Gaining Adivasi Trust for a Maoism free India

***Mains**: GS- III | Internal Security*

Why in News?

The union home minister addressed a press conference in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh, his first conference since March 31, 2026, when India was officially declared Maoist-free.

What is Maoism?

- Maoism in India, widely known as the Naxalite movement, is a ***far-left radical communist insurgency*** driven by the ideology of **Mao Zedong.**
- **Spearheaded by -** The banned Communist Party of India (Maoist).
- **Aim -** To overthrow the Indian government through an armed peasant rebellion known as a "protracted people's war".
- **Historical Origin** - **The Naxalbari Uprising -** The movement originated in 1967 in the village of Naxalbari in West Bengal, where marginalized sharecroppers revolted against oppressive landlords.
- This gave the movement its colloquial name, "Naxalism".
- **Core Ideology and Goals**
    - **Armed Struggle** - Maoists believe that state power can only be seized through violent insurrection and guerrilla warfare.
    - Their armed wing, the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), frequently targets state institutions and security forces.
    - **Agrarian Revolution** - The movement aims to overthrow what they view as a feudal and imperialist Indian state.
    - Their socio-economic goal is to seize land from landlords and corporations, redistributing it to landless peasants and the rural poor.
    - **Resistance to Exploitation -** The insurgency draws much of its support from marginalized tribal communities, or Adivasis.
    - Maoist cadres often rally these groups against displacement caused by government infrastructure projects and private mining corporations.
- **Geographic Presence**

    - **The "Red Corridor"** - The Maoist insurgency primarily operates in a contiguous arc across central and eastern India.
    - **Active States -** Their influence is largely concentrated in rural and forested regions of states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Telangana, and Maharashtra.
- **National Security Threat -** India has designated the CPI (Maoist) as a terrorist organization under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Who are Bastar's Adivasis?

- Bastar's Adivasis (including the **Gond**, **Maria**, **Muria**, and **Halba** communities) make up roughly two-thirds of the 2.7 million population in the ecologically sensitive Bastar region of Chhattisgarh.
- Their way of life, centered entirely on forest ecosystems and minor produce.
- **Key Issues Facing the Community - Militarization-** For decades, the region has been a focal point of anti-insurgency operations.
- While the government has significantly curtailed Maoist influence, heavy militarization and resource extraction continue to displace communities and threaten their traditional lands.
- **Marginalization -** Adivasis frequently face severe hardships in basic services, such as traveling 25 to 50 km to reach the nearest banking networks in towns like Bijapur.
- The gradual transfer of local lands to corporations and mining mafias remains a critical concern.
- **Ecological Stewardship -** Despite the geopolitical struggles, these communities maintain a deep connection with nature and lead massive ecological restoration and seed-saving efforts.

What is the Governance and Welfare Roadmap for Bastar's Adivasis by 2031?

- It is assured that 2031 would be the next milestone for ensuring the overall welfare of Bastar's Adivasis.
- This objective is to be achieved through democratic values, cooperation and development.
- The government also intends to expand its outreach by delivering welfare schemes to the doorsteps of local communities through designated centers operated by the security forces.
- One of the methodologies is emphasized for the empowerment of Adivasis

was a commitment to the tiered system of governance, from the tehsil level upwards to the Centre.
- Welfare schemes, the road laying, and the installation of mobile communication towers do contribute significantly to improving the ease of living.

What is the Core Philosophy of PESA?

- **Cornerstone of Local Self-Governance -** The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) (PESA) Act, 1996 elevates the Gram Sabha as the foundational unit of grassroots governance.
- **Decisive Constitutional Mandate -** The Act explicitly empowers the Gram Sabha with decisive powers to:
  - Safeguard and preserve Adivasi identity and cultural traditions.
  - Manage and protect local community resources (Jal, Jungle, Zameen).
  - Resolve local disputes in accordance with traditional customary laws.
- **Adivasi Aspirations -** Tribal communities are deeply aware of these constitutional guarantees and are unlikely to scale down their expectations of self-governance.

What are the Structural Bottlenecks and Dilution of the Act?

- **Asymmetric Implementation -** Because the operationalization of the Act was left to individual State governments, each state interpreted and applied it differently, frequently undermining its core spirit and intent.
- **Overshadowing by Bureaucracy -** Constitutional governance in these regions was envisioned to run through two parallel channels:
  - The elected Panchayati Raj institutions (led by the Gram Sabha) and
  - Government-appointed officials (such as Tehsildars and District Collectors).
- In practice, the bureaucratic channel routinely dominates and overshadows democratic grassroots institutions.
- **Consent vs. Consultation -** State governments have often attempted to circumvent tribal authority to pursue external economic or administrative objectives.
- A key example is the Chhattisgarh government's 2022 proposal to amend the Act by replacing the mandatory requirement of "consent" with mere "consultation", a move that severely dilutes the Gram Sabha's veto power.
- **Administrative Malpractice -** There have been critical institutional failures on the ground, including instances where Gram Sabha resolutions and consent records were allegedly forged or fabricated with mala fide

intent to bypass tribal opposition.

What is the ethical perspective of Negative Peace vs. Positive Peace?

- **The Ethical Dilemma -** Eliminating the Maoist insurgency through security operations achieves **"Negative Peace"** (This just means the physical fighting has stopped for now.)
- **The Problem -** Keeping things quiet by using heavy military force—without fixing the real, underlying problems—is not a complete or lasting solution.
- **The Ethical Imperative -** Realizing **"Positive Peace"** requires rectifying historical injustices and institutionalizing structural equity.
- True peace is not just the elimination of an armed threat, but the active presence of justice, dignity, and rights.

What lies ahead?

- Achieving sustained peace in tribal pockets like Bastar requires shifting focus from basic infrastructural development to deeper structural corrections.
- **Addressing Core Grievances -** The ultimate metrics that determine tribal trust in the state relate directly to the security of their Jal, Jungle, and Zameen (water, forest, and land).
- **Redefining the "Mainstream" -** Rather than forcing a top-down integration, genuinely participatory governance demands that the government allow Adivasis to organically define the "mainstream" they wish to integrate into.
- **Unlocking Positive Peace-** Prioritizing the mandatory consent of the Gram Sabha on matters affecting tribal lives and livelihoods offers the structural change needed to achieve "positive peace".

Reference

The Hindu | Next battle is for Adivasi trust

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