

SKILL INDIA MISSION

The Skill India Mission, launched by the Government of India in 2015, represents a transformative approach toward building a workforce that is not only employable but also globally competitive. With rapid technological advancements, changing industrial requirements, and the emergence of new sectors, traditional education alone is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of the modern economy. The Skill India initiative seeks to bridge this critical gap by providing young Indians with practical skills, training, and opportunities for sustainable employment.

At its core, the mission emphasizes vocational training across diverse sectors, ranging from manufacturing and healthcare to information technology, hospitality, and entrepreneurship. It aims to equip millions of youth with both hard and soft skills, fostering innovation, productivity, and efficiency. The program also aligns closely with the government's broader vision of a self-reliant India, or "Atmanirbhar Bharat," by promoting local industries and startups that can thrive on a skilled labor base.

One of the most significant strengths of the Skill India Mission is its inclusivity. By targeting marginalized communities, rural youth, and women, the initiative ensures that skill development becomes a vehicle for social and economic empowerment. Platforms such as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) have already certified millions of young Indians, opening doors to employment opportunities both in India and abroad.

Furthermore, the integration of digital technologies, online learning modules, and app-based training ensures that skill development is accessible, flexible, and scalable, even in remote areas.

However, the mission's success hinges on collaboration between government agencies, private industry, and educational institutions. Employers need to actively engage with training programs to ensure that the curriculum meets industry standards, while trainers must adopt innovative methods to inspire learning and skill retention.

Continuous monitoring, assessment, and feedback are essential to ensure that trainees are not only certified but genuinely ready to contribute effectively to the workforce.

In addition, skill development must be linked to entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities. Encouraging young Indians to become job creators rather than mere job seekers will have far-reaching impacts on economic growth, innovation, and societal well-being.

By nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and ensuring equitable access to opportunities, the mission is laying the foundation for a skilled, confident, and self-reliant India.

With sustained focus, the Skill India initiative has the potential to transform not just individual lives but the entire nation.

■ NARENDRA MODI

2025 witnessed path breaking reforms across various sectors which have added momentum to our growth journey. They will also enhance our efforts to build a Viksit Bharat.

India has emerged as the centre of global attention. This is due to the innovative zeal of our people. Today, the world sees India with hope and confidence. They appreciate the manner in which the pace of progress has been accelerated with next-generation reforms, which are cross-sectoral and amplify the nation's growth potential.

I have been telling many people that India has boarded the Reform Express.

The primary engine of this Reform Express is India's demography; our young generation and the indomitable spirit of our people.

2025 will be remembered as a year for India when it focused on reforms as a continuous national mission, building on the ground covered over the past 11 years. We modernised institutions, simplified governance, and strengthened the foundations for long-term, inclusive growth.

We moved ahead decisively...with higher ambition, faster execution and deeper transformation. The reforms have been about enabling citizens to live with dignity, entrepreneurs to innovate with confidence and institutions to function with clarity and trust.

Let me cite a few examples of the reforms undertaken.

GST reform:

► A clean two-slab structure of 5% and 18% has been implemented.

► The burden has been eased on households, MSMEs, farmers and labour-intensive sectors.

► The purpose is to ensure dispute reduction and better compliance.

► This reform has boosted consumer sentiment and demand. Sales have grown in the festive season.

Unparalleled relief for the middle class:

► In a first, individuals earning up to Rs. 12 lakh a year faced no income tax at all.

► Obsolete Income-tax Act of 1961 has been replaced with the modern and simple Income Tax Act, 2025.

► Together, these reforms mark India's move towards a transparent, technology-driven tax administration.

Boost to small and medium businesses:

► Definition of "small companies" has been expanded to include firms with turnovers up to Rs. 100 crore.

► Compliance burdens and associated costs for thousands of companies will get reduced.

100% FDI Insurance reform:

► 100% FDI permitted in Indian insurance



companies.

► This will give a fillip to insurance penetration and security for the people.

► Apart from enhanced competition, it would offer better insurance choices and improved service delivery for the people.

Securities Market Reform:

► Securities Market Code Bill has been introduced in Parliament. It will enhance governance norms in SEBI, also enhance investor protection, reduce compliance burden and enable a technology-driven securities market for a Viksit Bharat.

