

# NEWSLETTER

## CONSTRUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES

MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2025

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## PM Modi To Inaugurate Rs 2,700 Crore Sonamarg Tunnel Project Tomorrow, Enhancing Military And Tourism Connectivity In J&K

PTI,

January 13, 2025

In a boost for all-weather connectivity in Jammu and Kashmir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Sonamarg tunnel on Monday (13 January).

He will also meet the construction workers who have worked meticulously in the harshest conditions, acknowledging their contribution to this engineering feat.

The 12-km long Sonamarg tunnel project has been constructed at a cost of over Rs 2,700 crore.

It comprises of the Sonamarg main tunnel, also known as Z-morh tunnel, of 6.4 km length, an egress tunnel and approach roads.

Situated at an altitude of over 8,650 feet above sea level, it will enhance all-weather connectivity between Srinagar and Sonamarg enroute to Leh, bypassing landslide and avalanche routes and ensuring safer and uninterrupted access to the strategically critical Ladakh region.

It will also promote tourism by transforming Sonamarg into a year-round destination, boosting winter tourism, adventure sports, and local livelihoods.

Along with the Zojila Tunnel, set for completion by 2028, it will reduce the route length from 49 km to 43 km and boost vehicle speed from 30 kmph to 70 kmph, ensuring seamless NH-1 connectivity between Srinagar Valley and Ladakh.

This enhanced connectivity will boost defence logistics, drive economic growth and socio-cultural integration across J&K and Ladakh.

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday (11 January) visited Sonamarg to review preparations for PM Modi's visit.

Abdullah also visited the Z-morh tunnel and also shared the aerial images of the project.

"The inauguration of the Z-morh tunnel will open Sonmarg to tourism all year round, Sonmarg will now be developed as a great ski resort. The local population will not have to leave in winter & the travel time to Kargil / Leh from Srinagar will also reduce," Abdullah said on X.

Reacting to Abdullah's X post, PM Modi said, "I am eagerly awaiting my visit to Sonmarg, Jammu and Kashmir for the tunnel inauguration. You rightly point out the benefits for tourism and the local economy. Also, loved the aerial pictures and videos!".

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## Gurugram set to witness major infrastructure upgrades, Haryana Minister Rao Narbir Singh outlines plan for next five years

The Financial Express,

January 13, 2025

Highlighting the improved connectivity and a strengthened road network, Singh assured that the groundwork for the city's long-term prosperity is being laid

Haryana Minister Rao Narbir Singh has announced a significant infrastructure push aimed at shaping Gurugram's future over the next five years. Highlighting the improved connectivity and a strengthened road network, Singh assured that the groundwork for the city's long-term prosperity is being laid. The update was shared by officials on Sunday.

One of the major initiatives includes the construction of an elevated road linking the Gurugram-Jaipur National Highway to Vatika Chowk. Moreover, four flyovers will be built between Vatika Chowk and Ghata at a budget of Rs 800 crore. Singh is also an MLA from Badshahpur and holds a portfolio for commerce, Wildlife, and forests, sharing the above details on major infrastructure projects in the districts. An official statement confirmed a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for this major initiative to be executed by the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA), is currently right now. The minister assured that once the DPR is finalized, the groundwork will start on time.

Singh while addressing a gathering during his visit to Vatika City in sector 49, reasserted his commitment to making Gurugram a cleaner and more attractive city. He stated that in all the upcoming projects, public opinions will be given preference, and will ensure that the voice of the common man is considered in making governance decisions.

"The current government does not just make promises in the 'Sankalp Patra', we ensure their realization," he added. He also directed the officials to make sure that there is effective implementation of all government schemes and that citizens can receive all the benefits.

Singh also stressed that officials should follow all the necessary criteria while implementing development projects. He also informed that work related to a community center at Close South in Sector 50 is to commence in the next two months.

The minister has mentioned that prompt action will be taken on the encroachments along the green belt from Vatika Chowk to Ghata. To oversee the removal of encroachments, District Town Planner R S Bhat has been appointed as the nodal officer, he added. A stern deadline of January 31 has been put up for removing unauthorized structures along the 12-km stretch, reinforcing the government's commitment to planned urban development.

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## Z-Morh Tunnel To Provide Year-Round Access To Kashmir, Boosting Tourism In Sonmarg And Enhancing Defence Movement In Border Areas

Swarajya,

January 13, 2025

On Monday (13 January), Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to inaugurate the 6.4-kilometre (km)-long Z-Morh tunnel, which will improve the connection between Kashmir and Ladakh.

Located amidst the scenic but tough landscape of central Kashmir, high in the Himalayas, the Z-Morh Tunnel is poised to revolutionise connectivity in the region by linking the well-known Sonamarg health resort to Kangan town in the Ganderbal district of Kashmir.

