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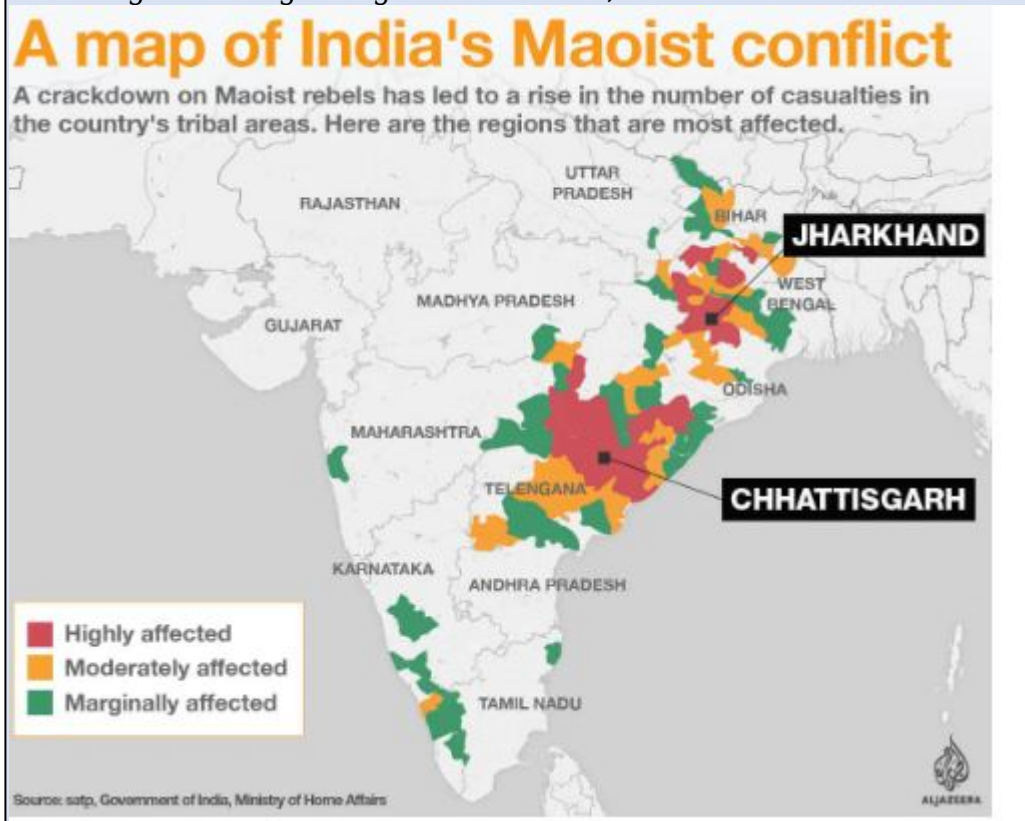
## **Grass Root Democracy against Maoism**

### **Why in news?**

The low polling turnout in the Maoist-affected areas of Chhattisgarh is a pointer that democracy needs to be strengthened at the grassroots.

### **History of Maoist insurgency in Chhattisgarh**

- Chhattisgarh is a part of the *larger Naxalite-Maoist insurgency* that has been going on in India since the late 1960s.
- **Maoism**- It is a doctrine to capture State power through the combination of armed insurgency, mass mobilization and strategic alliances.
- **Aim**- To overthrow the Indian state and establish a "*people's democracy*" through a protracted people's war
- **Geographical location**- The State's strategic location, dense forests, rugged terrain and remote areas provide the ideal conditions for Maoist groups to operate and hide.
- **Internal security issue**- In 2006, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared the Maoist insurgency as the "*greatest internal security challenge*" facing India.
- **Operation green hunt, 2009**- It is multipronged offensive of the Indian security forces against the Maoists, that has begun in the forests of Chhattisgarh.
- **Operation Prahar, 2017**- It is a targeted action by police officials in various States including Chhattisgarh against criminals, outlawed elements or even for illegal liquor sales.



## Why there is lower turnout ratio of voters in Maoism affected areas of Chhattisgarh?

*As per report only 3% to 4% of the voters in Maoist-affected areas such as Bijapur and Konta participated in the elections, indicating the failure of the political parties to address the Maoist challenge.*

- **Influence of Maoists**- They claim to fight for tribal cause, force the tribals to shun the democratic process and instead follow their own 'janta sarkar'.
- **Fear of violence**- The Maoists often threaten and attack the voters, candidates, and security forces to disrupt the elections and enforce their boycott call.
- **Disrupt election**-They also plant improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and landmines on the roads and near the polling booths to deter the voters from reaching the polling

stations.

- **Lack of trust**-The Maoists claim to represent the interests of the tribals, who form a large part of the population in these areas, and accuse the government and the mainstream parties of exploiting and neglecting them.
- **Logistical challenges**- The Maoist-affected areas are often located in remote and inaccessible regions, with poor road connectivity and communication facilities.
- **Inconvenient**- The voters have to travel long distances, sometimes on foot, to reach the polling stations, which may not be feasible or convenient for many of them.
- **Limited voting time**- The polling hours are often reduced in these areas due to security reasons, which may limit the voter participation.
- **Religion based conversation**- It is used by political parties as a 'manufactured agenda' to divert attention from basic issues affecting the tribals such as their rights and aspirations.
- **Lack of governance**- The government's development programs have failed to reach the tribals, Maoists have set up their own parallel development programs and have provided basic services to the tribals.

