



NAXAL SECURITY TRACKER

March 2026

Chhattisgarh

Bijapur Narayanpur
Sukma



Aradhita Singh

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
II	OVERALL INCIDENT OVERVIEW
III	GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF INCIDENTS
IV	DISTRICT-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF INCIDENTS
V	NATURE OF INCIDENTS
VI	WEEK-WISE INCIDENTS
VII	ARRESTS AND SURRENDERS
VIII	SECURITY OPERATIONS
IX	CASUALTY INDICATORS
X	IED RELATED INCIDENTS
XI	RECOVERIES
XII	COMPARATIVE TRENDS 2025 & 2026
XIII	PROGNOSIS
XV	CONCLUSION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March 2026 feels like a turning point in India's long battle against Left Wing Extremism. With the Government of India setting a clear deadline to eliminate Naxalism by March 31, the past few months have seen an unusual convergence of sustained security pressure, policy push, and political intent. Together, these factors seem to have accelerated changes on the ground.

What stands out most is the scale—and profile—of surrenders. This is no longer limited to lower-rung cadres. Senior leaders and mid-level commanders are also stepping down. That shift suggests something deeper than a tactical retreat. It points to weakening morale and growing disillusionment within the movement. When leadership begins to thin out, both operational capacity and ideological direction tend to suffer.

At the same time, there are visible cracks in the Maoist organisational structure. Leadership gaps are emerging in key areas, particularly in traditional strongholds like Dandakaranya and parts of Telangana and Odisha. The decline of state and zonal committees indicates that command-and-control systems are under strain. Intelligence-led operations appear to have played a role here—disrupting communication lines, supply chains, and recruitment channels.

The geographical spread of the insurgency has also shrunk. Several districts that once reported regular activity now see little to none. What remains is largely confined to smaller, forested pockets, often along state borders. This contraction reflects the cumulative effect of coordinated inter-state operations, better road and infrastructure access, and a more consistent state presence in remote areas.

On the operational front, security forces have kept up the pressure through encounters, arrests, and area domination exercises. Even so, the continued recovery of weapons and detection of IEDs shows that the insurgency hasn't disappeared entirely. Its actions, however, appear more reactive than strategic—suggesting a shift from expansion to survival.

Policy interventions have added to this momentum. Surrender and rehabilitation schemes, combined with strong signalling ahead of the March deadline, have encouraged cadres to disengage. At the same time, increased development efforts and governance outreach have narrowed the space in which Maoists once operated.

That said, the situation isn't entirely settled. Small, mobile groups—especially in tri-junction regions—continue to operate in difficult terrain. There is also the lingering presence of urban networks and splinter formations, which means complacency could be costly.

Taken together, March 2026 does seem to mark a critical inflection point. The steady loss of leadership, shrinking territorial footprint, and rising number of surrenders all suggest that the insurgency is approaching a stage of exhaustion. But the real test lies ahead—whether these gains can be consolidated through sustained security efforts, and more importantly, through governance and development in areas that were once deeply affected.

OVERALL INCIDENT OVERVIEW

March 2026 marks a noticeable shift in the pattern of Left Wing Extremism (LWE). The overall picture is no longer that of a sustained insurgency, but of a movement that has thinned out—more fragmented, more cautious, and increasingly on the back foot. Large, coordinated attacks were largely absent. Instead, the month was defined by surrenders, arrests, recoveries, and a handful of small, contained encounters. Taken together, these developments suggest a steady erosion of Maoist capacity in the lead-up to the Government of India's March 31, 2026 target.

What stands out most is the scale and nature of surrender. These were not isolated or token gestures; in many cases, groups of cadres came forward together, and some included members from the leadership ranks. Incidents of this kind were reported across key areas like Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Odisha, and Maharashtra. The pattern points to more than just pressure from security forces—it reflects a deeper organisational strain, where holding ground or staying underground is becoming harder to sustain. Many of those surrendering also handed over weapons and shared intelligence, which then fed into further operations.

Encounters, while still occurring, were limited in both number and scale. Most were confined to forested pockets of Chhattisgarh and involved small groups rather than larger formations. These were sharp, intelligence-led actions rather than prolonged engagements. At the same time, there was a noticeable drop in Maoist-initiated violence. Whether this reflects a lack of capability or a conscious decision to avoid confrontation, it underscores a reduced offensive posture.

IED-related threats, however, continue to linger. States like Jharkhand reported multiple recoveries and defusals, along with a few incidents that caused injuries. Even at a lower intensity, these tactics remain relevant for residual Maoist elements. They offer a way to disrupt and delay without committing to direct confrontation, suggesting a shift toward low-risk, high-impact methods.

Security forces, meanwhile, maintained steady pressure through the month. Operations were largely intelligence-driven—focused on arrests, seizures of arms and explosives, and the dismantling of storage sites and fabrication units. There was also a visible effort to track and act against urban networks and support structures, with investigative agencies pursuing cases beyond the traditional conflict zones. This points to a more layered approach, aimed not just at armed cadres but at the ecosystem that sustains them.

Geographically, the spread of incidents has narrowed significantly. Activity is now concentrated in a smaller cluster of districts, particularly along the Chhattisgarh–Jharkhand–Odisha belt. Many areas that once saw regular activity reported little or none during the month. At the same time, security operations in the remaining pockets appear more focused and sustained, suggesting a shift from broad area domination to targeted, last-mile clearance.

Overall, the March 2026 snapshot reflects a landscape in transition. The signs are not of an active, expanding insurgency, but of one that is contracting—marked by withdrawals, limited resistance, and growing state control. The initiative rests firmly with the security forces, while Maoist activity appears increasingly sporadic and constrained.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF INCIDENTS

The spread of incidents in March 2026 makes one thing fairly clear: Left Wing Extremism (LWE) is no longer dispersed across a wide geography, but is instead tightening into a few core pockets, with only traces left elsewhere. What used to be a broad, multi-state insurgent presence now looks increasingly contained. This shift fits into the larger national push to eliminate Naxalism by March 31, 2026, where the pattern on the ground is moving from widespread activity to a handful of isolated zones.

Most of the month’s activity was centred in the Bastar division of Chhattisgarh and the adjoining tri-junction belt touching Maharashtra, Telangana, and Odisha. Districts like Bijapur, Sukma, Dantewada, Kanker, and Narayanpur continued to see the highest frequency of incidents. Even here, though, the nature of activity has changed. Instead of sustained armed engagements, the trend is now dominated by surrenders, targeted encounters, and recovery operations. These are no longer stable insurgent strongholds in the earlier sense; they resemble pressure zones where the remaining cadres are holding on under increasingly difficult conditions. Senior leaders and residual armed groups are still present in dense forest terrain, which keeps these areas relevant, but their ability to operate beyond these pockets appears significantly reduced.

Jharkhand forms the other important, though secondary, cluster. Areas like the Saranda forest in West Singhbhum and nearby districts continue to report a mix of IED-related threats, scattered arrests, and occasional armed presence. These pockets suggest that while the insurgency has weakened, certain advantages—terrain, local familiarity, and older support networks—still give Maoist remnants some operational space. At the same time, sustained security operations and area domination efforts are steadily tightening control here as well.

