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Left-wing Extremism (LWE)/Maoism in India

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Why is in news?

The Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh are done and dusted. Equations in the context of tribal votes did matter immensely in the calculations of each political party, given the proportion of the tribal population in the State.

Maoist insurgency in the country presently thrives in the tribal regions of Chhattisgarh, particularly in Bastar. Tribals form the main cadre base of the movement. Elections in these Maoist strongholds, that are Schedule Five areas, have always been affected by violence in the backdrop of boycott calls by the Maoists. \

About LWE:

Left-wing extremism, also known as **left-wing terrorism or radical left-wing movements**, refers to political ideologies and groups that advocate for significant societal and political change through revolutionary means.

LWE groups may target government institutions, law enforcement agencies, or private property to further their agenda.

The LWE movement in India originated in a **1967 uprising in Naxalbari, West Bengal**.

Presence of LWE in India:

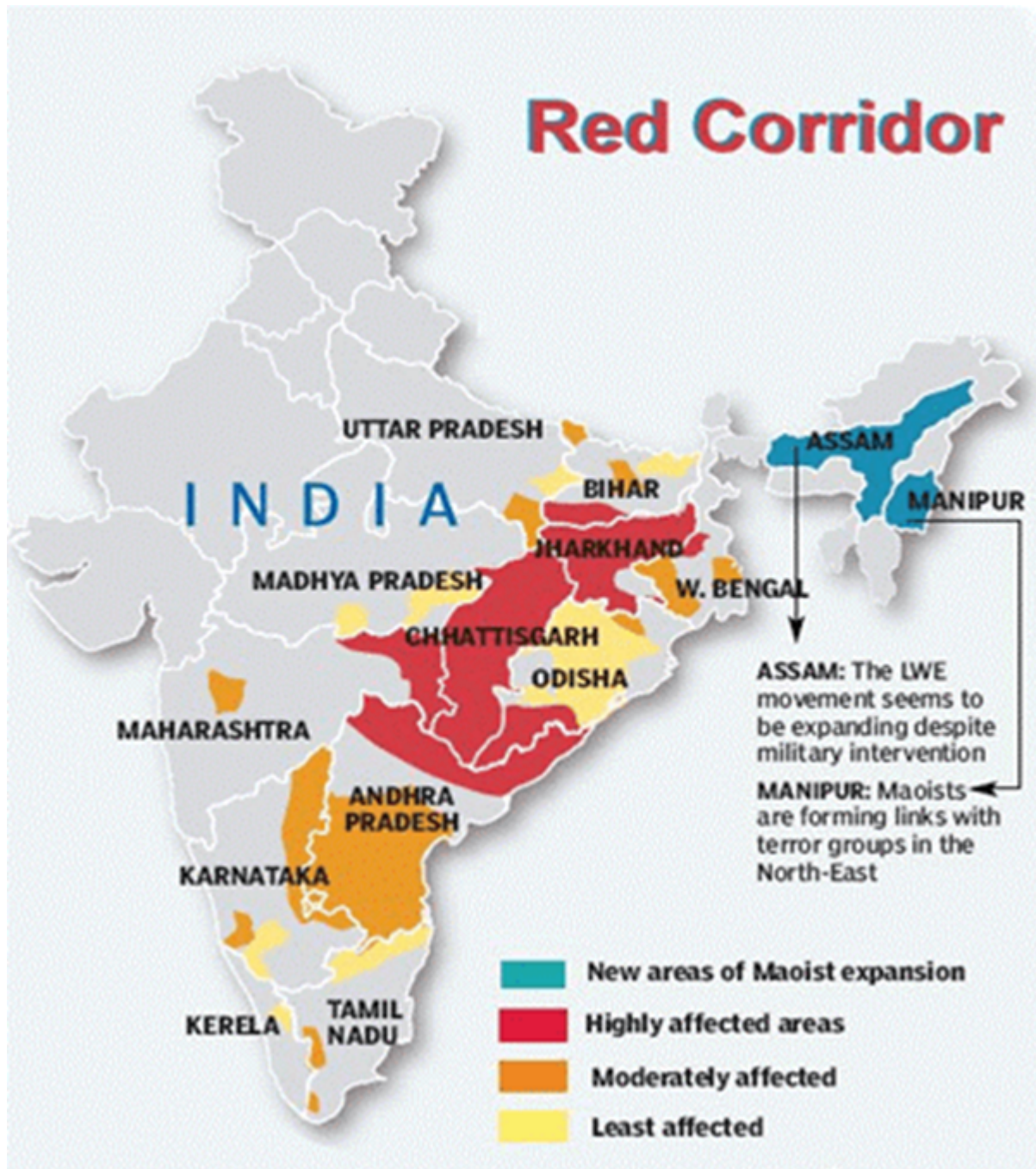
According to the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, 96 districts in 10 states are affected by LWE, although in varying degrees.

The states are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal.

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The **most affected states** are Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Bihar, where the LWE groups have a strong presence and carry out frequent attacks on security forces and civilians.

Union Home Ministry has stated that violence related to LWE had come down by **76% in 2022 as compared to 2010**.

Also, there has been a decrease in the geographical spread of violence as only 46 districts reported LWE-related violence in 2021, compared to 96 districts in 2010.

Red Corridor:

The Red Corridor is the region in the **central, eastern and southern parts of India** (Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal) that experience severe Naxalite–Maoist insurgency.

The districts affected by this and part of the Corridor are **among the poorest in India**.

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Most of the region has a high tribal population. The region is also marked by severe caste and economic disparities.