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It will offer uninterrupted access throughout the year to one of the most desirable tourist spots along the Srinagar-Leh highway as the area where the Z-Morh Tunnel is situated is subject to severe snowfall and avalanches during the winter.

Earlier, the route to Sonamarg used to be typically blocked for the majority of this season annually, isolating the area from the rest of Kashmir and interrupting the influx of tourists.

Sonamarg, celebrated for its breathtaking scenery, alpine pastures, and glaciers, depends heavily on tourism. Unfortunately, the seasonal closure of the road significantly impacts this industry.

The road in question, situated over 8,500 feet above sea level, is crucial as it provides strategic military access to Ladakh, an area that has increasingly become vital to India's defense infrastructure.

Previously, traveling to Ladakh during winter usually relied on air routes due to snow-blocked roads posing safety risks for transportation. However, the introduction of the Z-Morh Tunnel aims to offer year-round access.

The Z-Morh Tunnel is a vital component of the larger Zojila Tunnel project, designed to provide seamless connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh. The Zojila Tunnel, currently under construction at about 12,000 feet altitude, is set to link Sonamarg and Drass in Ladakh.

The networking is crucial to India's regional defense position. Ladakh, having extensive and disputed borders with both Pakistan and China, has seen a surge in military operations following the 2020 conflict between Indian and Chinese forces in eastern Ladakh.

The Z-Morh Tunnel, together with the upcoming Zojila Tunnel, will significantly lessen the dependence on air transportation for the transfer of military staff, machinery, and provisions to the areas close to these borders.

At present, the Indian Army is significantly dependent on air maintenance for its forward positions, utilising transport aircraft from the Indian Air Force to access the most remote posts.

The introduction of road connectivity through the Z-Morh Tunnel, however, is set to reduce this reliance, providing a more cost-efficient and effective means of transporting troops and resources.

This will not only extend the operational lifespan of military aircraft, which currently shoulder the responsibility of supplying Ladakh's distant locations all year round, but also improve overall logistics efficiency.

In an area marked by significant geopolitical tension, particularly around the Siachen Glacier and the Turtuk sub-sector that borders Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), enhanced road connectivity will offer India a tactical edge.

This improved accessibility to its border posts will equip the Indian military to react more rapidly and with increased logistical backing in the event of a potential dispute in Ladakh, be it with Pakistan or China.

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## Six-Lane Nagpur-Goa Shaktipeeth Expressway Gains Momentum Amid Renewed Push For Environmental Clearance With Multiple Alignment Options

The Financial Express,  
January 13, 2025

In a big boost for connectivity, the Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis led Mahayuti government's ambitious project of building an expressway between Nagpur and Goa, connecting Maharashtra's Shaktipeeths, some significant shrines and pilgrimage destinations - is starting to gain momentum.

The Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) has reportedly submitted a fresh application for environmental clearance for the Nagpur-Goa Shaktipeeth Expressway.

Earlier in August, after a delegation including local farmers met Eknath Shinde, Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar in Kolhapur demanding cancellation of the project, the MSRDC withdrew the plan to seek environment clearance for the project.

After withdrawing its previous request a couple of months ago, MSRDC has now re-applied, presenting multiple alignment options for all packages spanning from Wardha to Sindhudurg.

The proposed six-lane access-controlled Shaktipeeth Expressway is set to surpass the Nagpur-Mumbai Expressway in length, making it one of India's longest expressways. Spanning 802 kilometers, it will exceed the 701-kilometer Nagpur-Mumbai Expressway, commonly known as Samruddhi Mahamarg, which is currently partially open to traffic.

The Shaktipeeth Expressway will begin at Pavnar in Wardha district and conclude at Patradevi on the Maharashtra-Goa state border.

The Shaktipeeth Expressway is designed to traverse 11 districts, linking regions across Vidarbha, Marathwada, and the Konkan.

The planned route is proposed to pass through Wardha, Yavatmal, Hingoli, Nanded, Parbhani, Latur, Beed, Osmanabad, Solapur, Kolhapur, and Sindhudurg, which is located at the Maharashtra-Goa border.

The expressway is expected to reduce travel time between Nagpur and Goa from 18-20 hours to about 8-10 hours.

According to the reports, the land owners in Vidharbha and Marathwada are supporting the project, while major opposition was coming for it was coming from Sangli and Kolhapur districts.

Now, with the multiple alignment options submitted for the project, the state government is seeking to address the environmental and other concerns, including destruction of fertile lands, raised by locals.

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Budget 2025: Push for rooftop solar scheme, power infra likely  
FE Online,  
January 13, 2025

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On the EV front, the industry seeks more support towards building public charging infrastructure given the anticipated increase in the EV penetration.