Outside these core and secondary zones, the picture changes sharply. Peripheral regions show a clear drop in both presence and activity. In Odisha and Telangana, where Maoist influence was once significant, the rollback is quite visible. Activity in Odisha is now limited to a few border pockets, and several districts have effectively moved out of the conflict map. Telangana, in particular, reflects organisational collapse, with large-scale surrenders and a near absence of active operations. These regions are increasingly shifting into a post-conflict phase, where the focus is less on combat and more on consolidation, rehabilitation, and ensuring that networks do not re-emerge.

A broader peripheral layer—covering parts of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and even Kerala—shows only sporadic signs of Maoist-linked activity. Here, incidents are typically limited to arrests, legal proceedings, or the handling of legacy cases. The presence of small splinter groups or dormant modules points more to residual ideological or criminal linkages than to any organised insurgent structure.

Taken together, the geographical pattern for March 2026 reflects a clear core–periphery divide. The insurgency has been pushed back into shrinking forested pockets, while large stretches of previously affected areas have either stabilised or moved out of active conflict altogether. This kind of spatial containment underlines the impact of coordinated inter-state operations and sustained policy measures. At the same time, it also brings into focus the final challenge—clearing and stabilising the last remaining strongholds, where terrain, legacy networks, and hardened cadres still pose resistance.

DISTRICT-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF INCIDENTS

The district-wise distribution of incidents in March 2026 reveals a highly concentrated and uneven spatial pattern, with a small cluster of districts accounting for the majority of activity, while most others report either negligible or no incidents. This reinforces the broader trend of geographic compression of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in the lead-up to the March 31, 2026 elimination target.

At the top of the distribution are districts within the Bastar division of Chhattisgarh, which continue to form the primary concentration of incidents. Districts such as Bijapur, Sukma, Dantewada, Kanker, and Narayanpur recorded the highest frequency of events during the month. However, the composition of incidents in these districts is heavily skewed towards surrenders, recoveries, and intelligence-led operations, rather than sustained armed engagements. Bijapur and Sukma, in particular, emerged as focal points due to multiple large-scale surrenders and end-of-month consolidation operations, while Dantewada and Kanker also saw a mix of surrenders, recoveries, and limited encounters. Narayanpur registered comparatively fewer incidents but remained part of the core operational grid.

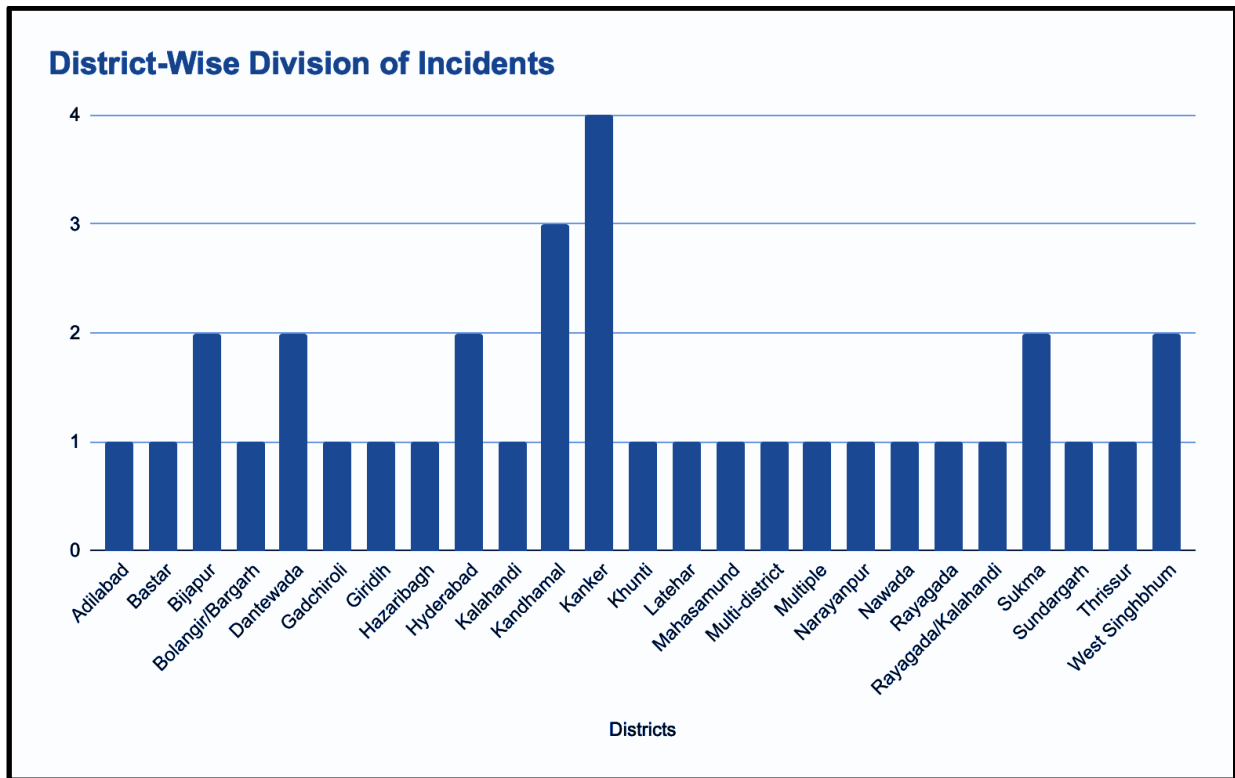
A second tier of districts with notable activity includes West Singhbhum (Jharkhand) and adjoining areas such as Latehar and Giridih, where incidents were primarily related to IED threats, arrests, and security force operations. West Singhbhum, especially the Saranda forest region, stands out for continued Maoist presence and the persistence of explosive-related risks. These districts reflect residual but operationally relevant zones, where Maoist capabilities are diminished but not fully neutralised.

In Odisha, districts such as Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Rayagada, and Bargarh–Bolangir belt registered incidents largely in the form of surrenders, recoveries, and declarations of Naxal-free status. Kandhamal remains the last district with residual activity, while others have transitioned into near-zero incident zones. The distribution here indicates a late-stage decline, with activity tapering off as cadres either surrender or are pushed out.

Similarly, in Telangana, districts like Mulugu, Bhadrachalam, and Adilabad appeared in the dataset primarily due to mass surrender events and pre-emptive security actions, rather than active conflict. These districts no longer function as sustained operational theatres but rather as zones of organisational collapse and disengagement.

Peripheral districts across Bihar, Maharashtra (Gadchiroli), and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh recorded isolated incidents, including arrests, surrenders, and recoveries. These are best understood as spillover or residual activities, often linked to cross-border movement of cadres or dismantling of remaining networks, rather than independent centres of insurgency.

Overall, the district-wise distribution highlights a sharp concentration of incidents in a handful of core districts, with the vast majority of districts either witnessing low-intensity residual activity or complete normalisation. The pattern reflects a transition from a widespread insurgency to a localized, end-phase security challenge, where targeted operations in a few districts are central to achieving full elimination.



NATURE OF INCIDENTS

The pattern of incidents recorded in March 2026 points to a decisive shift in the character of Left Wing Extremism (LWE). What was once a prolonged insurgent campaign now appears to have entered a phase shaped more by state control—marked by disengagement, disruption, and consolidation. Maoist activity during this period is no longer driven by coordinated offensives; instead, it shows up in fragmented, largely defensive actions, with the initiative resting overwhelmingly with security forces.

