

Indian Forces Clash With Maoist Rebels, Five Dead

AFP- Indian security forces on Sunday battled with Maoist rebels in their forested heartland, police said, with at least four guerillas and one policeman killed.

More than 10,000 people have died in the decades-long insurgency waged by Naxalite rebels, who say they are fighting for the rights of marginalised indigenous people in India's resource-rich central regions.

Government forces stepped up efforts last year to crush the long-running armed conflict, with some 287 rebels killed in 2024, according to government figures.

Clashes broke out late Saturday in Abujmahar district of Chhattisgarh state, a key battleground in the insurgency.

"Four bodies of Maoists, who were in their battle uniform, have been recovered after an encounter with police forces," police inspector general P. Sunderraj told AFP, adding one police constable had also been killed.

"Action is still on," he said.

Around 1,000 suspected Naxalites were arrested and 837 surrendered during 2024.

Amit Shah, India's interior minister, warned the Maoist rebels in September to surrender or face an "all-out" assault, saying the government expected to quash the insurgency by early 2026.

The insurgency has been drastically restricted in area in recent years.

The Naxalites, named after the district where their armed campaign began in 1967, were inspired by the Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong.

They demanded land, jobs and a share of the region's immense natural resources for local residents, and made inroads in a number of remote communities across India's east and south.

The movement gained in strength and numbers until the early 2000s when New Delhi deployed tens of thousands of security personnel against the rebels in a stretch of territory known as the "Red Corridor".

Authorities have since invested millions of dollars in local infrastructure and social projects to combat the Naxalite appeal.

AFP