

LAYING OUT THE ROADMAP OF RURAL GROWTH

JAIRAM'S STRATEGY TO TACKLE MAOIST HOSTILITY HAS GENERATED A NEW RAY OF HOPE

One of the most distinguished economist and an influential politician, Jairam Ramesh was promoted to Cabinet Minister and given the charge of the Ministry for Rural Development in July 2011. Soon after, he was also named minister (additional charge) of the new Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

It has been reported that in the civilian sector, rural development is the single largest spending ministry. Ramesh recently informed the media that the government may pass the Land Acquisition Bill in the upcoming Budget session of Parliament in March 2012. The Bill has been referred to a Parliamentary Committee for further examination to overhaul the century-old land acquisition laws in India. The Bill would protect the interests of farmers/land owners and not bar purchase of land by the private companies, corporates among others. It would enable acquisition of land for industries, industrialisation and some form of urbanisation.

Having graduated from IIT-Bombay in 1975 with a B.Tech. in Mechanical Engineering, his credentials perfectly match up to his accomplishments. From 1975-77 he studied at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College and received Masters of Science in Public Policy and Public Management. In 1977-78, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he studied technology policy, economics, engineering, and management, as part of the newly-established inter-disciplinary technology policy programme. In 2001, IIT-B presented him with their Distinguished Alumnus Award. He is also a founding member of the Indian School of Business in Hyderabad and is a member of the International Council of the New York-based Asia Society. In 2009, Ramesh was given independent charge of Environment and Forests as Minister of State in the Congress-led administration. He was also the chief negotiator for India at the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark.

One cannot overlook his strategy for containing Maoist violence. As per a recent report, he mentioned that the government is paying

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special attention on 78 Maoist-affected districts, including eight in Andhra Pradesh, to prevent the youth and children from being enrolled as Maoist cadres. He has also been open about his opinion that the government should be more sensitive about the needs of the tribals. Citing non-development as the main reason why Maoists are flourishing, he recently mentioned that the government needs to focus on growth, political dialogue and police action to tackle the problem.

He has also said that the government is

keen on undertaking various development projects in Maoist affected districts. Ramesh believes that Maoists are not politically undefeatable. He has been reiterating that this is a war of ideologies. He thinks that it is a war to win over the hearts of the tribal communities, who have not always been the beneficiaries. Be it the question of the land acquisition bill or finding solutions to the Maoist problem, the hopes that the Centre has from Ramesh are many and the results should be there for everyone to see.

