

Gadchiroli's transformation as India's biggest steel hub gathers steam

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Once a Naxal stronghold, Gadchiroli is fast transforming into a steel hub, with committed investments of Rs 1.60 lakh crore and nearly 50,000 jobs. More investments are in the pipeline.

The lion's share of investment is by JSW Steel with a whopping Rs 1 lakh crore in the next seven to eight years for a steel plant. Through green steel production, Gadchiroli is set to create steel that's not only of higher quality than China's, but also more affordable.

Left Wing Extremism (LWE) will be a thing of the past - given the fact that people, which comprises a largely tribal population, have given thumbs up to development - and in the 2024 elections, record voting of 72.68% was reported.

"Ten years down the line, Gadchiroli would be a different district buzzing with development," informed sources said, adding that the 'jal, jungle, zameen' rights of the adivasi community will not be disturbed. Over decades, Gadchiroli - located in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra - would emerge bigger than

Jamshedpur, also known as Tatanagar, the steel city of mine-rich Jharkhand, they said.

In fact, the Gadchiroli district, rich in natural resources and forest produce, is part of the ancient region of Dandakaranya. The Centre and the Maharashtra government is giving a major push to the industrialisation in the tribal district of Gadchiroli, which was once affected by Maoism. The district is used by CPI (Maoist) cadres as a transit point between Chhattisgarh and Telangana.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who is the state Home Minister and Law & Judiciary Minister, is also the Guardian Minister of the Gadchiroli district.

"Gadchiroli will emerge as one of the best districts. Naxalism is shrinking in Gadchiroli, and very few Naxalites, who can be counted on fingers, are left in the forests here.... even former Naxals are working here.... the Naxal network has been broken, only a few remain, and they too must surrender... people are for development," Fadnavis, who had celebrated the New Year Day and his 55th birthday on 22 July in Gadchiroli, said recently. "Entire steel ecosystem is



Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis in Gadchiroli.

being created," he added.

While JSW Steel is investing Rs 1 lakh crore for developing a steel plant, Lloyds Metal and Steel is planning to invest Rs 40,000 crore beyond the Rs 5,000 crore already invested. Sumedh Tools Pvt. Ltd has signed MoU for Rs 2,000 crore investment while Hariom Pipes will come in with Rs 3,135 crore investment.

During the inauguration of ATIFA Steelex 2025, last week, Fadnavis said Maharashtra would not only lead in steel production but also play a key role in India's Green Steel Mission, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

vision. "When the PM signed the Paris Agreement, many believed it was an impossible goal. But India has met its climate commitments ahead of schedule, showing the world our resolve," he said.

Education facilities too being revamped

Jobs will require a trained workforce - and the primary to higher education sector is being boosted. Under a unique initiative - 'ek gaon, ek granthalaya' ('One Village, One Library') - in the last over two years, 71 libraries are now functional - where over 8,000 students enrolled. In the last two and a half years, 205 of these young individuals have been selected for the Police force, and many others have secured jobs in the revenue department and other jobs in the government.

MoUs were signed between the Gondwana University Gadchiroli and the Lloyds Metals and Energy and the Curtin University in Western Australia. One MoU was signed between the Gondwana University and Lloyds Metals to establish an autonomous 'University Institute of Technology' in Gadchiroli for offering Engineering

programmes to the students. The second MoU was signed between the Gondwana University and Curtin University in Western Australia for degree courses.

The Gadchiroli Police Skilling Institute is revolutionising the lives of tribal youth in Naxal-affected villages by providing training in cutting-edge technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), software development

Mahindra Tractors has entered into an agreement with the Maharashtra government to establish a Skill Development Centre in Gadchiroli. This agreement was signed between Mahindra Tractors, Department of Vocational Education & Training (DVET) and Maharashtra State Skill Development Society (MSSDS) aimed at promoting skill development among rural youth in Gadchiroli. It focuses on equipping them with industry-ready skills while also boosting local livelihoods.

The action

The Gadchiroli district is part of the Red Corridor, which once experienced high degree Naxalite-Maoist insurgency. Naxalites from the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) took shelter

in the dense forests and hills of this district.

"Over the years, the outlawed Maoists have used Gadchiroli district as an 'oscillating point' between the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh and Telangana, which has been carved out of Andhra Pradesh. The Left Wing Extremism has taken a toll in this remote district, that borders Chandrapur and Gondia in Vidarbha region," said an official of the State Intelligence Department (SID), however, now things are changing.

The Gadchiroli police, the elite C60 commando team of the Anti-Naxalite Operation (ANO) and Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), have constantly mounted pressure on the outlaws.

However, with over 100-plus CPI (Maoist) commanders and cadres being killed in encounters with police and regular intelligence-based operations have stepped up the heat on them in the last eight to 10 years dealing a body blow to the Naxalites.

Besides, over a decade's time, hundreds of outlaws have surrendered and they have been rehabilitated.