Goaltore (West Midnapore), Jan. 3: Police today detected a landmine planted in a road near Metala forest here during a joint operation with the BSF.

(02.01.2004)

District superintendent of police Praveen Kumar said this evening that People's War guerrillas had planted the landmine in an attempt to kill policemen. "The landmine was fitted with 10 kg of explosives, a long electric wire was drawn inside the forest and fitted to a detonator. We spotted it minutes before crossing the area with a police jeep carrying eight security personnel. Had it exploded, the police van would have blown up killing all of them on the spot. We have recovered the explosives and the detonator," Kumar said.

The detection follows the deadly explosion in Bandwan, Purulia, in October last year that killed the officer-in-charge of the police station there and another blast the next month in which five policemen were injured in Salboni, also in West Midnapore. Alarmed at growing Naxalite activities, a special team of district police officials and BSF jawans has started a combing operation in the forests, the favoured hideout of the extremists.

Acting on a tip-off, a large contingent of security forces was headed this morning for the Metala forest in search of Naxalites. "While travelling in a jeep, we spotted a heap on the kuccha road and noticed a wire lying by it. Smelling something wrong, we dug the road and the landmine was detected. We immediately defused it. We suspect someone was waiting in the forest to trigger it. We have intensified the search operation after the incident," Kumar said. He said People's War activists were desperately trying to get back at the police after security forces arrested 10 Naxalites during recent combing operations.

Von: Calcutta Telegraph, 03 January 2004

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