Attack on CRPF Personnel

Why in news?

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The disaster at Sukma, where 25 CRPF jawans lost their lives, represents multiple failures at different levels.

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What went wrong?

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- It is inexplicable that the **post of Director General of the CRPF should have been kept vacant** for more than 50 days. And this absence creates a sense of uncertainty in the ranks.
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- It is also incomprehensible that there is **no clarity yet about the strategic approach** to the Maoist problem, even though the Indian state has been battling it for the last 50 years.
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- In 2006, **a 14-point policy** was announced which talked of addressing the problem simultaneously "on political, security and development fronts".
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- The policy, however, never got implemented on the ground.
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- During UPA rule, P. Chidambaram, summarised government policy in three graphic words in 2009: **"Clear, hold and develop",** and was executed by a **massive deployment** of the Central forces in the affected regions.
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- But, his approach was, not shared by everyone in the Congress. As a result, the security forces felt hamstrung in their operations.
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- In the **absence of any clear-cut guidelines** or directions from the Central government, every state government has been dealing with the problem as per its own assessment of the situation.
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- The 74 Battalion personnel also seem to have made **serious tactical mistakes.**

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- It shows, the CRPF in Sukma appeared to be lacking in the required level of training and leadership.
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- It is said the CRPF personnel were attacked by about 300 Maoist guerrillas. Obviously, they must have been in the area for a couple of days.
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- How did the **local administration and intelligence have no scent of their presence**? This intelligence vacuum is inexcusable.
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What are the concerns?

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- Chhattisgarh has witnessed the highest level of Maoist violence in the country.
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- But, it has **not extended the kind of support** it should have to the Central armed police forces, which often, are left to fend for themselves.
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- Shortages of Mine Protected Vehicles (MPV). (Every battalion must hold 7-10 MPVs, as of now only 1 exists in each battalion). Also, inadequate use of technology in surveillance.
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- In the Sukma incident, 25 CRPF personnel were martyred, but there is no information yet about injuries to state police personnel. Either they were not there or were in very small numbers.
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- Chhattisgarh, also, has been **sluggish in building the capacities of its police forces.**
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- There are about **10,000 vacancies** in different ranks in the state police. Twenty-three sanctioned police stations have yet to be set up. And, there are 14 police stations without any telephone link.
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- A fundamental flaw in the anti-Maoist operations in state today is that they are heavily dependent on the Central government.
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- The mindset seems to be that Maoism is the government of India’s problem and, therefore, the Central forces should bear the brunt of extremist violence.
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- The great **lesson we learnt in Punjab** was that until the state police makes a frontal attack on the terrorists/Maoists, the battle would never be won.
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What must be the response?

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- **There is a need for a dedicated Internal security Ministry.**
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- Centre’s response must be to **double down to extend the presence of the administration** in Bastar, to break the isolation and reach social services to the people.
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- There is also a need to **boost the morale of the security and police forces.**
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- The recent spate of attacks and ambushes indicates a breakdown in intelligence-gathering, possibly on account of a **lack of effective coordination** between the State police and paramilitary forces.
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- The inadequacies are more grave than the administrative oversight.
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- The Centre needs to urgently put in place, in mission mode, measures to **strengthen, expand and arm the State police,** most of all in Chhattisgarh.
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- The damage and loss of life from attacks with grenade launchers and improvised explosive devices (IED) can be lessened with movement in armored vehicles.
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- In 2012, the Home Ministry had proposed to replicate Greyhounds in five Maoism-hit States. Clearly, the proposal has not seen the light of day, especially in Chhattisgarh.
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- Also, state govts must realise that it is their battle. They have to lead and the Central forces are to play only a supportive role.
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- This needs the State governments to show far more political will to persuade local communities than they currently do.
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- The Maoists long ago lost the argument with their murderous ways. But, the

political and civil establishment is yet to win that argument by addressing the people’s security and welfare needs, and their concerns about extractive state policies.
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Source: The Hindu & The Indian Express

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