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A high-angle, top-down photograph of a group of approximately ten children of various ethnicities and ages, all smiling and looking up towards the camera. They are arranged in a loose circle on a light-colored, textured ground. The children are wearing a variety of colorful, patterned clothing, including dresses, shirts, and traditional headwear. The overall mood is joyful and hopeful.

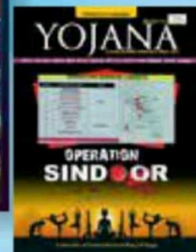
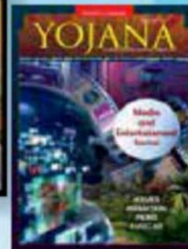
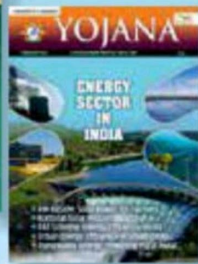
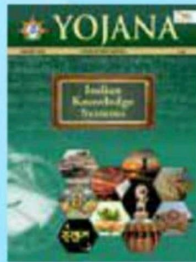
**NAXAL-FREE
BHARAT**

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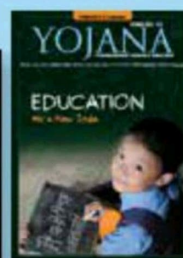
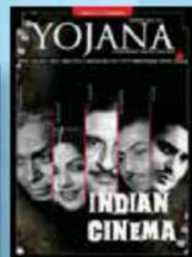


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*Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.
Rig Veda*

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Note: The cover of this issue of Yojana is based on a symbolic image. The children shown are not affected by Naxalism.

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Naxal-Free *Bharat*

Restoration of Security, Development and Trust

In India's democratic journey, some achievements are not merely administrative successes, but become symbols of the restoration of trust between the state, society and citizens. The declaration of the country as free from Left-Wing Extremism in March 2026 is one such historic achievement. The fundamental basis of this achievement was a Whole-of-Government approach anchored in strong coordination between the Centre and the States. This strategy was built on four key pillars—strengthening security measures in Left-Wing Extremism-affected areas, accelerating development in backward regions, ensuring the protection of the rights and interests of local communities, and creating an atmosphere of trust through sustained public outreach and dialogue.

This issue of Yojana attempts to view the question of Naxalism not merely as a law-and-order challenge, but in a broader social, developmental and humanitarian context. It demonstrates that the resolution of any long-term internal conflict is possible not only through the gun, but through the convergence of good governance, education, opportunity and social trust. During the discussion in the Lok Sabha on making the country free from Left-Wing Extremism, Union Minister of Home and Cooperation Amit Shah described this achievement as the result of a clear policy, strong political will and the extraordinary courage of the security forces.

For a long time, Left-Wing Extremism in India affected those regions where geographical difficulties, limited administrative reach and social deprivation deepened the sense of alienation. In such a situation, the multidimensional strategy adopted in recent years changed the direction of this conflict. Security operations, intelligence coordination, technological surveillance and Centre-State cooperation weakened the structures of extremism, while development and rehabilitation efforts created a new foundation of trust among the people.

This issue particularly highlights education as a transformative force. The role of Eklavya Model Residential Schools demonstrates that quality education is not merely a medium of knowledge, but can also become the foundation of social stability and confidence-building. When children from remote tribal regions connect with modern education, digital resources and competitive opportunities, a new world of possibilities opens before them instead of violence. Aspiration itself becomes an effective resistance against extremism. Similarly, skill development and employment-oriented initiatives are also the central pillars of this transformation. In the new economy, merely ensuring security is not sufficient; it is equally essential to connect youth with dignified livelihoods, technical skills and future opportunities.

This issue also indicates that lasting peace cannot come only through administrative control; it also requires respect for cultural confidence and social identity. Events such as Bastar Pandum are examples of how culture and tradition possess immense power to unite society, reduce fear and revive community pride. When the identity of a region begins to be associated not with violence, but with art, folk traditions, handicrafts and cultural heritage, such transformation does not remain merely symbolic; it also changes the social psyche.

The discourse in this issue on yoga and mental balance also carries forward this broader humanitarian perspective. Yoga is not merely a physical practice, but a medium of self-discipline, balance and inner consciousness.

Ultimately, 'Naxal-Free *Bharat*' is not merely a political or security-related declaration, but proof of democratic India's capacity to provide a new direction through development, dialogue and constitutional values even to those regions that had remained untouched by the mainstream of development due to extremism. The challenge ahead is to transform this achievement into lasting peace, inclusive development and social trust. This alone will be the true identity of a developed and self-confident India. □





Naxal-Free India: A Historic Achievement

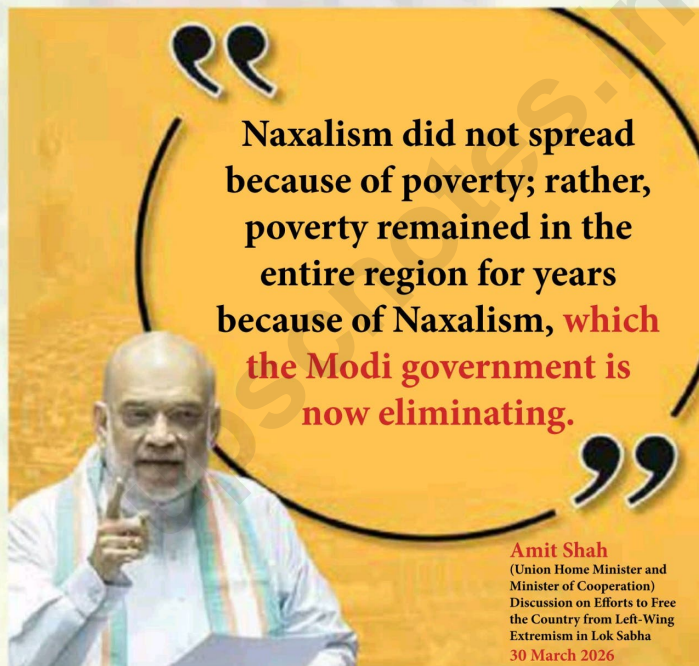
Making the country free from Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) stands as one of the Modi Government's major achievements, one that future generations will remember about this era. The problem that remained the gravest challenge to the nation's internal security for over five decades has been eradicated today. This outcome did not come about on its own; behind it lie a clear policy, unwavering political will, and the extraordinary courage of our security forces.

For decades, Left-Wing Extremists and their sympathisers peddled a false narrative to innocent tribal communities, claiming that they were fighting for their rights and struggling to secure justice for them. However, this was fundamentally an ideological battle, not a demand for development. It is imperative to make this truth clear to the entire nation today.

The Roots of Left-Wing Extremism Lie in Ideology, Not in Development

It is crucial to understand that Naxalism did not spread due to poverty or a lack of development; rather, it was Naxalism itself that perpetuated poverty in this entire region for years. In the 1960s, the literacy rate stood at 35 per cent in the Naxalbari region, 23 per cent in Bastar, 33 per cent in Saharsa, and 31 per cent in Ballia. Per capita income was also roughly comparable across all four of these regions. Yet, Naxalism flourished exclusively in those areas characterised by dense forests, rivers and streams, and limited national presence. Naxalism failed to take root in Saharsa and Ballia precisely because the geography of those regions was not conducive to its operations.

The central tenet of Maoist ideology is: "Power comes out of the barrel of a gun." Its objective was not development, but rather the perpetuation of its own ideology and the overthrow of the democratic order. Rather than drawing inspiration from figures like Tilka Manjhi, Bhagwan Birsa Munda, or Bhagat Singh, they adopted Mao as their ideal; an ideology, incidentally, imported from abroad. When left-wing extremists realised that if tribal communities became literate, they would no longer remain loyal to their cause, they set schools on fire. Fearing that opening bank accounts



The author is the Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation, Government of India.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah felicitated police officers in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh on 18 May 2026.

would lead people to drift away from them, they burned down banks. Medical clinics, too, were torched. For years, they actively prevented development from reaching these regions. This, in essence, was their basic strategy.

The Red Corridor: A Big Problem

In this region, spanning 12 states, covering 17 per cent of the landmass and home to a population of 200 million, the rule of law had been obliterated. Twenty thousand young people were killed on both sides. Many were left permanently disabled for life. More than 3,500 security personnel were martyred in the line of duty. During the attack on Jehanabad, 1,000 armed Naxals seized a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) camp and a prison, freeing 389 inmates. In Jharkhand, 70 trucks were set ablaze simultaneously. The annual collection of the 'Janatana Tax' amounted to Rs 240 crore. Along the Andhra-Odisha border, dozens of schools and pieces of infrastructure were subjected to their planned destruction.

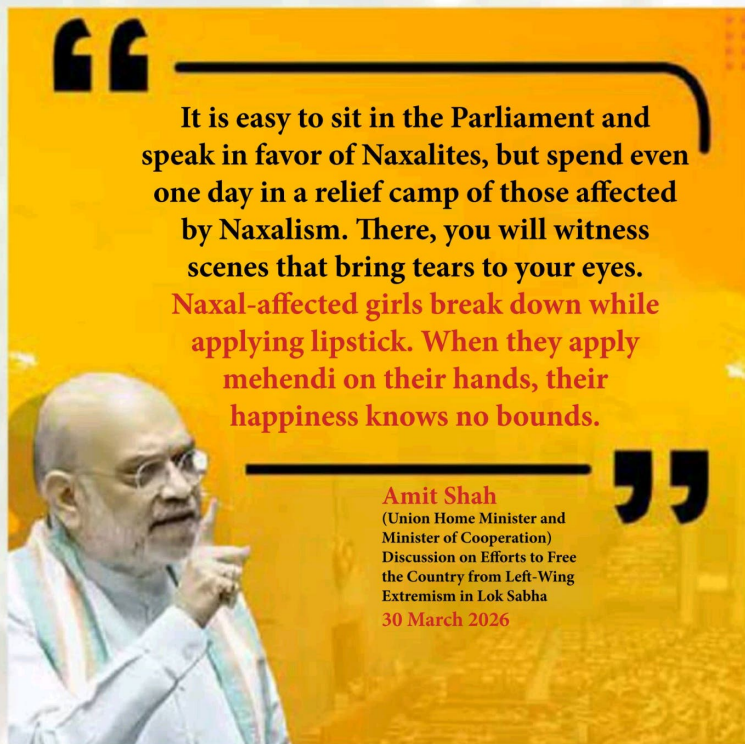
The UPA Period: A phase of Policy Ambiguity

To understand the policies and achievements of the current government in the proper perspective, it is essential to examine what transpired during the previous regime and why this problem escalated to such a formidable scale.

During the period spanning from 1970 to 2004, barring a four-year interlude, the country remained

under the continuous governance of the Congress party. It was precisely during this period that Maoist ideology spread, flourished and consolidated its strength. In 2004, two major militant factions merged to form the CPI (Maoist). The political scenario responsible for facilitating this entire expansion cannot be overlooked. The then Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, himself publicly acknowledged before the entire nation that armed Maoists constituted the single greatest threat to the country's internal security, a threat even more grave than those posed by the situations in Kashmir or the North-East. While the acknowledgement was there, concrete action remained conspicuously absent. This was a period characterised by a failure to formulate a decisive national strategy, despite a clear recognition of the gravity of the problem.

The UPA period witnessed numerous instances that raised serious questions regarding urban networks, alleged intellectual patronage and institutional leniency; in some cases, allegations of ideological sympathy toward Naxal-sympathising elements also surfaced. Following the martyrdom of 76 security personnel in a single incident, the then Minister of Home Affairs remarked to the Naxals that the Government could not ask them to lay down their arms. Subsequently, weapons were disarmed from the tribal volunteers of the 'Salwa Judum' movement, leaving them vulnerable to being systematically targeted and killed by the Naxals.



It was the policy laxity and ideological sympathy that prevailed during the UPA period, which effectively gave this problem a new lease on life. In stark contrast, the policy of the current government has remained unequivocally clear: dialogue for those willing to talk, and a bullet-for-bullet response for those who open fire. This constitutes the fundamental difference between these two distinct periods of governance.

Post 2014: A Policy Shift

When Narendra Modi's Government assumed office in 2014, a clear policy framework backed by firm political will was infused into this endeavour. While the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and State Police forces remained the same, significant improvements were made regarding coordination between the Centre and the States, the generation of actionable intelligence, and the precise delineation of responsibilities. An "All-Agency Approach" was adopted, which entailed striking not only at the armed cadres but also through agencies such as the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Enforcement Directorate (ED), and various intelligence bodies, at their networks, funding channels, and support systems.

On 20 August 2019, during a pivotal meeting at the Ministry of Home Affairs, a comprehensive strategy was formulated encompassing police coordination, modernisation, and the synchronisation of intelligence agencies. On 24 August 2024, it was announced that the country would be rendered completely free of

Naxalism by 31 March 2026. This was not merely a political declaration; it was a solemn resolve, one that has now been fulfilled.

Security Operations: Results and Achievements

In 2014, there were 126 Naxal-affected districts. Today, only two remain. In 2015, there were 35 districts classified as "most affected"; today, that number stands at zero. 350 police stations were recording Naxal-related incidents; now, there are merely seven. During Modi Ji's 11-year tenure, 596 fortified police stations were constructed. Over the last six years, 406 new CAPF camps were established, 68 night-landing helipads were built, and 400 bulletproof and blast-proof vehicles were provided to the troops.

According to combined statistics for the years 2024, 2025, and 2026, covering the three years leading up to March 2026, 706 Naxals were killed in encounters, 2,218 were arrested, and 4,839 surrendered. Those captured were incarcerated and brought before the courts.

The latest technology was deployed in this campaign. Success was achieved through the use of drone surveillance, satellite imagery, advanced imaging technology and Artificial Intelligence-based data analysis. 'Operation Black Forest' was particularly noteworthy. During a 21-day operation, a permanent Maoist camp situated on the Telangana-Chhattisgarh border was dismantled. The site housed a gathering of 400–500 cadres, contained a five-year stockpile of food grains, and featured facilities for manufacturing IEDs. This operation, during which troops had to operate in 45-degree Celsius temperatures while subsisting on just 300 grams of water, deserves the highest possible commendation.

The central leadership of the Maoist organisation has been completely neutralised. At the beginning of 2024, the leadership comprised 21 members of the Central Committee and the Politburo. Of these, one was captured, seven surrendered, 12 were killed, and one remains at large. The 37-member State Committee for the Dandakaranya region has also been completely dismantled.

The Development Drive: A Parallel Effort

Alongside the security campaign, development work also proceeded at a rapid pace. Since 2014, the construction of 17,589 kilometres of roads has been sanctioned across this entire region, of which 12,000 kilometres have already been completed.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates and lays the foundation stone for key developmental and transformational projects during his visit to Nava Raipur on the occasion of Chhattisgarh's 25th Foundation Day, 1 November 2025.

Approximately Rs 20,000 crore has been expended. 5,000 mobile towers were installed at a cost of Rs 6,000 crore, and directives have been issued to set up 8,000 new 4G towers. 1,804 bank branches were opened, 1,321 ATMs were established, 37,850 banking correspondents were appointed, and 6,025 post offices were opened. 259 Eklavya Model Residential Schools were sanctioned, and 47 ITIs and 49 Skill Development Centres were established.

A 240-bed super-speciality hospital was constructed in Jagdalpur. A campaign was launched to ensure the presence of a school and a ration shop in every village across the Bastar region. A provision was instituted to allocate Rs 1 crore for village development immediately upon a Panchayat being declared Naxal-free.