With the peak demand for power growing at a rate of 8-9% annually, the industry is looking forward to strengthening of climate resilient infrastructure augmentation.

Extension of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for solar energy value chain, increased allocation towards PM Suryaghar Muft Bijlee Yojana, and greater thrust to distribution and transmission infrastructure are likely to be the key features of the upcoming Budget, as far as the energy sector is concerned.

Sources said these proposals figured not only in the budget wish lists of the industry, but also in the respective recommendations from the ministries of power and renewable energy to the finance ministry, ahead of the Budget.

While the government has already launched rooftop solar scheme and announced viability gap funding for offshore wind projects, industry players expect increased allocations, particularly towards solar and wind, along with higher budgetary capital expenditure in green hydrogen and battery storage infrastructure. Along with this, the sector also expects the government to increase its coverage of households under PM Suryaghar.

“Given the success of PM Suryaghar scheme with almost 600,000 installations in just nine months since its launch, one could probably see additional allocation to target more households,” said Ashwin Jacob, partner at Deloitte India. “As far as evacuation of power from offshore wind projects is concerned, we would want to see the VGF or budgetary support to continue or get enhanced,” he added.

“We hope to see a decisive increase in funding to accelerate the green energy transition. Priorities must include scaling renewable energy by addressing grid and transmission challenges, advancing Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) for grid stability and reliable power, doubling energy efficiency and digitalizing the energy sector through AI, smart meters, and data-driven solutions. Streamlining rooftop solar programs with simplified approvals, financing, and monitoring is equally vital,” said Saurabh Kumar, Vice President – India, Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP).

Sharat Goyal, CEO of Impact Infracap also expects the government to remove restrictions on state wise caps on roof top capacity for net-metering for industrial establishments. “Further, adoption of batteries to substitute use of diesel generators for back-up power should receive incentives and policy support given their role in reducing dependence on imports,” he said.

While the government is increasingly working towards enhancing the country’s RE capacity, the distribution and transmission infrastructure for its evacuation still needs to be strengthened. With the peak demand for power growing at a rate of 8-9% annually, the industry is looking forward to strengthening of climate resilient infrastructure augmentation. “One can expect new allocations towards augmentation of power distribution infrastructure, especially in high density/ urban load centres, in view of the sharp rise in peak demand over the last few years,” said Anujesh Dwivedi, Partner at Deloitte India.

He noted that there may be some allocation towards supporting the preparatory work especially on the listing of power utilities, or some incentive mechanism for promoting initiatives on private sector participation or listing of utilities at the state level because they are increasingly being seen as the much needed structural reforms the sector needs.

The industry is optimistic of a wider coverage of the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme by including smart metering in infrastructure definition. “This would direct more financing for a sector which seeks to bring down India’s transmission and distribution losses to 12% and improve recovery for state utilities,” Goyal said.

Goyal also noted that power transmission despite significant potential has not seen any notable monetisation events which could address the latent investor demand. “Government should announce a time-bound privatisation programme for assets owned by PGCIL,” he said. The sector also sees the PLI scheme for solar value chain to continue with possible reduction in the duty structures for solar equipment.

Jacob highlighted that there may be some rationalisation of duties on capital goods required for solar upstream manufacturing could be seen so that overall that industry can really take off. “We expect continuation and maybe broadening of the PLI support towards the solar module value chain. We already have a few interventions there, which are likely to be extended deeper,” Dwivedi said.

Similarly, on the battery manufacturing front, the industry expects localization of the value chain given competing countries have already advanced beyond India. In the green hydrogen segment, the industry believes the government may bring in hydrogen purchase for specific sectors like (green) steel.

On the EV front, the industry seeks more support towards building public charging infrastructure given the anticipated increase in the EV penetration. “Under the PM E-drive, we already have an allocation of about Rs 1,100 crores for FY26. Given that the final guidelines have not been released until now, I think even the allocation under FY25 may get added and FY26 budget may be increased as the country expects an acceleration in EV adoption in FY26,” Dwivedi said.

“Under the Atmannirbhar Bharat scheme, there should be a scheme for the home grown EPCM companies to create indigenous technical capabilities in the country and reduce the foreign exchange outflow. We would also like to see a reduction on GST for engineering equipment and a reduction in import duties on chemicals in India,” said Umesh Sood, CEO Simon India Ltd.

Sunil Singhvi, President, Indian Electrical and Electronics Manufacturers Association noted that there is a need for strong policy support to foster growth, drive innovation, and enhance sustainability in the power sector. “One of the main requests is to expand the PLI scheme, which aims to increase domestic production of crucial electrical components necessary for large and essential power projects, such as the advanced High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) systems.” he said.

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