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The successful operation carried out by the Maharashtra Police and its elite C-60 team of commandos against Naxals in the Mardintola forest in the Korchi area of the Gadchiroli district has once again brought into focus the state's anti-Naxal operations. As many as 27 Naxals, including wanted Maoist leader Milind Teltumbde, were killed in the police operation. Teltumbde was the head of Maharashtra-Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh zone of the banned CPI (M) and carried a reward of Rs 50 lakh. Teltumbde's killing is a major blow to the Naxals because apart from heading the movement in three states, he was also responsible for building the teams and recruiting people. He was allegedly conducting weapons training for their cadre and had a strong network in all the areas. His killing will boost the anti-Naxal operations in all the three states. According to the reports, Teltumbde was trying to create a special Naxal zone in the areas of North Gadchiroli, Gondia and Balaghat. His killing has surely eliminated Naxal presence in these areas. He is the younger brother of Anand Teltumbde, who is currently in jail for his alleged involvement in the Elgar Parishad case. Milind Teltumbde has also been shown wanted in that case. In the past few years, the Naxals have ambushed and killed several policemen in Gadchiroli. In 2009, 52 policemen were killed by Naxals in two ambushes in North Gadchiroli. In 2019, Naxals killed 15 policemen with a

Tackling the Naxal menace head-on

In the first of a three-part series, the writer talks about the challenges the state police face in the Naxal-infested areas

landmine blast. This was done as a way of retaliation for an operation conducted by the Gadchiroli Police in April 2018, when they killed as many as 40 Naxals. Following these incidents, the operation carried out on November 13 carries a lot of significance. It was an operation carried out in the most clinical fashion, working on specific intelligence, a team of more than 300 specially trained C-60 Commandos led by Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Somen Munde on the ground and supervised by young and dynamic IPS officer Ankit Goyal, Superintendent of Police (SP), Gadchiroli. With minimum damage to the police (four commandos were injured) the team conducted the operation. It has, no doubt, dealt a body blow to the Naxals and their operations in Maharashtra and even in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Having originated in the Naxalbari area of West Bengal (WB) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Naxal movement reached Maharashtra in the early 1980s and by the 1990s, the movement had spread across several states, from WB, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Orissa. It was called the 'Red Corridor' and had spread across 40% of our territory. In fact, the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in the DGPs conference in 2009, said that Naxalism is "the single biggest internal security challenge ever faced by India". In 1995 to 1998, I was posted as Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police (Nagpur Range). The state government and the Maharashtra Police had already done a lot of work with regards to tackling Naxalism. They had implemented a two-pronged strategy to tackle the menace. One was to strengthen and modernise our police forces with the latest guns and

ammunition and include young and fearless officers to tackle the Naxals head-on. The other strategy was to build the local infrastructure and provide better amenities to the local citizens so that they don't get influenced by the Naxals and their ideology. The state government had involved the Border Road Organisation (BRO) to build roads in the area. After having been there for a few days, I realised this is an issue which will have to be dealt with a 360-degree view and all aspects will have to be taken into consideration to empower the police and build their morale and then strengthen them. I also visited the Greyhound Academy in Andhra Pradesh multiple times and held several meetings with police officers in the Bastar area of Madhya Pradesh (now it is a part of Chhattisgarh). One modus operandi that the Naxals used to inflict serious damages on policemen was done in Andhra Pradesh, wherein, they would blow up police stations and then plunder the place, kill the policemen and loot all the arms, ammunition, food, and other materials. It was as per the philosophy of Mao "to treat the Teltumbde's killing will boost the anti-Naxal operations in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh state arms and ammunition as their own". To ensure that they didn't do the same in our state, I sent a proposal to the state government. The 'empowered committee' headed by P Subramaniam, the then Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), almost instantly cleared the proposal and allotted funds. The money was used to build strong, concrete and brick structures for our forces. Sleeping quarters were built, even the armory was built with a concrete structure. Proper storage facilities were built



which were solid structures and would not fall or collapse by grenade attacks. A proper protection wall was built around the entire compound so that our policemen were not targeted while they were sleeping or resting. Watch towers were erected on each of the four corners of the compound so that there were no surprise attacks. Incidentally, after this fortification, there has not been a single attack in Gadchiroli on any police building or structure till date. In fact, after this change, Naxals had to change their strategy and they retreated further into the jungles and started targeting moving cars and patrol vehicles and policemen who moved around on foot. Proper and protected sleeping arrangements were made for our forces, including providing them with adequate beddings, mattresses, bedsheets, blankets, etc. Healthy and hygienic sanitation, wells, kitchen, drinking water, playing areas and bathing facilities were put in place with a shower installed so that whenever the policemen would come back from a tiring patrol, they could clean themselves up, freshen up and take proper rest. During my tenure from 1995 to

