

NaXalism

A Quarterly Analysis

July-September 2026

Aradhita Singh

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About the Author

Aradhita Singh is a Research Fellow at India Foundation. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Hindu College, University of Delhi, and is currently pursuing a postgraduate degree in Public Policy at O.P. Jindal Global University.

Before joining India Foundation, she served in the Office of the Hon'ble Vice President of India, where she worked on research, strategic communications, and parliamentary affairs. She contributed to high-level parliamentary engagements and official delegations in India and abroad, including visits to Brazil, Greece, Azerbaijan, and New Zealand, engaging with policymakers, diplomats, academics, journalists, and civil society representatives.

Her research focuses on national security, internal security, governance, and development, with particular interest in conflict-affected regions, counter-insurgency, and people-centric approaches to policymaking.

Ms. Singh is a regular contributor to public policy discourse. Her articles and commentaries have been published in Dainik Jagran, Zee News, The Pioneer, Dainik Swadesh, Firstpost, and Chintan. She has participated in policy consultations and expert discussions with members of India's security establishment, academia, and the wider policy community on issues including Left-Wing Extremism, terrorism, radicalisation, and internal security. Through her research and writing, she seeks to contribute to evidence-based policymaking and informed public discourse.

INTRODUCTION

For nearly six decades, Left-Wing Extremism remained one of India's most persistent internal security challenges. What began at Naxalbari in 1967 evolved into an armed movement that challenged the authority of the Indian State and sought to replace democratic institutions with parallel structures of control. Its consequences extended far beyond encounters and casualties. Roads were obstructed, schools became targets, and generations of people in some of the country's remotest regions grew up with limited access to opportunities available elsewhere.

Over the past decade, however, the Government's approach has changed the course of this conflict. Sustained security operations, better coordination between central and state forces, and infrastructure development and rehabilitation have weakened the Maoist organisational structure. These gains matter because they have restored governance in regions where extremist groups had long limited its reach.

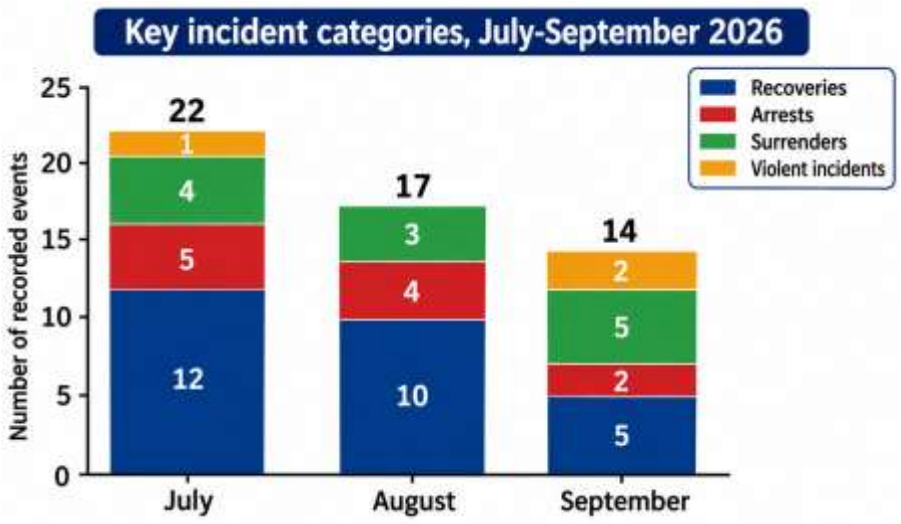
The third quarter of 2026 must be understood in this context. The arrest of senior leaders, the surrender of experienced cadres and the recovery of concealed weapons indicate an organisation struggling to preserve its remaining networks. At the same time, civilian injuries from buried explosives show that a decline in organised violence cannot be taken to mean that every village is safe.

This final edition of the Naxal Tracker examines developments from July to September 2026 and the responsibilities that follow. The space vacated by Maoist organisations must now be filled by functioning schools, accessible healthcare, reliable administration and livelihoods. The gains achieved through security operations provide an opportunity. Their lasting value will depend on the changes in the everyday lives of people who endured this conflict.