► Reforms will ensure savings thanks to reduced compliances and other overheads.

Maritime and Blue Economy Reforms:

► In a single Parliament session, the Monsoon Session, five landmark maritime legislations were passed: the Bills of Lading Act, 2025; the Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025; the Coastal Shipping Bill, 2025; the Merchant Shipping Bill, 2025; and the Indian Ports Bill, 2025.

► These reforms simplify documentation, make dispute resolution easier and reduce logistics costs.

► Outdated Acts dating back to 1908, 1925 and 1958 have also been replaced.

Jan Vishwas...Ending the Era of Criminalisation:

► Hundreds of outdated laws have been scrapped.

► 71 Acts have been repealed through the Repealing and Amendment Bill, 2025.

Boosting Ease of Doing Business:

► A total of 22 QCOs were revoked across synthetic fibres, yarns, plastics, polymers, and base metals, while 53 QCOs were suspended in various steel, engineered, electrical, alloy, and consumer end product categories, covering a broad spectrum of industrial and consumer materials.

► This will increase India's share of apparel exports; lower production costs in diverse industries like footwear; automobiles; ensure lower prices for domestic consumers for electronics, bicycles and automotive products.

Historic labour reforms:

► Labour laws have been reshaped, merging 29 fragmented laws into four modern codes.

► India has created a labour framework that secures the interests of workers while boosting the business ecosystem.

► The reforms focus on fair wages, timely payment of wages, smoother industrial relations, social security and safer workplaces.

► They ensure greater female participation in the workforce.

► Unorganised workers including contract workers are brought under the ESIC and EPFO expanding the coverage of formal workforce.

Diversified and expanded markets for Indian products:

► Trade deals inked with New Zealand, Oman and Britain. These will add to investments, boost job creation and also encourage local entrepreneurs. They reinforce India's position as a trusted and competitive partner in the global economy.

► The FTA with the European Free Trade Association, comprising Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, has been operationalised. This marks India's first FTA with developed European economies.

Nuclear Energy Reforms:

► The SHANTI Act is a transformational step in India's clean-energy and technology journey.

► Ensures a strong framework for the safe, secure and responsible expansion of nuclear science and technology.

► Enables India to meet the rising energy demands of the AI era, like powering data cen-

tres, advanced manufacturing, green hydrogen and high-technology industries.

► Promotes the peaceful application of nuclear technologies in healthcare, agriculture, food security, water management, industry, research and environmental sustainability; supporting inclusive growth and improved quality of life.

► Opens new pathways for private sector participation, innovation and skill development. Creates opportunities for India's youth to lead in frontier technologies and next-generation energy solutions.

This is an opportune moment for investors, innovators and institutions to partner with India, to invest, innovate and build a clean, resilient and future-ready energy ecosystem.

A Landmark reform in Rural Employment guarantee:

► Viksit Bharat- G RAM G Act, 2025 Rozgar Guarantee framework raises employment guarantee from 100 to 125 days.

► This will result in increased spending towards strengthening village infrastructure and livelihoods.

► The aim is to turn rural work into a means to ensure higher incomes and better assets.

Education Reforms:

► Bill has been introduced in Parliament.

► Single, unified higher education regulator will be established.

► Multiple overlapping bodies like the UGC, AICTE, NCTE will be replaced with the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan.

► Institutional autonomy will be strengthened, with innovation and research boosted.

What makes the reforms of 2025 significant is not only their dimension but also their underlying philosophy: Our Government has prioritised collaboration over control and facilitation over regulation in the true spirit of a modern democracy.

These reforms were designed with empathy; recognising the realities of small businesses, young professionals, farmers, workers and the middle class. They were shaped by consultation, guided by data and anchored in India's constitutional values. They add momentum to our decade-long efforts to move away from a control-based economy to one that operates within a framework of trust, keeping the citizen at its core.

These reforms are aimed towards building a prosperous and self-reliant India. Building a Viksit Bharat is the polestar of our development trajectory. We will continue pursuing the reform agenda in the coming years.

I urge everyone in India and abroad to deepen their bond with the India growth story.