1998, several initiatives were undertaken. Most prominent was the 'Jan Jagran Abhiyan', a programme to make the adivasi villagers to be aware of the various government programmes. Thousands of the villagers used to assemble and participate in the day-long events. Simultaneously we ran another massive drive to convince the local Naxals to put down their weapons and surrender. It was among the most successful programmes conducted, with hundreds of Naxals surrendering during that time. Senior IPS officer and current Police Commissioner of Mira-Bhayandar-Vasai-Virar, Sadanand Date, was posted as Superintendent of Police in Bhandara 1995. He was instrumental in getting top Naxal Shivaji Tumreddy and his wife Sangita to surrender, both carrying an award of more than Rs 2 lakh. Shivaji surrendered with an AK-47 assault rifle, ammunition, and cash. His wife also surrendered with a firearm and cash. VV Laxminarayan and S Jagannathan were two young IPS officers who also did tremendous, good work in Gadchiroli during the three years that I was there. In the past three decades, there have been several initiatives taken by the local administration, the police, and state government to fight and tackle the Naxal menace. Even

though, in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, the Naxals had a significant hold over the 'Red Corridor', there is now a clear evidence that their influence is dwindling. It is thanks to various developmental measures taken by the central government, respective state governments and the police administration of those states. In Maharashtra, the state government and the police administration were always forthwith with whatever help, support and financial aid was required. Thanks to this and various measures taken, the Naxal influence has reduced drastically over the years. After having suffered heavy casualties in Naxal attacks in the past two decades (the year 2009 was the worst, when Maharashtra police suffered as many as 52 casualties), the Maharashtra Police has slowly but surely established its authority in the area. As per the records and statistics available with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) incidents of Naxal attacks on the police forces and people have been decreasing in Maharashtra. For example, from 2009 till date, there have been as many as 390 incidents, in which 216 Naxals have been killed (including 46 killed on November 13, 2021), 787 Naxals arrested, almost 1800 kgs of explosives have been recovered, 126 of our policemen have been martyred. From two companies, four platoons, and 15 dalams in 2009, the Naxals have been reportedly reduced to only one active platoon, while three others have been dormant, as of date.

(THE WRITER OF THIS ARTICLE IS THE RETIRED DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE (DGP), MAHARASHTRA & FORMER CHIEF OF THE ELITE MUMBAI CRIME BRANCH. HE HAS WORKED IN THE INTELLIGENCE BUREAU (IB) AND WAS POSTED AS DIG IN GADCHIROLI. HE IS ALSO AN AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR.)

MBMC bags second spot in Maha, 8th in country

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The Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC) has bagged the second spot at the state level in the Safai Mitra challenge which was organized under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). The results were announced at the Swachh Amrit Mahotsav organized at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on Saturday.

The civic administration also claimed the 8th position in the country-wide list of competing cities, falling in the sub-category of having a population between 3-10 lakh.

"The initiatives are not just limited to challenges, but it will be a regular part of the overall sanitation process. We are thankful to our staffers, elected representatives and above all the citizens for their cooperation," said municipal commissioner Dilip Dhole.

Apart from launching various awareness events and welfare schemes including Swachhata Udyami Yojana, distribution of uniforms and safety gear and skill development training sessions, the civic administration has been conducting

Safai Mitra painting competitions with the help of the education department and also the ambitious public-oriented Safai Mitra Internship Program which was aimed to develop a bridge between Safai Mitras and the youth, to collaborate, engage and spread awareness about Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge-2021 across the twin-city.

The initiative aims to conduct mechanized cleaning operations in order to prevent deaths and fatalities of sanitation workers

An integral part of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), the Safai-Mitra Challenge is a first of its kind initiative introduced by the MoHUA on the occasion of World Toilet Day in November last year, to ensure safety, well-being and dignity of sanitation workers and to eradicate the menace of hazardous cleaning in the field of public health and hygiene via mechanized cleaning operations in order to prevent deaths and fatalities of sanitation workers.



The Safai-Mitra Challenge ensures safety, well-being and dignity of sanitation workers