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## PM Modi Launches Development Projects In Khajuraho, Honors Atal Bihari Vajpayee With Commemorative Stamp and Coin

Swarajya,

December 26, 2024

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday (25 December) inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of several key development projects in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh.

Among the highlights was the launch of the Ken-Betwa River Linking Project, the country's first interlinking of rivers initiative under a national perspective plan.

The Ken-Betwa project aims to provide irrigation facilities to numerous districts in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, benefiting lakhs of farmer families. The project includes the construction of the Daudhan dam in the border area of Chhatarpur and Panna districts, which will store approximately 2,853 million cubic meters of water.

A 221-km-long link canal from the Daudhan dam will transfer surplus water from the Ken River to the Betwa River, ensuring drinking water and irrigation facilities for both states.

The river linking initiative will enable irrigation across 8.11 lakh hectares of land in 2,000 villages spread across 10 districts of Madhya Pradesh, including Panna, Damoh, Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Niwari, Sagar, Raisen, Vidisha, Shivpuri, and Datia. This will be achieved through a pressurized micro-irrigation system, benefiting at least 7 lakh farmer families.

Speaking at the event, PM Modi said, "In one year of (Chief Minister) Mohan Yadav's government, development has gained a new momentum. Today also, development projects worth thousands of rupees have been started here. The Ken-Betwa link project has also been approved. I congratulate the people of MP for these projects."

In addition to the river linking project, the Prime Minister released a commemorative stamp and coin to mark the 100th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

PM Modi also laid the foundation stone for 1,153 Atal Gram Sushasan buildings, which are expected to enhance governance at the grassroots level. "These buildings will play an important role in the practical conduct of work and responsibilities of Gram Panchayats, leading to good governance at the local level," he noted.

Another significant project inaugurated by PM Modi was the Omkareshwar Floating Solar Project, located in the Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh.

The solar project is designed to reduce carbon emissions and support the Government's mission of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2070. The initiative will also aid water conservation by reducing evaporation.

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## Centre Allocates Rs 13.138 Bn for Ranipet-Chittoor Highway Project

The Hindu,

December 26, 2024

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, announced that his ministry has approved Rs 1,338 crore for an access-controlled highway project on NH-40, also known as Old Madras Road. This 28.1 km stretch will connect Walajapet/Ranipet to the Tamil Nadu-Andhra Pradesh border.

The section between Walajahpet and Chittoor, though a four-lane road until Walajahpet from Chennai, remains a two-lane road. Gadkari confirmed that the new highway will feature a four-lane main carriageway with paved shoulders, and two-lane service roads on both sides. The project will also include a 10-km bypass around Walajapet/Ranipet, four major bridges, and two railway overbridges.

"This corridor will improve connectivity between Chennai and cities such as Bengaluru, Tirupati, and Vellore, which is home to the famous CMC-Vellore hospital. It will boost local industries like leather and small-scale engineering units that support BHEL. With a Special Economic Zone in Ranipet set to be completed in 2025, this project promises to drive economic growth while also improving local traffic flow with the addition of 2-lane service roads," Gadkari shared on social media.

The approval follows a delay in the tendering process for the widening of the Walajahpet/Ranipet-Chittoor section since September 2022. Initially, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) planned a six-lane highway for Rs 980 crore, but this plan was revised earlier this year. The project is now set to be developed as a four-lane access-controlled highway, with tenders invited in July 2024. "With the Union Ministry now sanctioning funds, the tender process will soon be finalised," NHAI sources confirmed.

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## Road Construction on Highway Increases Travel Time Between Nashik and Mumbai

The Hindu Business Line,  
December 26, 2024

Travel time between Nashik and Mumbai has risen by two hours due to ongoing road construction work on the Mumbai-Agra highway.

Traffic has been diverted onto adjacent road sections, creating situations where one side of the road has two-way traffic between Nashik and Igatpuri. Abhay Kulkarni from Nashik First organisation highlighted the poor condition of the highway, with continuous work occurring between Nashik and Thane.

Commuters have reported delays, with travel times increasing from three hours to at least five, and in some cases, over six hours. Lack of traffic management, such as lane discipline, has raised concerns about potential accidents.

Rajendra Phad from the Nashik Transport Association urged for the deployment of traffic personnel to ensure safer passage and alleviate traffic jams. NHAI officials confirmed that the construction work would be completed in a few months, improving traffic flow.

