the progress on these issues. Shri Rajnath Singh also appreciated the wonderful job being done by young officers as Deputy Commissioners/Superintendents of Police in the LWE-affected areas despite some difficulties.

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