

Maoist Insurgency in India: Why Maoist Insurgency Is Nearing Its End

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Maoist Insurgency Latest News

- The killing of top Maoist leader Nambala Keshava Rao in May 2025 and the surrender of his successor Thippiri Tirupati in early 2026 have significantly weakened the CPI (Maoist).
- With most of its top leadership eliminated or arrested, the organisation appears largely leaderless.
- These developments have prompted claims, including by Amit Shah, that the decades-old Maoist insurgency is nearing its end, though questions remain about whether it can truly be considered finished.

Decline of India's Maoist Insurgency: Near End or Strategic Lull

- Recent operations, especially **Operation Kagar** (2024), have dealt severe blows to the Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) movement.
- Security forces have recorded thousands of surrenders ($\approx 3,840$), arrests ($\approx 2,220$), and deaths (≈ 600).

- Several top leaders, including Central Committee and Politburo members, have been eliminated or captured, leaving the organisation structurally weakened and leaderless.

Collapse of Organisational Structure

- The Maoist leadership has sharply declined:
 - Central Committee strength reduced from ~40 members to just 2
 - Many senior leaders killed, arrested, or surrendered
 - This reflects a near breakdown of command and coordination within the organisation.

Shrinking Geographical Influence

- The Maoists' territorial control has drastically reduced:
 - From ~180 districts in 2013
 - To just two districts (Bijapur and Sukma in Chhattisgarh) today
- Their once expansive "Red Corridor" has effectively collapsed, marking the end of large-scale insurgent dominance.

History of Resilience and Regrouping

- Despite current setbacks, Maoists have previously demonstrated remarkable resilience:
 - Reduced to minimal strength in the early 1990s
 - Re-emerged by 2000 with expanded influence
 - Formation of CPI (Maoist) in 2004 strengthened their reach
- Their secretive and tightly controlled structure makes it difficult to fully assess their remaining capacity.

Current Reality: Weak but Not Eliminated

- While the Maoists' armed dominance has nearly ended, they cannot be completely written off.
- Residual networks and the potential for regrouping remain, especially given their past ability to revive after setbacks.

Origins and Expansion of the Maoist Movement in India

- The Maoist movement began with the Naxalbari uprising in 1967 in West Bengal, led by Charu Majumdar.
- Inspired by Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong's ideas, the movement emphasised armed struggle led by landless peasants, targeting feudal landlords as "class enemies."
- By 1972, most early leaders, including Majumdar, had been killed, causing a temporary decline.

Revival through People's War Group

- The movement was revived in the late 1970s by Kondapalli Seetharamaiah, who founded the People's War Group (PWG) in Telangana.

- It gained momentum by mobilising educated youth from universities and technical institutions, expanding its organisational base.
- The formation of CPI (Maoist) under Muppala Lakshmana Rao marked a turning point.
- The group developed a structured insurgent force, including the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), transforming into a well-organised guerrilla movement.
- The Maoists evolved into a highly militarised insurgency, reportedly receiving training from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.
- At its peak, the movement was described by the then PM Manmohan Singh as India's "**biggest internal security threat.**"

Decline of the Maoist Movement: Key Factors Behind the Downfall

- From its early years under Charu Majumdar, the movement was plagued by ideological conflicts.
- Disagreements over violent annihilation versus mass mobilisation led to splintering into multiple factions and frequent leadership changes, weakening organisational cohesion.
- **Shift to Militarisation and State Response** - Although militarisation brought temporary success, it also provoked a strong state response. Special forces like the **Greyhounds** in Andhra Pradesh and coordinated operations such as Operation Kagar significantly eroded Maoist strongholds.
- **Tribal vs Non-Tribal Leadership Rift** - A key internal contradiction emerged as tribals formed the core fighting force, while leadership remained largely non-tribal. This created tensions within the organisation, prompting efforts to promote tribal leaders like Madvi Hidma.
- **Declining Relevance of Ideology** - The Maoist ideology gradually lost appeal as government welfare schemes expanded into tribal areas, reducing grievances. The notion of "class enemy" became less relevant in changing socio-economic conditions.
- **Attempts at Dialogue and Strategic Reassessment** - Internal documents by leaders such as Muppala Lakshmana Rao acknowledged the need to reconnect with society and intellectuals. Some leaders, including Cherukuri Rajkumar, even explored peace talks with the government, indicating strategic uncertainty.
- **Declining Recruitment and Rise of Democratic Alternatives** - Falling recruitment levels, sustained security pressure, and the growing effectiveness of democratic protest mechanisms weakened support for armed struggle. Efforts to enter mainstream politics also reflected the movement's diminishing influence.

Prospects of Maoist Revival: Constraints and Uncertainties

- A large-scale revival of the Maoist insurgency appears unlikely in the near term, given the severe weakening of leadership, organisational structure, and territorial control.
- Reports suggest that some cadres may have surrendered tactically to rebuild networks underground.
- The future trajectory depends significantly on the **effectiveness of rehabilitation measures.**
- Many surrendered cadres face serious criminal charges, including murder, complicating their reintegration.
 - Withdrawal of prosecution requires judicial approval.
 - Victims' families can file protest petitions, often holding stronger legal standing.
- While a full-scale insurgent revival appears difficult, residual risks remain, contingent on rehabilitation outcomes, legal processes, and the ability of former cadres to reintegrate into mainstream society.

Source: TH

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