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PM INAUGURATES Z-MORH TUNNEL

Sonamarg Tunnel will give significant boost to connectivity, tourism: Modi



PM Narendra Modi at the inauguration of Z- Morh Tunnel at Sonamarg on Monday.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

GANDERBAL: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the Sonamarg tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the Prime Minister thanked the labourers who have worked hard and also put their lives at stake for the development of Jammu and Kashmir and India.

Modi remarked "Despite the challenges, our resolve did not waver".

He lauded the labourers for their resolve and commitment and for tackling all the obstacles to complete the work and consoled the demise of seven labourers.

Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Union Minister for

► Improved connectivity will open doors for tourists to explore lesser-known regions of J&K

► Delighted to be amongst the wonderful people of Sonamarg, With the opening of the tunnel here, connectivity will significantly improve and tourism will see a major boost in J&K

Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, Union Ministers of State, Dr. Jitendra Singh and Ajay Tamta were present among other dignitaries at the event.

Hailing the beautiful snow-covered mountains and the delightful weather, Modi said that his eagerness to visit Jammu & Kashmir increased after seeing the recent pictures shared by the Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir on social media. He reminisced about his earlier days when he frequently visited

the region while working for his party. He mentioned spending considerable time in areas like Sonamarg, Gulmarg, Ganderbal, and Baramulla, often walking for hours and covering several kilometers.

Modi added that despite the heavy snowfall, the warmth of the people of Jammu and Kashmir made the cold unnoticeable.

Acknowledging that today was a special day, the Prime Minister remarked that there was a festive atmosphere

Modi assures all promises will be fulfilled

SONAMARG: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday asserted that he would keep promises he had made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, a statement seen as an oblique reference to the demand for restoration of statehood voiced strongly by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

Union minister Nitin Gadkari, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah were also present at the inauguration.

"Yeh Modi hai, wada karta hai toh nibhata hai. Har kaam ka ek samay hai, aur sahi samay pe sahi kaam bhi hone wale hai (This is Modi who keeps his promises. And right things are going to happen at the right time)," The Prime Minister said at a large public meeting.

Terming Kashmir as India's crown, Prime Minister Modi also said the dream of 'Viksit Bharat' will be achieved only when this crown is bedecked with jewels. Without making a direct reference to the issue of statehood, Modi assured the gathering that all promises would be kept and the right things would happen at the right time.

across the country. He remarked on the commencement of the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, where millions are gathering for the holy bath. He also mentioned the celebration of Lohri in Punjab and other parts of North India, as well as festivals like Uttarayan, ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

Sonamarg tunnel is 'Bhagya Rekha' for J&K, says LG

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said that with the opening of Sonamarg Tunnel a new chapter has begun in the history of Jammu and Kashmir.

"I am grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for fulfilling the dreams and aspirations of the people of UT and creating an environment which is enabling common man to flourish and live a dignified life", the Lieutenant Governor said, addressing a rally after the Prime Minister inaugurated the Sonamarg tunnel.



LG Manoj Sinha addressing Public rally at Sonamarg on Monday.

"Sonamarg tunnel is the 'Bhagya Rekha' (lifeline) for J&K, enabling year-round connectivity to the picturesque Sonamarg. It will be a Game-Changer for the local economy, winter tourism and also create new avenues of livelihood & trade in the region.

PM has taken the J&K on a path of progress & prosperity from agonies. From darkness he has brought light of hope in the lives of people. J&K has been mentioned as heaven in books, he has made it a reality. Today instead of terrorism, tourism is being discussed.

This ground-breaking project is a testament to Government's commitment to rapid and inclusive development of the UT of Jammu Kashmir. The opening of this tunnel will not only change the fortunes of the tourism sector in Sonamarg but will also change the social and economic condition of this area.

I pay my homage to workers of the Sonamarg Tunnel project martyred in Gagangir terror attack. Today, we have also taken a big leap from a strategic point of view and have provided a strong infrastructure support to facilitate the movement of our Armed Forces. The under-construction Zojila ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

My heart says PM Modi will very soon fulfill J&K statehood restoration promise: Omar

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SONAMARG: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Monday praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his efforts in bridging the gap between "Dil (heart) and Delhi" and holding assembly polls in the Union Territory while exuding confidence that the statehood restoration promise would soon be fulfilled.

Addressing a gathering after the prime minister inaugurated the 6.5-km Z-Morh tunnel renamed 'Sonamarg Tunnel' in the Ganderbal district, the Chief Minister began his speech by



CM Omar Abdullah addressing gathering at Sonamarg.

paying tributes to the seven people who died in a terrorist attack near the tunnel site on

October 20 last year. He said terrorism will be defeated to ensure peace and

development besides safeguarding democracy in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Prime minister, when you came to Srinagar for a programme after getting a third term (in office), people started believing your words. You talked about three important things which included your efforts to bridge 'Dil ki duri aur Delhi se duri', and you have proved it by your work.

"This is your second function in Jammu and Kashmir within 15 days after inaugurating (virtually from Delhi) the separate Jammu Railway Division (on January

■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

Infra development imperative to achieve Viksit Bharat goal: Gadkari

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SONAMARG: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday said infrastructure development is imperative to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat, as the economy depends on good transport and communication facilities.

"The Prime Minister has given us a mission of developed and prosperous India. If we have to achieve a Viksit Bharat, we will have to improve the country's infrastructure.

"Until water, power, transport, and communication do not develop, industry,



Union Minister Nitin Gadkari addressing gathering at Sonamarg.

business, and tourism will not get a boost," Gadkari said, addressing a rally after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Sonamarg tunnel here.

The Union Minister said Modi has taken a pledge to develop J-K along with the country.

"He has given us the task of developing this infrastructure. Good roads make a country developed and prosperous. We are working on a mission to make J-K developed and prosperous so that industries are established here, tourism increases, ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

A tale of two tunnels: Responses in the valley, then and now



JAMMU: It was a landmark day for the Kashmir Valley-and, to a lesser extent, for the people of Jammu-when Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the strategically crucial Z-Morh Tunnel, now renamed the Sonamarg Tunnel. This engineering marvel has made the breathtakingly beautiful tourist resort of Sonamarg accessible throughout the year. The Valley welcomed the development with widespread enthusiasm, viewing the tunnel as a step toward prosperity and an economic boon for the tourism industry, which has been the backbone of the

region's economy for decades.

In stark contrast, the reaction in 2017 to the inauguration of the Chenani-Nashri Tunnel, India's longest road tunnel, was muted and loaded with skepticism. Despite the tunnel reducing travel time between Jammu and Srinagar by two hours, the response from the Valley was marked by resentment.

The contrasting responses to these two monumental projects offer a fascinating insight into the evolving psyche of the Valley, shaped by socio-political and historical contingencies.

Reflecting the jubilant mood over the Sonamarg Tunnel's inauguration, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, enjoying widespread mandate in the Valley, termed the tunnel as a potential game-changer for Sonamarg. The magnificent

tourist resort is being envisioned as a new hub for winter sports, akin to the renowned Gulmarg skiing resort.

In 2017, however, skepticism about the Chenani-Nashri Tunnel dominated public discourse. Reports even suggested that some separatist and extremist elements spread unfounded fears, alleging the tunnel's primary purpose was to transport prisoners from Kashmir to jails outside the region. Such ridiculous narratives used to gain acceptability during those traumatic times of terror and separatist ecosystem.

The stark difference in responses underscores the transformation that has occurred in the Valley following the abrogation of Article 370. In the era of Modi's Naya Jammu and Kashmir, the Valley has ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

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