Roughly, the Corridor stretches from the Indian border with Nepal and extends to the northern fringes of Tamil Nadu.

The region also has a **significantly lower literacy rate** compared to the national average.

The Naxalites have frequently targeted tribal, police and government workers in what they say is a fight for improved land rights and more jobs for neglected agricultural labourers and the poor.

Factors responsible for the rise of LWE:

The chief reason behind the rise of the movement was the **severe lack of development** of these regions despite being mineral-rich.

They were largely tribal belts that were **neglected by the government** and also by the mainstream media.

There were **gross ineffectiveness and mismanagement in the administrative machinery**.

Corruption was also rampant leading to misery for the people.

The **alienation and social exclusion** of large groups of people led to sections of them feeling a disconnect with the government of the day and also society at large.

The **issue of Jal-Jangal-Jameen** (water, forest, land) is at the centre of these revolts initially.

Tribal people are **routinely exploited for their mineral-rich land**. There is **illegal encroachment** and the forest-dwellers are bereft of rights in their own land.

The **2006 D Bandopadhyay Committee** identified **governance gaps and extensive discrimination** against tribals in economic, socio-political, and cultural spheres as the primary causes of Naxalism's proliferation.

Challenges:

Left-wing extremism poses **significant internal security threats** to India, leading to violent clashes and loss of lives among security forces and civilians. For example, Maoist rebels often engage in deadly attacks on security forces in remote areas like Dantewada.

LWE in India **disrupts social and economic development** in affected regions, hindering infrastructure and welfare projects. For instance, the Maoists target roads, schools, and other vital infrastructure to maintain control over their territories

Maoist groups have been known to **force vulnerable individuals**, including children, to join their ranks, **exploiting them for their cause**. This practice violates human rights and disrupts the lives of countless innocent people

LWE groups often **engage in extortion and other illegal activities** to fund their operations. For example, they may demand "protection money" from local businesses, leading to economic stagnation in affected areas

LWE contributes to political instability in India, as the affected regions **struggle with governance issues and weakened trust in democratic institutions**. This can undermine the overall stability of the country

LWE groups have been known to **commit human rights violations**, including extrajudicial killings, abductions, and torture. These actions not only harm innocent civilians but also tarnish India's international reputation

LWE often **exploits and alienates tribal populations** in their strongholds, creating a cycle of **violence and mistrust** between the communities and the government. This makes it difficult to address the root causes of extremism and to foster long-term peace and stability

Various Government initiatives:

Operation Samadhan:

Home Ministry came up with the strategy of Samadhan.

It is a strategy to frame short term and long-term policies to tackle LWE.

It includes: S- Smart Leadership; A- Aggressive Strategy; M-Motivation and Training; A- Actionable Intelligence; D- Dashboard Based KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and KRAs (Key Result Areas); H- Harnessing Technology; A- Action plan for each Theatre; N- No access to Financing.

Modernizing the police force:

The scheme focuses on strengthening police infrastructure by construction of secure police stations, training centres, police housing (residential) and equipping police stations with required mobility, modern weaponry, communication equipment and forensic set-up etc.

On the administrative side, changes include separation of investigation from law and order, **specialized wings for Social and Cyber Crimes** are initiated in several states.

Various technological reforms are pushed including modernization of the control room, **fast tracking Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and System (CCTNS)**, pushing for **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)** and pushing for incorporation of new technology into policing.

'National Policy and Action Plan to address Left Wing Extremism 2015:

The plan adopted a comprehensive approach that involved various facets of governance, security, and development.

It aims to enhance the capabilities of security forces to combat LWE and contain its spread.

It ensures that the rights and entitlements of local communities are safeguarded, thereby reducing grievances that fuel extremist ideologies.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015:

The Juvenile Justice Act, enacted in 2015, plays a crucial role in protecting children affected by LWE, particularly those in distress situations, including: Children in Conflict with Law (CCL), Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP), etc.

SMART Policing:

Smart policing paradigm promotes integration & interoperability of information & communication systems.

Broadly, smart policing involves interventions incorporating application of evidence-based and data-driven policing practices, strategies and tactics in order to prevent and control crime.

Recruit specialized personnel: Specialized crimes require specialized approach and personnel to deal with them. There should be core technical team to handle modern technology related crimes.

Community policing improves interface with citizens and makes police more sensitive. E.g. (i) Janamaithri Suraksha Padhathi, Kerala (ii) Friends of Police Movement (FOP), Tamil Nadu (iii) Suraksha Setu – Safe City Surat Project

Way forward:

The successful implementation of development projects in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana reduced Maoist influence. Thus we must **focus more on the effective implementation of development projects**.

Empowering local governments to address grievances and deliver public services effectively, as seen in the Panchayati Raj system's success in reducing Naxalism in West Bengal, can help build trust between communities and authorities

Provide **specialized training and better equipment to security personnel**, similar to the Greyhounds force in Andhra Pradesh, which proved effective in countering LWE due to their specialized training and local knowledge

Engage in **meaningful dialogue with Maoist groups** to address their grievances, similar to the peace talks between the Indian government and Naga insurgents, which led to a ceasefire and reduced violence in the region

Involve **local communities in decision-making processes and development projects**, as seen in the success of the Janmabhoomi program in Andhra Pradesh, where community participation helped build trust and reduce Maoist influence

Strengthen measures to prevent corruption and human rights abuses, as demonstrated by the National Human Rights Commission's interventions in cases of alleged human rights violations by security forces, which can **help restore public trust in government institutions**.