Rehabilitation: A Sensitive Endeavour

A highly effective rehabilitation policy has been adopted for those who choose to surrender. Incentives such as a cash reward of Rs 50,000 for surrender, a doubled amount for group surrenders, additional compensation for depositing weapons, a monthly stipend of Rs 10,000 for a period of 36 months and benefits under the *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana* are being provided. In the surrender camps, voluntary organisations are actively working to facilitate their

reintegration into normal civilian life. Events such as the Bastar Olympics and Bastar Pandum witnessed the participation of over 1,20,000 artists and 5,50,000 tribal people.

Final Reflections

This achievement represents not merely the success of a security operation but the triumph of a vision that places good governance, development, and faith in constitutional values at its very core. Full credit for this success goes to the personnel of the CAPF, particularly the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), CRPF, Chhattisgarh State Police, and District Reserve Guard (DRG), as well as to the local tribal inhabitants of the region, all of whom made invaluable contributions to this protracted struggle. A humble tribute to the thousands of youths who lost their lives, to the security personnel who attained martyrdom, and to all those who sacrificed their everything for the sake of this nation's internal security.

The fundamental principle of democracy is that a solution to any problem can be arrived at through dialogue, not through arms. Today, as Bastar undergoes development, with the benefits of progress reaching every single village in the region, it stands proven that the presence of the nation, combined with good governance and development, possesses the power to overcome any challenge. □



From Conflict to Progress: Chhattisgarh's Transformation

Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah at the Centre and the leadership of Chief Minister Vishnudev Sai in the state of Chhattisgarh, the resolve to end armed Naxalism in the state has been finally realised. At the root of this historic success lies, undoubtedly, strong political will, along with the unparalleled valour, indomitable courage and supreme sacrifice of the brave soldiers of the police and security forces.

Today, Chhattisgarh, especially the Bastar region, is emerging from the long-standing environment of Naxalite violence, fear and insecurity and entering a new era of peace, development, and good governance. For nearly four decades, Naxalism has perpetrated profound suffering and countless wounds on this region. It claimed the lives of thousands of innocent people, inflicted unbearable pain on countless families, and forced many to endure lifelong disabilities. In the name of revolution, terror was unleashed, denying the light of democracy and the Constitution to reach its people. All avenues to progress and prosperity were blocked. People were deprived of even basic amenities like roads, electricity, water, schools, and hospitals. Today, a golden dawn of peace and good governance has risen in Bastar. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah at the Centre and the leadership of Chief Minister Vishnudev Sai in the state of Chhattisgarh, the resolve to end armed Naxalism in the state has been finally realised. At the root of this historic success lies, undoubtedly, strong political will, along with the unparalleled valour, indomitable courage and supreme sacrifice of the brave soldiers of the police and security forces.

Role of DRG and Local Youth

In Bastar, security forces not only took the lead but also earned trust. A decisive shift in Bastar

began when security strategies were aligned with an understanding of local society. This local understanding made security operations effective. Units like the DRG (District Reserve Guard) played a crucial role in this. There is a misconception about the DRG that it is composed solely of surrendered Naxalites. However, in reality, such members constitute only 10 to 15 per cent of the DRG; the rest are young men recruited from across Bastar. These young men are intimately familiar with the people of Bastar, their dialects, culture, and traditions, as well as the forests, hills, trails and geographical and social structure of Bastar. Their physical structure and physique are suited to the Bastar forests, which aid them in long and arduous missions. In addition to these qualities, these Bastar soldiers possess a strong desire to free their land from the terror of the Red Army. This is why the DRG, as a key striking force, has been at the forefront of anti-Naxal operations. Today, as entire Chhattisgarh is becoming Naxal-free, the state's DRG forces, as well as the Central Armed Police Forces, have made an invaluable contribution to this. There's no doubt that central security forces also established long-term camps to secure all remote areas in Bastar and lay the groundwork for the operation. Security forces personnel also made significant sacrifices to advance development work and provide public services to the interior areas of Bastar.

The author is the Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister of the Chhattisgarh Government.



Prime Minister, Narendra Modi visited the Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum, at Nava Raipur, in Chhattisgarh on 1 November 2025.

Technology and Centre-State Coordination

The central and state governments stood firmly behind their security forces on the Naxalite front. Modern technology, drone surveillance, radio frequency tracking, and coordination among central agencies gave security forces an edge on the Naxalite front for the first time. At the direction of Union Home Minister, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police's (ITBP) Radio Frequency Technical Wing, the National Security Guard's (NSG) Bomb Disposal Squad, the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO), the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) also provided technical and material assistance without delay.

The process of procuring weapons is a lengthy one, taking one and a half to two years. Considering the current circumstances, when this matter was brought to the attention of the Union Home Minister, he coordinated with all agencies and secured the acquisition of modern, highperformance weapons, including the AK-47 and INSAS, for the Naxalite campaign. Snipers were loaned from other security agencies and made available to Chhattisgarh's DRG force, which proved to be a milestone in the

anti-Naxal campaign. Advanced technology-laden Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) were also made available. Video footage of Naxalite movements in remote, dense forests and hills, along with radio frequency intelligence, led to precise operations in which the soldiers achieved major successes without any casualties. Achieving successes without casualties was previously unimaginable, but coordination made this possible.

Attack on Naxalism on the Economic Front

The goal of Naxalite eradication in Bastar has been achieved by working simultaneously on multiple dimensions, including economic development and local infrastructure development. To achieve economic development, the Chhattisgarh government has further developed sources of income based on minor forest produce, tailored to the lifestyle of the people of Bastar. Key forest produce, such as tendu leaves, was withdrawn from the control of private contractors and brought under a direct government agency, ensuring benefits reached the public while simultaneously inflicting significant economic losses on the Naxalites. The state government is committed to achieving sustainable economic development in Bastar through its own resources and

the support of the central government, and efforts are underway to achieve this goal expeditiously.

A Humanitarian Approach to Rehabilitation

The Chhattisgarh government implemented a new rehabilitation policy, which made it clear that the society to which the Naxalites belonged, who had killed tribals in groups in Bastar, had accepted them with a big heart by rehabilitating them in front of the same community leaders, Manjhi-Chalaki. During their rehabilitation, the Naxalites, holding a copy of the Constitution, conveyed the message that they would no longer roam the forests with weapons, but would instead accept the Indian Constitution. These individuals were welcomed with a red carpet. Rehabilitation centres were established in every district of Bastar for the rehabilitated, providing them with basic amenities and tailoring their daily routines.

They were provided with employment-oriented training and kits and basic education in rehabilitation centres. They are being issued Aadhaar cards, *Ayushman* cards, ration cards, and voter ID cards, and bank accounts are being opened. Rehabilitated individuals and young people who have never seen roads, electricity, airports, railway stations, or malls are being taken on a tour of Raipur under the '*Liyor Oyna*' (Youth Invitation) programme. They are being allowed to observe the Assembly session to familiarise themselves with the constitutional system of the country and state. A community meal was organised at the Deputy Chief Minister's official residence to help the rehabilitated individuals integrate into society.

In reality, rehabilitation doesn't just mean spending a few days; it encompasses economic, mental, physical and educational rehabilitation. Many people came with bullets lodged in their bodies. They underwent surgery to remove the bullets, achieving physical rehabilitation. The rehabilitation process has been completed on all these fronts. Everyone in the rehabilitation centres has been given a smartphone so they can connect with the new generation.

The Voice of Naxal Victims Reached Delhi

The number of people affected by Naxalite Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blasts in Bastar is in thousands. Many were killed, and those who survived have been disabled for life. Their lives have their own tragic stories. Some were driven out of their villages by Naxalites, and others were killed by Naxalite bullets. After the formation of the new government, all these

people travelled together to Delhi and presented their case before the President. Amit Shah set up a pandal in his courtyard, fed them, and listened to them seriously. These Naxalite victims held a unique press conference at the Constitution Club of India, with Naxalite victims from Bastar on one side and media from around the world on the other. In this way, the pain of the common citizens of Bastar was also conveyed to Delhi.

Bastar Olympics and Cultural Renaissance

Sports among Bastar's youth and culture in society are two important aspects that form the foundation of Bastar's lifestyle. Appealing for rehabilitation, it was emphasised that more youth should not turn to Naxalism. Therefore, the Bastar Olympics 2025 and 2026 were organised. Millions of youths from every village showcased their talents at the Bastar Olympics. Similarly, Bastar's cultural values are highly valued. Bastar Pandum 2025 and 2026 were organised to promote and preserve these cultural values. Bastar Pandum was organised to showcase the traditional costumes, dances, musical instruments, folk theatre, festivals, foods, and beverages of all the tribes of Bastar, including the Gond, Muria, Maria, Doral, and others, on a single level, nationally and internationally.

The transformation visible in Bastar today is only possible through the strength of the soldiers' arms. In other areas of Chhattisgarh, so many soldiers have sacrificed their lives in the fight against Naxalism that Chhattisgarh received the President's Colours Award, a police team that was given after 25 years, at the young age of 24. The entire Bastariya community, Bastar's Panchayati Raj representatives, and Bastar's journalists also contributed significantly to the Naxal liberation movement.

Success Through Collective Resolve

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world". Maoist leaders knew this very well, and therefore, to maintain their dominance in Bastar, they never allowed real education to reach there. If any teacher wanted to teach, he was beaten, due to which no one was willing to teach there. When efforts were made to spread the message of education by inspiring local educated youth and making them education ambassadors, the Maoists started killing the education ambassadors. Schools, colleges, and even Anganwadi centres were demolished or closed. To dispel the darkness of knowledge, the government rebuilt the old, demolished or closed schools of Sukma.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah being felicitated by Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma during the Ujar Bastar (Rising Bastar) programme in Jagdalpur on 18 May 2026.

Work was done to restart 123 schools and 265 such schools in Bijapur. Local people say that Bechapal, Kavadgaon, Kodoli, Mutvedi, Peeramunda, Jidpalli, Naimed, Todka of Bijapur were such villages where schools were not allowed to open for the last 20 years. Youths were directly included in the organisation willingly, or forcibly; refusal from this meant direct death. Now, the environment of education is developing in this area. Its happy result is that Ankit Sakni, a youth from the highly Naxal-affected village Gudma of Bhairamgarh development block of Bijapur, set an example by passing a difficult exam like UPSC. Similarly, the youth of Bastar will come forward and enhance the prestige of the state.

Schools Come Alive Again

The government's objective isn't simply to conquer these areas like feudal lords, but to integrate those who have been marginalised for years into the mainstream of development. Dreaming of development under the shadow of fear would be a travesty. To this end, the paramilitary camps were established as focal points of development, and the *Niyada Nella Nar* (My Good Village) initiative was launched. Under this initiative, 25 individual and 18 community programmes from 17 departments were integrated into 144 gram panchayats and over 500 villages covered by 99 security camps, ensuring the benefits of all government programmes were extended to people in every village. Those who never had an Aadhaar card, voter ID card, or ration card were first identified and provided with benefits through gram panchayats.

Since the formation of the current government in the state, mobile coverage is available in 87 per cent of Bastar's villages. To improve road connectivity and connect district headquarters with villages, the Chief Minister's Rural Bus Scheme has been launched, under which 38 bus routes have been launched in Bastar. According to an NCAER survey, primary schools are now available in 93 per cent of villages. 97 per cent of students are receiving mid-day meals. 97 per cent of villages have Anganwadi centres, and *Ayushman* cards have been issued for 89 per cent of villagers.

The Changing Picture of the Village of the Dreaded Hidma

Madvi Hidma, once known as the poster boy of Maoism was tried to be made a hero by urban Naxal groups, but the reality of his village was never revealed. Those who chant Naxalite slogans from the air-conditioned rooms of prestigious universities in Delhi never took a peek into these villages, where they lived in fear. This village had no roads, no drinking water, no other amenities; only fear. Everyone lived in fear. In 2024, the first camp opened in Poorvarti, marking the beginning of a new era. The 150th Battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) not only established security and trust here but also promoted development work. In 2024, people here exercised their right to vote for the first time. CRPF personnel assisted in building the road to this village. There was no provision for children's education in this village, so the CRPF also started a *Gurukul*, where over 100 children are now being provided with basic education, including

literacy. Here, in addition to providing livelihoods through the *Bihan Yojana*, youth are also being trained in employment-oriented jobs like masonry, welding, and fitting. Previously, the people of Purvarti had to travel miles to obtain rations; now, a ration shop has opened in the village itself. Electricity is being provided to all the hamlets of the village.

New Beginning in Life from the Playground

Bastar Olympics gave the youth of Bastar a chance to showcase their skills. While 1.65 lakh youth participated in it in 2024, 3.91 lakh youth registered for it in 2025. The special thing about this was that Doda Vijay, a young Kabaddi player from Purvarti, once considered vulnerable, played the role of Olympic torchbearer. While youth from the entire Bastar division participated in this Olympics, it was for the first time that people from Naxal-affected families and 300 rehabilitated Naxal youth also participated enthusiastically in the competitions. Muchaki Ranawati, who had already been rehabilitated, participated and secured first place in the division-level Bastar Olympics. She is now building a new future for herself by training in sewing and masonry at the rehabilitation centre in Sukma.

Returning Childhood and Women's Identity

The rehabilitation centres have also rehabilitated young girls, 15, 20, and 25 years old. These girls spent their teenage years in the jungles. When a female social worker asked them if they would apply henna, they became emotional. This is a real-life incident from a rehabilitation centre in Bijapur. The girls said they would, if they could, "I would." The female social workers brought all the makeup items and sat with them on the ground, applying henna and makeup. The girls were stunned to see themselves. Their joy knew no bounds. One can only imagine the fate of a girl who, after wearing pants and a shirt for 25 years, was



Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai inaugurates Pandum Café in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh.

paraded through the jungles with a gun. And how she felt when henna was applied to her hands. The Naxalites had even taken away this fundamental right from her. Today, all the girls in Bastar have returned home. In the rehabilitation centres, they are experiencing the feeling of being women. Now she is free and living a normal life, the way she should have.

Truth about Naxal Violence

One dimension of Naxal violence was the misinformation it spread. To dispel this, 55 victims of Maoist violence marched to Delhi. Under the slogan "*Kenja Naxalite-Manwa Mata*" (Listen Naxalite, listen to us), they presented their tragic experiences of Naxalite violence to President Draupadi Murmu and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. From Jantar Mantar and JNU, they revealed the true nature of Naxalite violence. They explained how the terrorists, whom people praise in Delhi, have engulfed the paradise of Bastar in gunpowder smoke. Some lost their fathers, some their eyes, and some even lost both their hands. He narrated his tragic story before the national media at the Constitution Club of India.

Holding Guns to Serving Delicious Dishes

Laxmu Poyam and Poolmathi Mandavi are forging new identities as inspiring stories of transformation and rehabilitation in Bastar. Both were influenced by the Maoist organisation at a young age and joined it. Laxmu, a resident of Jamgaon in the Bastanar region, joined the organisation in 2006 at the age of 14, while Poolmathi Mandavi, a resident of the Lohandiguda region, followed suit in 2009. Influenced by village meetings and emotional propaganda, both embraced armed struggle as their future. Over time, Laxmu rose to the rank of Divisional Committee Member (DVCN) in the organisation and served as a guerrilla commander, while Poolmathi became a platoon commander. Both were trained in weapons handling and guerrilla activities while living in the jungles. But years of constant conflict, insecurity, difficult lives, and uncertainty about the future made them realise that the path of violence only leads to fear and loss. Impressed by the government's rehabilitation policy, confidence-building efforts, and the support provided to those returning to the mainstream, the two surrendered in January 2025 and began a new life. Today, they are living a respectable and self-sufficient life through the Pandum Café initiative. The hands that once held guns are now serving delicious food to the public. Their lives have moved from fear and the shadow of guns to peace, freedom, and dignity. □



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Naxal-Mukt Bharat: A Strategic Turnaround

The story of Naxal-Mukt Bharat is not simply one of military or policing successes. It is a story of coordinated statecraft. It reflects how political will, institutional coordination, professional security operations, and developmental commitment can together confront and reverse a long-standing insurgency.

