

Indian Prime Minister Takes Strong Stand Against Maoists, Calls For Imminent Implementation Of Forest Rights Act

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Nilanjana Bhowmick - AHN India Correspondent

New Delhi, India (AHN) - Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday said that Maoist violence made carrying out developmental work in tribal areas of the country challenging. He also stressed the importance of implementing the Forest Rights Acts in all states imminently for effectively addressing the problem of the tribals.

The Forest Rights Act aims to distribute title deeds to tribals and while some states in India have already began the process some others are lagging behind. Singh said such delay was not "acceptable" and stressed that the Chief Ministers should "spare no effort to ensure effective implementation of the Act and expeditious distribution of titles well within the given time frame." He added, "the Act recognizes the symbiotic relationship between the forest and the forest dweller."

The Prime Minister was addressing a conference of Chief Ministers and State Ministers of Tribal Affairs in Delhi and said that there have been a "systemic failure in giving the tribals a stake in the modern economic processes". In an indirect reference to the Maoist insurgency he said, "No sustained economic activity is possible under the shadow of gun. Nor have those who claim to speak for the tribals offered an alternate economic path that is viable."

The Prime Minister took a strong stand against the Maoists saying "systematic exploitation and social and economic abuse of our tribal communities can no longer be tolerated."

Nihar Nayak, security expert says, "The Maoists work under contradiction. On the one hand they fight for social justice and call themselves savior of the poor but on the other they hamper developmental work. They are responsible for the alienation and underdevelopment of tribal areas. If the government tries to provide tribal areas better communication facilities by putting up a telephone exchange they will blast it. So whose interests are they destroying? It is not in their interests to allow the government to create better access to the areas they operate from."

The Naxalite-Maoist insurgency in India began in 1967 as a peasant rebellion but has now spread to large parts of central and eastern India. The Maoists launched a violent offensive in West Bengal, in eastern India, against the government in November 2008. In October they abducted a police officer in West Bengal and killed two of his colleagues. A few days after, they seized the Bhubaneswar-New Delhi express train Rajdhani.