Keep trusting India and investing in our people! (The writer is Prime Minister of India)

2025-A Decisive Year for Naxal Mukt Bharat

2025 marks a rare moment in India's internal security history, when the State confronted violence not at its edges, but at its roots. For the first time in decades, India fought its most persistent internal threat: dismantling the armed insurgency of Left-Wing Extremism.

After decades in which Left-Wing Extremism drained state capacity, endangered lives, and stalled development in vulnerable regions, India demonstrated that sustained political resolve and institutional coordination could yield lasting results.

In 2025, India moved beyond episodic action to a comprehensive internal security approach: precision operations against armed Maoists, and simultaneous expansion of governance, infrastructure and rehabilitation in long-neglected areas. The outcome was unmistakable; shrinking insurgent footprints, collapsing extremist leadership structures and large-scale surrenders.

Breaking the Backbone of Naxalism

As 2025 draws to a close, the Modi Government's declaration remains central: India will be completely Naxal-free by March 31, 2026. With just over three months remaining, and with the organizational structure of the CPI(Maoist) substantially dismantled, the target appears

within reach.

In 2013, 182 districts were affected by LWE, now in 2025 the number of LWE affected districts brought down to just 11. In a giant stride towards Modi government's vision of building a Naxal-free Bharat, the number of districts most affected by Naxalism have been brought down to 3 from 6.

Neutralisation Operations and Major Encounters

In 2025 alone, security forces neutralised 335 Naxals and facilitated over 2167 surrenders and made 942 arrests. In Operation Black Forest, 27 hardcorenaxals were neutralised. On 24, May 2025, 24 hardcorenaxals surrendered in Bijapur.

In November 2025, in an encounter between forces and naxals in the Marechumilli forest area of Alluri Sitaram Raju district in Andhra Pradesh, 6 maoists were killed. Among the dead were senior Maoist leader and Central Committee member MadviHidma, his wife Rajee, and several close followers. He was involved in the 2010 Dantewada attack, the 2013 Jhiram Valley massacre and the 2021 Sukma-Bijapur encounter.

A major breakthrough came in September 2025 in the Abujhmad region along the Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh border,

where forces eliminated senior Central Committee leaders Katta Ramachandra Reddy and KadriSatyanarayan Reddy.

In May, 2025, in an operation in Narayanpur, Chhattisgarh, security forces have neutralized 27 dreaded Maoists, including NambalaKeshav Rao, alias Basavaraju, the general secretary of CPI-Maoist, topmost leader; and the backbone of the Naxal movement.

High-Value Surrenders and Collapse of Leadership

Recently in December 2025, in a major breakthrough, 10 Maoists of the Kanha-Bhoramdeo (KB) division, including most-wanted commander Surendar alias Kabir; who carries aRs 77-lakh bounty, surrendered before security forces in Balaghat. Senior Maoist leader VikasNagpure, alias Navjyot, alias Anant, had surrendered last month in November and made a public appeal to lay down arms.

Also in November 2025, in Chhattisgarh, 15 active cadres of outlawed CPI (Maoists), carrying a combined bounty of nearly 50 lakh rupees, laid down arms in Sukma district. Among them were four hardcore members of thedreaded People's Liberation Guerrilla Army BattalionNo. 1 - PPCM MadviSanna, SodhiHidme, Suryam alias Ravva Soma and Meena alias

MadviBheeme, each carrying a reward of eight lakh rupees. Between October 14 and 17, 2025, a total of 258 Naxalites surrendered across Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra, including 170 in Chhattisgarh's Abujhmad-North Bastar region and 61 in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli. Among them were several senior cadres and area commanders, carrying major bounties on their heads. The surrender list includes 10 senior Maoist operatives, among them: ► Satish alias T. Vasudeo Rao (Central Committee Member), notably, T. Vasudeo Rao carried a reward of ₹1 crore, underscoring the strategic significance of this surrender wave.

► Ranita (South Zonal Committee Member and Secretary, Maad DVC), ► Bhaskar (DVC Member, PU 32), ► Nila alias Nande (DVC Member, In-Charge and Secretary, Nelhar Area Committee)

► Deepak Palo (DVC Member, In-Charge and Secretary, Indravati Area Committee)

In September 2025, Senior Maoist leaderSujatha surrendered after 43 years underground. In April 2025, Badesatti village in Sukma district was declared the first Gram Panchayat in the Bastar division to be completely Naxal-free.