The vision of a Naxal-Mukt Bharat or Naxal-free India represents far more than a security objective. It reflects the commitment of the Government of India towards restoring governance, expanding development and protecting democratic institutions in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas. Naxalism posed one of India's gravest internal security challenges for decades. It affected large parts of central and eastern India by disrupting development, targeting security personnel and exploiting socio-economic vulnerabilities. However, a significant shift has emerged in recent years. Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has made substantial progress towards neutralising the Naxal threat through sustained security operations, strong central-state coordination, focused development initiatives, and strategic leadership. India has made substantial progress towards neutralising the Naxal threat.

At the core of this transformation has been the recognition that the Naxal challenge cannot be addressed solely through force. It required a whole-of-government approach, integrating security operations with governance, infrastructure, and welfare delivery. While state police forces have rightly remained at the forefront of Naxal operations, given that the law and order is constitutionally a state subject, the MHA has played the critical role of strategist, coordinator, and force multiplier. The distinction is important: the fight may have been led operationally by states, but it has

been driven structurally and strategically by the MHA, Government of India.

MHA designed a multipronged, zero-tolerance strategy aimed at ending LWE by March 2026 through the SAMADHAN doctrine (Smart Leadership, Aggressive Strategy, Motivation and Training, Actionable Intelligence, Dashboard-based Key Result Areas and Key Performance Indicators, Harnessing Technology,



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Action Plan for Each Theatre & No access to Financing). By March 2026, security forces neutralised almost all CPI (Maoist) leadership through enhanced intelligence, forward operating bases and intensive development in “red corridors”, shifting focus towards “growth corridors”.

Key Turnaround Strategies and Tactics (2014-2026)

Leadership and Policy Shift

A zero-tolerance approach under the Ministry of Home Affairs emphasised proactive operations rather than reactive measures aimed at eliminating the ideological, financial and logistical support of LWE. Ministry of Home Affairs' LWE division implemented a “National Policy and Action Plan (2015)” that prioritises the “Trace, Target, Neutralise” approach and “Development, security synergy” as outcome.

Forward Operating Bases (FOB's)

One of the defining features of recent success against Naxalism has been the enhanced role of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF's) – primarily the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) (including CoBRA - Commando Battalion for Resolute Action units) BSF (Border Security Force), ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police) and SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal), who acted as the backbone of anti-Naxal operations, providing fire power, intelligence and support to the state Police. As the lead CAPF in counter-LWE operations, the CRPF has played a pivotal role in reclaiming territory, disrupting insurgent strongholds and conducting targeted operations (through its specialised units – CoBRA) in difficult forested terrain where Maoist groups traditionally enjoyed tactical advantage.

Over 350 security camps were set up within extremist strongholds to create a security vacuum for Naxals. These camps comprise CAPFs and State Police specialised units like District Reserve Guards (DRG) of Chhattisgarh, C-60 Commandos of Maharashtra, Special Operations Group (SOG) of Odisha and Jaguars of Jharkhand. The contribution of such joint camps extends beyond combat. They enable area domination, secure roads and critical infrastructure, protect polling stations



during elections and facilitate the return of civil administration in previously inaccessible areas. It has created the necessary conditions for schools to reopen, roads to be built, health services to reach the remote population and the benefit of Government schemes to reach the needy.

Key Operational Shift

The strategy has shifted from passive containment to aggressive, proactive operation. With the establishment of joint operating bases (Over 350 of them), high-impact operations, including ‘Operation Octopus’, ‘Operation Double-bull’, and ‘Operation Bura Pahad’, successfully targeted the Naxalite leadership and command structure, with over 300 Naxals neutralised and over 200 arrested in 2025. The entire top leadership of the CPI (Maoist) has been dismantled, with 12 neutralised, 07 surrendered, and 01 arrested out of 21 top leaders. Only one leader is still at large.

The leadership role of the MHA has been critical in maintaining sustained political and administrative focus. Counterinsurgency efforts often falter when attention becomes episodic or fragmented. In contrast, the anti-Naxal strategy has benefitted from continuity, regular monitoring with clearly defined objectives. This sustained institutional drive has ensured that gains made through security operations are consolidated through governance and developmental interventions.

Effective operational coordination has been achieved through a multi-disciplinary ‘whole-of-government’ approach, reducing the security vacuum in remote areas. The Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) is empowered to provide real-time intelligence to all security forces. In all, 15 new Joint Task Forces have been established to synchronise operations between



Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting an exhibition in Nava Raipur, Chhattisgarh on 1 November 2025.

CAPFs and state police forces. Two Multidisciplinary Groups (MDGs) have also been established in the Ministry of Home Affairs (since 2016) to choke the financial resources of the Maoists, which has already led to seizure of Rs 40 Crores (approx).

Another Key element in the push towards a Naxal-Mukt Bharat has been the strategy of targeting the insurgency's support structures rather than focusing only on armed cadres. Efforts to disrupt recruitment, logistics, extortion networks and propaganda machinery have weakened the organisational resilience of Maoist groups. Simultaneously, surrender and rehabilitation policies have encouraged many cadres to rejoin mainstream society, further eroding insurgent strength.

Capacity Building of States

The MHA's strategic direction has been visible through the implementation of a multi-pronged national approach combining security, development, rights & entitlements and public outreach. This has included financial assistance to states for modernisation of police forces, infrastructure development in affected districts and support for capacity building. Central schemes targeting roads, telecommunications, skill development, education and banking access in LWE-affected areas have directly undercut the conditions that insurgents sought to exploit.

Security Related Expenditure (SRE) was increased by 155% with Rs 3,371 Crore released over the past

11 years for operational needs, training and rehabilitation of surrendered cadres. Similarly, in the Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS), Rs 371 Crore was approved for strengthening specialised state forces and intelligence branches. Rs 620 crores were approved for the construction of 246 Fortified Police Stations (FPS). Apart from the above, huge funds have been spent on mobility, night landing helipads, surveillance, drone tracking, AI-based data analytics, GIS mapping, upgradation of intelligence gathering mechanisms, etc.

The decisive factor has been unprecedented centre-state coordination, which has moved from episodic cooperation to

institutional partnership. The MHA has been in control of this transformation. Through regular security reviews, joint operational planning, intelligence sharing mechanisms and targeted support to affected states, the MHA has ensured unity of purpose across jurisdictions.

Through these efforts, the government aims to end the red corridor era, replacing it with development projects like roads, schools and Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) to permanently remove the influence of Naxalism.

Importantly, the state's approach has increasingly emphasised winning the trust of local communities. This is crucial because the battle against Naxalism is not only about eliminating armed violence but also about restoring citizen confidence in the state. Security forces and civil administration have, in many areas, worked to build stronger engagement with tribal communities and marginalised populations. Civic action programmes, welfare outreach, and responsive governance have helped counter the alienation that insurgents once leveraged.

The decline in Naxal violence across many previously affected districts is evidence that this approach has yielded results. Areas once considered insurgent strongholds have witnessed restoration of governance, improved connectivity, increased economic activity, and greater citizen participation in

democratic processes. Elections conducted peacefully in previously volatile regions are a powerful symbol of this transformation.

With the achievement of a Naxal-free *Bharat*, India has reached a historical milestone. Yet residual pockets of insurgency remain, particularly in difficult terrain where extremist groups attempt to regroup. Sustained vigilance, therefore, remains essential. Counter-insurgency successes can only endure if accompanied by continued development, responsive governance, and institutional resilience.

Going forward, the lessons from the anti-Naxal campaign offer a broader model for addressing internal security challenges. First, security responses are most effective when integrated with development and governance. Second, strong Centre-State coordination is indispensable in dealing with complex, cross-jurisdictional threats. Third, central leadership, particularly through institutions such as the MHA, can provide the strategic coherence needed for long-term success, even when operational responsibility lies primarily with states. And fourth,



Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the Jan Seva Kendra (CSC) in Bastar, Chhattisgarh.

professional, adaptive security forces like the CRPF and other CAPFs remain vital pillars of national internal security.

The story of Naxal-Mukt *Bharat* is, therefore, not simply one of military or policing successes. It is a story of coordinated statecraft. It reflects how political will, institutional coordination, professional security operations, and developmental commitment can together confront and reverse a long-standing insurgency. In this effort, state police have led from the front, CAPFs - especially the CRPF - have acted as a powerful operational backbone, and the Ministry of Home Affairs has provided the strategic direction that has held the entire framework together.

The emergence of a Naxal-Free *Bharat* stands as a testament to the strength of cooperative federalism, the professionalism of its security forces, and the enduring capacity of the Indian state to restore peace, order, and development even in the most challenging environments. Naxal-Mukt *Bharat* is thus not merely a security milestone; it is a reaffirmation of national resolve and democratic resilience. □



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Whole-of-Government Approach for LWE Eradication

*On March 30, 2026, Union Home Minister declared on
the floor of the Lok Sabha in Parliament,
“I can say with full confidence that we have become free from Naxalism”.*

It will go down in the annals of India's history. India becoming free from the decades-old problem of left-wing extremism (LWE) is no ordinary feat. Barely two and a half years ago, when the Home Minister set the ambitious target of making India LWE-free by March 2026, few believed that it was achievable. But this seemingly impossible achievement was made possible through a series of well-coordinated responses on security and development fronts, implemented resolutely over the last decade.

Background

The roots of LWE in India trace back to the 1967 Naxalbari uprising in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. This marked the beginning of an armed Maoist movement challenging the Indian state. In 1969, the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) gave the movement an ideological structure and direction. Leaders such as Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal, and Jangal Santhal, inspired by Mao Zedong, advocated seizure of state power through armed revolution rather than democratic means. Strong police action during the 1970s weakened the movement, leading to its temporary decline.

The movement resurfaced during the 1980s, particularly in Andhra Pradesh with the rise of the People's War Group, and gradually spread to Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha. Although various Maoist factions often competed with one another, they merged in 2004 to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist), which

subsequently became the principal organisation driving LWE violence across large parts of India.

Modus Operandi

The objective of the Maoist movement has been to overthrow India's constitutional governance structure through violent revolution. Exploiting grievances related to land disputes, poverty, and social inequality, Maoist groups gradually expanded into Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, and adjoining states.

However, it is important to recognise that the spread of Naxalism was not merely a consequence of underdevelopment. Several districts in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and the Himalayan region had comparable or worse socio-economic indicators but did not witness Maoist expansion. Maoists strategically selected areas with dense forests, difficult terrain and weak governance presence, which were conducive to guerrilla warfare.

Exploiting poor connectivity and limited state presence, Maoists established strongholds in remote tribal districts of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring regions. Thereafter, they established parallel systems of authority known as “Jantana Sarkars” in so-called “liberated zones”. These structures collected levies from locals, extorted contractors and conducted kangaroo courts in the name of “people's justice”.

In this atmosphere of fear and coercion, many tribal youths joined Maoist ranks, either willingly or under

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Prime Minister, Narendra Modi visited the Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum, at Nava Raipur, Chhattisgarh on 1 November 2025

compulsion. In several cases, poor families were forced to hand over their children to strengthen Maoist cadres. This partly explains the large number of women cadres within Maoist organisations.

Fearing that improved connectivity would facilitate security operations, welfare schemes relating to education, healthcare, banking and financial inclusion failed to reach remote villages. Ironically, groups claiming to represent the poor became the principal obstacle to the development of these very communities.

The Peak of LWE Violence

Following the formation of CPI (Maoist) in 2004, LWE violence escalated sharply and peaked during 2009-10. The year 2010 recorded 1,936 incidents of violence and 1,005 deaths, including major attacks such as the Silda camp attack and the Dantewada ambush in Tadmetla, where 76 security personnel were killed. Incidents such as the Jiram Valley attack further demonstrated the brutality of the insurgency. Overall, LWE violence claimed around 8,600 civilian lives.

Whole-of-Government Approach

At its peak, LWE had spread across nearly one-third of India's districts, forming the so-called "Red Corridor" stretching from Tirupati to Pashupati. Recognising that the challenge required a comprehensive response, the Government of India

formulated a Policy and Action Plan in 2015 based on a Whole-of-Government approach.

Four Key Pillars

1. Strengthening Security Measures

Since law and order is a State subject, State police forces were recognised as the primary stakeholders in counter-LWE operations. Accordingly, focused efforts were made to strengthen security infrastructure and eliminate security vacuums in affected regions. Establishing security camps in core LWE areas became a priority, to set up one camp every five kilometres.

At present, 121 battalions and around 400 companies of Central Armed Police Forces, including CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force), BSF (Border Security Force), ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police), and SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal), are deployed across the LWE theatre. The CRPF also recruited 1,143 local youths from Bastar to form the Bastariya Battalion.

Capacity Building of States

Since State police personnel possess better familiarity with local terrain, language, and social conditions, the Central Government placed special emphasis on strengthening their capabilities.

The Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS) was introduced to strengthen police infrastructure in LWE-

affected areas through the construction of fortified police stations, improved training facilities, and enhanced intelligence capabilities. Around 706 fortified police stations were sanctioned, of which nearly 660 have been completed. The scheme also supported the procurement of drones, vehicles, weapons, ammunition, and other operational equipments

The Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme reimburses States for operational expenses incurred in counter-LWE activities. Since 2014–15, Rs 3,756.38 crore has been released under this scheme.

Under the Assistance to Central Agencies for LWE Management (ACALWEM), financial assistance is provided to the Central Armed Police Forces for infrastructure development in remote areas and operational requirements. Since 2014–15, Rs 1,249.38 crore has been released under this scheme.

Maoist cadres frequently exploited interstate boundaries to evade security forces. To address this challenge, Joint Task Forces comprising personnel from neighbouring States and CAPFs were established.

Operation Black Forest (2025)

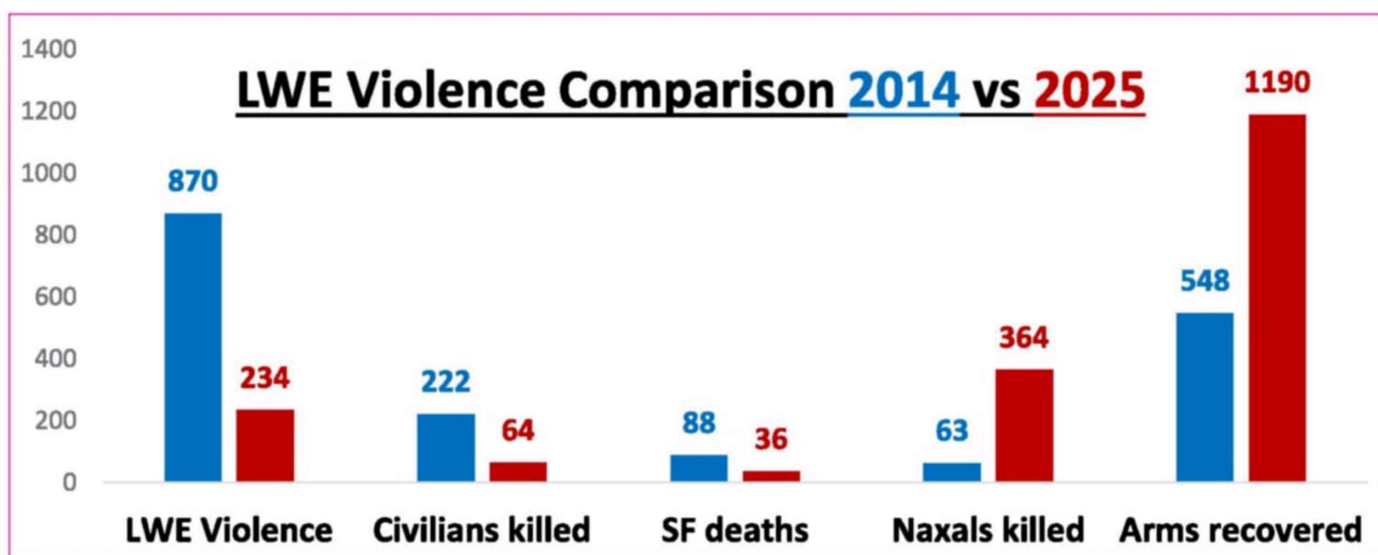
The Karreguttalu Hills along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border served as a major Maoist hideout due to their dense and inaccessible terrain. In April-May 2025, security forces launched Operation Black Forest involving over 10,000 personnel from CAPFs and State police forces. The operation targeted 400–500-armed Maoist cadres regrouping in the area. In multiple encounters, 31 Maoists were neutralised and a large cache of arms and explosives was recovered.

