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Maoists strike at Sunabeda sanctuary

SAMBALPUR/NUAPADA: Armed Maoists struck in Sunabeda sanctuary in Nuapada district and burnt down forest offices last night. Around 40 Maoists, including women cadres, targeted the rest shed, ranger and forester's offices of Sunabeda Wildlife Division at Sunabeda village. They tied up watchman Amar Majhi before setting all documents on fire.

Later, they moved to Cherechuan forest gate and took Majhi along with them. On their way, they seized a mini-truck and an MUV and forced the drivers at gunpoint to ferry them. After they reached Cherchaun at about 11 pm, they demolished the forest gate. The cadres then assaulted forest guard Nuapan Majhi and anti-poaching staffer Mansingh Sabaria. There too they set all documents on fire. When the cadres were returning to Sunabeda village, watchman Majhi jumped off the mini-truck and escaped to safety even as the Maoists melted into the forest towards Chhattisgarh.

Majhi later said that the Maoists had planned to take him hostage in exchange of the DFO. The cadres pasted posters which stated that their attack was in protest against police atrocities in Lalgah.

Nuapada SP Bibek Rath said steps are being taken to counter the Maoists' attack. DFO (Wildlife), Sunabeda, Biswaranjan Rout said the documents, which were set afire, related to claim petition on Rehabilitation Policy of 2006 of forest-dwellers.

Sunabeda sanctuary, spread over 600 sq km, seemed to have become a safe haven for the Maoists. Bordering Chhattisgarh, the sanctuary is being used by the Maoists to train their cadres. Saranda forest in Jharkhand has also become a Maoist hideout and a base for planning attacks. The cadres seemed to have entered the district after the mayhem in Nayagarh through Sonapur and Balangir districts.

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