

Maoists attack Essar Steel plant in Chhattisgarh

About 300 heavily armed Maoists attacked an iron ore beneficiation plant of Essar Steel in Chhattisgarh early Friday and set 53 trucks and three heavy machines on fire, a senior police officer said.

The attack was carried out near Kirandul, some 400 km from here, in the state's southern Dantewada district where the insurgents have been running a de-facto administration for years.

'Armed rebels attacked Essar Steel's iron ore facility and created havoc for hours, by setting at least 53 trucks and three heavy machines on fire, in a raid that ended in the early hours of Friday,' R. K. Vij, inspector general of police of Bastar range, told reporters.

The plant supplies high quality iron ore from its 8 million tonne per annum (MTPA) unit to the pellet plant at Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

The iron ore slurry is pumped through a 267-km-long pipe line to the pellet plant from the Kirandul facility.

Police said rebels overpowered a few employees working in the plant during night shift and then sprayed diesel on vehicles and set them on fire.

Three heavy machines were also damaged in the fire. The rebels later slipped into the nearby dense forests.

The rebels left pamphlets at the attack site saying their act was to protest transportation of local rare natural resource iron ore to outside the state and the country.

In recent months, rebels have stepped up attacks on industrial units. They raided a mining facility of public sector Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) in Durg district March 27 and walked away with 1.75 tonnes of explosives kept for blasting rocks and surfaces to make space for iron ore mining.

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