2. Development of LWE Areas

Rapid and inclusive development formed the second pillar of the Government's strategy. Extremist groups had created isolated pockets where governance and development could not reach. Ironically, tribal communities suffered the most from this isolation.

Road connectivity was recognised as the foundation of development. Under the *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* (PMGSY), population criteria for road connectivity were relaxed in LWE areas. Additionally, the "Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism



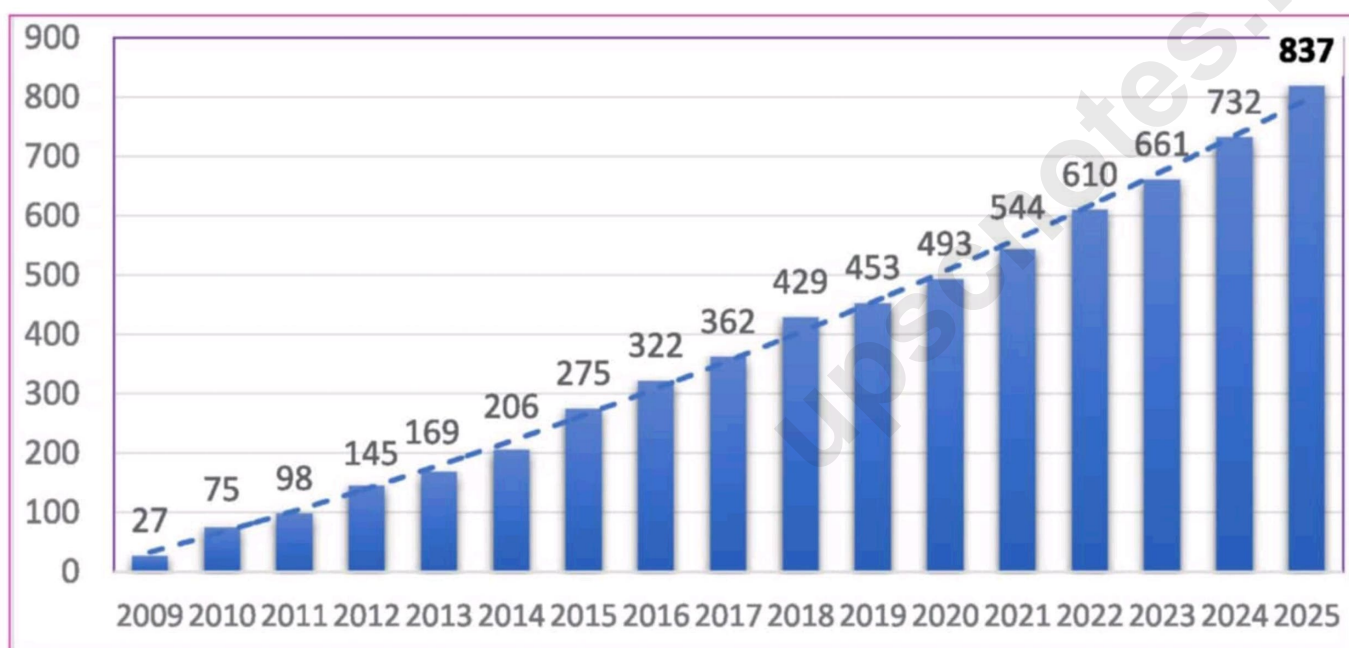


Affected Areas” sanctioned 11,958 km of rural roads and 691 bridges. Under the Road Requirement Plan, another 5,361 km of roads of state highway standard were sanctioned. In core Maoist areas, the Government deployed the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) for critical infrastructure projects. As a result, overall road density in LWE regions increased by nearly 30%, while highway connectivity improved by around 80%.

Rail connectivity has emerged as a major driver of economic integration in LWE areas. A 95-km railway line between Dalli Rajhara and Rowghat has already been completed, while the 140-km Rowghat-Jagdulpur phase has been approved. Additionally, a 180-km railway line between Dantewada and Manuguru has also been sanctioned.

Telecom connectivity has become central to socio-economic transformation in tribal areas. Under various schemes of the Department of Telecommunications, more than 9,000 mobile towers were installed and many 2G towers were upgraded to 4G. Today, nearly 96% of villages in heavily LWE-affected regions have mobile connectivity, enabling access to education, banking, online services and governance.

Special focus was placed on education and skill development. A total of 259 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) were sanctioned, of which 179 are functional. Population norms for opening EMRS schools were relaxed in remote LWE-affected blocks. Similarly, 48 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and 61 Skill Development Centres were sanctioned, with most already operational.



Number of Security Camps established in LWE-affected areas

Financial inclusion was prioritised to facilitate Direct Benefit Transfers and improve access to banking services. Accordingly, 1,804 bank branches and 1,321 ATMs were established, 74,720 Banking Correspondents were deployed, and 5,731 post offices were opened between 2017 and 2024. These measures significantly expanded financial access in remote tribal areas.

Healthcare infrastructure in tribal hinterlands remained weak for decades. CAPF field hospitals established for security personnel were also opened to local tribal, and around 77,000 local residents have received treatment at these facilities. Additionally, a 240-bed super-speciality hospital was established in Jagdalpur under the *Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana*. To address internet-related difficulties in generating *Ayushman Bharat* cards, the Government introduced offline applications enabling officials to issue cards in remote villages.

Responsive and Inclusive Governance

The Government recognised that implementation challenges in tribal regions required flexibility and local adaptation rather than rigid adherence to standard procedures. Special campaigns were organised with UIDAI and the postal department to ensure Aadhaar coverage in remote tribal areas. Due to weak internet connectivity and banking infrastructure, cash wage payments and offline attendance systems were permitted in certain LWE areas under the earlier version of *Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika*

Mission (*Gramin*) (VB-G-RAM G) scheme. Under the *Swachh Bharat* Mission, toilet construction funds were routed through Village Sanitation Committees, where banking access remained inadequate. These examples demonstrate the importance of adaptive governance in ensuring last-mile delivery of welfare schemes.

To bridge critical infrastructure gaps, the Ministry of Home Affairs launched the Special Central Assistance Scheme in 2017. Under this scheme, the most affected districts received Rs 30 crore annually, while districts of concern were allocated Rs 10 crore annually. Around 15,000 projects have been sanctioned under the scheme, including schools, Anganwadi centres, roads, health centres and drinking water facilities. Since 2017, Rs 4,097.47 crore has been released under SCA.

3. Rights and Entitlements of Local Communities

Protection of tribal rights formed another important pillar of the Government's strategy, particularly because Maoists frequently exploited grievances relating to land and forest rights. Accordingly, nearly 1.8 million title deeds have been distributed across 10 LWE-affected states under various land and forest rights initiatives.

4. Engagement with Local Communities

The Government approached the LWE challenge not merely through security measures, but also through empathy, inclusion and trust-building. Under the Tribal Youth Exchange Programme, around 5,000 tribal youths from LWE areas visit important cities and institutions across India every year. CAPFs conduct medical camps,



sports events and distribution drives under the Civic Action Programme to build trust with local communities. Initiatives such as the Bastar Olympics and Pandum festivals have provided platforms for tribal youth to celebrate and showcase their cultural identity. Surrender-cum-Rehabilitation Policies provide financial assistance, skill development, and rehabilitation support. Over the past decade, nearly 10,000 Maoist cadres have surrendered and returned to mainstream society. Alongside progress in rural areas, the Government introduced the “Action Plan for Countering Activities of CPI (Maoist) in Urban Areas” in 2018, focusing on dismantling urban support ecosystems and strengthening counter-narratives.

Way Forward

The Ministry of Home Affairs is now focusing on ensuring sustainable livelihood opportunities in areas freed from LWE influence. District-level mapping of local resources, skills and aspirations has already been completed, and a long-term development plan has been prepared.



The journey from Naxalbari in 1967 to the declaration of an LWE-free India in March 2026 reflects one of the most significant internal security achievements in independent India. It demonstrates that deeply entrenched insurgencies can be addressed through a balanced strategy that combines security operations, development initiatives, responsive governance and community participation. The success of India's Whole-of-Government approach offers an important global example of how coordinated action within a federal framework can effectively address complex internal security challenges. □

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| • Extended Abstract (approximately 2000 words) | : August 7, 2026 |
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| • Full Paper Submission | : November 13, 2026 |
| • Acceptance of Full Paper | : November 27, 2026 |
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Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, on 9 February 2026 witnessed the 'Bastar Pandum' festival held in Jagdalpur, showcasing the rich heritage of tribal art and culture.



Source : PIB



Bastar Olympics: A Catalyst for Peace, Inclusion, and Transformational Change in Bastar

The transformation of Bastar is a story of courage, perseverance, and collective effort. The Bastar Olympics stands at the forefront of this narrative, illustrating how sports can transcend boundaries and heal divisions. It is turning aspirations into achievements and challenges into opportunities.

The story of Bastar, once predominantly associated with Left Wing Extremism (LWE), is steadily being rewritten into one of resilience, hope, and positive transformation. At the heart of this change lies an innovative and people-centric initiative, the Bastar Olympics. Far beyond being a sporting event, it has emerged as a powerful social movement that is reshaping identities, empowering youth, strengthening community bonds, and reinforcing peace in the region.

The Bastar Olympics 2025 builds upon the remarkable success of its inaugural edition in 2024. What began as a sporting experiment has now evolved into a symbol of Bastar's social resurgence and cultural pride. It reflects a conscious effort by the Government to channelise the immense energy, talent, and aspirations of the youth towards constructive and nation-building activities. In a region that witnessed decades of violence and alienation, such an initiative is not merely recreational, it is transformational.

Conflict to Confidence: The Role of Bastar Olympics

Bastar has long been affected by left-wing extremism, where generations of youth were deprived of opportunities, exposure, and platforms to showcase their abilities. However, one constant truth remained, there was never a lack of talent, courage, or potential. What was missing was access, encouragement, and integration with the mainstream.

The Bastar Olympics addresses this gap directly. By providing structured opportunities in sports, it offers young individuals a dignified pathway to express themselves, compete, and excel. It replaces the narrative of fear with one of confidence and ambition. The playing field becomes a space where identity is shaped not by conflict, but by capability.

Sports, by their very nature, promote discipline, teamwork, and mutual respect. In Bastar, these values have taken on a deeper significance. They are helping rebuild trust between communities, between citizens and institutions, and within individuals themselves.

Mass Participation as a Measure of Change

One of the most compelling indicators of the Bastar Olympics' success is the scale of participation. In 2024,



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approximately 165,000 youth registered for the event. In 2025, this number has surged to over 3,91,000 participants—a nearly threefold increase. This includes a substantial number of women participants, marking a significant step towards gender inclusion and empowerment.

Such unprecedented participation is not just a statistic; it is a reflection of changing mindsets. It signifies that the youth of Bastar are choosing playgrounds over paths of violence, competition over conflict, and opportunity over isolation. It also demonstrates growing trust in governance and institutional initiatives.

Nuva Baat: Inclusivity and Social Integration

The Bastar Olympics stands out for its deeply inclusive approach. It brings together participants from remote villages, tribal communities, and even those who were once associated with extremist ideologies. Apart from players from all seven Districts of Bastar Range, a special team was constituted under the name “Nuva Baat”, which means “New Path” in the local tribal dialect. The Nuva Baat team comprised of former Maoist cadres who have renounced violence and joined the mainstream, victims of Maoist violence, as well as specially-abled athletes. They were given a new identity and an opportunity to participate as athletes. This reintegration was to ensure that no section of society is left behind. In doing so, it sends a powerful message: development and dignity are universal rights, and every individual has a role in shaping Bastar’s future.

Organised Approach and Professional Execution

The Bastar Olympics is not a symbolic event; it is executed with meticulous planning and

professionalism. The competition spans multiple levels, such as block, district, and division, ensuring widespread reach and structured progression. Over 60 playgrounds have been identified and prepared across 32 development blocks, supported by trained referees, physical education instructors, and technical officials.

The inclusion of both traditional and modern sports ranging from athletics and football, kabaddi, Kho-Kho, and volleyball ensure cultural continuity while promoting contemporary sporting standards. The use of national-level referees and standardized infrastructure further elevates the credibility and quality of the event.

Such an organised approach instils discipline and exposes participants to competitive environments comparable to state and national levels. It also builds institutional capacity in sports management within the region.

Recognition and National Visibility

The impact of the Bastar Olympics has resonated beyond the region. The initiative has received national recognition and appreciation, highlighting it as a model of how sports can be used as a tool for social transformation. The acknowledgement at the highest levels reinforces the idea that Bastar’s journey is not isolated; it is part of India’s broader narrative of inclusive growth and peacebuilding.

By inviting renowned athletes and sports personalities to participate and interact with local players, the Olympics creates aspirational value. Young participants see role models up close, making their dreams more tangible and achievable.

Opportunities, Incentives, and Pathways

A key strength of the Bastar Olympics lies in its ability to convert participation into opportunity. Winners at various levels are awarded medals, certificates, and financial incentives, providing both recognition and motivation. More importantly, talented athletes are given pathways for further training,



Glimpses from the Bastar Olympics.

including access to state sports academies.

The concept of “Youth Icons” introduced through the event highlights inspiring stories of local champions. These narratives, when shared through media and social platforms, create a ripple effect that encourages more youth to participate and believe in their potential.

Additionally, the provision of sports kits, equipment, and infrastructure contributes to long-term sports development in the region. It ensures that the impact of the Olympics extends beyond the event itself.

Breaking the Cycle of Extremism

Perhaps the most profound impact of the Bastar Olympics is its role in weakening the ecosystem of extremism. Engaging youth in constructive activities reduces their vulnerability to radicalisation. It offers an alternative identity that is rooted in achievement, recognition, and belonging.

The initiative also fosters community engagement. Families, local leaders, and entire villages come together to support participants, creating a collective sense of pride and ownership. This social cohesion is a critical factor in sustaining peace.

Furthermore, the Olympics complements broader governance efforts such as improved connectivity, education, and livelihood initiatives, creating a holistic framework for development. It demonstrates that

security measures alone are not sufficient; sustainable peace requires social and emotional integration.

A Symbol of Hope and a Blueprint for the Future

The Bastar Olympics is more than an event; it is a symbol of what is possible when vision meets commitment. It embodies the idea that transformation is not imposed from outside but nurtured from within communities. By empowering youth, celebrating culture, and promoting inclusivity, it lays the foundation for a resilient and self-confident Bastar.

