

Government to better intelligence gathering on Maoist activity: Pillai

The central government is stepping up intelligence gathering on Maoist guerrillas in consultation with the affected states to check their growing activities, union home secretary G.K. Pillai said Saturday.

'We are building up the intelligence network in the Maoist areas to collect information on their activities. The affected state governments have also been directed to strengthen their special branches to intensify intelligence gathering on Maoists,' Pillai told IANS on the margins of a function here.

Admitting that most of the police and intelligence officials were reluctant to be posted in the Maoist-dominant areas for various reasons, Pillai said in view of the threat posed by Maoists to law and order and society at large, the state governments have been directed to give an additional 15 percent payment.

'A new scheme has been drawn to recruit or depute more personnel for intelligence gathering in the special branches of the state police departments. Those who will work in the Maoist-affected areas will be given 15 percent additional pay,' Pillai said after delivering the fifth General K.S. Thimayya Memorial Lecture on 'India's Internal Security: Challenges and Responses,' at Bishop Cotton Boys' School, as an alumni of the school.

Terming the growing Maoist activity a menace and a challenge for internal security forces, Pillai said there was an urgent need for a concerted action against them from the people, police and the executive, as these anti-social elements have turned extortion into a cottage industry to raise funds.

'Maoists fund their organisations through extortion. To protect their life and property, even government employees are forced to cough-up every month. They (Maoists) also collect taxes from the hapless people in the affected districts and raise crores (of rupees) to sustain their activity and buy weapons from outside the country,' Pillai noted.

In the northeastern states of Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland, insurgent elements also extort huge amounts from plantation estates, industrialists, business houses and transporters. To save themselves, these sections end-up paying huge sums every month.

Pillai also regretted that state governments were not investing enough to modernise their police force with the latest arms and gadgets for raising the bar of preparedness against possible attacks by anti-national elements.

'Across the country, there are about 300,000 vacancies in police departments. Even the sanctioned posts remain still less. The states have been directed to modernise and reform their police force to gear up for the new challenges,' Pillai added.

(© IANS / India eNews)