

Decline of Maoist Movement in India: Six Decades of Insurgency Nears End

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Maoist Insurgency Latest News

- Nearly six decades after the Naxalbari uprising, India's Maoist insurgency is witnessing deep internal rifts and sustained government pressure.
- Union Home Minister Amit Shah has pledged to end the insurgency by March next year, intensifying state action.
- Amid this backdrop, CPI (Maoist) ideological head **Mallojula Venugopal Rao** has twice urged the group to consider ending armed struggle to save the party.
- While Rao insists he has support from senior cadres and grassroots members, other leaders strongly rejected his stance, reaffirming commitment to armed rebellion.
- The contrasting positions highlight a weakening movement at odds over whether to persist with armed conflict or adapt to survive.

Decline of the Maoist Movement

- The Maoist movement has been severely weakened by continuous operations of central armed forces and elite state police units.
- Top leaders like former General Secretary **Nambala Keshav Rao (Basvaraj)** and several Central Committee members have been killed this year, alongside many cadres.
- Maoist strongholds are now restricted to small pockets in **Bastar, Dandakaranya, and the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border**, with dwindling supplies of arms and ammunition.

Shrinking Recruitment Base

- Recruitment challenges have deepened the crisis. Non-tribal recruits disappeared over a decade ago, and even tribal youth today are reluctant to join.
- The growing impact of government welfare schemes, free education, and digital connectivity has reduced the appeal of the Maoist cause.
- Young people, exposed to modern opportunities, are disinterested in the harsh, uncertain life of a guerrilla fighter.

Aging Leadership and Surrenders

- Most surviving Maoist leaders are now elderly and battling serious illnesses.
- Many find surrendering attractive, given the government's rehabilitation packages.
- Several leaders' wives and partners have already surrendered, reinforcing the trend toward disengagement from armed struggle.

Ideological Disconnect

- The inability of Maoist ideology **to adapt to social and material changes** in its former bastions has eroded its resonance.
- As tribal communities integrate into mainstream opportunities, the once formidable insurgency now appears to be in irreversible decline.

The Possible End of the Maoist Insurgency

- Despite recent surrender offers from senior Maoist leaders, both the Centre and state governments remain skeptical.
- Past attempts at peace — notably the 2004 talks with Andhra Pradesh under Y. S. Rajashekara Reddy — collapsed quickly due to mistrust, leading to a renewed surge in violence.
- Officials caution that **peace overtures may simply be a tactic to buy time and regroup**, given the Maoist ideology's deep commitment to armed struggle.
- Some security officials, however, note a shift in perspective among senior leaders who fear complete annihilation of the movement if current crackdowns continue.
- They believe surrendering and joining the mainstream may now be the only viable path to preserve remnants of the party and its ideology.

Maoist Insurgency: From Naxalbari to Decline (1967-2025)

- The Maoist-Naxal movement began in **Naxalbari, West Bengal**, on May 18, 1967, when armed peasants attacked landlords and seized land.
- Its ideologue, **Charu Mazumdar**, framed the “Historic Eight Documents,” calling the Indian state bourgeois and urging a protracted revolutionary war on the model of Mao and Castro.
- The uprising split CPI(M), leading Mazumdar and **Kanu Sanyal** to form CPI(ML) in 1969.
 - CPI(M) had opposed armed struggle.
- However, a strong government crackdown saw leaders killed, arrested, or underground. Mazumdar died in police custody in 1972.

Spread Beyond Bengal

- Though it weakened in Bengal, the movement spread to Andhra Pradesh, Srikakulam, and later across central India — Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and parts of Bengal.
- The leadership became Telugu-dominated, mobilising youth and students, particularly from Warangal’s Regional Engineering College in the 1970s, where many went underground to join the armed struggle.

Organisational Growth (1980s-2000s)

- In 1980, Kondapalli Seetaramaiah founded CPI(ML) People’s War, strengthening guerrilla warfare tactics.
- The Maoists engaged in armed violence, extortion, destruction of infrastructure, and forced recruitment, including of children.
- The insurgency peaked in the 2000s, with the **People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (2000) and the formation of CPI(Maoist) in 2004** after merging factions like People’s War and the Maoist Communist Centre.
- By the late 2000s, left-wing extremism affected nearly 180 districts across 92,000 sq km.

Government Counter-Offensive and Decline

- Government strategy combining security operations, development, and community engagement steadily weakened the insurgency.
- By April 2024, only 38 districts remained affected, of which six were deemed districts of concern.
- According to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in 2025 alone, 270 Naxalites were killed, 680 arrested, and 1,225 surrendered.

The Road Ahead

- After nearly six decades, the Maoist insurgency stands at a crossroads.
- Once widespread and feared, it is now confined to shrinking strongholds, weakened leadership, and declining recruitment, marking what could be its final chapter.

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