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End of an Era — India's Maoist Insurgency Nears Collapse After Decades

19 April 2026

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End of an Era — India's Maoist Insurgency Nears Collapse After Decades

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WHY IN NEWS

India's **Left Wing Extremism (LWE)** crisis — once described by PM Manmohan Singh as the “biggest internal security challenge” — appears to be nearing its end. The **killing of CPI (Maoist) General Secretary Nambala Keshava Rao** in a security forces operation in **May 2025**, followed by the **surrender of his successor Thippiri Tirupati** in early 2026, has effectively decapitated the Maoist leadership. The organisation's Central Committee has contracted from approximately **40 members** to just **2**, and territorial control has shrunk from **~180 districts** at its 2013 peak to **2 districts** (Bijapur and Sukma in Chhattisgarh).

ORIGINS OF THE MAOIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA

The Naxalbari Uprising (1967)

The modern Left Wing Extremist movement in India traces its roots to the **Naxalbari peasant uprising of 1967** in West Bengal, led by **Charu Majumdar** and **Kanu Sanyal**. The uprising drew inspiration from Maoist ideology — armed agrarian revolution as the path to state power. The term “**Naxalite**” (and “Naxalism”) derives from this village.

Organisational History

ORGANISATION	YEAR	KEY FIGURE	NOTE
CPI (M-L)	1969	Charu Majumdar	First Naxalite political party
People's War Group (PWG)	Late 1970s	Kondapalli Seetharamaiah	Dominant in Andhra Pradesh
MCC (Maoist Communist Centre)	1969	Bihar-based	Separate strand
CPI (Maoist)	2004	Merger of PWG + MCC	Marks organisational consolidation; peak phase begins

The **2004 merger** creating the CPI (Maoist) gave the movement a unified command and national-level coordination — enabling its expansion into a “Red Corridor” spanning Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra (Gadchiroli), Andhra Pradesh/Telangana, and West Bengal.

THE RED CORRIDOR — PEAK EXPANSION

At its peak (~2013), Maoist influence extended across:

- **~180 districts** in 20 states
- A geographic arc from Nepal border (Bihar) to Kerala border (AP/Karnataka)
- Parallel administration (“Jan Adalats,” extortion, “tax” collection from mining/infrastructure companies)
- Regular attacks on security forces, railways, and election processes

SECURITY FORCES’ COUNTER-MAOIST STRATEGY

SAMADHAN Doctrine

India’s counter-LWE strategy operates under the **SAMADHAN** framework (Smart Leadership, Aggressive Strategy, Motivation and Training, Actionable Intelligence, Dashboard-Based KPIs, Harnessing Technology, Action Plan for Each Theatre, No Access to Financing):

Key Operations and Initiatives

INITIATIVE	DETAILS
Operation Kagar (2024)	Massive security surge in Chhattisgarh; ~3,840 surrenders, ~2,220 arrests, ~600 deaths among Maoists
Aspirational Districts Programme	Development in 112 most backward districts — many overlap with LWE areas
PMGSY/RCPLWEA	Road connectivity in LWE districts to extend state reach
Technology: UAVs, HoverGuard	Surveillance in forest terrain
Greyhounds (AP/Telangana)	Elite anti-Naxal force; highly effective in southern corridor

Leadership Eliminations

LEADER	ROLE	FATE	YEAR
Nambala Keshava Rao	General Secretary, CPI (Maoist)	Killed in security operation	May 2025
Thippiri Tirupati	Successor (acting GS)	Surrendered	Early 2026

CURRENT STATUS OF CPI (MAOIST)

METRIC	2013 PEAK	2026 STATUS
Districts under influence	~180	~2 (Bijapur, Sukma — Chhattisgarh)
Central Committee members	~40	~2
States with active presence	20	Primarily Chhattisgarh
Civilian/security force deaths	Hundreds/year	Single digits/year

WHY COMPLETE VICTORY CANNOT BE ASSUMED

Despite the near-collapse, analysts caution:

- ❶ **Past resilience:** After APTelangana police eliminated PWG leadership in the 1990s, the movement reconstituted and merged into a stronger CPI (Maoist)
- ❷ **Root causes persist:** Tribal land alienation, forest rights disputes, poor governance in remote areas — the socioeconomic conditions that fuelled Maoism have not been fully addressed
- ❸ **International linkages:** Theoretical links to PLGA networks and ideological solidarity with Nepali left movements exist
- ❹ **Surviving cadre:** Remaining cadre could regroup or relocate to new regions

UPSC RELEVANCE

Left Wing Extremism, Naxalism, counter-insurgency operations, SAMADHAN doctrine. GS2 —

Governance: *State capacity in tribal areas, federalism in internal security (Centre-State police powers). GS1*

Indian Society: *Tribal issues, land rights, Scheduled Tribe welfare, forest rights.*

Key Linkages:

- Naxalism ↔ Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 — land alienation as a grievance
- LWE districts ↔ Aspirational Districts Programme — development as counter-insurgency
- PMGSY + road connectivity → state penetration in LWE areas ([link to today's PMGSY article](#))
- PESA Act (1996) — Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas — self-governance for tribals
- 5th Schedule of Constitution — administration of Scheduled Areas

FACTS CORNER

Naxalbari uprising: 1967, West Bengal; Charu Majumdar (ideologue), Kanu Sanyal (organiser)

CPI (Maoist) formed: 2004 (merger of PWG + MCC)

“Biggest internal security threat”: PM Manmohan Singh (2010)

Nambala Keshava Rao: CPI (Maoist) General Secretary — killed May 2025

Thippiri Tirupati: Acting successor — surrendered early 2026

Central Committee: reduced from ~40 to ~2 members

Territorial control: ~180 districts (2013) → 2 districts (2026) — Bijapur + Sukma, Chhattisgarh

Operation Kagar (2024): ~3,840 surrenders, ~2,220 arrests, ~600 Maoist deaths

SAMADHAN: MHA's integrated counter-LWE doctrine

Greyhounds: AP/Telangana's elite anti-Naxal police force

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