

# Modi to visit Somnath Temple, hails it as symbol of India's indomitable spirit

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will join the Somnath Swabhiman Parv on January 11 to celebrate the resilience of the Indian civilisation which rebuilt the temple in Gujarat that was ravaged repeatedly by foreign invaders.

The year-long celebrations are being planned at the Somnath Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva on the Arabian Sea coast at Veraval in Gujarat's Saurashtra region.

Many spiritual and social activities will take place in Somnath from January 8 to 11, the officials said.

In a blogpost to mark 1,000 years since the first attack on the Somnath Temple, the prime minister hailed the temple as a symbol of the indomitable spirit of Indian civilisation.

"There can be no better example of our civilisation's indomitable spirit than Somnath, which stands gloriously, overcoming odds and struggle," he said.

Modi also took a swipe at then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, claiming the opening of the temple in 1951 did not enthuse him.

The prime minister said 2026 marked 1,000 years since the first attack on the Somnath Temple took place and despite repeated attacks subsequently, the temple stands tall.

"This is because Somnath's story is about the unbreakable courage of countless children of Bharat Mata who protected our culture and civilisation," he said.

He said it was the same spirit that was visible in the nation, which has emerged as one of the brightest spots of global growth, having overcome centuries of invasions and colonial loot.

"It is our value systems and the determination of our people that have made India the centre of global attention today. The world is seeing India with hope and optimism. They want to invest in our innovative youngsters," the prime minister said.



"Our art, culture, music and several festivals are going global. Yoga and Ayurveda are making a worldwide impact, boosting healthy living. Solutions to some of the most pressing global challenges are coming from India," Modi said.

The prime minister said the aggressors of the past were now "dust in the wind", their names synonymous with destruction.

"They are footnotes in the annals of history, while Somnath stands bright, radiating far beyond the horizon, reminding us of the eternal spirit that remained undi-

minished by the attack of 1026," he said.

"Somnath is a song of hope that tells us that while hate and fanaticism may have the power to destroy for a moment, faith and conviction in the power of goodness have the power to create for eternity," the prime minister said.

Modi said if the Somnath Temple, which was attacked a thousand years ago and faced continuous attacks thereon, could rise again and again, then "we can surely restore our great nation to the glory it embodied a thousand years ago before the invasions."

"With the blessings of Shree Somnath Mahadev, we move forward with a renewed resolve to build a Viksit Bharat, where civilisational wisdom guides us to work for the welfare of the whole world," the prime minister said.

The temple was attacked and plundered many times, including by Turkish ruler Mahmud Ghazni in 1024

AD.

Modi recalled that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a key role in rebuilding the Somnath Temple after Independence.

"A visit during Diwali time in 1947 moved him so much that he announced that the temple will be rebuilt there. Finally, on May 11th 1951, a grand Temple in Somnath opened its doors to devotees and Dr. Rajendra Prasad was present there," he said.

Modi said Sardar Patel was not too enthused with the opening of the Somnath Temple on May 11, 1951, but the fulfilment of his dream stood tall before the nation.

"The then Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was not too enthused with this development. He did not want the Honourable President as well as Ministers to associate with this special event. He said that this event created a bad impression of India. But Dr. Rajendra Prasad stood firm and the rest is history," Modi said.

# Northern Army commander takes part in bike rally, pays tribute to veterans

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Northern Army Commander Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma on Monday took part in the Dhruva motorcycle rally that started in Udhampur, to pay tribute to the sacrifices of India's bravehearts and strengthen the Army's commitment to veteran outreach and military-civil fusion.

Ahead of the 10th Veterans' Day on January 14, the general officer commanding-in-chief (GOC-in-C) laid a solemn wreath at the Dhruva War Memorial in Udhampur to honour the supreme sacrifices made in the service of the nation. The rally was ceremoniously flagged off here by Param Vir Chakra awardee Honorary Captain Bana Singh and Chinta Devi, wife of Vir Chakra awardee late Naib Subedar Chinni Lal, a defence PRO said.

As an expression of solidarity with and tribute to veterans, Sharma, White Knight Corps GOC, and senior Army officers rode along with the bikers from Udhampur to Nagrota, covering the first phase of the rally, he said. "Spanning approximately 740 kilometres, the Dhruva motorcycle rally is a deliberate



outreach initiative designed to celebrate the unmatched contribution and supreme sacrifices of India's bravehearts, while strengthening the Indian Army's commitment to veteran outreach and military-civil fusion," the PRO said.

The rally will traverse the scenic landscape of the Pir Panjal region in the White Knight Corps zone before culminating at the mega ex-servicemen's rally on January 13 at Rajouri, he said. Along its route, the motorcycle rally will conduct wreath-laying ceremonies at various war memorials. "It is accompanied by 'Aarogya Rakshak' medical teams, which will establish medical outreach camps to provide health screening, preventive care and essential medicines to ex-servicemen," he added.

Blood pressure monitoring machines will be distributed to senior veterans, reinforcing the Army's sustained focus on medical care.

