

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2024

[^ TOP](#)

- [From Jharkhand to Rajasthan: Here's how PM Gati Shakti is redrawing India's infra map](#)
- [From Vajpayee's Vision To Modi's Execution: Long-Delayed Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal Project Finally Comes Through](#)
- [India to have world's second-largest Metro network, says Manohar Lal; 997 km of rail lines under construction](#)
- [Siang Upper Multipurpose Project: Arunachal CM warns of Chinese Hydropower impact, defends project as national priority](#)
- [Chennai's Outer Ring Road Master Plan Nears Completion, Likely To Be Ready By Early 2025](#)
- [Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link Nears Completion; Likely To Be Operationalised Next Month](#)
- [Ropeway Project At Vaishno Devi: Why Supporting Such Infrastructure Initiatives Is Crucial For Improving Pilgrims' Experiences](#)

From Jharkhand to Rajasthan: Here's how PM Gati Shakti is redrawing India's infra map

The Financial Express,
December 20, 2024

Connecting Sikar, Nagaur, Jodhpur, and Delhi, the Singhana-Titanwar Access-Controlled Highway project will streamline freight and passenger movement, strengthen regional trade, and drive economic development across Rajasthan, Haryana, and the Delhi region.



From Jharkhand to Rajasthan: Here's how PM Gati Shakti is redrawing India's infra map

The 85th meeting of the Network Planning Group (NPG) under the PM Gati Shakti initiative recently assessed five transformative infrastructure projects, comprising two railway projects and three highway development projects that promise to significantly enhance India's logistics, trade, and connectivity.

Railway Projects: Strengthening Freight and Passenger Movement

Dangoaposi-Jaroli 3rd & 4th Lines

Spanning 85.88 km across Jharkhand and Odisha, this project involves constructing third and fourth railway lines parallel to the existing corridor. These lines are vital for transporting iron ore from the mineral-rich Keonjhar region to industrial hubs and Paradip Port. Additionally, the lines will support the efficient movement of bulk commodities like coal, gypsum, and fertilizers, ensuring seamless logistics for critical industries.

Burhwal-Gonda Kacheri 4th Line

Located in Uttar Pradesh, this 55.75 km fourth rail line complements existing double lines and ongoing third-line work. The project aims to improve connectivity across the Barabanki, Bahraich,

"Joining the Hands that Believe in Building Sustainably # Platform for Sustainable Infra"

and Gonda districts, streamlining freight and passenger traffic. By increasing capacity, the project will facilitate the efficient movement of goods, including coal, cement, fertilisers, and steel, to the Northeast, boosting regional logistics and connectivity.

Highway Projects: Enhancing Regional Integration and Trade

Barabanki-Bahraich NH-927 Corridor

This project involves upgrading a 101.54 km stretch of NH-927 into a 4-lane configuration with six-lane structures. Connecting Lucknow, Shrawasti Airport, NH-27, and the India-Nepal border, the improved highway is set to reduce travel time and bolster trade across Northern India. It will also unlock economic opportunities, supporting industries, tourism, and trade in the region.

Kanpur-Kabrai Greenfield Highway

A 118.8 km, 4-lane Greenfield highway with six-lane structures is planned to connect Kanpur Ring Road to Kabrai on NH-35. With multimodal connectivity to seven railway stations and three airports, the project will enhance accessibility across Kanpur, Hamirpur, and Mahoba districts. It is expected to significantly boost industrial growth, tourism, and regional economic integration in Uttar Pradesh.

Singhana-Titanwar Access-Controlled Highway

This 40.725 km 4-lane access-controlled Greenfield highway along NH-311 will address the limitations of the existing single-to-intermediate lane road in Rajasthan. Connecting Sikar, Nagaur, Jodhpur, and Delhi, the project will streamline freight and passenger movement, strengthen regional trade, and drive economic development across Rajasthan, Haryana, and the Delhi region.

Driving Economic Growth and Connectivity

The evaluated projects underscore the government's commitment to bolstering India's infrastructure under the PM Gati Shakti initiative. By enhancing multimodal connectivity, reducing transit times, and improving logistics efficiency, these developments will unlock vast economic potential, support regional integration, and lay the foundation for sustainable growth.

With a focus on collaborative planning and execution, the Network Planning Group continues to play a pivotal role in shaping India's infrastructure future.