OVERVIEW OF LEFT-WING EXTREMISM TRENDS: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2026

Three developments stand out in the incident record: the erosion of experienced leadership, repeated exposure of weapons and supply networks, and the continued exodus of cadres. Across several states, arrests, recoveries and surrenders point to a greater emphasis on dismantling remaining networks and preventing regrouping. The relationship between these developments is particularly important: information gained through one operation increasingly informs subsequent action.

The quarter also brought the longer-term consequences of the conflict into focus. Rehabilitation, the prosecution of past offences, the removal of explosives and development outreach increasingly formed part of the same policy challenge. These developments call for continued security attention alongside a more durable civilian presence.



This chart presents the key incident categories recorded between July and September 2026, compiled from open-source reporting. These 53 events declined from 22 in July to 14 in September. Arms and explosives recoveries were the

largest category (27 events), followed by surrenders (12) and arrests (11), while only three incidents involved violence. The figures reflect media-reported incidents and may not capture every event.

SECURITY OPERATIONS AND THE WEAKENING OF MAOIST NETWORKS

The main security trend during the quarter was the disruption of the networks through which the CPI-Maoist had sustained its organisation. Pressure on senior leadership continued, alongside the exposure of weapons caches, communication systems and financial resources. Taken together, these developments suggest that the organisation was losing the means to preserve its remaining units and to rebuild links between them.

The arrests of Misir Besra in late July and Asim Mandal in September were important examples of this wider weakening. Both held senior positions within the organisation. Their removal from underground networks reduced the availability of experienced leadership at a time when cadres were already leaving the movement.

For an organisation reliant on *personal contacts, secrecy and accumulated field experience*, such losses are difficult to replace. Another clear trend was the link between arrests, surrenders and subsequent recoveries. Information from former and arrested cadres helped security forces locate resources that had remained concealed in forested areas. Recoveries in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha therefore reflected more than the seizure of individual weapons. They showed that parts of the organisation's logistical system were becoming accessible to security agencies.

The substantial cache recovered in Sukma in August illustrates this pattern. Information from surrendered cadres led forces to weapons and explosive materials,

while similar disclosures supported operations elsewhere. Each recovery restricted the resources available to surviving cadres and reduced the scope for their later use. The repeated discovery of such dumps also makes clear why search and clearance operations must continue even after armed activity declines.

Inter-state coordination remained central to this process. Pressure from the security forces has forced some surviving cadres and support networks to leave their usual operational base. One such individual was Brijesh Ganjhu, the commander of the TSPC (***Tritiya Sammelan Prastuti Committee***). The Uttar Pradesh ATS eliminated him in an encounter in Varanasi in September. The incident underscores the need for coordinated tracking across jurisdictions, while the TSPC must be assessed separately from the CPI-Maoist's central structure.

The changing pattern of operations points towards consolidation. Leadership arrests and the exposure of concealed resources are increasingly important for preventing regrouping. The task ahead is to sustain intelligence-sharing, follow the links revealed through investigations, and ensure that reduced violence does not allow surviving networks the time and space to recover.

SURRENDERS AND REHABILITATION: THE DECLINING APPEAL OF MAOIST EXTREMISM

The continued exodus of cadres was another significant trend during July-September 2026. Surrenders across several states suggest that the Maoist organisation was increasingly finding it difficult to retain experienced members. The implications extend beyond a reduction in strength. Departing cadres take with them knowledge of recruitment, training, local contacts and the arrangements that keep underground units functioning.

The surrender of sixteen cadres in Ranchi in July and of eight in Bijapur the following day illustrated this pressure. Further surrenders in the Saranda-Kolhan region, Telangana and the Bengal-Jharkhand belt showed that the process extended across different organisational areas. The participation of senior functionaries gave these developments particular importance: the loss of experience can weaken an organisation even where small groups remain active.

Security pressure and rehabilitation worked alongside one another. Ongoing operations restricted movement and access to resources, while family outreach and assistance offered a route back to civilian life. The tracker records both elements. Their combined effect helps explain why surrenders should be understood as part of the organisation's broader decline rather than as isolated administrative events.

