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**EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

# After the Red Corridor: India's Post-Maoist Challenge Is Development, Not Celebration

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# After the Red Corridor: India's Post-Maoist Challenge Is Development, Not Celebration

 Business Standard

19 April 2026

GS3

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 Business Standard

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## INTERVIEW ANGLE



*"The near-collapse of India's Maoist insurgency — with CPI (Maoist) General Secretary Nambala Keshava Rao killed in May 2025 and his successor Thippiri Tirupati surrendering in early 2026 — marks a watershed moment in India's internal security. Business Standard argues that the security victory, while real and significant, must not be mistaken for resolution of the underlying problem: tribal land alienation, forest rights deprivation, and governance vacuum in India's resource-rich hinterland. The risk of premature celebration is that the state withdraws its development infrastructure along with its security presence — replicating the conditions that generated Maoism in the first place. What does post-Maoist governance in Chhattisgarh demand?"*

## EDITORIAL SUMMARY

Business Standard argues that India's near-total military defeat of CPI (Maoist) is historic but insufficient. Root causes — tribal land alienation, Fifth Schedule violations, resource extraction without rights — persist. The AP Greyhounds precedent (1990s PWG destruction, followed by 2004 reconstitution as larger CPI Maoist) warns against premature celebration. Post-Maoist governance requires rights-based development: FRA completion, PESA enforcement, land titles, and mineral revenue sharing with communities.

## CPI (MAOIST): THE RISE AND NEAR-COLLAPSE

PERIOD	DEVELOPMENT
1967	Naxalbari uprising — Charu Majumdar and Kanu Sanyal
1969	CPI (Marxist-Leninist) founded
Late 1970s	People's War Group (PWG) formed in Andhra Pradesh
2004	PWG + MCC merger → CPI (Maoist); Red Corridor begins
2013	Peak: ~180 districts, 20 states
2024	Operation Kagar: ~3,840 surrenders, ~2,220 arrests
May 2025	Nambala Keshava Rao killed
Early 2026	Thippiri Tirupati surrenders; Central Committee down to ~2 members
2026	Territorial control: 2 districts (Bijapur, Sukma, Chhattisgarh)

## KEY CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS FOR TRIBAL AREAS

PROVISION	SUBSTANCE	IMPLEMENTATION GAP
<b>Fifth Schedule (Article 244)</b>	Administration of Scheduled Areas; Tribes Advisory Council	Tribes Advisory Council under-utilised
<b>PESA 1996</b>	Gram sabha consent for land acquisition in Sch. Areas	Frequently bypassed for mining projects
<b>Forest Rights Act 2006</b>	Individual and community forest rights	Millions of claims pending
<b>Samatha v. AP (1997)</b>	Non-tribals cannot mine in Fifth Schedule areas	Enforcement inconsistent

## UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS3 — Internal Security	Naxalism, CPI (Maoist), SAMADHAN doctrine, Operation Kagar, Red Corridor
GS2 — Governance	Fifth Schedule, PESA, tribal self-governance, Forest Rights Act
GS1 — Society	Tribal issues, land rights, Scheduled Tribe welfare, displacement
GS3 — Economy	Mineral economy, development-displacement nexus, resource curse
Mains Keywords	Naxalism, CPI (Maoist), SAMADHAN, Fifth Schedule, PESA 1996, FRA 2006, Samatha judgment, Greyhounds, Operation Kagar, Aspirational Districts, RCPLWEA

### ● KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

India's security forces have achieved a near-total military defeat of CPI (Maoist) — reducing its Central Committee from ~40 to ~2 members and territorial control from ~180 districts to 2 — but this operational victory is not synonymous with resolution of the structural conditions that sustained Maoism for five decades; the root causes — tribal land alienation, non-enforcement of Fifth Schedule protections and PESA 1996, forest rights deprivation, and governance absence — remain insufficiently addressed, and the risk is that the state will withdraw its development infrastructure along with its security presence, recreating the vacuum that generated Maoism; Business Standard argues that the post-Maoist agenda demands a governance surge, not just a security stand-down.

### ✓ SUPPORTING

- **The root cause remains:** Maoism grew in India's mineral-rich tribal heartland — Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Gadchiroli — where the Fifth Schedule's protections for tribal land rights were routinely violated by state and corporate actors. The **Forest Rights Act (2006)** recognised community forest rights but implementation remained uneven.

**PESA 1996** mandated gram sabha consent for land acquisition in Scheduled Areas but was frequently bypassed.

The Supreme Court's Samatha judgment (1997) barred non-tribal mining in Fifth Schedule areas — but enforcement was weak. These structural conditions persist and create fertile ground for any future mobilisation.

The territorial collapse of CPI (Maoist) does not erase them.

