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Sunday's clashes were among the deadliest clashes since the government ramped up efforts to crush the insurgency, which has been running since the 1960s.So far 31 dead bodies of the Maoists have been recovered," senior police officer Sundarraj Pattilingam said.The death toll could rise as police carry out operations in the area, he said.

Police said they had seized assault rifles and grenade launchers from the bodies of the dead rebels.The clashes took place in the forests of Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh Major military and police offensives in recent years have pushed the rebels back to their forest strongholds and levels of violence have fallen.

But clashes between security forces and rebels are still common, killing scores of people every year.

A crackdown by security forces killed around 287 rebels last year - the vast majority in Chhattisgarh - according to government data. More than 10,000 people are believed to have died since the 1960s.