[^ TOP](#)

From Vajpayee's Vision To Modi's Execution: Long-Delayed Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal Project Finally Comes Through

Swarajya,

December 20, 2024

L to R: Rajasthan CM Bhajan Lal Sharma, PM Narendra Modi and Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav during Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal Link project agreement

River-linking projects are expected to minimise flood and drought situations while ensuring water availability round the year.

A tripartite agreement was signed between the Centre and the state governments of Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Rajasthan for the Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal Link project on 17 December.

"Joining the Hands that Believe in Building Sustainably # Platform for Sustainable Infra"

This comes decades after former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee supported the vision of interlinking rivers, and set up a task force under the chairmanship of Suresh Prabhu to check the feasibility of river-linking projects.

The preliminary feasibility report (PFR) of the Kalisindh-Chambal link canal project was first prepared and circulated among the concerned state governments in September 1991.

However, the then-MP government did not find the project economically viable on account of its low benefit-cost ratio and internal rate of return.

The project was then modified into the Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal (PKC) Link to accrue more benefits by increasing the quantum of water for diversion.

However, river-linking projects were put in cold storage when the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) came to power in 2004.

They were revived only after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) returned to power in 2014 under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The water resources minister at the time, Uma Bharti fast-tracked river-linking projects for the consenting states. However, the PKC Link project could not get going in 2014 after objections were raised by the MP government.

"Sometimes MP did not agree, sometimes Rajasthan did not agree to certain conditions," Abhay Kumar, an Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officer in Rajasthan, told Swarajya.

Now that the issues are resolved after decades of effort, Kumar said, "Give credit to statesmen. All this could be achieved because everyone was brought to the table to discuss."

The Politics Around It

In his public address in Jaipur, PM Modi blamed the Congress for the delay in the PKC project, as well as for the delay in the East Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP), which is set to be linked with the PKC project.

"Instead of solutions, Congress promoted water disputes among states. ERCP was delayed by Congress, but BJP accepted and expanded it because our policy is not of disputes but talks," the PM said at the event.

PM Modi might be referring to the fact that the Congress came to power in Rajasthan and MP after the 2018 assembly elections and suggesting that that was why the project was stalled.

"As soon as BJP governments were formed in MP and Rajasthan (after the 2023 assembly elections), an agreement on the PKC Link project was reached. This image of the Centre's Water Minister and the CMs (chief ministers) of the two states is extraordinary," PM Modi said.

Following the oath-taking ceremony of the two CMs in December 2023, both the state governments signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Jal Shakti Ministry on 28 January 2024.

The preparation of a detailed project report (DPR) for the PKC Link began along with the integration plan of this link to the ECRP, called the Modified PKC (MPKC) Link.

Thereafter, the MP and Rajasthan governments signed an MoU on 30 June in Bhopal in the presence of Rajasthan CM Bhajan Lal Sharma and MP CM Mohan Yadav, followed by the signing of this tripartite MoU on 17 December in Jaipur.

However, the opposition Congress in Rajasthan, making a counter-claim, said that the ERCP was delayed by the BJP and that without the Centre's funds, former CM Ashok Gehlot approved Rs 10,000 crore for the ERCP.

Gehlot also demanded to make the MoU of the project public. "People have the right to know whether this project will be beneficial for Rajasthan. The newly signed agreement is being kept a secret," he said.

Many details are not out as yet. The DPR for this project is being made by the National Water Development Agency (NWDA). Under NWDA's direction, Wapcos has already prepared the DPR for the Rajasthan side of the project.

The DPR will be made public only after the approval of the Central Water Commission (CWC). But the secrecy around the project has given ammunition to the opposition to create misinformation around it.

"This project is bound to remain on paper. That's what the BJP does. Nobody will benefit from it," a Congress office-bearer in Shivpuri's Kolaras told Swarajya.

However, the MP government appears to be proactive in this regard. CM Yadav has been talking about the advantages of the river-linking project on various platforms and has asked other public representatives to do the same.

Various events were organised by the members of legislative assemblies (MLA) in their respective areas to celebrate the agreement. They are fighting misinformation to win the public's trust.

Even district magistrates have issued circulars among officials to make villagers aware of this project and convince them that they would be affected positively, an Irrigation Department official working in Shajapur told Swarajya.

The MPKC Link Project

The Rs 72,000-crore MPKC Link project will be constructed with 90 per cent contribution from the Centre and 10 per cent from the states. Works worth Rs 35,000 crore will be carried out in MP and worth Rs 37,000 crore in Rajasthan.