Surrenders form the most prominent category of incidents through the month, making up a substantial share of the overall activity. What is notable is not just the volume, but the profile of those surrendering. Alongside lower-rung cadres, several senior leaders and key organisational figures also laid down arms. The frequency and scale of these developments suggest a deeper, structural weakening within the movement. For many cadres, reintegration now appears a more viable option than continuing in a shrinking and high-risk insurgency. In several instances, surrenders were accompanied by the handing over of weapons and actionable intelligence, reinforcing their operational significance beyond mere symbolism.

Recovery and seizure operations form the second major strand. Security forces uncovered arms caches, explosives, and even fabrication or storage sites linked to Maoist networks. Many

such recoveries appear to have been enabled by intelligence from surrendered cadres or sustained surveillance efforts. The scale of material recovered points to what was once a well-developed logistical network, but also highlights how quickly it is being dismantled. As these resources are neutralised, the remaining cadres are left with fewer means to sustain any meaningful level of armed activity.

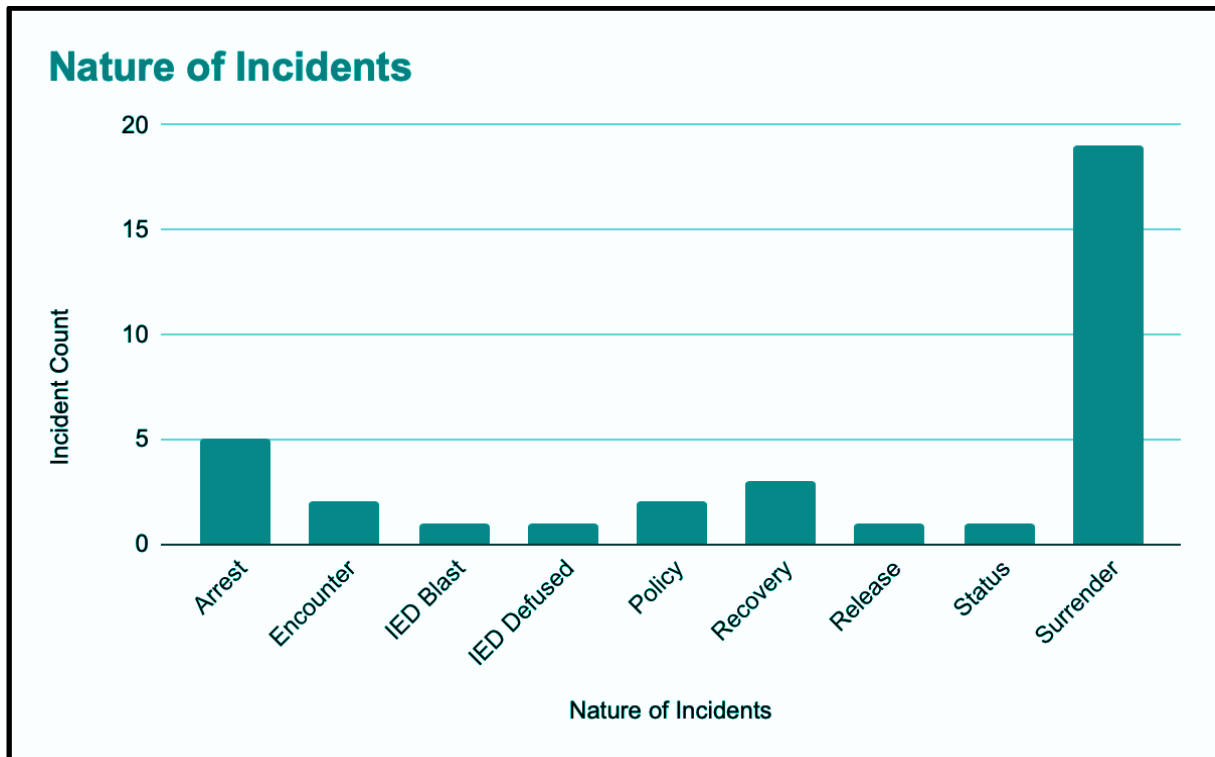
Arrests and legal action also feature prominently. Security and investigative agencies have adopted a more targeted approach, focusing not just on armed cadres but also on overground workers and urban linkages. The filing of chargesheets and continuation of legal proceedings indicates a parallel institutional track aimed at dismantling the broader support ecosystem that once sustained the insurgency beyond the immediate conflict zones.

In contrast, encounter-related incidents and Maoist-initiated violence remain limited. A few clashes were reported, mostly in remote pockets of Chhattisgarh, leading to the neutralisation of individual cadres. These were typically brief, intelligence-led engagements rather than prolonged firefights. The relative absence of large-scale offensive action from Maoist groups reflects both diminished capability and a shift toward survival-oriented tactics.

IED-related incidents, however, continue to persist, particularly in forested regions like Jharkhand. While many devices were detected and defused, isolated blasts causing injuries underline the continued reliance on asymmetric methods. These incidents appear less about mounting large attacks and more about creating disruption—slowing troop movement or maintaining a residual sense of threat. Their sporadic nature further reinforces the idea of a weakened force operating defensively rather than offensively.

There were also occasional signs of ideological signalling—statements or messaging from remaining Maoist elements aimed at projecting relevance and countering narratives of decline. However, these efforts seem limited in both reach and impact, especially when set against the broader trend of surrenders and organisational retreat.

Taken as a whole, the incident profile of March 2026 reflects a transition away from active insurgency toward containment and resolution. The dominance of surrenders, recoveries, and arrests over direct combat suggests that the conflict has entered its final phase. The challenge now is less about preventing expansion and more about ensuring closure—consolidating gains, stabilising affected areas, and preventing any possibility of resurgence.



WEEK-WISE INCIDENTS

A week-wise reading of March 2026 brings out a clear pattern of escalation followed by consolidation, broadly in line with the Government of India’s March 31 deadline to eliminate Left Wing Extremism (LWE). Activity did not unfold evenly; instead, it built up over time, with the most decisive outcomes—especially surrenders and recoveries—clustered toward the end of the month.