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## Andheri Lokhandwala-Yari Road Bridge Project Delayed

PTI,  
December 26, 2024

The construction of the bridge connecting Lokhandwala to Yari Road in Andheri is unlikely to start before January due to pending no-objection certificates (NOCs) from the state forest department for the removal of 48 mangrove trees and the traffic police.

The forest department is conducting a panchnama to document the tree felling, and only after its completion will the NOC be issued. Additionally, 26 encroachments along the Lokhandwala side of the bridge need to be cleared.

Work delays were exacerbated by the recent assembly elections, but officials are hopeful that construction on the Yari Road side can commence once the NOCs are obtained. The bridge, expected to cost Rs 42 crore, aims to reduce travel time between Lokhandwala and Yari Road from 35 minutes to just five.

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## Andhra Pradesh Approves Rs 2,723 Crore For Greenfield Capital Amaravati Road Infra; Total CRDA Funds Reach Rs 47,288 Crore

Swarajya,  
December 26, 2024

The Andhra Pradesh government has announced its commitment to the development of the greenfield capital Amaravati, approving Rs 2,723 crore for road infrastructure projects. The funds will be specifically utilized for constructing layout roads in Amaravati zones 7 and 10, Municipal Minister P Narayana confirmed on Monday (23 December)

“Funds for works worth Rs 47,288 crore were approved until now during Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) meetings for the development of Amaravati,” Narayana said at a press conference held at the state secretariat. He added that approvals for additional works will be finalised within this month.

Reiterating the state government’s financial strategy, Narayana emphasised that the cost of building the greenfield capital city will not be passed on to the people of Andhra Pradesh.

Instead, the loans taken to fund Amaravati’s development will be repaid through the sale of land pooled from farmers for the capital city project.

By leveraging the land monetisation model, the administration aims to ensure that taxpayers are not burdened with the financial requirements of the capital city's development.

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## Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS Corridor Set For Full Operationalisation By 2025 After Achieving Major Milestones In 2024

Swarajya,  
December 26, 2024

The Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS), led by the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), has made remarkable progress in 2024, setting the stage for full operations by January 2025.

Spanning 82 kilometers, this ambitious project aims to revolutionize regional connectivity in the National Capital Region (NCR) by offering high-speed, efficient, and sustainable transit solutions.

The operationalisation of the 42-kilometer section between Sahibabad and Meerut South earlier this year marked a major milestone. This stretch has already witnessed impressive ridership, significantly reducing travel time and improving convenience for daily commuters.

Civil construction on other sections has also advanced rapidly. The Anand Vihar station in Delhi, a critical interchange hub, is now 85 per cent complete, while tunneling work connecting Anand Vihar to Sarai Kale Khan has surpassed 70 per cent completion.

In Ghaziabad, elevated viaduct construction between Sahibabad and Guldhar is nearing completion, with most stations either operational or in the final stages of development.

Meanwhile, in Meerut, over 75 per cent of the structural work on the Meerut South to Shatabdi Nagar stretch has been completed, paving the way for track-laying activities.

The manufacturing and delivery of trainsets have progressed as planned, with 15 out of 30 trainsets delivered and undergoing rigorous testing. These trains, capable of speeds up to 180 km/h, promise faster and more efficient travel for passengers.

Additionally, significant strides have been made in installing signaling systems and platform screen doors at key stations. Sustainability has been a core focus, with green building standards and renewable energy integration incorporated throughout the project.

Solar panels have been installed on station rooftops, and energy-efficient systems deployed to minimize environmental impact.

Despite challenges such as land acquisition and utility shifting in densely populated areas, innovative construction techniques like segmental launching and pre-cast structures have helped accelerate timelines.

As anticipation builds for the full operationalisation of the RRTS corridor, the project is poised to transform regional travel, offering a seamless and sustainable transit experience.

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## Indian Railways' Switch to Accrual-Based Accounting to Boost Green Financing

CW Team,

December 26, 2024

Indian Railways has transitioned to an accrual-based accounting system, a move that is expected to enhance financial transparency and facilitate resource mobilisation from multilateral agencies and green financing, according to a senior official of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI).

This transition is now operational across all 26 zones of Indian Railways for the 2023-24 financial year. ICAI President Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal stated, "The adoption of accrual accounting will simplify raising funds from agencies like the World Bank and promote green financing."

Indian Railways has been working on this transition since 2014. The ICAI and its Accounting Research Foundation (ICAI ARF) have been instrumental in driving these reforms.