MP will get 17 new dams and four barrages, while Rajasthan will get three new dams and five barrages. Works in the upper Chambal basin will come through in phase 2.

For phase 1, the Navnera-Galwa-Bisalpur-Isarda (NGBI) Link project is sanctioned in Rajasthan. It will be completed in three packages. The Prime Minister has already inaugurated the Navnera barrage, constructed at a cost of Rs 1,069 crore on the Kalisindh river.

In package 1, the Ramgarh and Mahalpur barrages will be constructed along with the Navnera pump house, and the feeder from the Navnera pump house to the Mez barrage will be constructed as part of package 2.

Package 3 will have feeder construction from Mez to Galwa to Bisalpur and Isarda, with pump houses at Mez and Galwa. Phase 1 is expected to be wrapped up in four years.

This link will get water from the Ramgarh barrage on Kool river, the Mahalpur barrage on Parvati river, and the Navnera dam, and will invest Rs 9,416.7 crore on constructing a canal network, pumping station, and pipeline for this purpose.

In MP, Guna will get the most irrigation projects, five, including the Nainagarh barrage and three micro-irrigation projects, followed by Ujjain, where four irrigation projects, including two micro ones, are planned.

Shivpuri will get three irrigation projects, and Sehore will get a complex lift and micro irrigation projects. Morena, Dewas, Shajapur and Rajgarh, Agar Malwa, Indore, and Mandsaur will get one project each.

Furthermore, a 60-year-old Chambal canal will be modernised in Bhind and Sheopur. These works are targeted to be completed in eight years.

Project's Benefits

It would be stating the obvious to justify the water needs of arid areas like west MP and east Rajasthan, both covered by the project. Irrigation water availability is the focus of the MPKC project in MP, while drinking water availability is the focus in Rajasthan.

CM Yadav has set a target of achieving irrigated land of 1 crore hectares in MP, up from the present 50 lakh hectares. But thousands of hectares of irrigated land are also receiving water from tubewells, stressing the underground water table.

A farmer from Sumawali in Morena told Swarajya, "The old Chambal canal is inefficient. The farmers are compelled to use borewell water for irrigation. Only a few farmers are able to use canal water."

He explained further that when adequate water is not given to crops, the yield drops and sometimes crops also get damaged, asserting the need for adequate water supply.

Similar is the story of a Dewas farmer. He also shared that the biggest concern in the Malwa region of MP was that previously proposed reservoirs in this project would submerge many villages.

It is believed that due to these concerns, the project was delayed for long. However, now, with micro-irrigation projects, such concerns have been minimised.

Rajesh Sonkar, the MLA from Dewas' Sonkatch, assured people of his constituency: "Earlier there were concerns about submergence; 66 villages were estimated to be submerged. But under the new project, not even a single village will be submerged."

In MP, the project will benefit 2,012 villages across 11 districts. Just over 6 lakh hectares of additional land will come under irrigation coverage, while drinking water will be ensured for 40 lakh people.

With the modernisation of the old Chambal canal, 1,205 more villages in the districts of Bhind, Morena, and Sheopur will have irrigation water, benefiting 3.62 lakh farmers.

In total, 3,217 villages of 13 MP districts of Guna, Morena, Shivpuri, Bhind, Sheopur, Ujjain, Sehore, Mandsaur, Indore, Dewas, Agar Malwa, Shajapur, and Rajgarh will benefit.

"Joining the Hands that Believe in Building Sustainably # Platform for Sustainable Infra"

In Rajasthan, 3.25 crore people living in 21 districts of Jhalawar, Baran, Kota, Boondi, Tonk, Sawai Madhopur, Gangapur City, Dausa, Karauli, Dholpur, Bharatpur, Deeg, Alwar, Khairtal-Tijara, Kotputli-Behror, Jaipur city, Jaipur Rural, Dud, Ajmer, Byawar, and Kekdi will get drinking water.

Though the focus of this project in Rajasthan is drinking water availability, the MPKC Link will also support the irrigation of 4.03 lakh hectares of land. Additional land of 2.5 lakh hectares will come under irrigation coverage, and the 1.5 lakh hectare irrigated land will get additional water supply.

The MPKC Link project is just one of many river-linking projects underway in the country. PM Modi is set to perform the bhoomi puja of the Ken-Betwa Link project in MP on 25 December.