Fruits of Development Finally Reaching the People

After intense action against naxals, the fruits of development are finally reaching the people. For instance, in May 2025, 17 remote villages in Chhattisgarh's Naxal-affected Mohla-Manpur-AmbagarhChowki district received grid electricity for the first time since independence, benefiting 540 families. Also in May 2025 Katejhari, a naxal affected tribal village in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra gets the bus transport facility for the first time since independence and the village residents celebrate the arrival of the bus. In Bihar's Jamui district, the small village of Chormara voted peacefully for the first time in 25 years in the Bihar 2025 Assembly Elections. The Modi government has won a victory that generations will remember: For nearly four decades, Bastar lived under the shadow of naxalism. Today in 2025, it is transforming. Bastar's return to normalcy and development has led to the establishment of a branch of the Indian Overseas Bank in Jagagunda, a remote and historically volatile region that has faced decades of insurgency.

In Bastarover 300 km of roads are being built, deserted markets are thriving again, and schools once shut by extremists have reopened, with more than 50 primary

schools revived and 7 new ones established in Sukma alone. Rehabilitation formed a crucial pillar of this success. In November 2025, Chhattisgarh government inaugurated a unique 'Pandum Cafe' at the divisional headquarters in Jagdalpur in the Bastar region to provide employment opportunities to former Maoists who have surrendered. The Café is run by former naxals.

In December 2025, a mobile tower has been installed for the first time since independence at Kondapalli village in Chhattisgarh's Naxal-affected Bijapur district, an area long cut off from the outside world.

Conclusion

The gains achieved in 2025 against Naxalism represent far more than a series of security or law-enforcement successes.The neutralisation of armed cadres, the dismantling of leadership networks, and the large-scale surrenders are not merely operational statistics; they signify the systematic erosion of an insurgent ecosystem that had sustained violence for decades.2025 will be remembered as the year India decisively turned the page on one of its most enduring internal security challenges, making concrete and irreversible progress toward the vision of a Naxal-Mukt Bharat.

Reform Express 2025: Quiet foundations for India's next growth phase

■ HARDEEP S PURI



As 2025 draws to a close, the loud headlines are easy to spot, but what is easier to miss is the quieter work of governance, the steady, week after week clearing of bottlenecks - the cumulative push is what I mean by Reform Express 2025.

India crossed about USD 4.1 trillion in nominal GDP and overtook Japan as the world's 4thlargest economy. Standard and Poor's upgraded India's sovereign rating to BBB after 18 years, signalling that the macro story has acquired durability, not just speed.In an uncertain world where political churn has become the norm, India'sstable leadership makes reforms credible, and credible reforms convert private caution into private investment.

I have seen, across negotiating tables from the GATT and WTO system to multilateral forums, that rules are only as good as the incentives they create. When procedures are opaque, discretion expands, and then even well-intentioned policy ends up discouraging enterprise. When procedures are clean and time bound, competition thrives, investment plans get executed, and jobs follow.

India's total exports hit USD 825.25 billion during the 2024-25, representing

an annual growth of over 6%. To support this volume of trade, the government introduced several digital tools such as The Trade Connect ePlatform, a single digital window for exporters, and the Trade Intelligence and Analytics (TIA) portal for providing real-time market data.

The India UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement signed in July 2025 created a stronger platform for Indian exporters, with wide duty-free access and clearer pathways for services and clearer mobility. In December 2025, India signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Oman, strengthening a strategic economic corridor for goods, services, and investment. India also concluded negotiations for a free trade agreement with New Zealand, expanding India's reach into high value markets and setting a template for disciplined, commercially meaningful agreements.

India's startup sector expanded to include over 2 lakh government-recognized startups, which helped create more than 21 lakh jobs.The Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) processed over 326 million orders, averaging more than 5.9 lakh daily transactions. Additionally, the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) saw its cumulative transaction value cross Rs 16.41 lakh crore, with 11 lakh micro and small enterprises receiving orders worth over

Rs 7.35 lakh crore.

