

Defence Reforms in India

The Indian Armed Forces along with the other uniformed forces are the backbone of the Nation's security architecture. To achieve self-reliance in Defence production and to meet the requirements of the changing technology, Defence Reforms have been released by the Government of the country.

On August 15, 2019, PM Narendra Modi's declaration for appointment of the [Chief of Defence Staff](#) was the first step towards strengthening of this sector.

The Defence Minister of India, Rajnath Singh, on June 7, 2021, released an E-Book on 20 Defence Reforms in 2020. The compilation provides a brief overview of defence reforms undertaken in the year 2020 by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to bring about greater cohesion and modernisation of the Armed Forces through policy changes, innovation and digital transformation.

20 Reforms in 2020 - Ministry of Defence

The reforms released in the MoD E-book showcase the boost in defence collaborations and acquisitions, digital transformation and strengthening, women participation in the Armed forces, etc.

Discussed below are the 20 Defence Reforms of 2020, as mentioned in the e-book released on June 7, 2021.

1. India's First Chief of Defence Staff

- In the year 2000, the Kargil War Committee had recommended the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) for greater cooperation between various wings of Indian forces
- After almost two decades, CDS was appointed in India, making him the chief military adviser to the Government of India and the Ministry of Defence
- General Bipin Rawat became the first CDS of India and assumed office on January 1, 2020

2. Creation of Department Of Military Affairs (DMA)

- For improved civil-military integration, the Department of Military Affairs was created on January 1, 2020
- The CDS will act as the Secretary for DMA
- About 170 civil posts were immediately transferred to DMA to enable instant functioning. Officiating Additional Secretary, Joint Secretary and other officers posted from Armed Forces to ensure immediate functioning

3. 'Atmanirbharta' (Self-Reliance) Brought to the Defence Sector

- To get in line with the PM launched 'Atmanirbharat Abhiyan', the defence sector extensively promoted the [Make in India](#) campaign
- In August 2020, the import of defence equipment was stopped. [FDI](#) allowed up to 74% through automatic route and beyond 74% was permitted through government (approval) route

- India intends to become a global manufacturing hub for defence equipment. 87% of all defence acquisition approvals were from domestic vendors during 2020
- New Defense Acquisition Procedure (DAP 2020) for promoting indigenous in defence & aerospace was approved in September 2020
- Rs. 52,000 Crore budget was earmarked for domestically made defence equipment in 2020-21
- Apart from this, an unprecedented push towards new technology developments within India was promoted:
 - Bharat Electronics made Indian Ventilators in record time to meet [COVID-19](#) needs in May 2020
 - MIDHANI made 99.6% pure nickel wire for ventilators in May 2020
 - Indigenously designed & developed [Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile \(QRSAM\)](#) had hit bull's eye at medium range and medium height in November 2020
 - Indigenously designed and built Pinaka rocket system cleared test of 45-60 km range in November 2020
 - iDEX4Fauji launched in September 2020 as a platform for possible innovations for armed forces

4. Bringing Digital India to Ministry of Defence

- With the aim to empower and upgrade the Defence sector with digital transformation, MoD brought in aspects of [Digital India](#). Following initiatives were taken:
 - New Cybersecurity policy for MoD LAN unveiled to address security threats
 - MoD pension provision was moved online
 - Cantonment services and canteen stores went online
 - For the first time, [Armed Forces Tribunal](#) conducted a digital hearing in August 2020
 - Defence estates went online with 17.5 lakh acres of Defence land on a GIS-based platform
 - NCC Mobile app was launched in August 2020. 65 Online Camps of [Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat](#) were conducted till December 2020, where 5700 cadets had participated

5. New Era of Speed & Transparency in Defence Acquisition

- 2020 had the highest ever thrust towards modernisation in the last 10 years. There was an increase of 10% in the budget allocated for 2020-21 in comparison to the previous year
- Defence Acquisition Procedure was approved in September 2020
- Procurements up to Rs 100 crores have been reserved for [MSMEs](#)

6. Trial and Testing - Transformed and Simplified

- With the boost to the startup sector and their involvement in certain specific defence activities, the cost and time for trials has reduced
- Also, third party testing has been introduced in DAP 2020, with effect from October, wherein, the option to go to the Directorate General of Aeronautical Quality Assurance (DGAQA) or Directorate General of Quality Assurance (DGQA) or accredited 3rd Party Testing Agencies has been approved

7. Connecting Broader Areas for Better Development and Security

- World's longest tunnel above 10,000 ft, [Atal tunnel](#), Rohtang was opened for traffic in October 2020, providing all-weather connectivity to northern borders
- The first-ever indigenously designed modular bridge along with Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd, Kolkata to reduce cost and import dependency for modular bridges
- Activities by [Border Road Organization \(BRO\)](#) during 2020:
 - Zojila pass was opened on April 12, 2020, which connects Kashmir and Ladakh
 - The link road between Dharchula and Lipulekh was inaugurated in May 2020
 - Six bridges build by DRDO were launched in and near Jammu and Kashmir in July 2020

8. Fortifying the Defence - Adding firepower to the IAF arsenal

- First major IAF procurement of state-of-the-art aircraft after 1996 was made
- A total of 8 [Rafale Fighter Jets](#) arrived in India in two lots, first in July 2020 and the second in November 2020