These projects are expected to minimise flood and drought situations while ensuring water availability round the year. The decades of delay inconvenienced crores of people; nonetheless, the projects have got going.

[^ TOP](#)

India to have world's second-largest Metro network, says Manohar Lal; 997 km of rail lines under construction

The Financial Express,
December 20, 2024

Speaking to members of the consultative committee of Parliament attached to the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry on Wednesday, Lal emphasised the government's commitment to strengthening urban transport infrastructure nationwide.

Metro, Patna metro, lucknow metro, delhi metro, mumbai metro, metro in India, India metro network news, India metro construction updates, second-largest metro network India, metro rail projects 2024, Manohar Lal metro announcement, metro construction cities India, PM-eBus Sewa initiative details, electric bus scheme India, metro rail operational cities India, urban transport news India.

The meeting also included a briefing on the Metro Rail Policy 2017 and detailed discussions on metro networks in cities such as Delhi, Jaipur, Patna, and Lucknow.

India is poised to become home to the second-largest metro network in the world, according to Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal. In an official statement released Thursday, the minister highlighted that 997 kilometers of metro rail lines are currently under construction across the country.

Speaking to members of the consultative committee of Parliament attached to the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry on Wednesday, Lal emphasised the government's commitment to strengthening urban transport infrastructure nationwide.

Urban mobility is crucial in addressing the challenges of a growing urban population, he said. With 993 kilometers of metro rail already operational in 23 cities and an additional 997 kilometers under construction in 28 cities, India is well on track to having the second-largest metro network globally, he further said.

The meeting also included a briefing on the Metro Rail Policy 2017 and detailed discussions on metro networks in cities such as Delhi, Jaipur, Patna, and Lucknow.

"Joining the Hands that Believe in Building Sustainably # Platform for Sustainable Infra"

Additionally, the ministry shed light on the 'PM-eBus Sewa' initiative, which aims to enhance city bus operations by deploying 10,000 electric buses under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.

[^ TOP](#)

Siang Upper Multipurpose Project: Arunachal CM warns of Chinese Hydropower impact, defends project as national priority

The Economic Times,
December 20, 2024

Khandu warned about the potential impacts of China's hydropower developments on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, known as Siang in India. China has approved the construction of a massive project capable of generating about 60,000 MW of power on the river before it enters India through Tuting in Upper Siang.

Siang Upper Multipurpose Project: Arunachal CM warns of Chinese Hydropower impact, defends project as national priority (Photo: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu X handle)

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has claimed that misinformation is being spread to mislead villagers about the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP). Speaking at a 'Thanks Giving' programme for local legislator and Panchayati Raj Minister Ojing Tasing in Boleng, Siang district, Khandu addressed protests and concerns surrounding the project.

Misinformation About Project Capacity

The chief minister criticised individuals allegedly instigating protests against the project, stating that they were spreading confusion about the facility's capacity. "As the chief minister, even I am not aware of the exact wattage of power the project will generate. NHPC is also not aware. How do you claim to know the capacity when the survey and investigation have not even begun?" Khandu questioned.

Khandu assured the public that the project would not proceed without their consent. "If you don't want a dam or a hydropower project, there will be no project... Chapter closed," he said, emphasising that the people's will remains paramount.

A Multipurpose Project of National Importance

Highlighting the broader significance of the SUMP, Khandu noted that the project is not solely about generating hydropower. "It is a multipurpose project of national importance, envisioned by the Government of India and NITI Aayog. Hydropower generation is a by-product. The real objective is to save the Siang River and the society connected with it since time immemorial," he explained.

Addressing Chinese Hydropower Developments

According to a statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Khandu warned about the potential impacts of China's hydropower developments on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, known as Siang in India. China has approved the construction of a massive project capable of generating about 60,000 MW of power on the river before it enters India through Tuting in Upper Siang.

“In such a scenario, the volume of water in the Siang River will drastically reduce, so much so that during winters, one could cross the mighty Siang on foot. Would you like such a situation? I certainly won’t,” Khandu remarked.

Preventing Future Catastrophes

The chief minister emphasised the necessity of the multipurpose project to mitigate potential risks. “If Chinese authorities release water from their dams, it could lead to a trail of destruction through the Siang belt, Assam, and Bangladesh,” he warned.

While expressing optimism about improving relations with China through bilateral talks, Khandu cautioned against complacency. “We must prepare for all scenarios to safeguard our river and communities,” he concluded.

