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BJP MLA killed in Maoist ambush in Dantewada

3 private security officers, driver also die in attack

Prakash Kumar

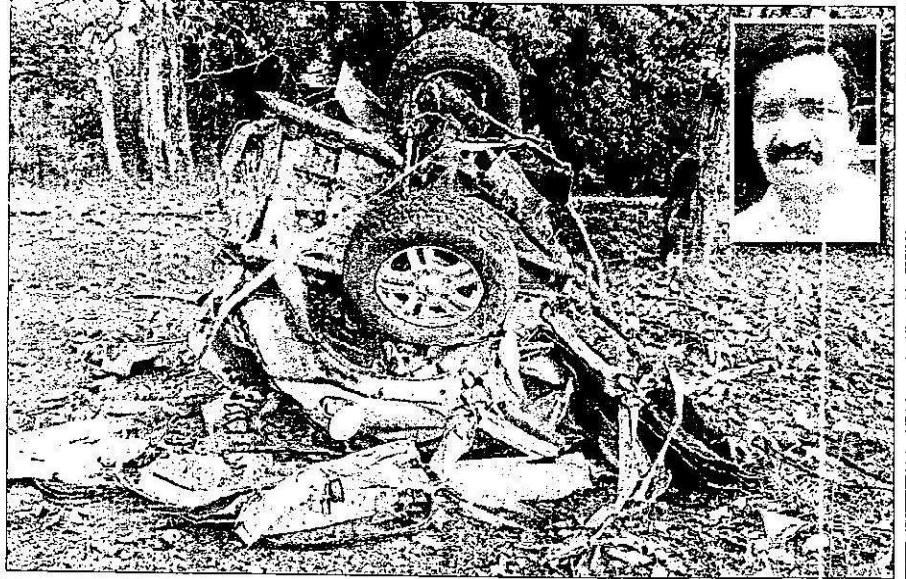
JAGDALPUR: A BJP legislator along with his three private security officers and driver of his vehicle was killed in a landmine blast triggered by Maoists in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh on Tuesday.

The incident took place at about 4.45 pm when BJP MLA Bhima Mandavi's convoy was crossing the Nakulnar village on the Dantewada-Sukma road and heading to a locality in the Maoist-hinterland.

The Maoists, who had laid an ambush, blew up the BJP legislator's vehicle with an improvised explosive device (IED) and opened fire at the security personnel who were following Mandavi in another vehicle.

The blast was so powerful that it ripped apart the bullet-proof vehicle. The bodies were scattered away from the big crater created by the explosion.

As the Maoists opened fire, security personnel travelling with Mandavi in another vehicle in the convoy retaliated. The exchange of fire between a group of some 20-25 Maoists and security forces continued for about half an hour.



The mangled remains of the vehicle that was blown up by Maoists in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh, on Tuesday. (Inset) Bhima Mandavi, PTI

The Maoists had fled the spot by the time police reached and began search for the security personnel. The bodies of Mandavi and four others were later sent for autopsy to a hospital.

Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallav told reporters that Mandavi had been advised not to visit the area as there was an intelligence input about a possible Maoist attack but he ignored it

and went ahead with his plan.

The Maoist attack comes two days before the polling for the Bastar Lok Sabha seat was scheduled to be held on April 11.

A team of Congress leaders and workers was also campaigning at a nearby locality when the Maoists ambushed the BJP legislator.

After the attack, a blame game over the killing broke out between the ruling Congress

and the BJP.

Demanding a CBI probe into the incident, BJP leaders in the state alleged that Mandavi was killed by the Maoists under a Congress conspiracy. They also lashed out at Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel for his recent remark that "bullet for bullet" was not an answer to the Naxal problem in the state.

The Congress leaders rejected the charge.

DH News Service