



## The Approach that Ended a Five-Decade Insurgency

*Naxal-Mukt Bharat is not merely a security achievement. It is a constitutional restoration, the return of the Indian state to every inch of its own territory, and the return of its citizens in those territories to the rights and dignity they were always owed.*

**T**he 31 March 2026, declaration was no accident. It marked the result of a sustained, system-driven transformation, where intelligence took the lead, security forces worked in sync, and political will stayed firm, along with institutional coordination. Together, these elements achieved what decades of reactive counterinsurgency could not.

On 6 April 2010, seventy-six Central Reserve Police Force personnel were martyred in a single Maoist ambush in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh, the deadliest attack on security forces in independent India's history. At its peak, Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) insurgency controlled or influenced over 223 districts across ten States, ran a parallel administration in the forest belts from Jharkhand to Chhattisgarh, and had rendered vast swathes of India's mineral-rich tribal heartland effectively ungovernable. The declaration of *Naxal-Mukt Bharat* by 31 March 2026 marked not merely a security achievement, but a restoration of constitutional order.

What shifted between Dantewada and March 2026 was not just better equipment or more boots on the ground. What changed was strategic architecture, the translation of political will into operational doctrine, of intelligence into precision, and of federal friction into institutional coordination. The story of how India

ended the world's longest Maoist insurgency is, at its core, the story of a state that chose to decide, align, and act.

### MHA as Strategic Nerve Centre

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) did not just oversee the anti-LWE campaign, it led it. The 2015 National Policy and Action Plan on LWE placed the MHA at the centre of a whole-of-government effort that combined security operations, development delivery, and inter-state coordination. District-level monitoring systems were set up, funding for Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) was streamlined, and a unified command structure was gradually put in place in the most critical conflict zones.

Central to this institutional transformation was the SAMADHAN doctrine — an MHA-articulated framework that gave operational coherence to a campaign that had historically suffered from fragmentation:

The decisive political signal came in 2024, when Union Home Minister Amit Shah publicly declared a firm deadline: "By 31 March 2026, armed Naxalism will be eradicated from the country." It was not political rhetoric but a directive, a time-bound commitment that shaped priorities, tightened accountability, and accelerated operations across the security establishment. Through sustained reviews, field visits,

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*Bijapur police recovered explosives hidden in a pit by Naxalites.*

and direct oversight, the Home Minister transformed the MHA's role from coordination to leadership, turning intent into execution.

### **Intelligence Revolution: From Reactive to Predictive**

If there is a single variable that most decisively altered the trajectory of the anti-Naxal campaign, it is the transformation of the intelligence architecture. For much of the Maoist insurgency's history, security force operations were reactive — launched after Maoist attacks, in terrain where the adversary was embedded and the state presence was peripheral. The shift to intelligence-led operations reversed that equation, turning pursuit into pre-emption and information into control.

The foundation of the shift was a systematic expansion of Human Intelligence (HUMINT) networks in areas once dominated by the Maoists. Surrendered cadres, who were rehabilitated and turned into assets, provided detailed knowledge of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army's (PLGA) structures, movement patterns, and leadership. Over time, village-level informer networks gave security forces the local awareness that had once belonged solely to the Maoists. In conjunction with this HUMINT base, technical tools such as drones, mobile signal interception, and satellite imagery were layered, allowing forces to identify and

neutralise Maoist units before they could act.

The results were historically unprecedented. Between 2022 and 2026, senior Maoist leaders (Politburo members, Central Committee functionaries, and PLGA military commanders) were neutralised at a rate that structurally decapitated the movement. This was not chance or tactical luck. It was the payoff of years of investment in intelligence, finally delivering decisive outcomes at operational scale.

### **Cracking the Strongholds: Bastar and Abujhmaad**

The fiercest battles of the anti-LWE campaign were fought in Bastar (across Sukma, Bijapur, and Narayanpur) and in Abujhmaad. These remote forested highlands for decades had been the Maoists' operational stronghold. These areas were characterised by dense forests, extremely challenging terrain, tribal communities long cultivated by Maoist cadres, and the concentration of PLGA battalion-strength formations, making them the hardest theatres of the conflict.

In Bastar, the CAPF strategy focused on expanding Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), embedding a permanent security presence deep inside forests that had long remained outside state control. Each FOB denied the Maoists sanctuary, disrupted their supply lines, and marked the return of state authority to areas abandoned for a generation. Leading the thrusts into



contested terrain were the CRPF's (Central Reserve Police Force) elite CoBRA battalions (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action), specialised in jungle warfare and counterinsurgency, backed by the BSF (Border Security Force), ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police), and state police. By this stage, a unified command framework had largely dissolved the inter-force friction that once blunted operations, allowing coordinated advances to take hold.

Abujhmaad, literally "the unknown hills," posed a challenge unlike any other. For decades, it functioned as a de facto no-go zone for the Indian state: the ideological core of the Maoist movement, a sanctuary for its leadership, and a place where PLGA units regrouped after reverses elsewhere. Penetration of this stronghold was made possible by helicopter-borne logistics, drone reconnaissance, and intelligence painstakingly cultivated over years. As security forces dismantled this sanctuary, they crippled the insurgency's ability to regenerate. Road construction into the forests became both a force multiplier, enabling rapid deployment, and a governance signal: the state was not just entering, it was staying.