As the region continues its journey towards lasting peace and development, the Bastar Olympics serves as both a milestone and a roadmap. It shows that even in areas once marked by conflict, positive change is achievable through innovative, participatory, and human-centric approaches.

The transformation of Bastar is a story of courage, perseverance, and collective effort. The Bastar Olympics stands at the forefront of this journey, illustrating how sports can transcend boundaries and heal divisions. It is turning aspirations into achievements and challenges into opportunities.

In redefining Bastar’s identity from a conflict zone to a cradle of talent and hope, the Bastar Olympics is not just changing perceptions; it is changing realities. It is a testament to the power of sports as a unifying force and a catalyst for enduring peace and progress. □



Prime Minister, Narendra Modi visited the Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum, at Nava Raipur, Chhattisgarh on 1 November 2025



Empowering through Education: Role of Eklavya Model Residential Schools

By nurturing aspirations, building confidence, and integrating communities into the mainstream, Eklavya Model Residential Schools weaken the foundations on which extremism thrives. They demonstrate that education is not just a developmental tool but also a means of ensuring peace and stability.

Left Wing Extremism (LWE), commonly known as Naxalism, has historically been a major hurdle to peace and development in India. Concentrated largely in tribal and forested regions, it has thrived on factors such as poverty, isolation, lack of infrastructure, and limited access to quality education. For decades, extremist groups exploited these vulnerabilities, targeting young tribal minds who had few opportunities and little exposure to alternative pathways in life. In such an environment, alienation often translates to recruitment into Naxal groups. It gradually became clear that security operations alone could not resolve this deeply rooted issue; addressing its socio-economic foundations was essential. In this context, education has emerged as one of the most effective and

sustainable tools of transformation, with Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) playing a central role.

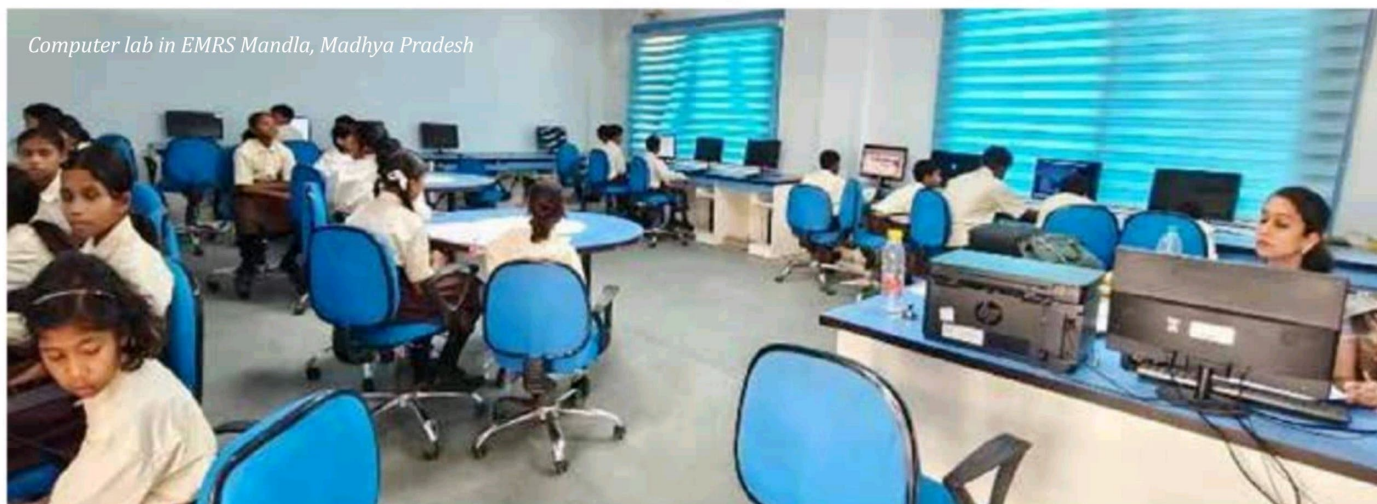
The foundation for tribal residential schooling was laid in 1999, when funds under Article 275(1) were allocated to states for establishing such institutions. However, a major policy shift occurred in 2018, when EMRSs were brought under a central sector scheme for fully residential, free, and quality education up to class XII. This transition reflected a clear vision: lasting peace in tribal regions could only be achieved by delivering quality education and development directly to the people. EMRSs were designed to provide high-quality, residential education to tribal students within their own socio-cultural environment, offering them both safety and opportunity. Over time, these



New EMRS Building

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Computer lab in EMRS Mandla, Madhya Pradesh



schools have evolved into powerful instruments of social change.

Importance of Education in Combating Naxalism

Education serves as a transformative force, particularly in conflict-prone areas. In regions affected by Naxalism, illiteracy and lack of awareness have historically made communities vulnerable to ideological manipulation. Without access to schooling, children often grow up disconnected from mainstream society, with a limited understanding of their rights or opportunities.

By ensuring access to education, the state empowers individuals with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and awareness. Education opens doors to employment, reduces economic dependency, and strengthens faith in democratic processes. It instils confidence and a sense of belonging, two factors crucial in preventing alienation. When young people are equipped with aspirations and opportunities, the appeal of extremist ideologies diminishes significantly.

EMRSs directly address these challenges by focusing on tribal youth, offering them structured, high-quality education in a residential setting. This not only bridges regional disparities but also integrates marginalized communities into the national mainstream.

Scaling Up in the Tribal Heartland

To counter the influence of Naxalism effectively, the government strategically expanded EMRSs in the most affected districts. A significant number of schools (259) have been sanctioned and made operational (178) in Left Wing Extremism-affected regions, directly targeting the areas where extremist recruitment has traditionally been high. The Remaining schools will be made functional next year. Today, more than 50,000 tribal students are enrolled in these schools, living and

learning in safe residential campuses.

This residential model of schooling plays a crucial role. By providing a secure and engaging environment, EMRSs physically and psychologically distance students from the influence of extremist groups. Children who spend their days attending classes, participating in sports, and engaging in extracurricular activities are far less susceptible to recruitment. In effect, EMRSs disrupt the supply chain of potential recruits by replacing vulnerability with opportunity.

Moreover, the presence of these schools strengthens the visibility of governance in remote areas. Teachers, administrators, and support staff act as representatives of the state, fostering trust and reinforcing the idea that development is reaching even the most isolated communities.

Modern Infrastructure and Digital Empowerment

One of the most distinctive features of EMRSs is their emphasis on modern infrastructure. These schools are not merely functional buildings; they are designed as high-quality institutions comparable to urban schools. Equipped with smart classrooms, computer labs, science laboratories, and digital tools, EMRSs ensure that tribal students receive a modern education.

High-speed internet connectivity has been introduced in all campuses, linking remote areas to the global knowledge network. Smart boards and digital learning tools make education interactive and engaging, particularly for first-generation learners. This technological exposure reduces the rural-urban divide and prepares students for a rapidly evolving world.

In a significant step toward innovation, advanced facilities such as space and science labs are being introduced in collaboration with premier institutions.

Such initiatives expose students to cutting-edge fields, encouraging curiosity and ambition. A child who once faced limited prospects can now dream of careers in science, technology, and research.

To sustain these advancements, dedicated funds for maintenance and upgrades ensure that infrastructure remains functional and relevant. This consistent investment signals long-term commitment and builds confidence among local communities.

Quality Education and Teacher Training

Infrastructure alone cannot bring change without quality teaching. EMRSs are affiliated with CBSE, ensuring that students follow a standardised curriculum comparable to that of top schools across the country. This alignment ensures that tribal students are not academically disadvantaged.

Teachers are being recruited through all India examination to ensure that the best quality of teachers deliver the academic inputs. Teacher training is another critical component. Teachers in EMRSs are not just instructors but also mentors and counsellors. They guide students through academic challenges while also helping them navigate social and emotional issues. By encouraging critical thinking and informed decision-making, teachers play a key role in preventing ideological manipulation.

An educated and aware student is far less likely to be influenced by extremist narratives. Instead, they are equipped to question, analyse, and choose constructive paths.

Centres of Excellence and Rising Aspirations

A defining strength of EMRSs is their focus on nurturing ambition. Through Centres of Excellence for IIT/NEET preparations, students receive specialised coaching for these examinations. These initiatives create clear pathways to prestigious institutions of eminence.

Aspiration is a powerful antidote to extremism. When students begin to envision successful futures as doctors, engineers, administrators, or scientists, they are less likely to be drawn toward violence. Each success story becomes a beacon of hope for the entire community, proving that education can transform lives.

Growing Demand and Community Trust

The increasing number of applications to EMRSs for admission reflects their growing credibility. Tribal families, once sceptical or constrained by circumstances, now actively seek admission for their children. The

residential model, combined with quality education and holistic development, makes these schools highly attractive.

This shift indicates a broader change in mindset. Education is no longer seen as a distant possibility but as a tangible pathway to progress. Such a transformation is critical in weakening the ideological base of Naxalism.

Holistic Development through Sports and Culture

EMRSs emphasise all-round development, integrating academics with sports and cultural activities. Events such as national sports meets and cultural festivals provide students with opportunities to showcase their talents and interact with fellow students from across the country.

Participation in sports builds discipline, teamwork, and resilience, while cultural exchanges foster national integration and pride. Students gain exposure to diverse traditions and perspectives, strengthening their identity as part of a larger nation.

The Power of Alumni Networks

The growing network of EMRS alumni stands as a testament to the scheme's success. Graduates are now contributing to society in various professional roles, from healthcare and engineering to education and public service. Their achievements inspire younger students and reinforce the value of education.

Many alumni return to their communities, serving as role models and mentors. This creates a cycle of aspiration and achievement that gradually replaces the influence of extremist ideologies.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools have emerged as a powerful tool in combating Naxalism by addressing its root causes. Through quality education, modern infrastructure, skill development, and holistic growth, they provide tribal youth with opportunities that were once unimaginable.

By nurturing aspirations, building confidence, and integrating communities into the mainstream, EMRSs weaken the foundations on which extremism thrives. They demonstrate that education is not just a developmental tool but also a means of ensuring peace and stability.

In the long run, the success of EMRSs underscores a fundamental truth: sustainable solutions to complex challenges like Naxalism lie not in force alone, but in empowering people with knowledge, opportunity, and hope. □



The Telecom Trajectory of a Naxal-Free India

The trajectory of these regions reflects a deeper shift, from coercion to connection, from exclusion to inclusion, and from insurgency to integration, countering the Maoist doctrine of 'power flows from the barrel of a gun' to a reality where 'development now flows through networks of connectivity'.

Minister of Home Affairs, in his address to the Lok Sabha on 30 March 2026, declared, "India is now Naxal-free," fulfilling a commitment made by him two years ago in August 2024. The movement, which plagued the country for over five decades, drew strength from an environment of governance deficits, lack of access to basic services, developmental disparities, and grievances of marginalisation. These conditions also held the key to its resolution. As long-standing grievances of neglect were addressed through sustained focus on development, the once widespread 'Red Corridor' began to shrink into isolated 'Red Pockets.' The response extended beyond security interventions to a holistic approach: anchored in zero tolerance towards violence, accelerated development and infrastructure expansion, and the rehabilitation of those willing to return to the mainstream.

For decades, vast stretches of India's Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected regions remained beyond reach, physically remote and digitally disconnected. In these gaps, governance thinned and extremism found space to grow. Bridging this divide was therefore not merely an infrastructural challenge, but a question of restoring state presence and public trust. Today, the silence and isolation that largely defined these regions are increasingly being replaced by signals of connectivity, governance, and opportunity.

Telecom infrastructure in these regions is not merely a matter of connectivity; it represents the

presence of the state itself. Towers and fibre networks do more than transmit signals; they carry governance, opportunity, and trust. In today's Digital India, telecom networks form the backbone of welfare delivery, enabling programmes such as *Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi* (PM-KISAN), *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana*, UPI and *Ayushman Bharat* and creating



Bridging distances: A mobile tower in Sarna Bodenar, a left-wing extremism-affected area of Chhattisgarh

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a window through which opportunities expand and inclusion deepens.

For people in these areas, a telecom tower is more than infrastructure; it is a gateway to a wider world, bringing classrooms to students, markets and information to farmers, timely pensions to the elderly, direct benefit transfers to beneficiaries, and a vital link between families. Connectivity also strengthens administrative reach and enhances coordination among security forces, thereby improving law and order and reinforcing a virtuous cycle of growth.

Recognising the central role of connectivity in achieving inclusive development, Digital *Bharat Nidhi* (DBN), formerly Universal Service Obligation Fund, was established under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) to bridge the digital divide in the country. DBN aims to ensure affordable and equitable access to telecommunication services, including mobile connectivity, broadband, and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) infrastructure, in remote and underserved areas, where commercial viability is limited, thereby ensuring that development is guided not solely by market forces but by the imperative of inclusion.

With this objective, DBN initiated targeted interventions to extend mobile connectivity in LWE - affected areas identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), aiming to integrate these regions into India's broader development trajectory towards *Viksit Bharat*. Historically underserved due to commercial unviability, these regions needed sustained public investment to bridge the connectivity gap.

In 2014, the cabinet approved Phase I of the scheme to provide 2G mobile services across the locations identified by MHA in 106 LWE-affected districts spanning 10 States. Under the initiative, 2,340 Mobile towers were installed, laying the foundational backbone for connectivity in these regions. A substantial proportion of these sites have since been upgraded to 4G, significantly enhancing the service quality and expanding the access for both the Security forces and the local communities.

Building on the success of Phase I and based on the requirements identified by MHA, Phase II of the scheme was approved in 2018 to expand mobile connectivity through 4G-enabled infrastructure using a viability gap funding model. Under this phase, 1,216 additional mobile towers have been commissioned, providing 4G mobile coverage to

1,275 LWE - affected locations.

The state-wise break-up of towers commissioned under the LWE Project is as follows:

State	4G Tower Commissioned	
	LWE - I	LWE - II
Andhra Pradesh	62	195
Bihar	250	1
Chhattisgarh	491	476
Jharkhand	808	73
Madhya Pradesh	19	24
Maharashtra	62	78
Odisha	256	358
Telangana	171	11
Uttar Pradesh	78	0
West Bengal	93	0
Total	2,290	1,216

In addition to the dedicated LWE schemes, an additional 5,863 mobile towers have been commissioned in LWE-affected areas under other DBN initiatives, including the 4G Saturation Project and the Aspirational Districts scheme, significantly expanding overall connectivity in these regions.

The state-wise break-up of towers commissioned under the other DBN Project is as follows:

State	Tower Commissioned under other DBN Projects
Andhra Pradesh	1,456
Bihar	116
Chhattisgarh	491
Jharkhand	807
Kerala	85
Madhya Pradesh	135
Maharashtra	517
Odisha	2,092
Telangana	162
West Bengal	2
Total	5,863

A major impetus to last-mile connectivity has been provided by the DBN-funded 4G Saturation Project, which aims to extend mobile services to some of the most remote and marginalised areas of the

country through an indigenous 4G stack. The project represents a strategic step towards *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, while accelerating the goal of universal mobile coverage.

Alongside the expansion of mobile services, DBN places equal emphasis on ensuring that connectivity is both sustainable and environmentally responsible. Implementing agencies are mandated to ensure dual power sources for telecom towers, with renewable energy, particularly solar power, being a key alternative. Further, as the majority of DBN towers are located in remote and ecologically sensitive forest areas, due care is taken to ensure compliance with statutory norms, including the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and Forest Conservation Act (FCA). Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), social audits, and compensatory afforestation measures under CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority) are also undertaken to align infrastructure development with environmental safeguards.