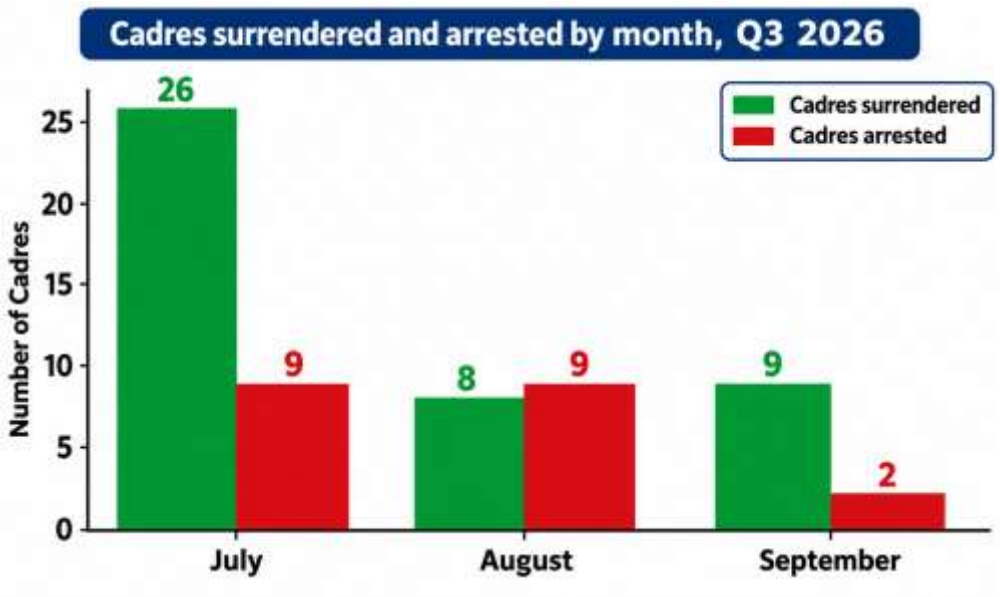
The reasons for leaving nevertheless require careful assessment. Age, illness, family circumstances, internal difficulties and the prospect of rehabilitation may all influence a cadre's decision. Surrender marks a break from the armed organisation; it does not, by itself, establish that every former member has rejected its ideology. The policy priority is to turn that break into a stable and lasting return to civilian life.

This requires support beyond the initial grant or surrender ceremony. Former cadres need access to documents, treatment, housing and stable employment. Women who spent years underground may face particular difficulties in rebuilding family relationships and achieving financial independence. Training must reflect local employment opportunities, and follow-up must confirm that assistance reaches people beyond the initial stage.

The growing use of information from surrendered cadres also links rehabilitation to security consolidation. Their knowledge can help locate concealed weapons and

prevent remaining networks from recovering them. This contribution reinforces the value of a credible rehabilitation process, underpinned by fair treatment and practical assistance.

Legal accountability remains integral to that credibility. Chhattisgarh's September clarification that surrender does not automatically terminate criminal proceedings sets out an important principle. Reintegration and prosecution must adhere to the applicable legal framework, with attention to individual circumstances and victims' claims. The lasting measure of success will be whether former cadres can build secure civilian lives while public confidence in justice is maintained.



This chart shows the number of cadres who surrendered or were arrested each month, based on open-source reporting. Surrenders peaked at 26 in July, driven by the surrender of sixteen cadres, including senior committee members, in Ranchi and eight in Bijapur, and totalled 43 across the quarter. Significant later surrenders included State Committee Member Kakarala Samatha in Telangana in

August. Arrests stood at 9 in July and August before falling to 2 in September. The most significant were Politburo member Misir Besra in Dhanbad in July and Central Committee member Asim Mandal in West Bengal in September. Overall, surrenders outnumbered arrests by more than two to one.

RESIDUAL THREATS AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF MAOIST VIOLENCE

The decline of Left-Wing Extremism has reshaped the security challenge in previously affected regions. Sustained operations have weakened the CPI-Maoist's leadership and constrained its ability to coordinate violence. However, the quarter's record shows that concealed explosives, abandoned weapons and smaller extremist networks continue to require attention. Security agencies increasingly must address what decades of insurgency have left behind.