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The new system reflects environmental sustainability initiatives in the financial statements for 2022-23 and places Indian Railways at par with developed economies.

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## Shirur MP Requests Relocation of GMRT for Pune-Nashik Rail Project

CW Team,

December 26, 2024

Shirur MP Amol Kolhe has urged the central government to relocate the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) near Narayangaon in Pune district to facilitate the proposed Pune-Nashik semi high-speed rail project.

In a letter to Union Minister of Science and Technology Dr Jitendra Singh, Kolhe highlighted the developmental challenges posed by the GMRT's presence, which has led to objections from scientists concerning the railway project.

In his letter, dated December 19, Kolhe stated, "The GMRT, established in 1996, is a prestigious scientific installation in my constituency. However, it has restricted industrial and infrastructure development in the region for nearly three decades. Issues such as delays in granting permissions for industries, disruptions in mobile connectivity, and hindrances to critical projects have emerged as major concerns. The Pune-Nashik railway line, a transformative project, has also been stalled due to GMRT-related objections."

Kolhe proposed two solutions: "The GMRT authorities should find a technical resolution to ensure the railway project progresses or consider relocating the GMRT to a sparsely populated area free from developmental pressures."

The Pune-Nashik semi high-speed rail project, spanning 232 kilometres, is expected to reduce travel time between the two cities to one-and-a-half hours. However, it has faced delays. The route, which passes through Pune, Chakan, Rajgurunagar, Manchar, Narayangaon, Sangamner, Sinnar, and Nashik, is seen as a significant boost to industrial and agricultural growth in these districts. There has been speculation about realigning the route to include Pune, Shirdi, Sinnar, and Nashik.

A senior official from the Maharashtra Rail Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (MAHARAIL) said, "Discussions are underway to finalise the alignment, taking GMRT-related concerns into account. This route will benefit Pune, Nashik, and surrounding areas."

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw confirmed in October that the project remains on track. He stated, "The alignment must avoid electrification within 10 kilometres of the GMRT. A revised detailed project report (DPR) is being prepared to ensure there are no disruptions to the telescope's operations." He also mentioned plans to link Nashik and Shirdi, develop mega termini near Pune, and expand Pune station's capacity.

The delays, however, have caused confusion among farmers whose land is to be acquired for the project. Compensation has been partially distributed, but the lack of progress has left them uncertain.

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## Indian Railways Expands Its Presence in West Bengal

PTI,

December 26, 2024

West Bengal is experiencing a railway revolution as Indian Railways embarks on an ambitious effort to enhance connectivity and infrastructure across the state. With 43 ongoing projects, including new lines, gauge conversions, and track doubling, the state is poised for significant development.

On December 20, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced that as of April 1, 2024, 43 projects—comprising 13 new lines, 4 gauge conversions, and 26 track doubling projects—spanning 4,479 km and costing Rs 60,168 crore, will be located fully or partially within West Bengal.

Indian Railways has allocated Rs 204 billion these projects, which include those in the planning, approval, or construction stages. As of now, 1,655 km of track has been commissioned, with an expenditure of Rs 20,434 crore by March 2024. The projects are being carried out across the Eastern Railway (ER), South Eastern Railway (SER), and Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) zones.

Despite a threefold increase in annual fund allocation—from Rs 4,380 crore (2009-14) to Rs 13,941 crore in 2024-25—delays in land acquisition have hindered progress. Of the 3,040 hectares required, only 21% has been acquired, leaving 79% still to be acquired.

Several projects are particularly delayed:

Nabadwipghat-Nabadwipdham New Line (10 km): 0.17 hectares of 106.86 hectares acquired.  
Chandaneshwar-Jaleswar New Line (41 km): No progress on the 158 hectares needed.  
Naihati-Ranaghat Third Line (36 km): 0.09 hectares out of 87.83 hectares secured.  
Balurghat-Hilli New Line (30 km): 67.38 hectares acquired, 88 hectares pending.  
Bypasses at Sainthia (5 km) and Sitampur (7 km): 2.22 hectares of 22.28 hectares acquired.  
The Ministry of Railways has introduced measures to speed up execution, including the formation of Gati Shakti units to streamline project implementation, prioritising high-impact projects, and giving field officers more decision-making powers. Close monitoring and coordination with state governments will address land acquisition challenges and accelerate approvals.

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