- Past resilience precedent:** The security forces of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana virtually destroyed the People's War Group (PWG) in the 1990s through the Greyhounds operations. The movement reconstituted, merged with the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in 2004 to form CPI (Maoist), and expanded into a far larger Red Corridor. The lesson: security victories are reversible when underlying conditions are not addressed. The 2026 collapse is more comprehensive, but the pattern of revival-after-defeat is the historical norm in India's LWE experience.
- The development dividend — what is owed:** The districts that constituted the Red Corridor are among India's most resource-rich (iron ore, coal, bauxite, forest produce) yet most impoverished. The SAMADHAN doctrine and the Aspirational Districts Programme initiated development investment in LWE areas — but this was instrumentalised as counter-insurgency, not as rights-based development. Post-conflict, the development agenda must shift: from security-led infrastructure (roads primarily for troop movement) to rights-based development (land titles, forest rights, gram sabha empowerment, local employment). PMGSY's RCPLWEA component must evolve from tactical connectivity to economic integration.
- The political economy of minerals:** Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand hold massive mineral reserves. Post-Maoist, the pressure for mining expansion will intensify dramatically. The state must resist the temptation to treat the security victory as clearance for large-scale resource extraction without adequate consultation, compensation, and rights protection. Historically, displacement-without-rehabilitation triggered the tribal grievances that Maoism exploited. Repeating this pattern post-Maoist would be strategically catastrophic.

### **COUNTER**

The government may argue that the security victory is itself a precondition for development — that no school, road, or health centre could function in Maoist-controlled territory. The SAMADHAN doctrine explicitly integrated development with security. The Aspirational Districts Programme (now Viksit Bharat Mission) has already begun improving HDI indicators in former LWE districts. Critics of the "root causes" argument note that many tribal districts with similar conditions did not produce Maoism — suggesting the

problem was organisational (the Maoist vanguard) rather than structural, and that the organisational defeat is sufficient.

### → WAY FORWARD

Five-pillar post-Maoist governance agenda: (1) **Fifth Schedule enforcement** — mandatory Tribes Advisory Council review of all new mining and infrastructure projects in Scheduled Areas; gram sabha consent enforced under PESA 1996; (2) **Forest Rights Act completion** — fast-track pending individual and community forest rights claims in former LWE districts; target 100% resolution within 36 months; (3) **Land title security** — comprehensive land records modernisation and pattas (land titles) for tribal communities to prevent alienation; (4) **Economic integration** — transform RCPLWEA roads from tactical connectivity to economic corridors; establish tribal cooperative markets and PESA-based minor forest produce value chains; (5) **Political representation** — strengthen elected panchayati raj institutions in former LWE districts; ensure gram sabhas have genuine (not consultative) powers over local resources.

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### MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK

#### QUESTION

*India's Maoist insurgency has been near-completely militarily defeated by 2026. However, analysts warn that without addressing structural socioeconomic grievances, the conditions for LWE revival persist. Critically examine the root causes of Naxalism, the policy interventions that led to its military defeat, and the governance agenda required for durable peace in former Red Corridor districts. (250 words)*

#### INTRODUCTION

India's **Left Wing Extremist (LWE)** crisis has been near-militarily resolved by 2026. The killing of **Nambala Keshava Rao** (CPI Maoist General Secretary, May 2025) and the surrender of his successor **Thippiri Tirupati** (early 2026) reduced the Central Committee from ~40 to ~2 members and territorial control from ~180 districts (2013) to 2 districts (Bijapur and Sukma, Chhattisgarh).

Yet the structural conditions that generated Maoism — tribal land alienation, governance absence, resource exploitation — remain insufficiently addressed.

### BODY

**Root causes:** Maoism’s social base was India’s tribal heartland — the **Fifth Schedule areas** where constitutional protections (PESA 1996, Samatha judgment 1997, Forest Rights Act 2006) were routinely violated. Tribal communities faced land alienation for mining and industrial projects without adequate consultation, compensation, or resettlement.

This structural dispossession — in regions with India’s richest mineral wealth — created the socioeconomic conditions that the Maoist vanguard mobilised. **Security victories:** The SAMADHAN doctrine integrated security operations (Operation Kagar 2024: ~3,840 surrenders, ~2,220 arrests, ~600 deaths) with development investment (PMGSY/RCPLWEA roads, Aspirational Districts Programme) and intelligence-led operations by specialised forces (Greyhounds in AP/Telangana, Bastariya Battalion in Chhattisgarh). The elimination of top leadership decapitated the organisation. **The precedent warning:** AP’s Greyhounds virtually destroyed the PWG in the 1990s; the movement reconstituted and expanded by 2004 as CPI (Maoist) into a far larger Red Corridor.

Security victories are reversible when structural conditions persist. **The governance agenda:** Post-conflict, the state must shift from security-instrumentalised development to rights-based development: Fifth Schedule enforcement, Forest Rights Act completion, land titles, gram sabha empowerment under PESA, and mineral extraction governance that respects tribal rights. The mineral resource dividend from these regions must flow to their communities, not merely to state revenues and corporate balance sheets.

### CONCLUSION

India’s security forces have earned a historic victory over Maoism. But victory in internal conflict is sustainable only when the structural conditions that generated the conflict are genuinely resolved. The post- Maoist governance agenda — Fifth Schedule enforcement, FRA completion, land titles, PESA empowerment — is the real test of whether India learned from five decades of Naxalism. Celebration is premature; governance is urgent.

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