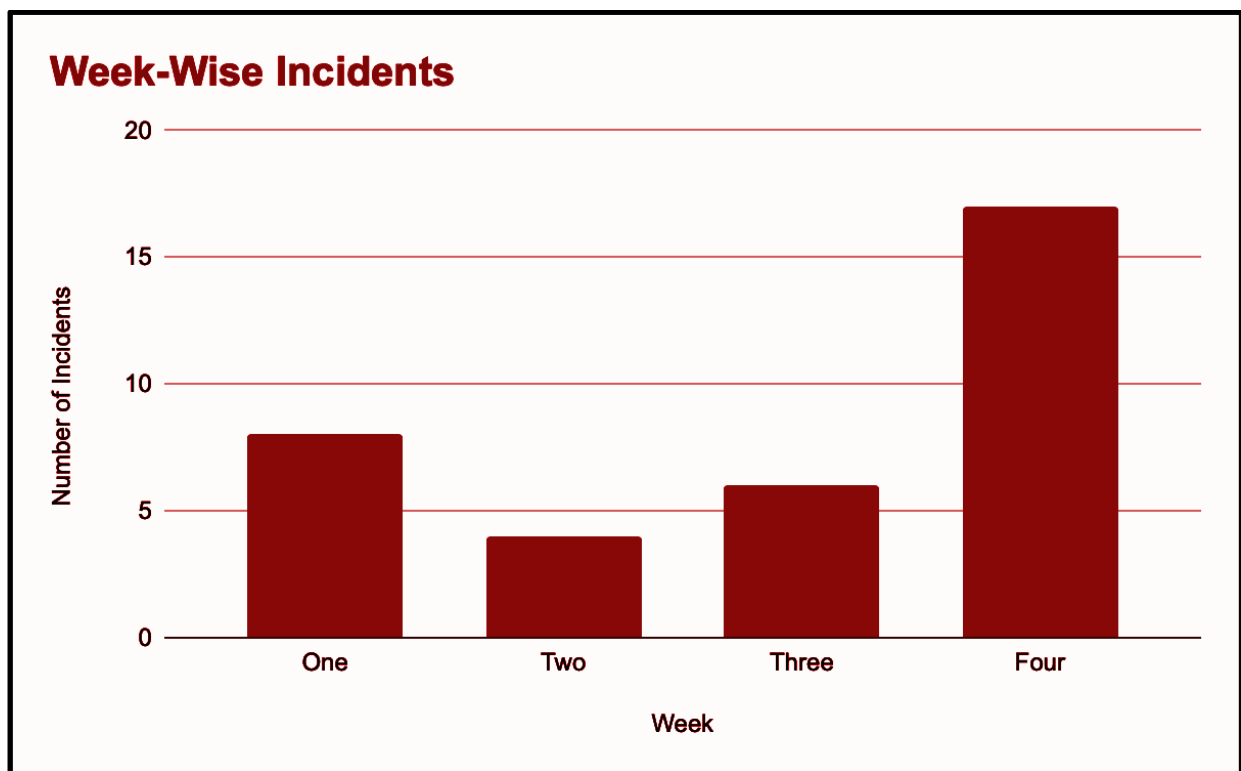
The first week (March 1–7) set the tone with high-impact developments early on. Large surrender events were reported alongside continued security force engagements, including encounters and IED-related incidents across key theatres such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Telangana. This phase reflected both pressure and response: intensified operations began producing visible results in terms of cadre disengagement, even as Maoist elements responded with sporadic, largely defensive actions like sabotage and limited attacks.

The second week (March 8–14) marked a clear consolidation of these initial gains. Surrenders continued at scale, but what stood out was the involvement of mid- and senior-level cadres, pointing to deeper organisational stress. Recovery operations also gathered pace, with seizures of arms and explosives further eroding Maoist capacity. Violence levels dipped, and the balance tilted more decisively toward state-led outcomes, indicating that sustained pressure was beginning to reshape the internal structure of the insurgency.

The third week (March 15–21) carried forward this consolidation, but with a broader spread of activities. Alongside surrenders, there was an increase in arrests and continued recovery efforts. Attention also shifted more visibly toward dismantling support systems, including urban linkages. This suggests an expansion of the counter-insurgency approach—from direct engagements in core areas to targeting the wider ecosystem sustaining Maoist operations. While overall violence remained subdued, the continued detection of explosives and seizures indicated that some residual capacity persisted.

The fourth week (March 22–31) emerged as the peak phase of activity. It saw cluster surrenders, major recoveries, and intensified operations in the remaining strongholds, particularly in the Bastar region. With the deadline approaching, there was a clear acceleration—cadres increasingly opting to surrender, and security forces pushing harder to clear the last pockets. The period also carried symbolic weight, with reports of senior leaders laying down arms and certain areas being declared free of Naxal influence, reinforcing the sense of a closing chapter.

Overall, the week-wise flow shows an initial push, followed by steady consolidation, and culminating in a final, high-intensity phase aimed at delivering concrete outcomes before the deadline. The progression reflects how sustained operational pressure, combined with clear policy signalling, gradually accelerated disengagement and weakened the remaining Maoist structures as the month advanced.



ARRESTS AND SURRENDERS

When the patterns of arrests and surrenders in March 2026 are viewed together, they tell a story that goes beyond numbers. They reflect a decisive shift in the trajectory of Left Wing Extremism (LWE), aligning with the broader sense that the insurgency is entering its final phase as the March 31, 2026 elimination target approaches. What stands out most is not just the scale of activity, but its character.

Surrenders, in particular, emerged as the defining feature of the month. Across states like Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Odisha, Maharashtra, and Jharkhand, cadres were not just trickling in—they were coming forward in groups. And these were not limited to the lower rungs. Many among them occupied positions of influence: state committee members, divisional leaders, and armed wing commanders. This detail matters. It suggests that what is unfolding is not merely attrition at the margins, but a deeper erosion within the organisational core.

The group nature of these surrenders is equally telling. It indicates that disengagement is no longer an isolated, individual decision made under duress, but often a coordinated step taken collectively. That points to something more profound—declining morale, shrinking operational space, and a growing belief among cadres that the state's rehabilitation framework offers a viable exit. In many cases, those who surrendered also shared intelligence, feeding into subsequent recoveries and operations. This created a kind of ripple effect, where one act of surrender quietly strengthened the next phase of enforcement.

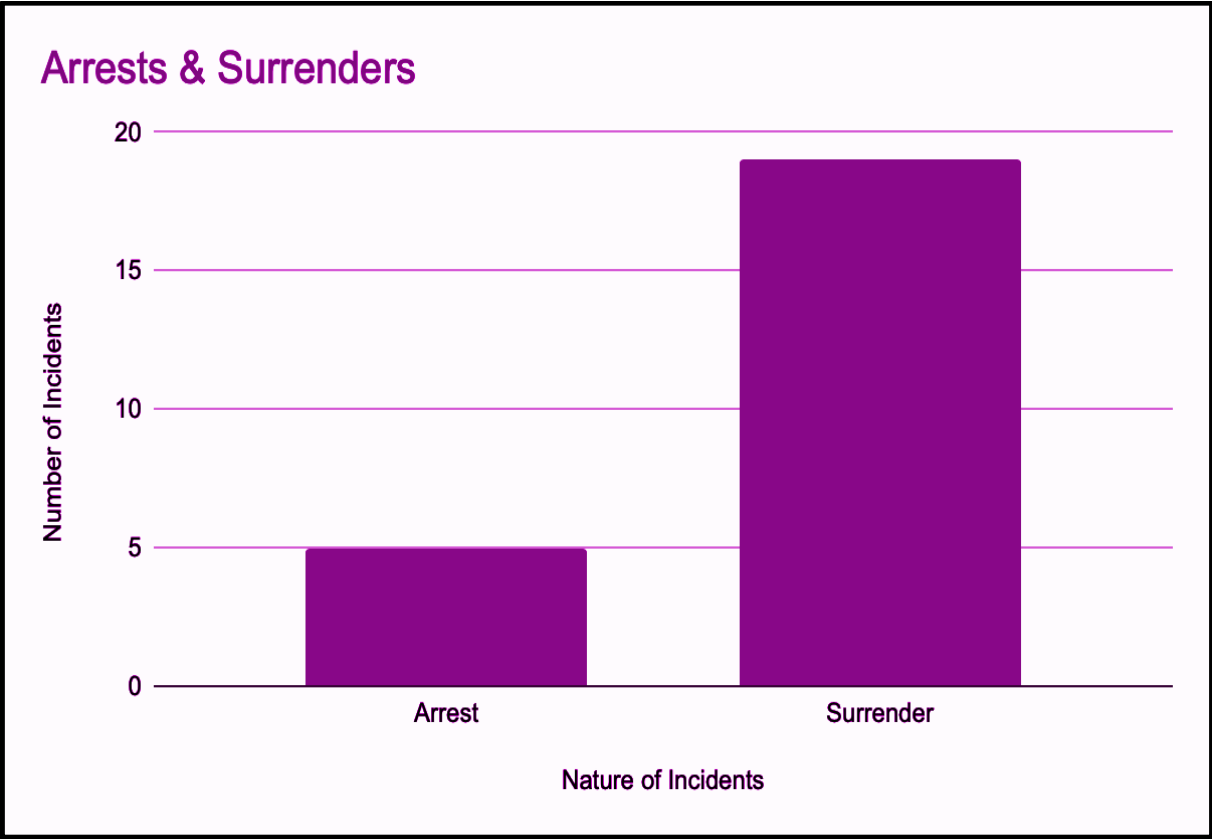
At the same time, arrests continued, but with a noticeable shift in approach. They were increasingly precise and intelligence-driven, targeting not just armed cadres in forested zones but also the wider support ecosystem—logistics handlers, recruiters, and urban operatives. States like Jharkhand, Bihar, and Chhattisgarh saw operations that led to the seizure of arms, explosives, and communication networks. These actions reflect a more layered strategy: not just confronting violence on the ground, but systematically dismantling the structures that sustain it behind the scenes.