### Why PESA is important in Maoism affected regions?

#### Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996

- **Bhuria Committee, 1995**- It is based on this report, the Parliament enacted the PESA Act, 1996 in 10 states.
- **Coverage**- Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Telangana.
- **Aim**- To empower the tribals to govern their own affairs, in accordance with their culture and traditions.
- **Need**- To provide for the extension of the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution relating to the Panchayats to the Scheduled Areas.
- **Nodal Ministry**- Ministry of Panchayat Raj Institutions
- **Objective**- It empowers gram sabhas to play a key role in approving development plans and controlling all social sectors.

- **Tribal empowerment**- The Act will empower the tribals to govern their own affairs, in accordance with their culture and traditions.
- **People's participation**-The Act could also weaken the Maoist influence and challenge, by restoring the trust and confidence of the tribals in the democratic process.
- **Tribal governance** - If the Act is implemented sincerely and effectively, it could be a powerful tool to mainstream the tribal community, by accommodating their aspirations and rights.
- **Internal security**- It has the potential to address the root causes of the Maoist insurgency and bring peace and development to the tribal regions.
- **Autonomy**- The tribals could safeguard and administer their own natural resources and cultural legacy, which are frequently endangered by the State and corporate intervention.

### What lies ahead?

- The Maoists claim to fight for the tribals need to be exposed as they hinder

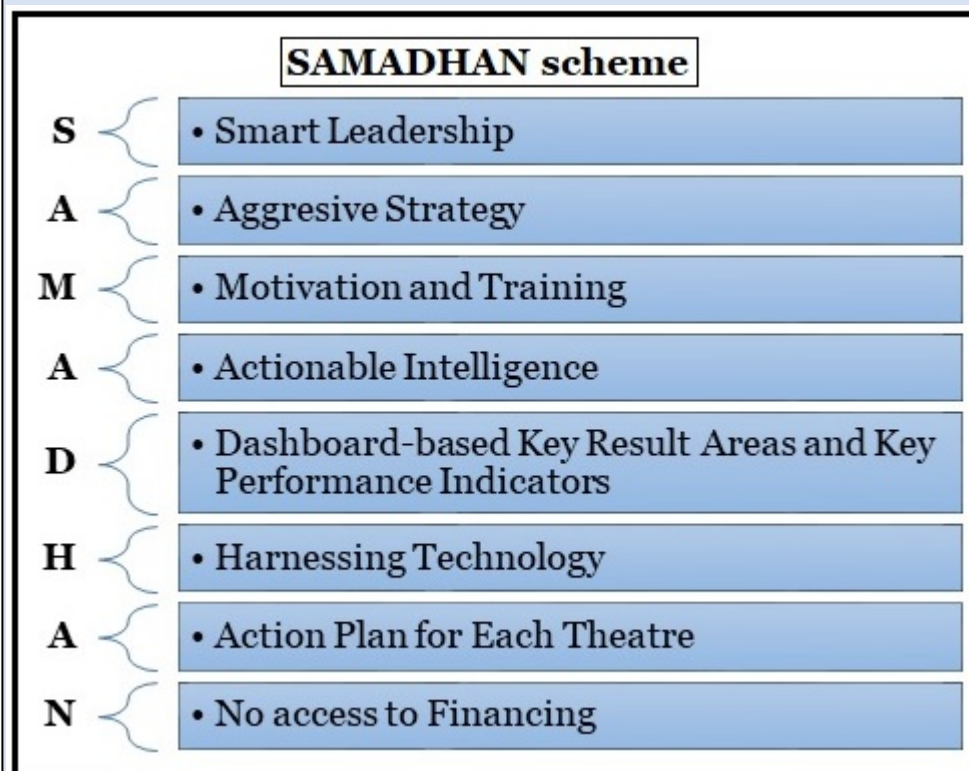
empowerment and development, it should be challenged by the state and the society.

- The solution to the Maoist problem is not only about providing security and development to the tribals, but also about respecting and fulfilling their aspirations and dignity.
- The Maoists' hidden agenda and violence need to be countered by a long-term vision and commitment.

### Quick facts

#### Measures taken to combat Maoism related insurgency

- **Security related expenditure (SRE)** - It is constituted by central government to provide financial support to the states affected by left wing extremisms (LWE).
- **Special infrastructure scheme (SIS)** - The scheme is to strengthen local police and intelligence.
- **Special central assistance** -It will provide fund to build infrastructure such as roads in LWE districts.
- **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)** -CRPF has been consistently enlarging its footprint by opening new camps deeper in the jungles of Jharkhand.
- **Bastariya Battalion** - It is launched by CRPF to recruit the local people to gain the local intelligence about the Maoist.
- **Counter-terrorism National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Enforcement Directorate** - They have been directed to track CPI (Maoist) cadres, leaders and sympathizers with the aim to choke their funding.
- **District Reserve Guard (DRG)** - It is constituted primarily in Chhattisgarh to include the local police in neutralizing the Maoists.
- **SAMADHAN**- It was launched in 2017.



### References

1. [The Hindu- Grass root democracy against Maoists](#)
2. [MHA- FAQs about Maoism](#)



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