**Centre-State Coordination: Making Federalism Work**

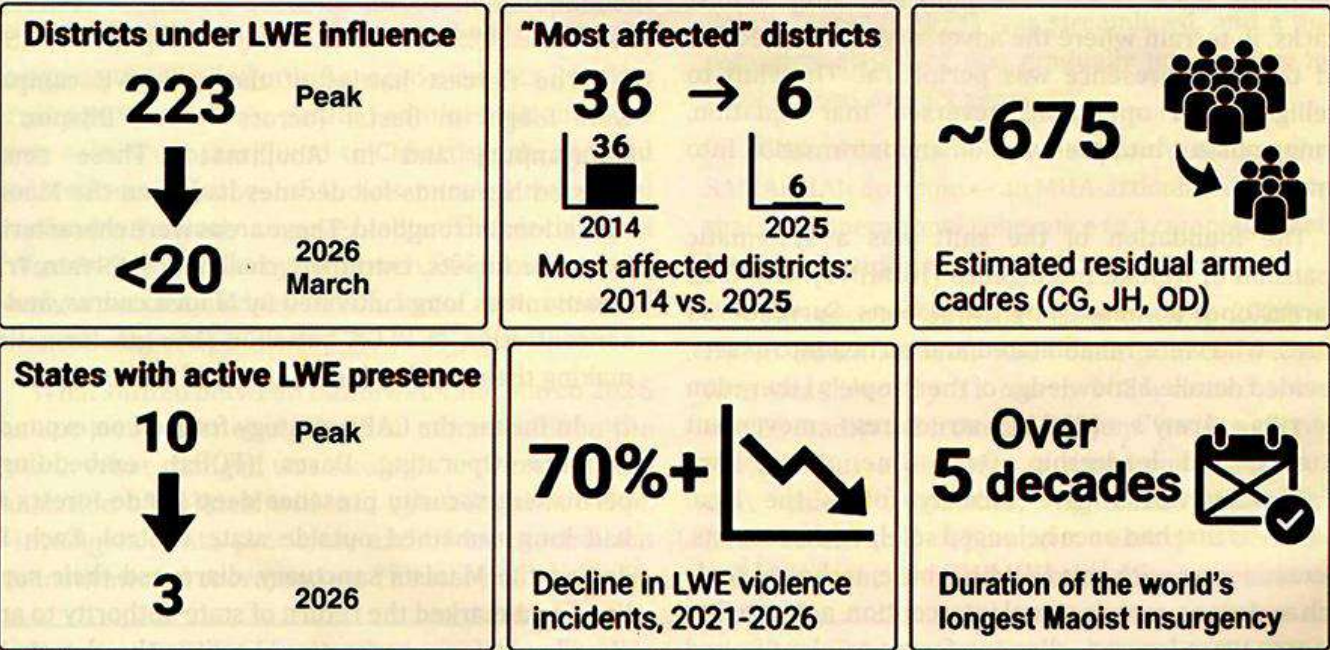
Anti-LWE operations had long been hampered by Centre-State friction, overlapping jurisdictions, uneven intelligence sharing, and political hesitations that diluted state-level commitment. After 2014, this

***For decades, the retrograde Maoist ideology had an adverse impact on the development of several regions. Left Wing Extremism has ruined the future of countless youngsters. In the last decade, our Government has worked towards uprooting this menace and at the same time ensuring the fruits of development reach areas affected by Naxalism. We will keep focusing on furthering good governance and ensuring peace and prosperity for all.***

*Prime Minister, Narendra Modi*

structural weakness was systematically addressed. Regular MHA-State reviews created institutional accountability, unified command structures were rolled out in the most affected districts, and financial flows,

**THE TRANSFORMATION IN NUMBERS**





# THE SAMADHAN FRAMEWORK (MHA)



including under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme, were tied directly to operational performance metrics.

Chhattisgarh's alignment with the Centre's operational doctrine, blending the state police's local knowledge with CAPF firepower and intelligence, became the template for effective anti-LWE federalism. The jointly administered surrender and rehabilitation policy added another dimension: offering Maoist cadres a pathway out while simultaneously yielding rich intelligence from insiders who understood the Maoist organisation from within.

## Security with Humanity: The Civil Action Dimension

The CAPFs' mandate in LWE-affected areas was never exclusively kinetic. Alongside security operations, Civil Action Programmes such as medical camps, school support, infrastructure aid, and community outreach consistently projected the state's constructive presence in tribal regions where Maoist narratives of neglect resonated. Coupled with psychological initiatives such as surrender appeals and community dialogue, these efforts steadily eroded Maoists' influence, turning tribal communities from passive or active supporters into stakeholders in the security outcome.

## The Unfinished Agenda and Durable Peace

31 March 2026, marks a genuine and historic inflection point. However, clarity requires acknowledging what remains. Approximately 675 armed Maoists continue to operate in small pockets of Bastar, Gadchiroli, and southern Jharkhand. At the same time, the LWE ideological ecosystem has begun to migrate into urban networks, digital platforms, and front organisations, a mutation that demands a different but equally sustained response. The gains of the past decade must now be consolidated through a post-insurgency transition: deep development investment, governance penetration, resolution of forest and land rights in former LWE-affected areas, and continued vigilance against ideological revival.

The anti-LWE campaign was never about military victory alone. Its deeper purpose was to extend the promise and protection of the Indian state to citizens who had been denied them for half a century. That unfinished work, governance, justice, and inclusion in the tribal heartlands, is the final chapter of the Naxal-Mukt Bharat story. And it is the most important one. Naxal-Mukt Bharat is not merely a security achievement. It is a constitutional restoration, the return of the Indian state to every inch of its own territory, and the return of its citizens in those territories to the rights and dignity they were always owed. □