There is an important distinction here. Arrests represent the coercive arm of the state—necessary, targeted, and often unavoidable. Surrenders, on the other hand, signal a different dynamic. They suggest that pressure has reached a point where exit becomes preferable to resistance. When surrenders begin to outweigh arrests so significantly, it indicates that the movement is not only being constrained from the outside, but is also weakening from within.

Seen together, arrests and surrenders form two sides of a single strategy—coercion and accommodation working in tandem. Security forces continue to pursue and neutralise active

threats, while surrender and rehabilitation policies create pathways for disengagement. This dual approach has reduced active cadre strength while also undercutting the long-term sustainability of the insurgency.

What March 2026 ultimately reveals is a shift in balance that now leans decisively toward the state. Arrests remain relevant in dealing with residual threats, but the scale and nature of surrenders point to something larger: an insurgency that is no longer expanding or even holding ground, but one that is gradually losing its internal coherence. In that sense, the current moment appears less like a phase of confrontation and more like a closing chapter—where sustaining the political and organisational logic of the movement is becoming increasingly difficult.



SECURITY OPERATIONS

Security operations in March 2026 were intensive, tightly coordinated, and clearly oriented toward a final-phase clearance of Left Wing Extremism (LWE), in line with the Government of India’s March 31, 2026 deadline. The operational posture reflected a mature counter-insurgency framework that combined sustained ground pressure with intelligence-led targeting, inter-state coordination, and a deliberate facilitation of surrenders. The emphasis

was no longer confined to neutralising armed cadres, but extended to the systematic dismantling of what remains of the insurgent architecture.

A defining characteristic of the month was the decisive shift toward intelligence-driven operations. Actionable inputs—frequently derived from surrendered cadres—were used to guide precise strikes, search missions, and recovery efforts. Security forces intensified deep forest operations in core areas, particularly in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh and the Saranda forests of Jharkhand, with the objective of locating residual cadres, exposing concealed hideouts, and recovering stockpiled weapons and explosives. These operations were not expansive in scale but sharply focused, aimed at verified pockets of presence and high-value targets.

Alongside this, there was sustained emphasis on area domination and route sanitisation, especially in zones historically vulnerable to IED attacks. The deployment of bomb disposal units at scale reflects an enduring concern over the Maoists' reliance on asymmetric tactics. The seizure of substantial quantities of explosives, arms, and ammunition from forested zones indicates that the security effort was equally focused on degrading the logistical backbone of the insurgency, not merely engaging its active elements.

Another critical dimension was the deepening of inter-agency and inter-state coordination. Operations were conducted through close collaboration between state police forces, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)—including the CRPF and its specialised CoBRA units—as well as elite formations such as the Greyhounds and intelligence agencies. This coordination was particularly evident in border regions spanning Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Odisha, where synchronised action has significantly constrained the inter-state mobility that Maoist groups have historically leveraged.

Equally noteworthy was the calibrated approach toward surrenders. Security forces did not rely solely on kinetic operations but actively worked to create secure exit pathways for cadres. In specific instances, there appeared to be a conscious restraint in the use of force to facilitate negotiated or induced surrenders. This reflects a broader strategic evolution—from a purely force-centric model to a composite approach that blends coercive pressure with opportunities for disengagement and reintegration, thereby accelerating internal erosion within Maoist ranks.

Operations during the month also extended beyond the forested theatres into the supporting ecosystem of the insurgency. Increased focus on urban networks and overground workers, coupled with investigative actions such as arrests and chargesheets, underscores an effort to

disrupt the ideological, financial, and logistical enablers of the movement. This integrated approach signals a recognition that the endurance of LWE has historically depended as much on these support structures as on its armed cadres.

Taken together, the operational pattern in March 2026 reflects a phase of clear state dominance, with Maoist groups largely confined to a defensive posture. The combination of precision, coordination, and intelligence-led action—reinforced by an active surrender policy—has substantially reduced their capacity to regroup or mount effective resistance. What is unfolding is best understood as a culmination phase: a systematic effort to eliminate the last residual pockets of LWE while laying the groundwork for a transition toward post-conflict stabilisation and long-term governance consolidation.

CASUALTY INDICATORS

The casualty indicators for March 2026 reflect a significant decline in the intensity of violence, reinforcing the broader trend of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) entering a terminal and residual phase. The overall casualty profile is characterised by low fatality levels, limited engagements, and an absence of mass-casualty incidents, indicating that the conflict has moved away from large-scale confrontations to sporadic and localised encounters.

Civilian casualties during the month were negligible to minimal, marking a notable departure from earlier phases of the insurgency where civilians were frequently targeted. This suggests a reduction in Maoist capacity as well as intent to undertake high-impact attacks, particularly those aimed at creating fear or asserting territorial dominance. The decline in civilian targeting also reflects increased state presence and improved security penetration in previously vulnerable areas.