However, translating the vision of DBN into on-ground connectivity in LWE-affected regions required navigating a complex set of challenges, including security risks, difficult terrain, and the absence of supporting infrastructure such as roads and electricity, which often constrained the pace of progress. There were also instances of tower burning by extremist elements aimed at disrupting the expansion of state presence in these areas.

These challenges were addressed through coordinated efforts across multiple stakeholders, ranging from support by state governments in land acquisition and security arrangements, timely interventions by the MHA, regular multi-stakeholder reviews led by the Cabinet Secretary, along with the active role played by DoT field units in facilitating on-ground implementation. Regular meetings, often held several times a month, brought together representatives from across ministries and implementing agencies on a single platform, enabling real-time resolution of bottlenecks.

A key feature of telecom expansion by the DBN in remote areas has been the adoption of data-driven monitoring mechanisms. Dedicated dashboards and review systems, such as PMIS (Project Management Information System) and MoC (Ministry of Communication) Dashboard, enable continuous tracking of progress against defined targets and challenges encountered by implementing agencies,

with regular oversight at senior administrative levels. With monitoring from the highest levels, stakeholders are encouraged to define clear targets and timelines, ensuring accountability and timely execution. This approach has fostered a culture of performance-driven governance, facilitating prompt corrective action and enabling projects to maintain momentum even in challenging environments.

Enabled by this robust framework, mobile towers installed under the DBN today serve over 30 lakh users, including more than 10 lakh users in LWE-affected areas.

A clear illustration of transformation brought about by mobile connectivity can be seen in districts such as Sukma of Chhattisgarh and Malkangiri of Odisha. Earlier, these regions had almost no mobile coverage, making communication difficult for both local people and security forces. With the installation of mobile towers under DBN mobile projects, many previously unconnected villages are now covered by mobile networks, significantly improving communication and coordination. This has not only strengthened operational effectiveness for security forces but also facilitated socio-economic development by connecting communities to essential services and opportunities. This illustrates how connectivity acts as a force multiplier for both governance and security in previously inaccessible regions.

Improved telecom connectivity has also enabled the growth of local entrepreneurship, with platforms such as Common Service Centres (CSCs) empowering village-level entrepreneurs to deliver digital and financial services. Enhanced connectivity has further enabled artisans, self-help groups, and small producers in LWE-affected areas to access digital marketplaces, expanding livelihood opportunities and integrating local economies with broader markets.

The success of telecom interventions in LWE-affected regions reflects the broader role of state capacity in delivering complex infrastructure in areas where markets alone fall short. As India celebrates the achievement of a Naxal-Free *Bharat*, connectivity stands out as a key enabler of this development. The trajectory of these regions reflects a deeper shift, from coercion to connection, from exclusion to inclusion, and from insurgency to integration, countering the Maoist doctrine of 'power flows from the barrel of a gun' to a reality where 'development now flows through networks of connectivity'. □



The Approach that Ended a Five-Decade Insurgency

Naxal-Mukt Bharat is not merely a security achievement. It is a constitutional restoration, the return of the Indian state to every inch of its own territory, and the return of its citizens in those territories to the rights and dignity they were always owed.

The 31 March 2026, declaration was no accident. It marked the result of a sustained, system-driven transformation, where intelligence took the lead, security forces worked in sync, and political will stayed firm, along with institutional coordination. Together, these elements achieved what decades of reactive counterinsurgency could not.

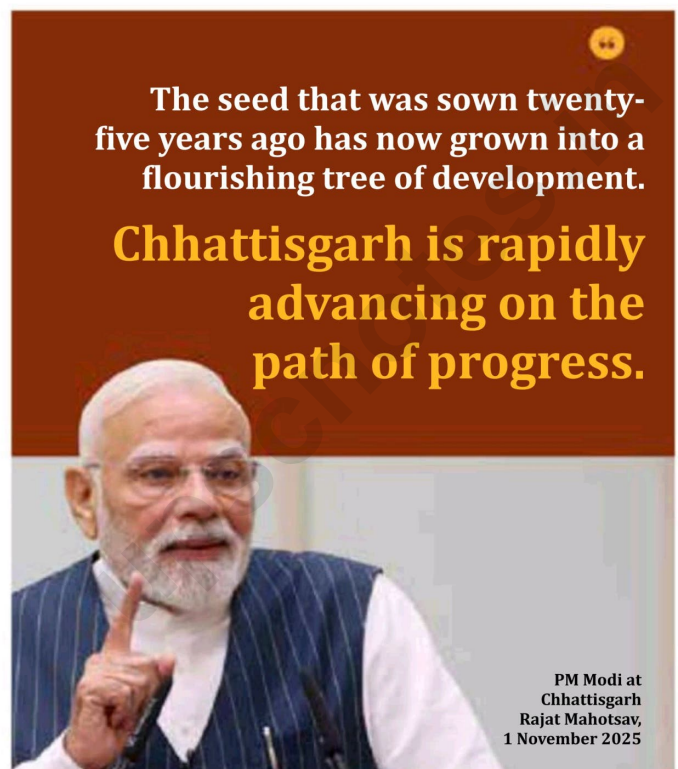
On 6 April 2010, seventy-six Central Reserve Police Force personnel were martyred in a single Maoist ambush in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh, the deadliest attack on security forces in independent India's history. At its peak, Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) insurgency controlled or influenced over 223 districts across ten States, ran a parallel administration in the forest belts from Jharkhand to Chhattisgarh, and had rendered vast swathes of India's mineral-rich tribal heartland effectively ungovernable. The declaration of *Naxal-Mukt Bharat* by 31 March 2026 marked not merely a security achievement, but a restoration of constitutional order.

What shifted between Dantewada and March 2026 was not just better equipment or more boots on the ground. What changed was strategic architecture, the translation of political will into operational doctrine, of intelligence into precision, and of federal friction into institutional coordination. The story of how India

ended the world's longest Maoist insurgency is, at its core, the story of a state that chose to decide, align, and act.

MHA as Strategic Nerve Centre

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) did not just oversee the anti-LWE campaign, it led it. The 2015



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Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting an exhibition in Nava Raipur, Chhattisgarh on 1 November 2025.

National Policy and Action Plan on LWE placed the MHA at the centre of a whole-of-government effort that combined security operations, development delivery, and inter-state coordination. District-level monitoring systems were set up, funding for Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) was streamlined, and a unified command structure was gradually put in place in the most critical conflict zones.

Central to this institutional transformation was the SAMADHAN doctrine — an MHA-articulated framework that gave operational coherence to a campaign that had historically suffered from fragmentation:

The decisive political signal came in 2024, when Union Home Minister Amit Shah publicly declared a firm deadline: “By 31 March 2026, armed Naxalism will be eradicated from the country.” It was not political rhetoric but a directive, a time-bound commitment that shaped priorities, tightened accountability, and accelerated operations across the security establishment. Through sustained reviews, field visits,

and direct oversight, the Home Minister transformed the MHA’s role from coordination to leadership, turning intent into execution.

Intelligence Revolution: From Reactive to Predictive

If there is a single variable that most decisively altered the trajectory of the anti-Naxal campaign, it is the transformation of the intelligence architecture. For much of the Maoist insurgency’s history, security force operations were reactive — launched after Maoist attacks, in terrain where the adversary was embedded and the state presence was peripheral. The shift to intelligence-led operations reversed that equation, turning pursuit into pre-emption and information into control.

The foundation of the shift was a systematic expansion of Human Intelligence (HUMINT) networks in areas once dominated by the Maoists. Surrendered cadres, who were rehabilitated and turned into assets, provided detailed knowledge of the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army’s (PLGA)

structures, movement patterns, and leadership. Over time, village-level informer networks gave security forces the local awareness that had once belonged solely to the Maoists. In conjunction with this HUMINT base, technical tools such as drones, mobile signal interception, and satellite imagery were layered, allowing forces to identify and neutralise Maoist units before they could act.

The results were historically unprecedented. Between 2022 and 2026, senior Maoist leaders (Politburo members, Central Committee functionaries, and PLGA military commanders) were neutralised at a rate that structurally decapitated the movement. This was not chance or tactical luck. It was the payoff of years of investment in intelligence, finally delivering decisive outcomes at operational scale.

Cracking the Strongholds: Bastar and Abujhmaad

The fiercest battles of the anti-LWE campaign were fought in Bastar (across Sukma, Bijapur, and Narayanpur) and in Abujhmaad. These remote forested highlands for decades had been the Maoists' operational stronghold. These areas were characterised by dense forests, extremely challenging terrain, tribal communities long cultivated by Maoist cadres, and the concentration

of PLGA battalion-strength formations, making them the hardest theatres of the conflict.

In Bastar, the CAPF strategy focused on expanding Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), embedding a permanent security presence deep inside forests that had long remained outside state control. Each FOB denied the Maoists sanctuary, disrupted their supply lines, and marked the return of state authority to areas abandoned for a generation. Leading the thrusts into contested terrain were the CRPF's (Central Reserve Police Force) elite CoBRA battalions (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action), specialised in jungle warfare and counterinsurgency, backed by the BSF (Border Security Force), ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police), and state police. By this stage, a unified command framework had largely dissolved the inter-force friction that once blunted operations, allowing coordinated advances to take hold.

Abujhmaad, literally "the unknown hills," posed a challenge unlike any other. For decades, it functioned as a de facto no-go zone for the Indian state: the ideological core of the Maoist movement, a sanctuary for its leadership, and a place where PLGA units regrouped after reverses elsewhere. Penetration of this stronghold was made possible by helicopter-borne logistics,



Bijapur police recovered explosives hidden in a pit by Naxalites.

THE SAMADHAN FRAMEWORK (MHA)



drone reconnaissance, and intelligence painstakingly cultivated over years. As security forces dismantled this sanctuary, they crippled the insurgency's ability to regenerate. Road construction into the forests became both a force multiplier, enabling rapid deployment, and a governance signal: the state was not just entering, it was staying.

Centre-State Coordination: Making Federalism Work

Anti-LWE operations had long been hampered by Centre-State friction, overlapping jurisdictions, uneven intelligence sharing, and political hesitations that diluted state-level commitment. After 2014, this structural weakness was systematically addressed. Regular MHA-State reviews created institutional accountability, unified command structures were rolled out in the most affected districts, and financial flows, including under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme, were tied directly to operational performance metrics.

Chhattisgarh's alignment with the Centre's operational doctrine, blending the state police's local knowledge with CAPF firepower and intelligence, became the template for effective anti-LWE federalism. The jointly administered surrender and rehabilitation policy added another dimension: offering Maoist cadres a pathway out while simultaneously yielding

rich intelligence from insiders who understood the Maoist organisation from within.

Security with Humanity: The Civil Action Dimension

The CAPFs' mandate in LWE-affected areas was never exclusively kinetic. Alongside security operations, Civil Action Programmes such as medical camps, school support, infrastructure aid, and community outreach consistently projected the state's constructive presence in tribal regions where Maoist narratives of neglect resonated. Coupled with psychological initiatives such as surrender appeals and community dialogue, these efforts steadily eroded Maoists' influence, turning tribal communities from passive or active supporters into stakeholders in the security outcome.

Durable Peace

The anti-LWE campaign was never about military victory alone. Its deeper purpose was to extend the promise and protection of the Indian state to citizens who had been denied them for half a century. Naxal-Mukt Bharat is not merely a security achievement. It is a constitutional restoration, the return of the Indian state to every inch of its own territory, and the return of its citizens in those territories to the rights and dignity they were always owed. □



From Isolation to Integration: India Post in LWE-Affected Regions

The postal network, with its deep local roots and human interface through Gramin Dak Sevaks, has built trust and reliability in communities that were once difficult to reach.

India Post has played a quiet yet transformative role in extending governance and essential services to Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas, contributing meaningfully to the larger vision of a Naxal-free India. By expanding its grassroots network, the Department has ensured that even the most remote and previously underserved regions are brought within the fold of formal communication and financial systems.

A key indicator of this outreach is the systematic opening of Branch Offices (BOs) in LWE areas over the years. Under initiatives sanctioned in 2016–17, as many as 1,789 Branch Offices were established, laying the foundation for last-mile connectivity. This effort was significantly scaled up in 2021–22 with the opening of 3,114 additional Branch Offices, reflecting a focused push to deepen access in vulnerable regions. As the country steadily progressed towards a Naxal-free India, the number of LWE-affected districts rapidly declined. Correspondingly, the requirement for new Branch Offices moderated, with 294 Branch Offices opened in 2024–25, indicating both consolidation of earlier gains and the positive impact of sustained development efforts.

These Branch Offices serve as critical access points for a wide range of citizen-centric services; postal delivery, savings and banking facilities through India Post Payments Bank, Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), insurance, and Aadhaar-enabled services. In regions where traditional banking and administrative infrastructure have struggled to penetrate, India Post has emerged as a trusted and accessible interface between the government and the people.

Beyond service delivery, the presence of post offices has also contributed to a sense of inclusion and state presence in LWE-affected areas. By enabling financial inclusion, facilitating communication, and supporting welfare delivery, India Post has helped reduce the sense of isolation that often fuels extremism. The postal network, with its deep local roots and human interface through Gramin Dak Sevaks, has built trust and reliability in communities that were once difficult to reach.

In this way, India Post is not merely delivering letters and parcels; it is delivering stability, opportunity, and integration. Its expanding footprint in these LWE-affected areas stands as a testament to how inclusive development and last-mile connectivity played a pivotal role in achieving the vision of a Naxal-free India. □



Dantewada Sub Post Office

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Securing Democracy in Formerly LWE Regions: Territory, Trust, Transition

The Naxal lands also had what the Naxals called the “janatana sarkar”, a defiantly anti-democratic and unconstitutional vigilante structure. The dismantling of this lawless structure and the establishment of India’s Constitution as the only law of the land is a clear and much-needed first victory against the Naxal insurgency. This spatial and territorial victory has created a secure, visible, and even aspirational space for democracy.

Less than a month after India officially declared the end of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) on 31 March 2026, I attended a digital democracy conclave at Jagdalpur, the administrative headquarters of the Bastar region in Chhattisgarh. The conclave brought together a demographically diverse cohort of 60 content creators to see the situation on the ground for themselves. They visited some of the former LWE areas, bamboo-raftered on the Indravati, ate at the community tourism facilities put together by local tribals, and listened to some of the former Naxals who have given up arms and joined the democratic mainstream explain why they made that decision. On the banks of the Indravati or rafting through the river, the content creators shot their videos and recorded the change they had witnessed, barely a few kilometres from the sites where the Naxals had carried out some of the deadliest attacks on the security forces or politicians. This would be considered normal in most parts of India. But in Chhattisgarh, this normalcy was not possible even a few years back.

This introduction to a transitioning Bastar was an eloquent evidence of the triumph of democracy over the decades-long Naxal insurgency, which rejected both India’s democracy and Constitution. The spectacular triumph of India’s security establishment over LWE

has raised high hopes for a similar and wider victory of grassroots democracy in those areas. This deepening of democracy in the paradoxically named “liberated zones” is a spectacular success story unfolding in lands that till recently were the theatres of a visceral conflict



It is true that Maoist violence had stalled the progress of many districts in central and eastern India. That is why in 2015, our government formulated a comprehensive ‘National Policy and Action Plan’ to eradicate Maoist violence. Along with zero tolerance towards violence, we have also focused on a massive push to infrastructure and social empowerment to bring a positive change in the lives of the poor people in these regions.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi



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between the organs and symbols of the State and the outlawed Maoists.

