

Maharashtra's Urban Maoism Bill 2024: Provisions, Concerns, and Impact Explained

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Urban Maoism Bill Maharashtra Latest News

- The Maharashtra Assembly has passed the Special Public Security Bill, 2024, targeting “urban Maoism” and left-wing extremism.
- It criminalises activities like disturbing public order and encouraging law disobedience. The Bill allows property forfeiture even before conviction, raising concerns over vague definitions and potential police misuse.
- It now awaits clearance from the Legislative Council and the Governor’s assent.

Urban Maoism

- Urban Maoism refers to the CPI (Maoist) strategy of expanding its influence in cities by mobilising students, intellectuals, professionals, and religious minorities.

- Their methods include creating NGOs, using protests, media campaigns, and infiltrating political and civil society organisations to weaken the state from within.
- These supporters may not be armed insurgents but are accused of aiding the movement through intellectual, financial, or logistical help, including media campaigns, legal defence, or resource mobilisation.

The Strategy Document: STIR

- The 2004 document titled ***Strategies and Tactics of Indian Revolution (STIR)*** guides CPI (Maoist) activities. It specifically directs cadres to:
 - Build urban bases to support armed struggle in rural areas.
 - Mobilise intellectuals, students, professionals, and minorities by spreading a sense of victimhood.
 - Form secret alliances with political parties, civil society groups, and other anti-state organisations.
 - Infiltrate mass organisations while maintaining secrecy.

Real-World Examples and Allegations

- Official communications reveal alleged links between Maoists and groups like Popular Front of India (PFI).
- **Elgar Parishad Case (2018):** Several activists and intellectuals were arrested in connection with alleged Maoist links following violence during the Bhima Koregaon event in Maharashtra.

Threats and Challenges

- **Expansion Beyond Forest Areas:** While traditional Maoist activity is concentrated in rural belts like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, urban support networks help sustain it.
- **Disruption of Law and Order:** Authorities claim Urban Maoists use protests, NGOs, and legal platforms to undermine state policy or law enforcement.
- **Difficult to Identify:** Unlike armed insurgents, urban supporters operate under legal covers like academia, activism, or journalism, making legal action complex.

A New Kind of Warfare

- Urban Naxalism is described as ***Naxalism minus AK-47***.
- Instead of guns, it uses propaganda, protests, and alliances to destabilise the Indian state.
- It represents a form of **Fifth Generation Warfare (5GW)**, where the battlefield includes media, politics, and public perception.

Maharashtra's Special Public Security Bill: Background

- First introduced in July 2024, Maharashtra's Special Public Security Bill lapsed due to elections and was reintroduced in December after joint committee clearance.
- Aimed at countering "naxalism," it empowers the government to declare organisations "unlawful" and penalise individuals linked to them.
- Modelled after the UAPA, it covers a broader range of "unlawful activities," targeting urban Maoist networks and alleged support structures within cities.

Maharashtra's Special Public Security Bill: Key Provisions and Penalties

- The Bill defines unlawful activity as acts disrupting public order, violence, disobedience to law, or aiding extremist organisations.
- It prescribes 2–7 years' jail and fines for membership, fundraising, or managing such organisations. Offences are **cognizable and non-bailable**.
 - Cognizable offences are serious crimes where police can arrest without a warrant.
 - Non-bailable offences require a court's discretion for bail, and are usually reserved for more serious crimes.
- The government can forfeit properties linked to unlawful organisations even before trial, with a 15-day notice.
- Affected parties can challenge forfeiture in the High Court within 30 days.
- An Advisory Board of three High Court-qualified persons must confirm the unlawful status of organisations.

Maharashtra's Special Public Security Bill: Key Concerns

- Unlike UAPA and PMLA, Maharashtra's Bill uses **vague terms** like "practising disobedience" or "disrupting communication," sparking fears it could criminalise legitimate protests.
- While UAPA and PMLA limit property attachment to terror or crime proceeds, Maharashtra's Bill allows **pre-trial property forfeiture** without such safeguards.
- Critics argue it **dilutes constitutional protections** like presumption of innocence, risking misuse against dissenters.

Source **IE**; **DDN**

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