

₹11K-cr project for Naxal-hit areas

■ Work likely to start in few weeks ■ 2 personnel hurt in encounter in C'garh

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The Centre will soon start work on a ₹11,000-crore project to provide road connectivity to 44 Naxal-affected districts, including Sukma in Chhattisgarh, which had recently witnessed one of the deadliest Maoist attacks. Sources said the project is likely to be started in the next few weeks and all necessary arrangements have been made for its launch.

According to sources five per cent of the total project cost — ₹550 crore — will be kept aside for administrative expenses, including for deployment

of security forces at strategic locations. To improve rural road connectivity in the left wing extremism affected districts, the Cabinet had last year approved the Centrally-sponsored "Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Affected Areas" scheme.

The project will be implemented under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in the districts that are critical from a security and communication point of view. Under the project, there will be construction or upgradation of 5,411 km of roads and 126

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bridges. Work will be taken up at an estimated cost of ₹11,724.53 crore in the above districts. Out of these 44 districts, the maximum are in Chhattisgarh, where 25 personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were

killed by Naxals last month. Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra are the other states that will be covered under the scheme.

Meanwhile, two personnel of the District Reserve Group were on Sunday injured in an encounter with Naxals in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district. Officials said the encounter took place at about 10 am near the forests of Timarpur-Basaguda axis in the said district when a security squad led by the CoBRA commandos of CRPF had an exchange of fire with Maoists in the area.