It is not anybody's case that democracy did not exist at all in those regions that constituted what the Naxals and their associated ecosystem loved to call the "red corridor". These regions did send their elected representatives to different tiers of India's democratic apparatus. But this was at best a limited democracy, and it did not offer the security of life and the rule of law that India's Constitution enshrined for those who inhabited these regions. The writ of the Maoists also ran along with the greatly limited and challenged writ of the Constitution. The Naxal lands also had what the Naxals called the "*janatana sarkar*", a defiantly anti-democratic and unconstitutional vigilante structure. The dismantling of this lawless structure and the establishment of India's Constitution as the only law of the land is a clear and much-needed first victory against the Naxal insurgency. This spatial and territorial victory has created a secure, visible, and even aspirational space for democracy. Under the clear-eyed and decisive leadership of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who has lent an unprecedented degree of political capital, commitment, and credibility to this anti-LWE operation, the security forces have achieved what no previous government did since the start of the Maoist insurgency in the late 60s, a total territorial control of the formerly Naxal zones. This is a monumental achievement that compares only with

another epic success in another part of India, the deft constitutional and parliamentary procedure to write down Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, followed by a complete territorial control, protection of civilians and security personnel, and establishing a new paradigm in J&K.

There is a reason why the Narendra Modi government, especially the MHA under Amit Shah, has been able to deal this existential blow to the LWE terror unlike the previous governments. Amit Shah set himself and the security apparatus a deadline to end this menace. In a country where governmental deadlines are almost always practiced in violation, this government aspired big and bold, and has delivered on its deadline- a singularly unique milestone in itself. Most observers of the LWE insurgency, including the skeptics who doubted whether this was a wise move, now admit that this audacious announcement gave the security infrastructure down the line a sense of purpose, missionary commitment, and single-minded focus. While this was not a military operation, the first two phases of the 'clear, hold, build' strategy have been accomplished.

The anti-LWE operation succeeded also because it deployed a strategy that addressed the root cause of the insurgency- lack of development that created a sense of alienation, which in turn caused the tribals to take up arms against the State. The Naxals and their supportive intellectual ecosystem actually created a



Union Home Minister
Amit Shah visits Naxal
stronghold Gundam in
Bijapur, Chhattisgarh



Prime Minister, Narendra Modi visited the Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum, at Nava Raipur, Chhattisgarh on 1 November 2025

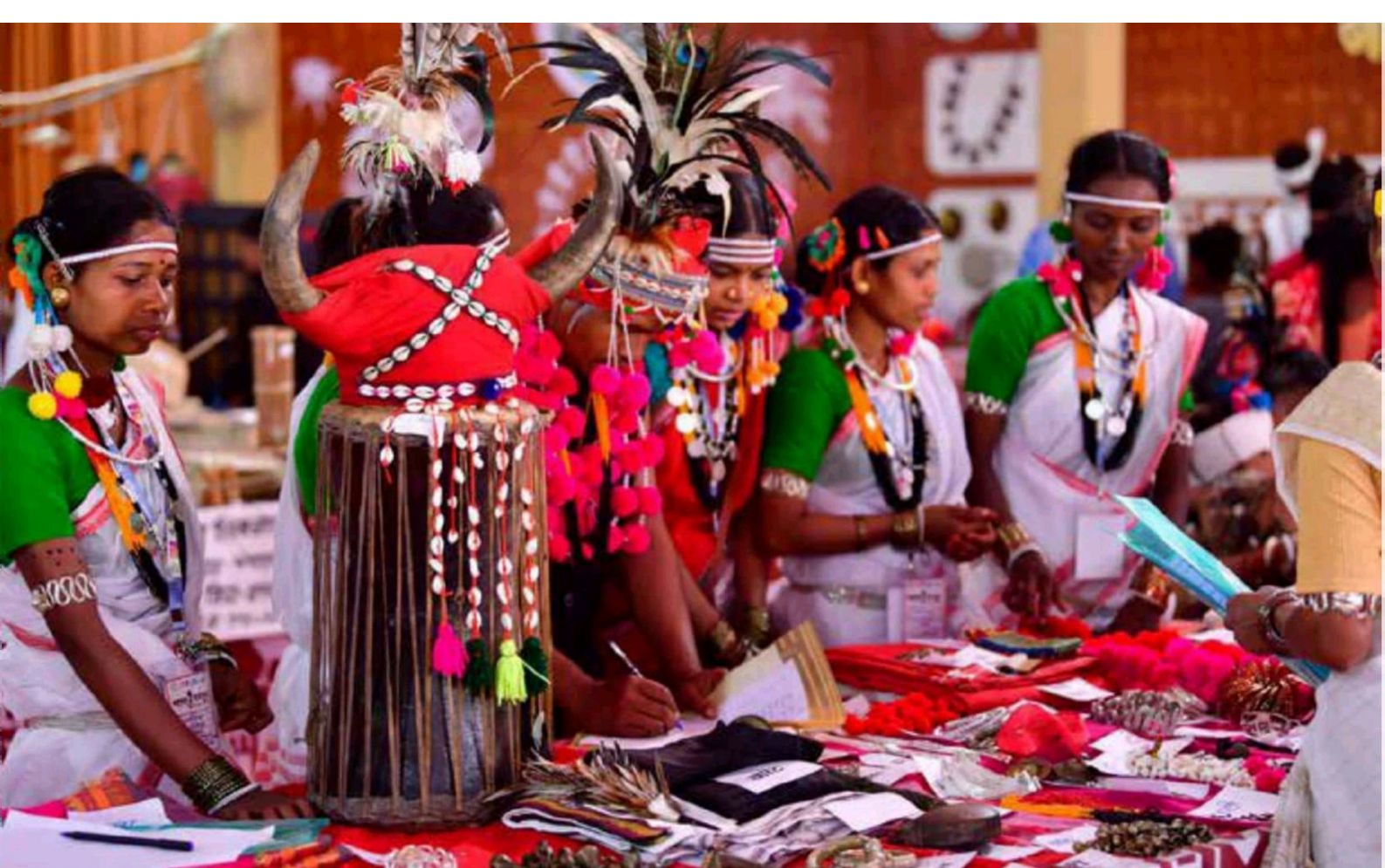
vicious cycle out of this root cause—they would cite the lack of development as the main driver of the insurgency, but would also not let any development initiatives reach the tribals. This excuse worked to the advantage of LWE from the tribal regions to metros, but this government has finally disrupted the vicious cycle by bringing security to the LWE areas, which ensured development follows. Under a new strategy, the government identified regions where the insurgency was most intense and asked the security forces to go after the top echelons of the Maoist cadres, to leave the LWE decapitated and demoralised. In the core LWE areas thus identified, 87 new security camps were established in 2025, and 16 so far in 2026. Of the total 833 such security camps in the LWE areas, more than 400 have been built after 2019. In 2025-26, more than half of the Maoist cadres eliminated by the security forces under this strategy were Area Committee Members (ACM), and 11 of the Maoist cadres killed in 2025 were Central Committee Members (CCM).

The security offensive, coupled with the strategic indifference toward offers for talks by the Maoist groups, had the desired effect. As the anti-LWE

operations gained momentum and territory, more and more Maoist cadres took the offer to surrender. In 2024, 881 Maoist cadres surrendered. This number nearly tripled to 2337 in 2025. This year, more than 700 Maoists have given up arms.

Development initiatives have complemented the security gains and brought about perceptual change. Post 2024, total road length in the LWE areas has increased by 25 percent. More than 96 percent of villages in the LWE zones have mobile connectivity now. The number of bank branches in the formerly liberated zones has increased from 3320 in 2014 to 5124 now, bringing the LWE regions close to the national average of one bank for 8300 persons. Between 2017 and 2026, nearly 6000 new post offices have opened in the LWE areas.

Smaller but locally significant changes like recruiting local tribals into the security forces, events such as Bastar Olympics and Bastar Pandum, and more than four-fold increase in the number of Eklavya Model Residential Schools since 2014 have addressed the problem of trust deficit and created aspiration among those who lived in fear of Naxals and without access to governance, delivery of services, and a true translation of democracy into welfare. □



Bastar Pandum: Cultural Assertion and the Consolidation of a Naxal-Free Trajectory

The participation of over 55,000 tribal individuals, as highlighted during the closing ceremony, is not merely a statistic. It is a reflection of the region's transition away from fear and towards collective confidence. Cultural assertion in this context acts as a counter-narrative to decades of alienation and conflict.

The idea of a Naxal-free India has increasingly come to be understood not only through the lens of security operations but also through the prism of cultural resurgence, participatory governance, and inclusive development. The Bastar region of Chhattisgarh, once emblematic of prolonged insurgency, is today witnessing a transformative shift. At the centre of this transformation lies Bastar Pandum 2026, which has emerged as both a cultural renaissance and a socio-political milestone, especially in the backdrop of India's broader efforts culminating in the Naxal-free trajectory achieved by the end of March.

A Festival Rooted in Life and Identity

Bastar Pandum is not merely a cultural event; it is an expression of the lived realities, seasonal rhythms, and collective identity of the tribal communities of Bastar. As highlighted by President Droupadi Murmu during the inaugural ceremony at Jagdalpur, on 7 February 2026, "when farmers sow seeds, it is Pandum; when mangoes ripen, it is Pandum", a reflection of how deeply embedded the concept is in everyday life. The festival celebrates not just performance arts but an entire worldview grounded in harmony with nature and community traditions.

The 2026 edition, held from 5 January to 9 February, witnessed the participation of 54,745 individuals, spanning all seven districts of the Bastar division (Sukma, Bijapur, Dantewada, Jagdalpur, Kondagaon, Narayanpur, and Kanker). Competitions were conducted across 32 block headquarters, covering all 1,885 Gram Panchayats, reflecting an unprecedented scale of grassroots engagement.

Expansion and Institutionalisation of Cultural Platforms

Building on the success of its earlier edition, Bastar Pandum 2026 expanded its scope from 7 categories to 12 disciplines. These included tribal dance, music, drama, performance arts, costumes, jewellery, handicrafts, painting, beverages, cuisine, regional literature, and forest-based medicinal knowledge. This expansion signifies a conscious effort to document, preserve, and promote diverse elements of tribal heritage.

The 2025 edition, held from 12 March to 5 April, had already set a strong precedent with approximately 47,000 artists participating and its inclusion in the Golden Book of World Records. The continuity and scaling up of the festival under the leadership of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai reflects a sustained policy commitment to cultural empowerment.

Political Leadership and National Recognition

The significance of Bastar Pandum 2026 was further elevated by the presence of national leadership at both its inaugural and closing ceremonies. Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the festival, while Home Minister Amit Shah attended the closing ceremony on 9 February 2026, in Jagdalpur.

In his address, the Home Minister underscored a fundamental shift in Bastar's identity from a region associated with "mortar shells, gunfire, and IED blasts" to one where over 55,000 people celebrated culture across 12 disciplines. He emphasised that Bastar's identity must no longer be linked with 'barud' but with its rich cultural heritage. This narrative shift is critical in redefining both internal and external perceptions of the region.

Cultural Revival as a Pillar of Peace

The participation of over 55,000 tribal individuals, as highlighted during the closing ceremony, is not merely a statistic. It is a reflection of the region's transition away from fear and towards collective confidence. Cultural assertion in this context acts as a counter-narrative to decades of alienation and conflict.

The festival has also played a role in providing dignity and visibility to tribal artists. By creating structured platforms for performance and competition, it integrates local traditions into broader cultural and economic frameworks. Initiatives to promote branding and marketing of tribal products, including forest produce and handicrafts, further strengthen livelihood opportunities.

Development Interventions and Governance

The cultural revival witnessed through Bastar Pandum is closely intertwined with a series of developmental initiatives. As outlined during the event, multiple infrastructure and welfare measures are being implemented:

- Reopening of schools that had remained closed for nearly 40 years
- Expansion of road connectivity and installation of mobile towers
- Establishment of post offices and banking facilities within a 5-kilometre radius
- Provision of 5 kg of free rice per person per month
- Procurement of paddy at a minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 3,100 per quintal



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the National Tribal Fair in New Delhi on 25 October 2016.



Whether it's building museums of tribal freedom fighters across the country... or declaring Lord Birsa Munda's birthday as Tribal Pride Day...

Our effort is to ensure that the contribution of the tribal society is always glorified.

PM Modi at Chhattisgarh Rajat Mahotsav, 1 November 2025



- Supply of gas cylinders and household tap water connections

Additionally, a new industrial area and auto gig hub are being developed over 118 acres, aimed at generating employment for tribal youth. Major infrastructure projects include the Rs 3,500 crore Raoghat-Jagdarpur rail project and a Rs 36 crore irrigation project on the Indravati River, expected to generate 120 megawatts of power. Skill development initiatives targeting over 90,000 youth further reinforce the development agenda.

Rehabilitation and Security: A Balanced Approach

The transition towards a Naxal-free Bastar is also rooted in a balanced approach combining security measures with rehabilitation policies. The government has emphasised that while those who surrender will be rehabilitated with dignity, violent actions will be met with firm responses.

The rehabilitation framework is designed to encourage reintegration into mainstream society, particularly focusing on youth and women. Appeals have been made for families to support the surrender of individuals involved in Naxal activities, ensuring that they can rebuild their lives.

At the same time, the core principle guiding anti-Naxal operations remains the protection of tribal

farmers, women, and children, the groups that have historically borne the brunt of violence.

Symbolism of Recognition and Inclusion

National recognition of tribal contributions has been another critical dimension of this transformation. The declaration of the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda as Tribal Pride Day and the celebration of his 150th birth anniversary as the Year of Tribal Pride reflect a broader commitment to honouring tribal heritage. Furthermore, individuals from the Bastar region, such as Pandit Ram Mandavi, Hemchand Manjhi, Ajay Kumar Mandavi, and Bhudhari Dati, have been conferred Padma awards in fields like art, health, and education. Such recognitions reinforce a sense of pride and belonging among tribal communities.

Tourism and Future Prospects

With the decline in Naxal influence, Bastar is poised to emerge as a major centre for cultural and eco-tourism. Proposed initiatives include adventure tourism, homestays, canopy walks, and glass bridges. These efforts are expected to generate employment while showcasing Bastar's unique cultural and natural heritage. The vision articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to present Bastar's culture on national and global platforms aligns with these initiatives, positioning the region as a significant contributor to India's cultural economy.

Consolidating the Gains

The developments in Bastar must be viewed in the broader context of India's progress towards eliminating Naxalism, with significant milestones achieved by the end of March. Bastar Pandum 2026 serves as both a reflection and reinforcement of this progress.

The festival demonstrates that sustainable peace is built not only through security interventions but also through cultural affirmation, economic inclusion, and participatory governance. The large-scale involvement of communities across 1,885 Gram Panchayats highlights the success of a bottom-up approach to development.

Bastar Pandum 2026 encapsulates the transformation of a region once defined by conflict into one characterised by cultural vibrancy and developmental momentum. By integrating tradition with modern governance, it offers a replicable model for addressing complex socio-political challenges. □

Source: PIB



Dr. Hansaji Yogendra

A Peaceful Mind for a Peaceful Society: Mindful Living Through the Yogic Way of Life

A peaceful society cannot be built only through laws, institutions, or economic progress. It must also be built through emotionally healthy people. When frustration, alienation, anger, and hopelessness remain unresolved within people and communities, they gradually affect the social fabric around them. Emotional imbalance at an individual level often manifests as conflict at a collective level. Therefore, mental wellness is not merely personal. It is deeply connected to social harmony and national well-being.

