

Maoists poses strategic threat to NEI: Haldar



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Syed Miraz Ahmed 3 February 2014 8254 views

The Northeastern corner of India is feared to be under the vicious threat of Maoist cells with available weaponry and sympathizers. While the Centre spends about a crore annually to fight the Maoists, their spread in the Northeast is a matter of deep concern despite big financial packages for the surrendering Maoists.

The Government of India's peace interlocutor for Assam, PC Halder today said that the presence of Maoists in the Northeast has the potential to create serious "strategic security complications" and urged the security establishments to take the attempts by the Naxals to consolidate themselves in the area seriously while planning a strategy to tackle the red rebels.

Inaugurating a two-day national seminar, titled "Responding to the Maoist Spread in India's Northeast", organized by Guwahati based think-tank Centre for Development and Peace Studies, Halder said: "The possibility of forces inimical to India using Maoists as a pawn would have to be factored in by the security establishment." He said, the decision of the Maoists to set up bases in eastern Assam, along the border with Arunachal Pradesh, has assumed added significance because of its proximity to the international border and the traditional routes that insurgent groups in the Northeast have been using to excess its bases in Myanmar. The Seminar is supported by the British Deputy High Commission, Kolkata.

Halder, who is also a member of the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), described as misconception the belief by many that the Maoists cannot work together with ethnic identity movements. He also said that the "religiosity" of the people also does not act as a deterrent against collaborating with Maoists. He said that an effective anti-Maoist strategy for any government would have to be a combination of security measures and focused development with a mechanism to address the genuine grievances of the people and that on the contrary, a much greater emphasis will be required from the structures of local governance to redress genuine grievances of the people to deny anyone an opportunity to exploit these to secure a hold on the public mind.

Earlier, addressing the Seminar, British Deputy High Commissioner to Eastern India, Scott Furssedonn-Wood said that India and UK have been cooperating and working together in a number of fields including in areas of development, conflict prevention and peace. He said India and UK have tremendous potential in furthering trade and business and emphasized that peace and stability as a prerequisite for economic growth.

The British envoy said, “Cooperation between Britain and India on security, counter-terrorism and cyber attack is now closer than it has ever been. People are alive today on the streets of Birmingham and Bangalore because of the work our countries have done together to protect them. Criminals are being brought to justice in our respective courts because of the growing cooperation between our police and judicial systems.”

He further said that as the British envoy to Eastern and North Eastern India he feels that the North East has to flourish for the eastern part of India to keep pace with the future growth projected for India. “I want to see the North East region playing a growing and dynamic role in India's economy and, consequently, in the economic partnership between our two countries,” he said.

Welcoming the participants, who include leading experts on Naxalism from across the country, Wasbir Hussain, Executive Director, Centre for Development and Peace Studies, said the spread of Maoism to the north-eastern region has added a new security dimension to the volatile region. He called upon the Government and the civil society to address the root causes of the problem and formulate a long term development agenda to eradicate poverty and unemployment in the region and improve governance and delivery mechanism.

Several prominent civil society leaders spoke on the first day of the seminar on Monday presenting their perspectives of the ground situation in the State. Dr. Ranuj Pegu, Chief Executive Councilor, Mishing Autonomous Council, Assam said the Government's effort to devolve powers by setting up autonomous councils was a good idea but said that things could be back to square one if the Govt. Fails to effectively empower these councils to deliver development on the ground.

A leading NGO activist from Tezpur, Barnabas Kindo, said that the Maoists have the potential to capitalise on the “prevailing underdevelopment” of the Adivasis of Assam and called upon the Government to uplift the community. Dr Budhin Gogoi, Principal of Margherita College also addressed the Seminar.

Prominent experts who would speak on Tuesday include, Vishwa Ranjan, Former DGP, Chattisgarh, Lt. Gen. A.S Lamba, Former Vice Chief of Army Staff, Dr PV Ramana of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, BJ Mahanta, Additional DGP Assam, LR Bishnoi, IGP, BTAD.

Syed Miraz Ahmed

Writes, edits and researches. In 2013 he was conferred the Rotary International District 3240 Young Achiever Award for his work in the area of environment and digital journalism. In 2006 he was awarded first in the category of Wildlife Photography by the Department of Environment & Forests and Tourism, Government of Assam.

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