



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.



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.

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



Bastar Olympics 2025 Closing Ceremony, Jagdalpur

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.

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,



Bastar Olympics 2025 Closing Ceremony, Jagdalpur

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 divisionlevel 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

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. □



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