India today stands at a remarkable point in its journey. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we have witnessed unprecedented progress in technology, infrastructure, education, digital transformation, and global influence. India is emerging as a confident and powerful voice on the world stage, driven by innovation, development, and a renewed sense of national purpose. Yet, alongside this visible progress, another reality unfolds within homes, workplaces, schools, and communities. It is a growing crisis of mental unrest.

According to the World Health Organization, nearly one in every eight people globally lives with a mental health condition. In India, stress, anxiety, emotional fatigue, loneliness, and burnout are increasingly affecting not only adults but also children and young people. Despite being more digitally connected than ever before, human beings are feeling deeply disconnected from themselves and from one another.

Many people wake up tired, rush through emotionally demanding days, and go to sleep without

ever feeling mentally rested. This is not merely a medical challenge. It is a human challenge.

Mental wellness influences how people think, respond, relate, work, and ultimately live together as a society. A healthy mind is not one that never faces difficulties, but one that learns how to move through life with clarity and balance.

Beyond the Absence of Illness

Mental wellness is often misunderstood as simply the absence of illness. In reality, it is the ability to maintain emotional steadiness amidst uncertainty, to remain calm under pressure, and to live harmoniously with oneself and others.

Today, many people appear successful outwardly but feel deeply unsettled inwardly. Modern life has brought convenience and opportunity, but it has also intensified comparison, overstimulation, impatience, and emotional exhaustion. One of the greatest paradoxes of our times is that human beings have learned how to manage machines efficiently, but are slowly forgetting how to manage their own minds.

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At The Yoga Institute, over decades of working with people from all walks of life, we have observed that suffering often increases not merely because of external situations, but because the mind has not been trained to respond to life calmly. A small criticism creates anger. A setback creates hopelessness. Constant comparison creates insecurity. Gradually, emotional imbalance begins affecting physical health, relationships, and overall quality of life.

The *Bhagavad Gita* beautifully describes the importance of mental steadiness:

“समत्वं योग उच्यते”

Samatvam yoga uchyate

“Yoga is the state of balance.”

(*Bhagavad Gita* 2.48)

This simple yet profound teaching reminds us that yoga is not merely physical flexibility. It is emotional equilibrium.

The Cost of a Restless Lifestyle

Modern life moves at tremendous speed. There is little silence, little introspection, and very little emotional pause. People spend hours reacting to notifications, messages, and distractions, yet very little time understanding their own emotions. Children and young adults today face immense academic and social pressure. Self-worth is increasingly measured through performance, appearance, social approval, and external

achievement. Even adults continue living under chronic stress without fully realising how deeply it affects their emotional and physical well-being. The human nervous system was never designed for constant stimulation.

The ancient yogic seers understood this deeply. Maharshi Patanjali, in the *Yoga Sutras*, defines yoga in one of the most timeless and relevant ways:

“योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः”

Yogash chitta vritti nirodhah

“Yoga is the calming of the fluctuations of the mind.”

(*Yoga Sutra* 1.2)

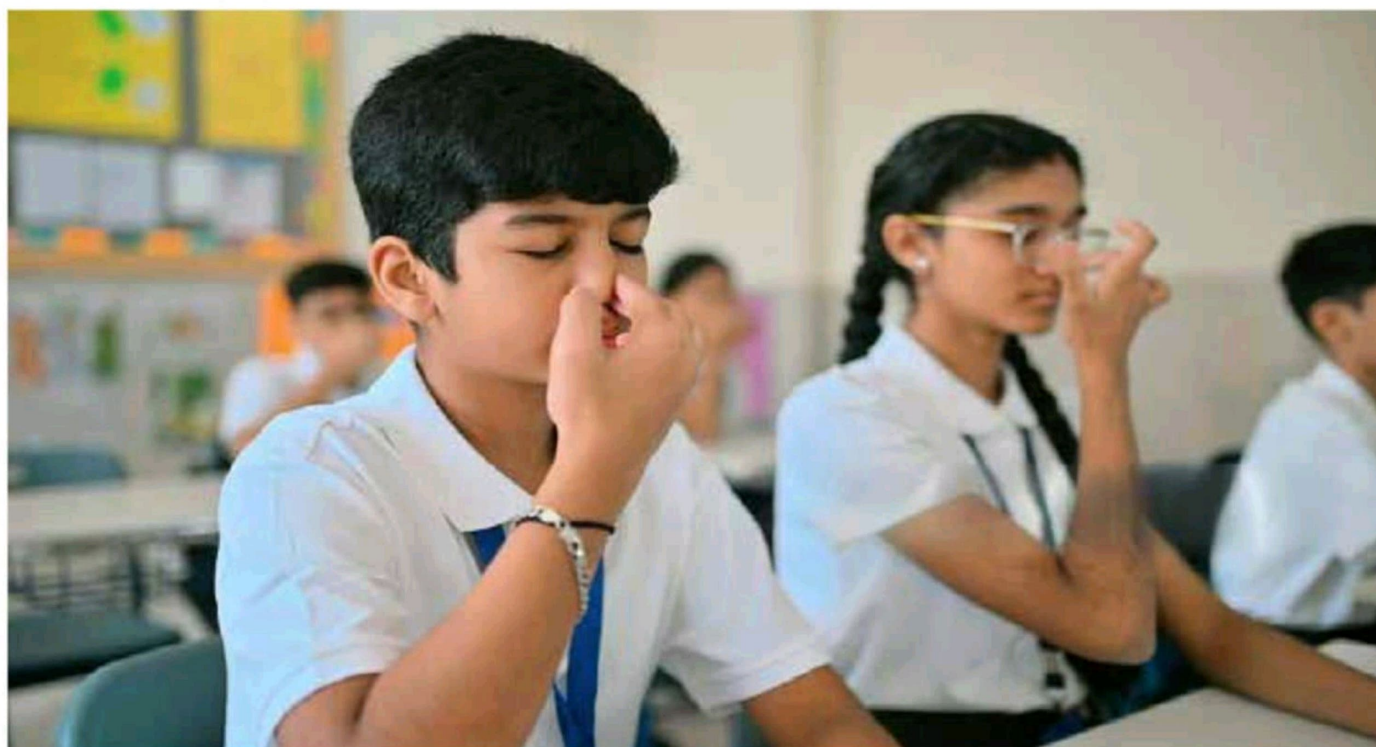
Today, the fluctuations of the mind have multiplied enormously. Endless information, comparison, fear, ambition, and emotional overload constantly disturb inner peace. As a result, many individuals remain physically active but mentally exhausted. The mind cannot remain healthy if life is lived only outwardly. Inner development is equally essential.

Yoga for Internal Balance

Yoga is often reduced today to physical postures or fitness routines. In truth, yoga is a complete way of living that helps create harmony between body, mind, emotions, and behaviour. The physical practices of yoga help release accumulated tension from the body. A relaxed body naturally supports a calmer mind. Breath awareness and *pranayama* help regulate emotional turbulence because the breath and the mind are



Glimpses of the 11th International Yoga Day celebrations held at Safdarjung Tomb, New Delhi on 21 June 2025.



deeply connected. When emotions become disturbed, breathing patterns also become disturbed. Learning to breathe consciously gradually restores balance.

Scientific studies today support the ancient yogic practices. Research published by institutions such as Harvard Medical School and the National Institutes of Health has shown that yogic breathing and meditation practices help reduce stress hormones, improve emotional regulation, enhance sleep quality, and support overall mental well-being. However, the true strength of yoga lies beyond stress reduction.

Yoga teaches self-awareness. Meditation and introspection help people observe their thoughts instead of becoming completely controlled by them. Most people live mechanically. Reactions become habitual. Yoga encourages people to pause and observe themselves without judgment. This awareness itself becomes transformative.

The Essence of Mindful Living

Mindful living is not about escaping responsibilities or withdrawing from society. It means learning to live with greater awareness in everyday life. It means becoming conscious of how we think, speak, react, consume information, and relate to others. It means listening patiently instead of reacting impulsively. It means responding with sensitivity instead of emotional aggression. A mindful person develops the ability to face life with maturity and balance.

Today, many people seek temporary escape from stress while continuing unhealthy patterns of living. Yoga, however, addresses the root of restlessness. It gently transforms the quality of daily living. Simple practices such as conscious breathing, balanced routines, moderation in lifestyle, meaningful silence, emotional awareness, and compassionate interaction gradually strengthen mental wellness.

The *Isha Upanishad* reminds us beautifully:

“ तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा ”
Tena tyaktena bhunjitha
 “Enjoy through moderation and balance.”

Modern society often encourages excess, such as excessive ambition, excessive stimulation, excessive consumption, and excessive emotional dependence on external situations. The yogic approach teaches balance, simplicity, and contentment. Inner peace is not created in a single moment. It is cultivated through the way we live every day.

Peace and Social Harmony

A peaceful society cannot be built only through laws, institutions, or economic progress. It must also be built through emotionally healthy people. When frustration, alienation, anger, and hopelessness remain unresolved within people and communities,

they gradually affect the social fabric around them. Emotional imbalance at an individual level often manifests as conflict at a collective level. Therefore, mental wellness is not merely personal. It is deeply connected to social harmony and national well-being.

Yoga nurtures qualities that strengthen both individuals and communities, such as patience, empathy, self-discipline, emotional resilience, and clarity of thought. These qualities are essential for creating harmonious families, responsible citizens, and peaceful societies.

In many parts of the country where communities face hardship, uncertainty, emotional stress, or social fragmentation, yoga can become a quiet yet powerful force for inner empowerment. One of its greatest strengths is its accessibility. It does not depend on expensive infrastructure or complex systems. Its principles can be practiced by people from all age groups and backgrounds.

A calm mind does not seek violence. A balanced mind does not nurture hatred. The Bhagavad Gita beautifully describes the qualities of a stable mind:

“दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः”

“One whose mind remains undisturbed in sorrow and free from excessive attachment in happiness...”
(Bhagavad Gita 2.56)

Such inner stability is not only valuable for individual well-being, but for collective harmony.

Emotional Education for the Future

Young minds today need more than academic success. They need emotional education. Unfortunately, modern education often develops the intellect while neglecting emotional well-being. As a result, many people become professionally capable but internally fragile. They know how to compete, but not how to cope. They know how to achieve, but not how to remain peaceful. Yoga helps bridge this gap.

Introducing yoga-based emotional wellness programmes in schools, colleges, workplaces, rural communities, and public health systems can contribute significantly towards preventive mental healthcare. Studies conducted in educational institutions have shown that regular yoga and mindfulness practices improve concentration, emotional regulation, self-confidence, and stress management among students. A society that invests

in emotional well-being invests in long-term harmony.

India's Timeless Contribution

One of India's greatest contributions to humanity is this holistic understanding of life. Yoga does not separate physical health from mental health, nor individual well-being from collective well-being. It recognises the deep interconnectedness of human existence.

International Day of Yoga has helped millions across the world appreciate yoga not merely as exercise, but as a path towards healthier and more conscious living. From schools and hospitals to correctional centres and workplaces, yoga is increasingly being embraced globally as a tool for mental and emotional well-being. Technological advancement alone cannot create peace. Lasting peace begins with a balanced human mind.

Towards a More Peaceful Future

Every person who learns to live with greater awareness contributes quietly to the well-being of society. Every person who develops patience instead of anger, understanding instead of hatred, and balance instead of impulsiveness strengthens the collective environment around them.

A nation's true progress must include both outer development and inner development. Roads, industries, institutions, and economies are essential for growth. But emotionally healthy citizens are equally essential for building a strong and harmonious society.

Yoga guides people towards this inner stability. Its purpose is not to escape from life, but to participate better in life. It teaches us how to remain centered amidst challenges, balanced amidst distractions, and compassionate amidst differences.

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* offers a timeless prayer that remains deeply relevant even today:

“असतो मा सद्गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ॥”

“Lead me from unrest to truth, from darkness to light, and from limitation to inner freedom.”

A peaceful future cannot emerge only through external change. It must also emerge through inner transformation. And perhaps now, more than ever before, humanity needs this mindful way of living. □



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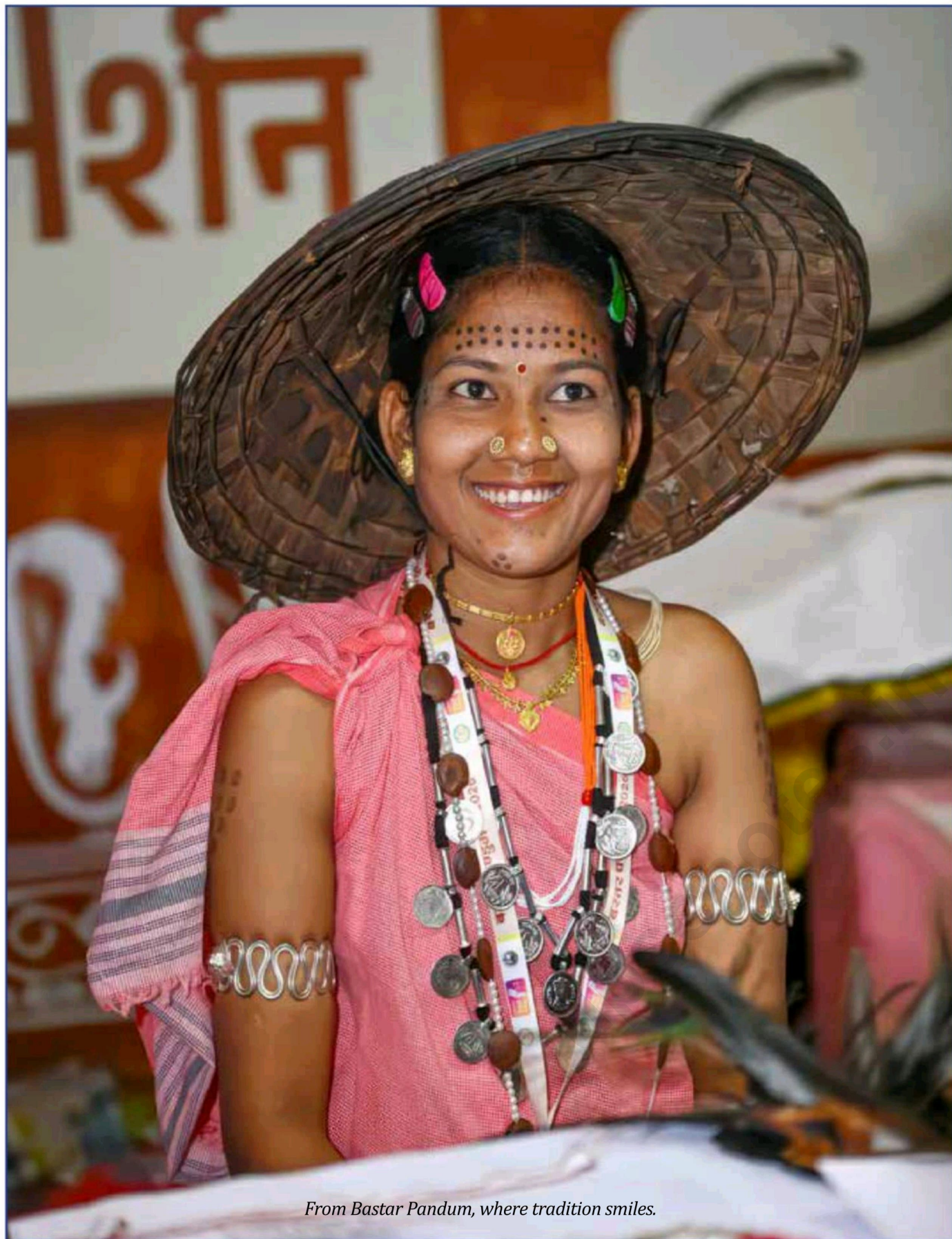
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