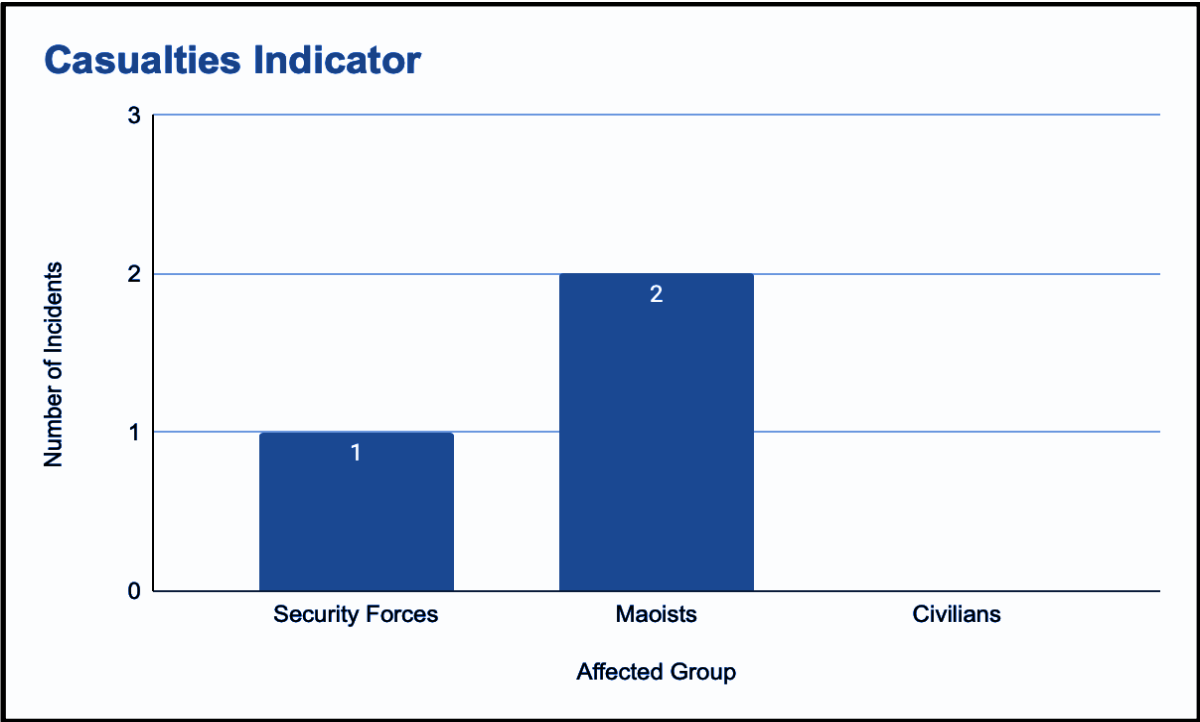
Security force casualties were limited and largely confined to isolated incidents, primarily linked to IED blasts or brief encounters in residual strongholds such as parts of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. While these incidents underline the continued risks faced by personnel operating in difficult terrain, the absence of large-scale ambushes or coordinated attacks indicates that Maoist groups are no longer capable of executing complex, high-casualty operations. Instead, their tactics appear defensive, relying on hidden explosives and opportunistic strikes.

Maoist casualties, in contrast, were relatively higher but still modest in absolute terms, resulting mainly from targeted, intelligence-based encounters. The neutralisation of individual cadres—often linked to specific operations—highlights the precision-oriented approach of security forces, rather than broad, high-intensity engagements. Importantly, the relatively low

number of Maoist fatalities, when viewed alongside the high volume of surrenders, suggests that disengagement rather than elimination has become the dominant pathway of attrition.

A key takeaway from the casualty indicators is the clear asymmetry in outcomes: while security forces continue to face occasional risks, the overall environment is one of reduced lethality and controlled operations, with minimal collateral impact. The dominance of surrenders over fatalities further underscores a shift toward non-violent resolution mechanisms, even as security pressure is maintained.

Overall, the casualty trends in March 2026 point to a de-escalated conflict environment, where violence is no longer the primary mode of interaction between the state and insurgents. Instead, the data reflects a transition from active conflict to containment and resolution, with casualties declining as the insurgency loses both capability and momentum in the final phase leading up to the March 31, 2026 target.



IED RELATED INCIDENTS

IED-related incidents in March 2026 highlight the residual tactical reliance of Maoist cadres on asymmetric warfare, even as the broader insurgency shows signs of decline. While the overall number of such incidents remains limited, their continued presence underscores that Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) remain the primary weapon of choice for weakened Maoist units, particularly in difficult terrain where direct confrontation is no longer viable.

The majority of IED-related events during the month were preventive in nature, involving the detection and safe defusal of explosive devices by security forces during combing and area domination operations. This indicates both improved operational preparedness and enhanced technical capability on the part of security forces, especially bomb disposal squads. The successful neutralisation of these devices reflects effective intelligence inputs and standard operating procedures, which have significantly reduced the potential for casualties.

However, there were isolated instances of IED blasts, resulting in injuries to security personnel. These incidents were largely confined to core operational zones such as forested regions of Jharkhand, where Maoist presence persists in small, mobile groups. The use of IEDs in such areas suggests a deliberate strategy to slow down advancing forces, restrict mobility, and create psychological pressure, rather than to inflict mass casualties.

The scale and sophistication of IED usage appear to have declined compared to earlier phases of the insurgency. There is little evidence of coordinated, large-scale ambushes involving multiple devices. Instead, the pattern points to scattered placement of explosives, often along patrol routes or in known operational corridors, reflecting a defensive and attritional approach adopted by remaining cadres.

Importantly, many IED recoveries were linked to intelligence generated through surrendered cadres, enabling security forces to pre-empt threats and dismantle hidden caches. This reinforces the interconnected nature of different incident categories, where surrenders contribute directly to reducing future risks by exposing Maoist tactics and logistical networks.

Overall, IED-related incidents in March 2026 represent a diminishing but persistent threat. While Maoist groups continue to rely on explosives as a low-cost, high-impact tool, their effectiveness has been significantly curtailed by enhanced counter-IED capabilities and sustained operational pressure. The trend suggests that IED usage is now a fallback mechanism of a weakened insurgency, rather than a central component of a coordinated offensive strategy.

RECOVERIES

Recoveries in March 2026 offer one of the clearest windows into how deeply Maoist operational capacity has been eroded. They are not just isolated seizures, but the cumulative outcome of sustained security pressure, sharper intelligence, and a time-bound push aligned with the Government of India's March 31, 2026 elimination target. What stands out is not only

the volume of recoveries, but what they represent—a shift away from direct confrontation towards systematically dismantling the insurgency’s material backbone.

A significant share of these recoveries consisted of arms and ammunition: AK-series rifles, INSAS, SLRs, light machine guns, and locally fabricated weapons. Many of these were not seized in combat but uncovered from concealed dumps in forested terrain. This pattern is telling. It suggests that Maoist cadres, under sustained pressure, were increasingly choosing to hide rather than deploy their weapon stockpiles. In effect, these caches became dormant assets—ones that, once recovered, directly reduced both immediate threat levels and the insurgents’ longer-term ability to sustain armed operations.

