

## O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

## Only force can't solve the Maoist problem

In a remote stretch of Chhatisgarh's Bijapur district, a gunfight unfolded inside the Indravati National Park, a region long associated with violence, despair, and the unresolved battle between Maoists and the state. The encounter, which resulted in the deaths of 31 Maoists, may be seen by many as a significant victory for the security forces. Yet, it also highlights the protracted and complex nature of the conflict that has plagued the state for decades. The battle, which has claimed countless lives on both sides, is far from over.

This latest operation is part of a broader, intensifying campaign by the government to eliminate Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) from India's heartlands, especially in regions like Bastar, where the Maoists – often referred to as Naxalites – have long found safe havens. Union Home Minister Amit Shah's resolve to end Maoist insurgency by 2026 echoes a political commitment that has propelled security forces into action. However, while such military victories are celebrated, they also underscore the enduring human cost of a conflict that has dragged on for years, leaving communities caught in the crossfire.

The security forces' recent operation has not come without its own toll. Two personnel were killed in the encounter, a reminder that the lives of those fighting on the front lines are also at risk. The battle for Chhatisgarh's forests has always been fraught with danger, with security forces facing adverse conditions – dense terrain, challenging weather, and the ever-present threat of ambush. For the men and women of the security forces, this war is as much about survival as it is about enforcing the will of the state.

But it is the civilians of Chhatisgarh, the ordinary men, women, and children who bear the brunt of the ongoing conflict. Living in villages scattered across the Bastar region, many have endured a life marked by fear, displacement, and economic hardship. The violence perpetrated by Maoists, who impose their own brutal form of control over the area, has made daily life a constant struggle. At the same time, government operations to quell the insurgency often disrupt local life, leading to deaths, injuries, and displacement. In a conflict that is supposed to be about restoring order, it is the people who suffer the most.

For the Maoists, the lines between revolutionary rhetoric and armed conflict have become increasingly blurred. The group's tactics have involved not only ambushes and attacks on security personnel but also attacks on civilians, and their demand for a "class war" has often translated into ruthless violence. The Maoists' stronghold in areas like Abujmahad – an unsurveyed, vast forested region – is a symbol of their resilience, but also a testament to the failures of both the state and insurgents to resolve the issues that have given rise to this conflict.

For years, the region has been a battleground of ideology and power, with both the state and the Maoists attempting to assert dominance. The recent increase in anti-Maoist operations and the consequent rise in casualties on the Maoist side indicate the government's growing resolve to put an end to the insurgency. According to Chhatisgarh Police, 49 Maoists have already been killed this year alone. Last year, the toll was even higher, with 219 Maoists killed in encounters across the state. This represents the highest number of Maoist casualties in the history of Chhatisgarh since its formation. Yet, these numbers, while seemingly indicative of a successful crackdown, should not obscure the human and moral cost of the ongoing violence.

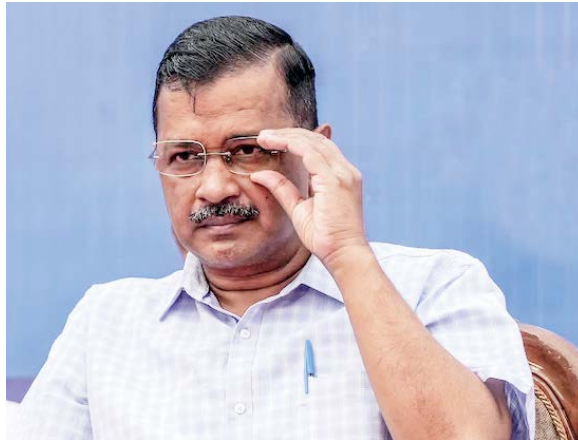
In addition to casualties, the conflict has led to numerous arrests and surrenders. Last year, 800 Maoists were arrested, and over 800 others laid down their arms. These figures point to a realization, at least among some, that the battle may no longer be worth fighting. As the government expands its network of forward base camps and provides basic services to villagers living in Maoist-controlled areas, there is hope that the cycle of violence might one day come to an end. The Niyad Nellanar scheme, designed to offer developmental benefits to local communities, is a step in the right direction, signaling that the state is looking beyond the barrel of a gun to address the root causes of insurgency.

However, such initiatives cannot fully address the deep-seated issues at the heart of this conflict. Economic disparity, lack of education, poor infrastructure, and social exclusion continue to fuel the anger and disillusionment that the Maoists prey upon. These systemic issues require sustained attention from the state, and cannot be solved by force alone. The state's long-term strategy must not only focus on dismantling armed resistance but also on creating conditions where the grievances of marginalised communities are heard and addressed.



ROBIN ROY

Now, to make things worse for him, not only will he be treated like a commoner and face the legal wrangles, to further compound his trouble, an FIR has been lodged against him in Kurukshetra few days back over his remarks on the alleged "poisoning" of the Yamuna river water by the Haryana government



## THE PUNJAB FACTOR

Also, the loss has been so massive for AAP which will certainly have a ripple effect in Punjab.

The AAP's humiliating defeat will put Punjab and its Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann in the spotlight and the AAP will find it difficult to keep its flock intact and the AAP is already wary of the situation and that is why AAP national convener

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