[^ TOP](#)

Chennai’s Outer Ring Road Master Plan Nears Completion, Likely To Be Ready By Early 2025

PTI,

December 20, 2024

The master plan for the 126 sq km Chennai Outer Ring Road (ORR) is expected to be finalised by December or early next year, according to Rudrabhishek Enterprises Private Limited (REPL), the consultancy preparing the detailed development plan for the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA).

Prabhakar Kumar, Business Head - government Services at REPL, said that the company has identified four key growth nodes: Minjur, Red Hills, Poonamallee, and Vandalur, The New Indian Express reported.

These nodes are characterised by diverse attributes, ranging from large land availability to eco-sensitive areas requiring careful planning.

“Nature should not be disturbed because some areas are prone to waterlogging and flooding. So, we tried to plan in a way that water bodies and eco-sensitive areas are conserved. Development activity has to be restricted in these places. Other zones, which have more potential for development, can be developed,” said Kumar.

REPL secured the Rs 2.9 crore contract for the project.

Beyond the development plan, the consultancy aims to delineate areas suitable for implementing the Land Pooling Area Development Scheme (LAPDS) and draft an economic development plan along the ORR corridor.

The ORR is envisioned as a high-growth corridor, fostering business and industrial activities with sustainable density levels.

Enhanced infrastructure and a higher floor space index (FSI) of 4-5 are expected to boost affordable real estate supply and create a new urban agglomeration.

Addressing delays, Kumar noted, “If you take the history of approval or finalisation of master plans in India, it takes at least two years. It involves various steps, including stakeholder meetings. As it is a legal document, it requires approval at various levels.”

[^ TOP](#)

Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link Nears Completion; Likely To Be Operationalised Next Month

The Hindu,

December 20, 2024

Kashmir is on the brink of being connected to the rest of India by rail as the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) is nearing completion.

Northern Railway General Manager Ashok Verma announced on Tuesday (17 December) that work on the final tunnel, T-33, situated in the Reasi region, is set to conclude within a week.

"The project will be completed very soon. We are hopeful of the connectivity in January. Then all trains, including Vande Bharat, will run, and a timetable will be framed for all the trains. We hope to start this project in January," Verma stated.

Verma elaborated that the track-laying work for the 3.2-km T-33 tunnel, nestled at the foothills of Vaishno Devi and linking Katra to Reasi, has already been completed.

The electrical installations are in progress and are expected to conclude within the week.

"CRS inspection will also be conducted in the next 15 days, after which the trains will run," he confirmed.

The completion of this 17-km stretch between Katra and Reasi marks the final segment of the USBRL project, paving the way for the first direct train operations between Kashmir and Delhi.

Once operational, this long-awaited rail link is expected to significantly enhance connectivity and catalyse economic and social integration for the region.

Verma concluded by emphasizing the broader implications of this achievement, "There will be a total change in the situation in Kashmir."

[^ TOP](#)

Ropeway Project At Vaishno Devi: Why Supporting Such Infrastructure Initiatives Is Crucial For Improving Pilgrims' Experiences

Swarajya,

December 20, 2024

As India's religious tourism continues to grow, such infrastructure projects are essential to accommodate the rising number of pilgrims.

- Locals argue that the project's direct route will bypass key stops along the traditional pilgrimage path, depriving businesses of essential foot traffic.

The sacred pilgrimage to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Bhawan in Jammu, a journey undertaken by millions each year, is facing a controversy as locals protest against the proposed ropeway project aimed at enhancing access to the shrine.

The project, designed to connect Katra town directly to the Bhawan, has led to widespread opposition from shopkeepers, pony service providers, porters, who fear it will disrupt their livelihoods.

Katra town has acted as the base and gateway for pilgrims embarking on their nearly 13-km trek to the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi temple.

However, on 18 December, the town observed a bandh, with protestors voicing their opposition.

As per reports, representatives of the shopkeepers' association, stated, "We will not allow the ropeway project to be implemented in Katra. We have been fighting against it for three years. Assurances were given to us in the past, but now they have gone ahead with the project."

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board announced plans to construct the Rs 300-crore ropeway, which will reduce the travel time required for the pilgrimage. This will especially benefit senior citizens, children, and those unable to make the arduous climb.

Currently, the trek takes 6–7 hours on foot, while the ropeway is expected to cut this to just six minutes, covering more than 90 per cent of the way.