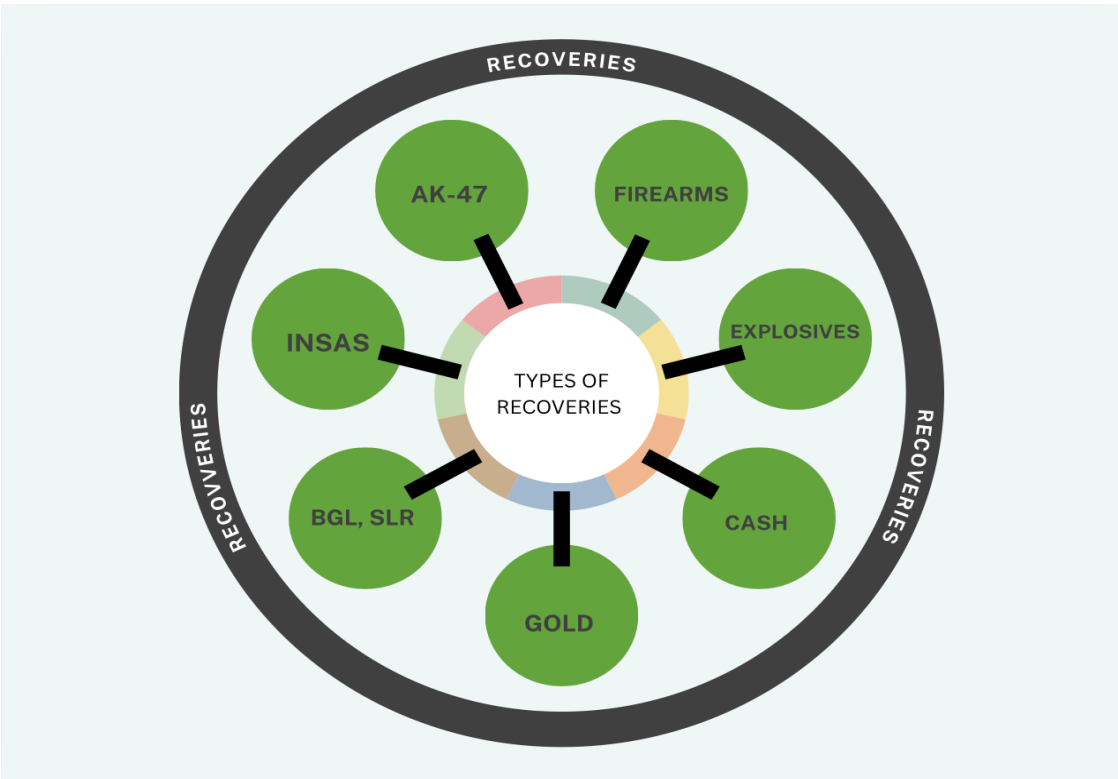
Equally important were the recoveries of explosive devices and IED-making components—detonators, wiring systems, pressure-cooker assemblies, and substantial quantities of explosive material. These finds reinforce the continued reliance of Maoist groups on IED-based tactics, even as their capacity for conventional engagements declines. At the same time, the successful detection and neutralisation of such materials point to improved counter-IED capabilities and deeper intelligence penetration, both of which are critical in lowering risks to security forces operating in affected areas.

Beyond weapons and explosives, March also saw the disruption of logistical and support infrastructure. Security forces recovered communication devices, electronic equipment, and materials used for propaganda and mobilisation. In some instances, fabrication units and small-scale arms manufacturing setups were discovered—clear evidence of attempts by Maoist groups to build a degree of self-reliance in sustaining their arsenal. The dismantling of such facilities is strategically significant, as it disrupts not just supply chains but also the localised capacity to regenerate combat resources.

Financial recoveries—cash reserves and valuables—further underline the extent to which Maoist groups were attempting to preserve resources for future regrouping. The seizure of these assets strikes at the financial underpinnings of the insurgency, limiting its ability to operate clandestinely or rebuild networks over time.

Taken together, the pattern of recoveries in March 2026 reflects a decisive operational shift. The focus is no longer limited to neutralising cadres in encounters but extends to systematically denying capabilities and dismantling support networks. The repeated uncovering of hidden weapons, explosives, and infrastructure suggests an insurgency that has been pushed into a defensive posture, with shrinking room to manoeuvre. More importantly, it indicates that the degradation is not merely tactical or temporary—it is structural. The steady erosion of material

resources, supply systems, and financial reserves leaves little foundation for any meaningful resurgence in the foreseeable future.



COMPARATIVE TRENDS 2025 & 2026

A comparison of March 2025 and March 2026 reveals a clear transition from high-intensity insurgency to terminal-stage decline in Left Wing Extremism (LWE). March 2025 represented the operational peak of conflict activity, with the highest incident volume of the year at that point. The landscape was characterised by frequent encounters, active Maoist violence including IED blasts, and sustained multi-theatre operations, particularly in core areas like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Maoist activity, while increasingly pressured, still retained offensive capability, with incidents reflecting both retaliation and attempts to assert control. Security forces were dominant but engaged in continuous high-intensity combat, including leadership neutralisation and large-scale recoveries.

In contrast, March 2026 reflects a qualitatively different phase, where the insurgency appears structurally weakened and strategically exhausted. The dominant trend is no longer violent engagement but mass surrenders, leadership collapse, and territorial contraction. While security operations remained intensive, they were increasingly intelligence-led and focused on clearance, recovery, and facilitation of surrenders, rather than sustained combat. Maoist violence during this period was minimal, fragmented, and largely defensive, with IED usage

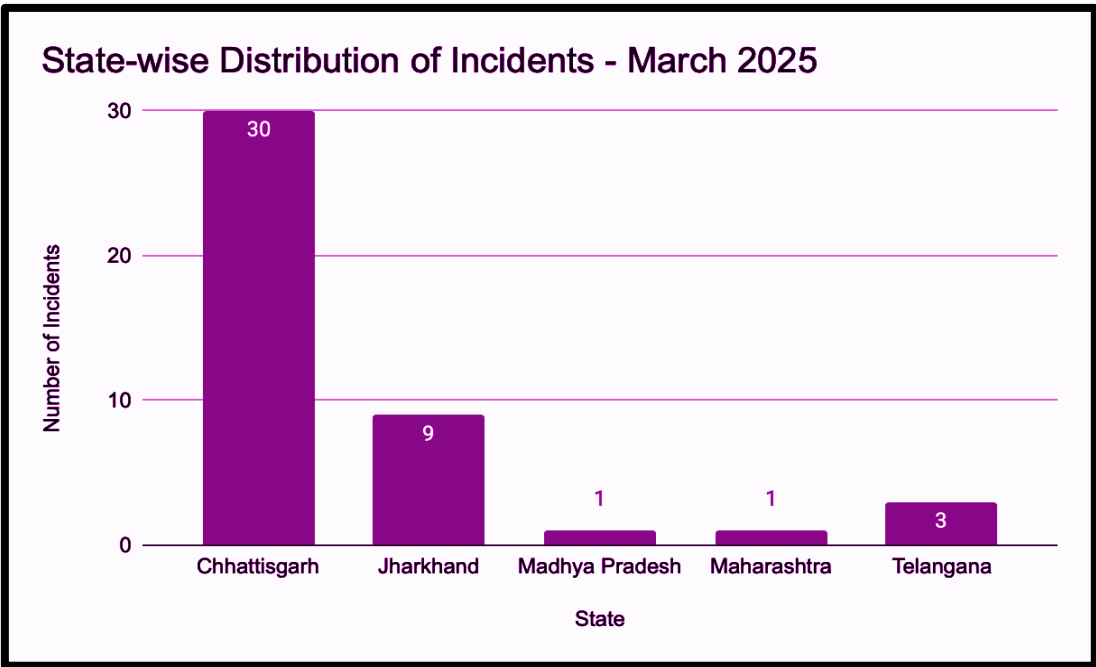
persisting as a residual tactic but with reduced effectiveness. The shift from encounters to surrenders as the primary mode of attrition marks a fundamental change in conflict dynamics.

