

Teachers on strike, CRPF men hold chalk & duster

JAMSHEDPUR: Donning battle fatigues, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel have been trekking a new terrain in Maoist-hit Jharkhand villages, which, for a change, is not hostile.



Responding to a call by people of remote Saranda villages in West Singhbhum district, the CRPF men have been conducting classes in schools so that students do not suffer due to the ongoing strike of para teachers in the state.

Villagers of Tholkobad had appealed to officials of CRPF'S 197 battalion teach students, who had had been deprived of regular classes since para teachers went on strike on November 16. The school in the village was dependent on only one teacher after three para teachers joined the statewide strike.

Senior officials of the CRPF subsequently decided to conduct classes in other schools as well. Apart from Tholkobad, two to four CRPF men teaching students at three schools in Chhotanagra and a primary school in Roam, among others.

Vikas Pandey, assistant commandant at CRPF'S Roam camp, said teaching students had been a memorable experience for him. "Students are serious in their studies. They also take deep interest in our profession, weapons and other aspects of para military force," he added.

An official of the central para military force said CRPF inspector general (IG) Sanjay Anand Latkar had welcomed the initiative of the 197 battalion. He reportedly directed all the 22 battalions in the state to conduct classes in schools near their camps till striking teachers resumed their work.

Ashish Kumar, deputy commandant, 197 battalion, said qualified CRPF personnel in various camps in Saranda have been deputed on 'class duty' till para teachers are on strike. "The noble service will continue even after the strike is called off if the locals and school administration seek for it," he added.

Government schools in remote Saranda forest are mostly dependent on para teachers.

The state education department had lauded the effort of the CRPF and thanked the para military force for helping them in tackling the crisis.

The CRPF is the lead anti-Maoist operations force in the country and has deployed 20 battalions (about 20,000 troops) in the tribal dominated state to conduct armed operations against the Left Wing Extremists (LWE).