Infrastructure for religious tourism

As India's religious tourism continues to grow, infrastructure projects like this are seen as essential to accommodate the rising number of pilgrims.

The shrine board also emphasised on the importance of the project, calling it a crucial upgrade for increased accessibility to the Bhawan.

Despite these advantages, locals argue that the project's direct route will bypass key stops along the traditional pilgrimage path, depriving businesses of essential foot traffic.

The Journey To The Bhawan

For years, the only way to reach the shrine located at 5,200 feet had been the steep trek along the Katra-Adhkuwari-Bhawan route.

Over time, several alternatives have been added, such as pony rides, palanquins, and porters who assist by carrying the people, luggage or even infants in prams.

Walking all the way can be exhausting, especially for the elderly, and those unaccustomed to such physical exertion, as the altitude also adds to the challenge.

Further facilities were added to improve accessibility such as helicopter services and electric battery cars, which now operate on newly developed routes, providing another option for those unable to trek.

However, the demand for these services remains overwhelming throughout. It mostly require bookings two months in advance, and also remains unaffordable for many pilgrims.

Thus, traditional modes such as ponies, palanquins, and porters, continue to play a role in supporting pilgrims.

Even with these alternatives, the increasing number of devotees has stretched existing resources to their limits, which means that the journey remains a challenge for many.

The Growing Numbers

Over 95 lakh pilgrims visited the holy site in 2023.

The rise in pilgrim numbers continues each year, with increasing awareness of the site as well as improved connectivity to Katra.

Previously, pilgrims had to travel to Jammu Tawi, the nearest major railway station, followed by a 2–3-hour road journey to reach Katra.

However, the extension of railway connectivity directly to Katra in recent years has increased visitor numbers.

The annual footfall in 2000 was approximately 52 lakh, and over the past two decades, this figure has nearly doubled.

Further, time periods such as the days of Navratri, see a sharp surge in demand, sometimes exceeding the capacity of available infrastructure.

This year, by November, nearly 90 lakh pilgrims have already been registered.

But for many still, the journey remains inaccessible. Helicopter services can accommodate only 5–6 passengers per trip, while the number of electric battery cars is similarly constrained.

The sheer volume of pilgrims leaves many without suitable ways to reach, which points at the need for expanded and inclusive solutions to meet the demands of this growing pilgrimage.

Challenges For Devotees

With such issues, devotees visiting the Vaishno Devi shrine, as well as the workers there, often rely on informal arrangements to make their way.

While services like ponies and porters are regulated with fixed rates set by the shrine board, exploiting the desperation of devotees remains a common practice, with demands of additional charges.

Similarly, many can be seen making informal arrangements with goods vehicles traveling to the shrine.

Some pilgrims hide among goods or sit atop these mountain-bound vehicles, posing risks to themselves as well as others on the route. At the same time, drivers also demand unreasonable sums, reportedly up to Rs. 3,000 per person.

Many adults can also be seen squeezing into children's prams while going downhill, as they are left with no other choice.

Infrastructure Expansion Remains Essential

Scenarios like these highlight the need for a mass transit solution, capable of reducing challenges as well as enhancing the overall pilgrimage experience.

The proposed 2.4-kilometer ropeway from Tarakote, near the Katra base camp, to Sanjichhat is a critical step in this direction.

Once operational, it will be capable of transporting 1,000 passengers per hour, reducing travel time and making the journey more accessible to devotees.

It is also equally important for the local community in Katra to recognise the benefits of such infrastructural advancements, as it would attract more tourists to the town and shrine.

Presently, beyond the Bhawan, pilgrims extend the journey to the Bhairon temple, requiring another trek.

For the same, a ropeway is already operational and charges a nominal fare of Rs. 100, reducing the travel time from three hours to just five minutes.



The operational ropeway from Bhawan to Bhairon Temple. (Source: Swarajya)

As this facility has proven success, it presents the potential of such projects for improving the overall pilgrimage experience.

Many pilgrims in Katra also support the new ropeway project, as they believe that these are required for the collective benefit of pilgrims.

Devotees who prefer trekking will still have the option to do so, preserving existing route and journey.

They add, “The businessmen should view the project as one helping the needs of the pilgrims and the sanctity of the pilgrimage itself. After all, it is the temple and the faith of the devotees that have provided livelihoods to the local community for decades.”

Moreover, regulating the transportation will also control the local economy, preventing exploitative practices that exist today, and can set a benchmark for other religious destinations.

[^ TOP](#)