9. Women Power in Armed Force

- Ten streams of the Indian Army opened for giving permanent Commission for SSC Women officers
- Women pilots of the Indian Navy operationalized for the first Time Commission for SSC Women officers.
- All Sainik Schools were thrown open for girl students from the academic session 2020-21

10. Reforming Defence R&D to boost innovation and instil a scientific temper

- 5 labs were launched in 2020 with young scientists, all below the age of 35 years:
 - Artificial Intelligence, Bengaluru
 - Asymmetric Warfare Technology, Kolkata
 - Cognitive Sensor Technology, Chennai
 - Smart Materials, Hyderabad
 - Quantum Technology, Mumbai
- [Defense Research and Development Organisation \(DRDO\)](#) identified 108 Systems and Subsystems for the industry to design, develop and manufacture in August 2020

11. Reforms in Defence Land Management

- Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of 17.9 lakh acres Defence Land created with help of Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG)
- A fully digitized Land Management System in the Ministry of Defence to enhance efficiency and speed of proposals for land Transfer was launched in October 2020
- A new policy that states that no lease rent to be paid for tunnels built under defence land was approved in July 2020
- A new policy framework to facilitate defence land for development projects including roads, highways, metros and other public utility projects was approved in October 2020

12. Reforms in Cantonment Administration - Digital Transformation to improve access, efficiency and organisation

- Draft Cantonment Amendment Act was formulated for public consultation
- All 62 Cantonments were moved to Accrual based accounting (in lieu of legacy cash-based accounting) w.e.f April 1, 2020
- More powers to the elected representatives on Cantonment Board were provided and three new committees were formed for:
 - Finance
 - Education
 - Health and Environment

13. Unprecedented Welfare

- A Disability Pension was approved even if the service was less than 10 years for persons permanently incapacitated during military service
- General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) personnel working above 12,000 ft will be granted Special Cold Weather Clothing as per the order passed in April 2020

14. Unparalleled Reforms in NCC to Expand Reach in Local Areas

- 1078 schools/colleges in Border and Coastal areas were identified and enrolments had started by November 2020
- The decision was made regarding the giving first preference to NCC cadets in employment in Central Armed Police Forces from May 2020
- Youth Exchange Programme Allowance for NCC cadets increased from Rs 100 per day to Rs. 750. No. of countries increased from 10 to 15
- An NCC Alumni was formed for the first time in November 2020

15. Help Beyond the Boundaries

- Indian Defence Forces extended helping hand to friendly foreign countries in distress
 - INS mounted 8 relief missions during 2020-21
 - Under Vande Bharat Mission the navy evacuated 3992 stranded Indians from Iran, Sri Lanka and the Maldives
 - INS Kesari provided Covid-19 medical relief including medicines, doctors to 5 countries
 - INS Airavat provided 270 MT food aid to Sudan, Djibouti and Eritrea struck by natural calamities
 - Indian Coast Guard leads rescue operation to save Sri Lanka coast of its biggest oil spill
- Training facilities for friendly foreign countries enhanced:
 - Australia was invited to the [Malabar naval exercise](#) held in November 2020 along with the US, Japan & India
 - Agreement on Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services was signed with Japan in September 2020
 - MoU between Coast Guards of India and Indonesia was signed in July 2020

16. Galvanizing Strategic Thinking - Building a Research-Oriented Approach

- Reaching out to Think Tanks/Research Centres to give impetus to strategic thinking
- On November 11, 2020, the President's Chair of Excellence on National Security was set up at National Defence College

- An MoU was signed between MoD and IIT Kanpur in August 2020 to develop [Artificial Intelligence](#) based solution for finding root cause resulting in grievances/complaints against MoD

17. Offset Reforms

- New Offset Policy was Approved in September 2020

18. Vocal for Local - Canteen Stores Department Reform

- E-commerce was made available for AFD products
- With effect from October 19, 2020, a complete ban on the sale of foreign-made goods in CSD canteen was made applicable

19. Increase Defence Export - New Vision, Explore Growth

- Between 2016 and 2020, the export growth in the defence sector increased eight times. The export was expanded to 84 countries. One of the biggest reasons for this was the involvement of the private sector
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) ranked India at the 23rd position in the Arms Exporter List of 2019. The value of defence exports in the past five years is as under:

	2014-2015	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Total Export (in Rs. Crs)	1941	2059	1522	4682	10746	9116	5711
No. of Authorizations issued	42	241	254	288	668	829	633

(Image Source : <https://www.mod.gov.in>)

20. Leveraging Medical Capabilities

- The Armed Forces Medical Sciences (AFMS) was extensively used for the fight against COVID-19. This includes setting up beds, quarantine centres and medical units

What is the need for Defence Reforms?

Since Defence forms the backbone of security in the country, maintaining and managing it becomes the utmost priority of the authorities and the Government.

With incidents like border-clashes between India and some neighbouring countries, enabling the armed forces with the latest ammunition, facilities and technologies have become extremely important. The uniformed forces in India have also played a key role in the present pandemic times and their growth holds great importance for the overall development and safety of the country.