

Ramesh: Defeat Maoists with development

RANCHI: Maoists can be defeated ideologically if programmes meant for rural development are successfully implemented, Union Minister for Rural Development Jairam Ramesh said on Sunday.

"The police and the CRPF have their special places [in dealing with Naxalism], but I believe the ideological battle can only be won through rural development, which has got a special importance," the Minister told reporters here.

"If the rural works are taken up properly, we will be

• "If rural works are taken up properly, we will successfully deal with Naxalism in six years"

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successful in dealing with Naxalism in the next five or six years," Mr. Ramesh said.

Commenting on the state of affairs in Jharkhand, he said: "The fact is the tardy pace of road works in Jharkhand is mostly attributed to extortion threats faced by contractors. Lohardaga, Sim-

dega, Latehar and Gumla are some of the districts where work under the Prime Minister's Rural Road Scheme is a cause for concern".

Pointing out that Jharkhand is home to 14 out of the 60 Naxal-infested districts in the country, Mr. Ramesh said he would visit the State every

three months to monitor development programmes in these districts. He said concrete roads and culverts would be constructed in the districts' rocky terrains.

The Minister also stressed on the need to strengthen the three-tier panchayat system in the State and advised the Jharkhand Government to recruit development officers and junior engineers at that level. The Centre, he added, would provide 75 per cent share on the condition that recruitment priority should be given to locals. — PTI