

# History of Encounters in Western Ghats

The encounters were conducted by a special commando unit called 'Thunderbolt', set up by the Kerala government to capture the Maoists.

Incident 1: November 2016 ... Two Maoists, Kuppu Devaraj and Ajitha, were killed in an attack by the Thunderbolts in the Nilambur forest area.

Incident 2: March 2019 ... Jalil, a Maoist, was killed in a shooting by Thunderbolts near a resort in Wayanad district.

Incident 3: On October 28, 2019, four Maoists, Manivasagam, Karthi, Rama and Arvind, were killed in a shooting by Thunderbolt troops in the Manjakandi area near Attappadi in Palakkad district.

Bhavani base is an organization established by the Maoists in the Western Ghats. Its leader, Manivasagam, and his colleagues were killed. Manivasagam and Karthi are both from Tamil Nadu. The other two are from Karnataka. It was this encounter in Manjakandi that became the subject of debate in the Kerala Assembly.

Opposition parties have stated they will not run in the by-elections. Shivani, vice-president of the Adivasi Motherland Association, said, "I was the mediator between the police and the Maoists. The Maoists were ready to surrender. At the time of the police raid, they were eating. Manivasagam suffered greatly from poor health. The slain Arvind was here with his wife and a six-month-old baby. How can they attack in this situation?"

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said, "The Maoists were the first to attack. The police retaliated. Many modern weapons, including AK-47s, have been confiscated from the Maoists.

Comrade Manivasagam is from Salem district. After graduating from college, he joined the Progressive Youth (RYL) organization and fought for agricultural issues in the Dharmapuri area. He worked as a teacher for some time in a private school in Attur. Later, he became the Salem District Organizer of the Agrarian Workers' Council, an organization of farmers for the Maoists. At the time, the ruling forces were protesting against the acquisition of land to build Dalit settlements in Attur Kaarippatti.

Manivasagam's struggle against them identified him to the outside world. He was arrested in 2002 at Uttankarai and was jailed for four and a half years as a Boda prisoner. The man, who came out of hiding and became a squad leader in the western ghats after 2008, was in jail with his wife Kala, younger sister Chandra and younger brother-in-law Sundaramoorthy, who belong to the Maoist organization.

- CS Reporter