The repeated recovery of weapons and IEDs was one of the clearest trends in July-September. Concealed dumps in Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand reveal the resources accumulated by Maoist groups over the years. Locating these stores reduces the means available to remaining cadres. It also helps make areas safer for communities whose access to forests, fields and public services has long been affected by violence.

Civilian harm during the quarter underscored the urgency of this work. Two minors were injured in suspected pressure-IED blasts in Bijapur in July. In September, Madakam Nageswara Rao was killed in Mulugu while returning after collecting bamboo, in a blast allegedly caused by a Maoist-planted device. These incidents show that buried explosives continue to threaten ordinary livelihood activities even as organised violence declines.

Area sanitisation must therefore remain a sustained priority. Search and clearance operations should give particular attention to routes used by villagers to reach forests, agricultural land, schools and markets. Community awareness, safe reporting arrangements and access to emergency medical care must accompany these efforts. People should be able to report suspicious objects without approaching or handling them. The continued presence of splinter organisations represents another aspect of the evolving threat.

Arrests of TSPC and JJMP (***Jharkhand Jan Mukti Parishad***) functionaries, together with the September operation against Brijesh Ganjhu, indicate that smaller networks can survive the weakening of the CPI-Maoist. Their capacity for extortion and intimidation, and their access to weapons, must be assessed through ongoing intelligence work and inter-state coordination.

The broader trend is a shift towards securing areas that have emerged from Maoist influence. Reduced violence creates space for normal life to return, but communities also need the confidence to travel, work and approach public institutions without fear. Preventing regrouping and removing the material remnants of the insurgency are essential to making that transition durable. The gains achieved through security operations must therefore be followed by continued vigilance and an accessible administration. The test of consolidation will be whether the decline in armed activity translates into greater safety and freedom in the everyday lives of local people.

CONSOLIDATING SECURITY GAINS THROUGH GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

For communities that lived under Maoist influence, the State's return must become visible in daily life. A road must connect people to a functioning hospital or market. A school building must have teachers. A welfare entitlement must be accessible without repeated journeys to a distant office. These practical changes give lasting meaning to security gains.

The quarter's incident record reflects progress in this direction. Odisha's July review linked continued vigilance and the recovery of looted weapons to welfare saturation through Gramodaya in previously affected villages. The decision to maintain security deployment alongside development outreach recognised that improved conditions still require support. Administrative attention should continue even after an area loses its earlier security classification.

In Telangana, the administration's assessment of the Karregutta Hills combined a security assessment with plans for roads, drinking water, mobile connectivity and tourism. These proposals point to a wider role for the administration in areas previously discussed mainly in operational terms. Their value will depend on implementation, local participation and whether they meet the needs of nearby settlements.

The Government already has a substantial policy framework to build on. The National Policy and Action Plan adopted in 2015 combined security measures with development and the protection of local rights. Special Central Assistance, road connectivity projects and telecommunications initiatives have supported the expansion of state presence. Broader tribal programmes, including Dharti Aaba

Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan, provide further means to address gaps in essential services.

In Bastar, Niyad Nellanar and the Shaheed Veer Gunda Dhur Seva Dera initiative reflect the transition from a security presence to public service delivery. Seva Dera envisages using CAPF camps as access points for services such as healthcare, banking and livelihood support. Such arrangements can help bridge immediate gaps while regular civilian institutions become more accessible.

The next phase requires attention to the quality of delivery. Infrastructure and programme coverage are useful measures, but they do not, on their own, indicate whether a village has dependable services. District administrations should examine school attendance, availability of health staff, access to markets, the settlement of grievances and the regularity of benefit payments. Local feedback should help identify where implementation is falling short. Development must also reflect the social and economic conditions of each region. Bastar, Abujhmad, Saranda and Kolhan cannot be approached with identical plans. Tribal traditions, forest dependence, language and settlement patterns must inform the design of services and livelihoods. Improved security should strengthen local participation in development.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: CONSOLIDATING THE TRANSITION TO A NAXAL-FREE BHARAT

Existing government initiatives provide a foundation for the next phase. The priority is to adapt them to the needs of regions emerging from prolonged Maoist influence, with sustained attention to local conditions, public services and livelihoods.

