

The Statesman

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[Orissa Plus] —————

‘Villagers seek Maoist help’

;Statesman News Service

BARIPADA, 2 JULY: Telenga Ho and Kuju Ho, the two Maoist leaders who were arrested from Jenabila and Yamunagard villages yesterday evening, have reportedly admitted that some of the villagers inside the core area of Simlipal Tiger Reserve had contacted them saying they needed their “help” against the government decision to evict them from the forest.

The duo was arrested from Jenabila and Yamunagard villages in the forest core area, about 75 km from Jasipur police station. They were produced in a Karanjia court today.

Police sources said the duo has admitted to their role in the attack on the forest beat houses and guest houses, as well as in assaulting some tourists in the tiger reserve area in March. About 100 cadres have stormed these places and ransacked the government establishments. They had also allegedly hurled bombs in the forest area.

The duo, against whom at least four cases have been registered in Mayurbhanj, while three have been registered in Keonjhar district, have reportedly claimed that they were invited by the villagers to help fight against the government’s proposed eviction drive.

Sources said the administration had issued eviction notices to the villagers of four areas ~ Jenabila, Kabatghai, Bakua and Yamuna - in the core area of Simlipal National Park. As some of the villagers had solicited their help, the Maoists had also found an opportunity to strengthen their network in the dense forest, sources said.

The ultras had chalked out the forest attack plan about nine months ago and as the first step had strengthened their public contact and network, police sources said. The rebels had started provoking the villagers citing the lack of basic amenities like road connectivity and health services in their area.

Administration sources claimed that the eviction notice was issued as per government norms. They assured that the oustees would be rehabilitated and given due compensation.

However, they conceded that some of the villagers had been demanding a higher package for rehabilitation, and that it was possible that a few of them had contacted the Maoists to fight for their case. While 20 families of Jenabila and Kabatghai villages have been shifted, roughly 20 families of Kabatghai, 30 families of Bakua and 10 families of Yamuna village are reluctant to move off their habitation, official sources said.

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