

THE 25-CRORE STORY

## How to Curb Naxalism?

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On behalf of the central government, and the PMO, Union Home Minister Mr Chidambaram has declared that naxalism will be ended in the naxal-hit areas through bringing in development, and the each district will be allocated Rs 25 crore for this purpose. The district of Dantewada is in this list of districts. It is not known how many hundreds of crore Rs have been provided to the Chhattisgarh government quietly, while a large noise is being created about the Rs 25 crore.

Dantewada area has now become the camping grounds for the police and the paramilitary forces. Under such circumstances, what work is possible? Where can it be done? Who will do it? Everything out there is dictated by gun wielding agencies. Now these villages, which are said to be influenced by naxalism, which in essence are those vilalges whose people have not gone to the Salwa Judum camps, or do not go the police to complain about the naxalites. Those villages have been branded as naxalite villages, or rogue villages by the gun toting security forces. They do not allow any real developmental work to take place in those places, like the building of schools, establishment of ration shops or medical service centres. The security forces claim that any money spent towards development in those villages would go over to the naxalites through some channel. So one can say before hand that the 25 crore will be spent in the so-called "naxalism free" areas. And thus the effort to eradicate naxalism in naxalite-hit areas will stumble in its very inception, and even the naxals will not be affected in any way beause of this. The question also rises—who will spend the money allocated to eradicate naxalism? It will be decided upon by the security agencies and the people who are favoured by these agencies. Who are those people who are favoured? They are the people who berate the villages not affiliated with the Salwa Judum, and those who say negative things about human rights workers and people's representatives not affiliated with the Salwa Judum. These deceiving people are thought to be the friends of the state. Most of them are not adivais; they are people who have migrated from elsewhere into Bastar. Some have become Salwa Judum leaders, while some are affiliated with the Congress party, and some are affiliated with the BJP. Some of them are enterpreuners, and some others are contractors. Some also do news reporting as a side-business, in which they sing praises of the governemnt and hide the grievances of the people. The 25 crore earmarked for naxalism will be spent through these people! In reality, people who were yearning for development will continue to do so. While the enemies of the common people will accumulate wealth, the anger of the ordinary person towards the government will only increase, and more adivasis will be pulled towards naxalism. So while it has been projected that the 25 crore investment will end naxalism, the opposite will occur.

Like in the other tribal areas, agencies responsible for over-sighting government corruption have been shut down, and any organistion or individual that raises the question of governmental corruption is branded naxalite. People who have spoken up in this manner have been sent off to jails. Kopa Kunjam, Kartam Yoga, are some such examples, and there are many others. As a result, there is no one left to question how the 25 crore should be distributed. The money will now be pocketed by the police, by corrupt government officials, and by the Salwa Judum leaders. Naxalism will continue unabated.

Only the police and security forces will have the authority to decide how exactly the money will be distributed. Using NREGA money, under the police's orders, hundreds of km of jungles had been cut down next to the roads. Expensive segun trees, were cut down, and furniture made out of the wood was shipped to the homes of the military personnel in lorries. These went to UP, Rajasthan, Haryana, and other states. And on paper, it was shown that the money had been used to plant trees! It is quite like that 25 crore will be used to benefit the police forces, and not for the betterment of the common people.

A new methodology for the distribution of money for development has been introduced in Dantewada. Now the person in charge of development is the SP of the police forces, who receives the funding. They make the people living in the Salwa Judum camps work a whole day for only Rs 20, instead of the stipulated minimum Rs 100. An example of the exploitation is the labour used in the building the road from Bijapur to Gangalur. The person in charge was the Bijapur SP, who was the same person who had attacked and injured 12 people who were collecting mahua. And the SP responsible for the Santoshpur–Pinjer–Tarahhar incident was the one who had declared that naxalites had made off with the bodies of 12 naxalites who had been killed. When this matter was investigated, the bodies were found and exhumed, the villagers testified that the people were villagers killed by the police. In the subsequent FIR, the police instead recorded that unknown assailants had killed these people. The case is still in court, but the SP has been made the person in charge of the state's Human Rights Commission! This is the same SP who has implicated the social worker Kopa Kunjam in a false murder case involving the death of Madhukar Rao, as a result of which Kopa is still in jail today. □□

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