India also improved its position in the Global Innovation Index, rising to 38th place among 139 economies. Efforts to simplify business operations resulted in the reduction of over 47,000 compliances and the decriminalisation of 4,458 legal provisions. By late November, the National Single Window System processed more than 8.29 lakh approvals. Infrastructure planning also saw changes as the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan opened to the private sector; and Project Monitoring Group portal has onboarded over 3,000 projects valued at more than Rs 76 lakh crore.

Embracingtrust-based governance, the Parliament passed the Repealing and Amending Bill 2025, clearing out 71 obsolete Acts that had outlived their purpose. Ease of doing business also moved closer to the entrepreneur through district level reform frameworks, including the District Business Reform Action Plan 2025, which seeks to make local administrations more responsive, predictable, and accountable.

A modern labour regime matters for scale, for manufacturing, and for a services economy that wants to formalise jobs while expanding social security coverage.With the 4 labour codes coming into effect from 21 November 2025, 29 central labour laws have been consolidated into a simpler framework covering

wages, industrial relations, social security, and workplace safety.

The Securities Markets Code Bill was introduced to modernise securities law and strengthen SEBI's investigative and enforcement capacity, with proposals for specialised market courts, stronger information sharing with regulators, and time bound grievance redressal. At a moment when retail participation has expanded and India is drawing larger global portfolio interest, regulatory clarity becomes part of national competitiveness, helping savings flow into productive investment.

Logistics is where reform becomes visible in costs, and 2025 saw a push to modernise the maritime backbone of trade. Nearly 95% of India's trade by volume and about 70% by value moves through maritime routes, so port and shipping efficiency is a competitiveness issue. The Indian Ports Act 2025 replaced a colonial era framework and introduced modern governance tools, including state level dispute resolution, a statutory coordination council, and stronger norms on safety, disaster readiness, and environmental preparedness. The Merchant Shipping Act 2025 and the Carriage of Goods by Sea Act 2025 further modernised shipping law, updating rules, liabilities, and dispute frameworks to reflect contemporary commerce.

The Cabinet approved a package of

₹69,725 crore to strengthen shipbuilding, including a Maritime Development Fund of ₹25,000 crore and components for financial assistance and development, points to a larger ambition: build industrial depth, reduce dependence, and keep freight value within India over time. This is industrial policy in the elastic sense, creating an ecosystem where private capital can enter with a clearer risk framework, and where jobs are created not only in ports but across shipyards, components, engineering, and services.

Energy reforms, too, were designed for long cycle investment. The Oilfields amendment and the new Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules 2025 sought to reduce investor risk by emphasising stability of terms during the life of a lease, moving toward a single petroleum lease across the project life cycle, and putting clearer timelines on approvals. The Open Acreage Licensing Policy continued widening the exploration map, with Round X offering 25 blocks across about 0.2 million square kilometres, predominantly offshore, including deepwater and ultra deepwater opportunities. Alongside this, the National Deep Water Exploration Mission signalled a strategic focus on domestic resources, technology, and capability in complex exploration.

Reform Express 2025 also carried a strategic energy and technology dimension. Budget 2025 set out a Nuclear

Energy Mission with an outlay of ₹20,000 crore to accelerate small modular reactors and other advanced designs, aligned with the national objective of reaching 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047, and a target of 5 indigenously designed operational small modular reactors by 2033. The SHANTI bill is a huge leap for modernising India's civil nuclear framework and opening a pathway for carefully regulated private participation. Nuclear energy adds firm, low carbon power to the grid, and strengthens India's ability to build advanced manufacturing, data infrastructure, and energy intensive industry with greater confidence.

Put together, these reforms show a pattern: clean up the statute book, decriminalise the trivial, modernise labour compliance, strengthen market governance, digitise trade processes, fix logistics, and de risk long cycle energy investment. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has consistently argued that the state's job is to reduce the burden on entrepreneurs so that productivity can compound. That is the strategic meaning of Reform Express 2025. The seeds of the next phase of double-digit growth are sown in this quiet, cumulative work, and India is doing it with a steadiness that many economies have lost.

(The author is the Union Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India)