



Explained: Stepping up Naxal fight, carrying on welfare push

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By: [Express News Service](#)

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Modi expanded PM-JAY coverage to all Indians over the age of 70 last year (PTI)

The first year of Modi 3.0 has seen the government step up its efforts to root out the decades-long Naxal insurgency, while building on flagship welfare policies introduced in its previous two terms.

Final push against Naxals

Union Home Minister [Amit Shah](#) last August announced that Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) would be eliminated from the country by March 31, 2026. This was a statement of the government's intent to bring an end to the insurgency that has cast a shadow over the very heart of the country.

To this end, security forces have registered significant gains against Naxals over the past year, especially in Chhattisgarh and parts of Jharkhand and Odisha, considered to be the last bastions of the Maoists. Major inroads have been made in Maoist strongholds in the Bijapur-Sukma-Dantewada tri-junction in Chhattisgarh, supported by intensified operations, the construction of forward operating bases, and better road connectivity.

In Chhattisgarh alone, security forces have killed 209 Maoists in the first five months of 2025, compared to 219 in all of 2024. In 2023, forces had killed 53 Maoists across states. Those killed in encounters include top Maoist commanders: the biggest success came on May 21 when security forces killed CPI Maoist general secretary Basavaraju in the forests of Abujhmad.

Key to these recent successes, sources said, has been the political will of the government, intelligence-driven operations, improved coordination between state and central agencies, and state forces such as the District Reserve Guards of Chhattisgarh taking the lead in operations.

However, there have also been some setbacks. Maoist ambushes in places such as Kolhan, Jharkhand, and Abujhmad, Chhattisgarh, have resulted in casualties among security forces, and indicated that Naxals retain the ability to hit back in their strongholds. The road ahead involves not only sustaining pressure on residual Maoist zones but also ensuring that governance and infrastructure reach these regions.

Expanding Ayushman Bharat

In what might be the most significant decision yet under Modi 3.0, the Centre last September approved the expansion of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) to include all Indians above the age of 70 years, irrespective of their income or social status.

Launched in 2018, PM-JAY is the Modi government's flagship programme in the health sector. Even prior to its expansion, it was the world's largest health insurance scheme, providing free cover of upto Rs 5 lakh per family per year to 40% of the most economically backward households in India.

By extending universal coverage to the elderly, the Centre has anticipated what might be one of India's biggest challenges in the coming decades.

According to the government's Longitudinal Ageing Study in India, the number of senior citizens (60 years and above) will increase from 103 million in 2011 to 319 million in 2050, going up from 8.6% of the total population to 19.5%. According to the India Ageing Report 2023, just over 20% of this population was covered by any government, employer-provided, or personal insurance scheme.

Major infra push

Last year, the government approved the extension of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) till 2029, paving the way for the construction of two crore more houses under the programme. The Centre has already released Rs 34,000 crore to states under the PMAY-G, and cleared the allocations of 84.45 lakh houses.

The Centre has also approved Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-IV (PMGSY-IV) to connect 25,000 villages with all-weather roads by 2028-29.

In the agriculture sector, the government last September launched the Digital Agriculture Mission, allocating Rs 2,817 crore for provisions of the umbrella scheme. These include creating Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and implementing the Digital

General Crop Estimation Survey (DGCES).

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