Region-Specific Frameworks for Post-Conflict Development

Special Central Assistance and tribal development programmes already recognise that these regions require focused support. The next step should be a sustained transition plan for each former stronghold, with priorities agreed through district administrations, panchayats and local communities. Clear arrangements for continuing essential development support should accompany changes in security classification. Regions emerging from decades of violence need administrative continuity and time to recover.

Strengthening the Transition from Security to Public Services

Niyad Nellanar and Seva Dera provide useful starting points. Their implementation should help identify villages where health services, banking, documentation and welfare access remain difficult. Camp-based services can address immediate needs, while departments take responsibility for regular staffing and delivery. Similar arrangements may be considered elsewhere according to local security conditions and administrative capacity.

Strengthening Rehabilitation and Support for Victims

Existing surrender policies provide financial assistance and support for reintegration. Follow-up should assess whether former cadres have access to treatment, stable housing, and an income after receiving initial benefits. Assistance should reflect individual needs and remain subject to lawful accountability. Civilian victims, injured survivors and bereaved families require equally sustained attention through timely compensation, disability support, education and livelihood assistance. Documentation requirements should be simplified wherever they prevent eligible families from receiving help.

Women-Led Livelihoods and Youth Employment

Existing skill programmes and self-help group networks should be linked more closely to local demand. Forest-produce processing, agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts and small enterprises can provide opportunities where larger investments are unlikely in the immediate term. Women's groups need working capital, processing facilities and dependable buyers. Young people whose education was interrupted require bridge learning and practical training linked to identifiable work. Measure programme success through continued earnings and participation.

Education and Rebuilding Institutional Trust

Eklavya Model Residential Schools and other tribal education initiatives offer an existing foundation. Formerly affected villages also need reliable local schooling, teachers familiar with regional languages and active identification of children who have dropped out. Bridge courses should help those returning after long interruptions. Schools must become institutions that families can depend on, with attention to attendance, learning and safe access throughout the year.

Strengthening Forest-Based Economies and Local Enterprise

Van Dhan initiatives and the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission already support value addition and marketing of minor forest produce. Their expansion in formerly affected villages should begin with locally available resources such as mahua, tamarind, bamboo and medicinal plants. Storage, transport, small processing units and transparent procurement can help communities retain more of the value generated from their produce. Local ownership and a dependable market are essential if these enterprises are to last.

Preserving Cultural Identity and Encouraging Community Participation

Platforms such as Bastar Pandum demonstrate the place of cultural participation in the wider transition. Traditional leaders, artisans, women's groups and young people should have a role in decisions concerning cultural programmes and tourism. Economic opportunities must respect local customs and community interests. Participation should extend beyond festivals to the planning and monitoring of services that affect everyday life.

Administrative Continuity and Long-Term Security

Longer and more predictable officer tenures, where feasible, would help administrations build knowledge of local conditions and maintain relationships with communities. Officials posted to these regions should receive orientation in local history, languages and tribal institutions. Accessible grievance mechanisms should accompany continued intelligence coordination and systematic explosive clearance. Lawful community mobilisation and expressions of grievance must be distinguished from unlawful extremist activity through evidence and due process.

CONCLUSION

The developments of July-September 2026 reflect the weakening of an organisation that once influenced large parts of India's forested interior. Leadership losses, the departure of experienced cadres and the exposure of concealed resources point towards a reduced ability to sustain armed networks.

At the same time, the persistence of buried explosives and splinter groups makes continued vigilance necessary. These gains are significant. They reflect the work of central and state security forces and a policy approach that has increasingly brought

security, development and rehabilitation together. Yet the civilian harm caused by buried explosives and the continuing needs of victims make clear that the responsibilities created by this conflict will outlast the decline of organised Maoist violence.

As the Naxal Tracker concludes, attention must remain on the regions and people whose lives it has documented. For them, lasting peace will mean safe access to forests and fields, education that is no longer interrupted, livelihoods free from intimidation and an administration that responds. The Government has created the conditions for this transition. Sustaining it will require the same commitment that made the security gains possible.



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

@indfoundation indiafoundation India Foundation India Foundation @IndiaFoundationChannel