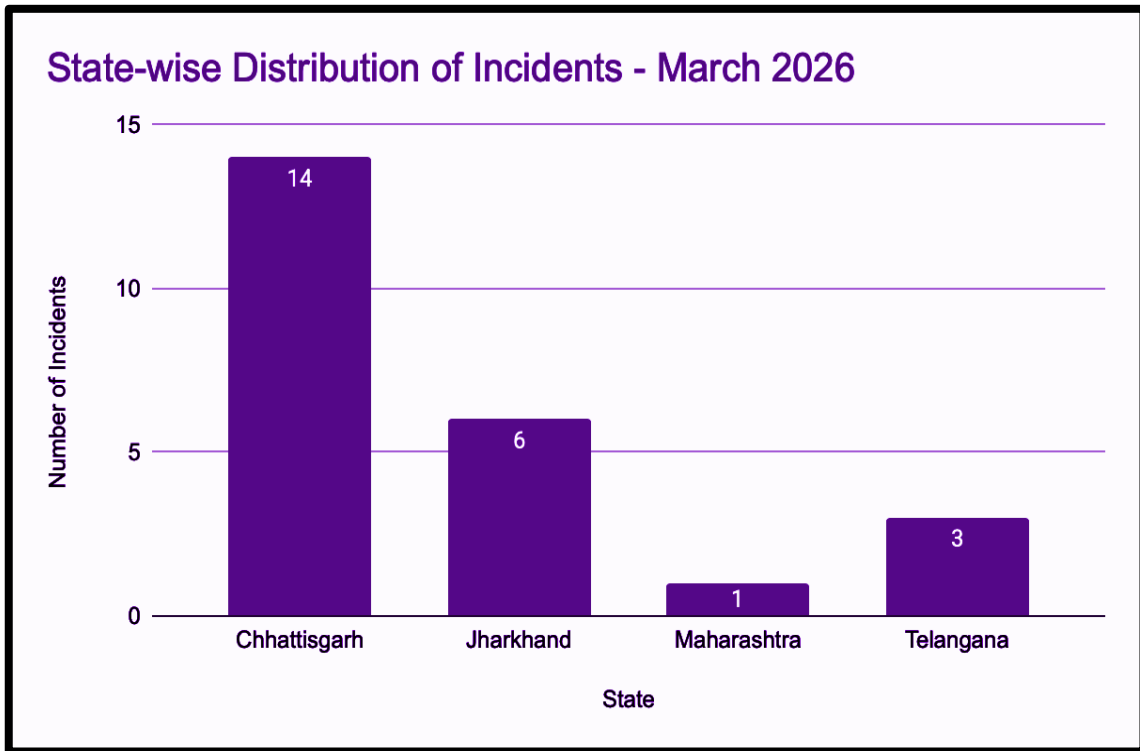
Geographically, March 2025 still exhibited a multi-state spread of activity, with spillover into peripheral regions such as Bihar, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh, indicating a broader insurgent footprint. By March 2026, this footprint had contracted sharply, with activity largely confined to core forested districts in Bastar and limited pockets in Jharkhand, while several districts—particularly in Odisha and Telangana—transitioned into near or complete Naxal-free status. This spatial compression highlights the effectiveness of coordinated operations but also indicates that the insurgency has been pushed into its last remaining strongholds rather than entirely eradicated.

The nature of incidents further underscores this shift. In March 2025, violent incidents, encounters, and IED attacks formed a significant share of activity, reflecting an active insurgency capable of engagement. In March 2026, the incident profile was dominated by surrenders, arrests, and recoveries, with violence playing a much smaller role. This indicates that the Maoist movement has lost both the capacity and intent to sustain prolonged armed confrontation, relying instead on survival tactics or opting for disengagement.

Overall, March 2026 marks a decisive strategic turning point and near-collapse of the Maoist insurgency, with momentum firmly in favour of the state. The data suggests that Naxalism has been effectively neutralised as a large-scale organised threat, though limited residual presence persists in isolated pockets, requiring continued vigilance and consolidation efforts.

STATE-WISE COMPARATIVE TRENDS - MARCH 2025 & 2026





PROGNOSIS

The trajectory observed by March 2026 suggests that Left Wing Extremism (LWE) has entered a post-insurgency phase, where the primary challenge is no longer the containment of armed violence but the management of residual risks and the contestation of ideology. With the collapse of leadership structures, territorial contraction, and large-scale surrenders, the movement has lost its ability to function as a coherent military force. However, this transition does not signify the end of the conflict; rather, it marks a shift from a security-centric challenge to a governance and ideological one.

In the immediate term, the prognosis is one of sustained but low-intensity residual activity. Small, dispersed groups of cadres may continue to operate in difficult terrain, relying on survival tactics such as IEDs and limited mobility. These elements are unlikely to mount large-scale operations but may attempt to retain symbolic presence and disrupt state consolidation efforts. The risk of regrouping, particularly in tri-junction areas and forested belts, remains contingent on gaps in security presence or governance delivery.

More critically, the ideological dimension of the Maoist movement is likely to persist beyond the decline of its armed wing. Historically rooted in issues of land rights, tribal marginalisation, and governance deficits, the movement’s narrative retains potential resonance in vulnerable regions. Even as armed cadres surrender, the ideas that sustained mobilisation—perceptions of

state neglect, exploitation, and injustice—may continue to circulate, particularly if underlying socio-economic conditions are not adequately addressed.

There is also the possibility of diffusion into non-violent or covert forms of mobilisation, including attempts to influence local grievances, student spaces, labour networks, or civil society platforms. Residual urban networks and overground workers may shift focus from logistics support to ideological propagation, narrative-building, and recruitment in subtler forms. This underscores that while the battlefield may quieten, the contest for legitimacy and influence continues in the social and political domain.

The state's response, therefore, must evolve accordingly. Security measures will remain necessary to prevent regrouping, but the long-term outcome will depend on winning the ideological and developmental battle. This includes deepening governance in previously affected areas, ensuring credible delivery of welfare and rights-based schemes, strengthening local institutions, and building trust with communities—particularly tribal populations. Effective communication strategies will also be essential to counter residual propaganda and reinforce the legitimacy of state interventions.

In this context, the end phase of LWE should be seen not as a conclusion, but as a transition point. The decline of violence provides an opportunity to address the root causes that enabled the insurgency to endure for decades. The durability of current gains will ultimately depend on whether the state can replace the space once occupied by insurgent influence with responsive governance, inclusive development, and a credible counter-narrative.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the trends observed in March 2026 indicate that India's long-standing challenge of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) has reached a decisive inflection point, marked by the collapse of armed structures, mass surrenders, and a sharp contraction of geographical influence. Compared to earlier phases, the insurgency no longer demonstrates the capacity for sustained violence or coordinated operations, and the balance of initiative has firmly shifted in favour of the state.

At the same time, the transition underway is not merely the end of an armed movement but the beginning of a new phase of consolidation and stabilisation. The persistence of small residual groups, coupled with the enduring relevance of the socio-economic issues that once fuelled the movement, highlights the need for a calibrated approach that goes beyond security

operations. The long-term success of counter-LWE efforts will depend on the state's ability to institutionalise its gains—by strengthening governance in previously affected regions, ensuring inclusive development, and maintaining a responsive administrative presence. Equally important is the need to address the ideological space, where narratives of grievance and marginalisation must be countered through credible engagement, trust-building, and visible improvements in livelihoods and access to justice. Ultimately, March 2026 represents not just the weakening of an insurgency, but an opportunity to transform conflict-affected regions into stable and integrated parts of the national mainstream. Sustaining this momentum will require continued vigilance, adaptive strategy, and a balanced emphasis on security, development, and ideological engagement.



4th Floor, Core 4B, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003
Email: contact@indiafoundation.in Website: www.indiafoundation.in