

Maoists cut off power supply to Chhattisgarh districts

Nearly 1,500 villages in four Chhattisgarh districts of the restive Bastar region were plunged into darkness Thursday after Maoists blasted power supply towers, officials said.

Power was cut off in entire Dantewada, Bijapur, Bastar and Narayanpur districts when leftist insurgents brought down high tension electricity supply towers somewhere in an interior forested location in Dantewada district.

Officials say it may take a week or more to resume normal power supply.

Chief Minister Raman Singh described the blackout situation in Bastar as 'extremely grim'. He held an emergency meeting with Chief Secretary Shivraj Singh and state-run Chhattisgarh State Electricity Board (CSEB) officials and engineers to tackle the situation.

Terming the Maoists' act as 'inhuman and anti-people', Singh asked the CSEB officials to immediately rush a team, under police security, to begin work for resumption of power supply.

Singh further appealed to the people to maintain patience amid 'unprecedented blackout and help authorities to resume supply as early as possible'.

Chhattisgarh's Bastar region is spread out in about 40,000 sq km area and in its forested interiors, rebels have been running a de-facto administration for almost two decades.

In May last year, rebels had repeatedly attacked power infrastructure in Bastar that kept the entire region in darkness for over a week. They even attacked a CSEB team that went to work to restore the supply.

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