The Dhruva motorcycle rally stands as a testimony to the Indian Army's ethos of 'service beyond uniform', honouring the past, engaging the present, and reaffirming an unbreakable bond with the veteran community, the PRO said.

"The initiative not only commemorates sacrifice but also celebrates the indomitable spirit, resilience and lifelong service of soldiers," the officer added.

To commemorate their selfless service and sacrifices, the Northern Army commander felicitated Honorary Captain Bana Singh and Smt Chinta Devi.

# Rajnath commissions ICG's 1st indigenously built pollution control vessel 'Samudra Pratap'

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

PANAJI: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissioned the Indian Coast Guard's (ICG) first indigenously designed and built pollution control vessel 'Samudra Pratap' in Goa on Monday.

The 114.5-metre vessel, built by the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL), has over 60 per cent of indigenous content. The 4,200-tonne vessel boasts a speed of more than 22 knots and an endurance of 6,000 nautical miles, officials said.

It will serve as a critical platform for enforcing marine pollution control regulations, maritime law enforcement, search and rescue operations, and safeguarding India's Exclusive Economic Zone.

As the largest and most advanced pollution control vessel built in India, Samudra Pratap stands as a testament to the nation's shipbuilding excellence and long-term vision for a cleaner, safer, and self-reliant maritime future, the ICG said in a statement.

The vessel was formally delivered in December to the Coast Guard at GSL.

Defence Minister Singh on Monday commissioned the ship at GSL, Vasco, in South Goa.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, Union Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh and ICG Director General Paramesh Sivamani were present on the occasion.

Singh said this occasion is connected to India's great maritime vision.



"India believes that marine resources are not the property of any one country; they are the shared heritage of humanity," he said.

"When heritage is shared, its responsibility is also shared. This is why India has today become a responsible maritime power," he added.

Singh noted that Samudra Pratap is India's first indigenously designed pollution control vessel.

"It is the largest vessel in the Coast Guard fleet to date," he said.

More than 60 per cent indigenous material has been used in it. "In itself, this is a strong step forward in the direction of a self-reliant India. The true meaning of 'Make in India' is visible in projects like this," he said.

Singh said that "even in such a complex platform, we have achieved this level of indigenous content, which shows that our defence industrial ecosystem has now become quite mature."

"But it needs to become even more mature. I want not just 60 per cent, but up to 90

per cent indigenous content in our ships. This is our endeavour," he commented.

India has achieved such capabilities in defence manufacturing that today it is able to handle even complex challenges related to manufacturing, he said.

Singh said that in recent years, marine pollution has been seen emerging as a serious challenge.

"It is obvious that as marine pollution increases, it will affect the livelihood of fishermen, the future of coastal communities, and the safety of our coming generations," he pointed out.

Singh also said that ensuring adequate participation of women is the goal of their government.

"I am happy that, keeping this vision in mind, the Coast Guard has given due attention to women's empowerment. This is a matter of pride for us," he said.

He noted that women officers have been appointed to important responsibilities such as pilot, observer, air traffic controller, and logis-

tics officer.

"Not only this, they are being trained for hovercraft operations. They are being actively deployed in frontline operations. Today, women are not only in support roles, but are also serving as frontline warriors," he said.

The commissioning of 'Samudra Pratap' marks a major step forward in India's pursuit of 'atmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in shipbuilding and maritime capability development, the ICG said.

Samudra Pratap, meaning Majesty of the Seas, reflects the Indian Coast Guard's resolve to ensure safe, secure and clean seas while safeguarding the nation's maritime interests. The ship represents a major advancement in indigenous ship design and construction, it said.

The vessel has been entirely conceived, designed, and built in India with over 60 per cent indigenous content.

Measuring 114.5 meters in length and 16.5 meters in beam, the ship can achieve speeds exceeding 22 knots and is equipped with advanced automation and computerised control systems, underscoring India's growing capability in complex shipbuilding, the ICG said.

Displacing approximately 4,200 tons, the ship is powered by two 7,500 kW diesel engines driving indigenously developed controllable pitch propellers and gearboxes, offering superior manoeuvrability, flexibility and endurance of 6,000 nautical miles.

The vessel's primary role is pollution response at sea, supported by state-of-the-art systems including side-sweeping arms, floating booms, high-capacity skimmers, portable barges, and a pollution control laboratory, the ICG said.

The ship is also fitted with an external fire-fighting system (Fi-Fi Class 1) and integrates advanced systems such as dynamic positioning, integrated bridge system, integrated platform management system, and automated power management system to enhance automation and mission efficiency.

Its armament includes a 30 mm CRN-91 gun and two 12.7 mm stabilised remote-controlled guns supported by modern fire-control systems.

Commanded by Deputy Inspector General Ashok Kumar Bhama, the ship, to be based at Kochi, has a complement of 14 officers and 115 personnel. The complement includes the maiden appointment of two women officers who will be performing duties shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts, the ICG said.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: India on Monday urged its nationals to avoid non-essential travel to Iran as the country has been rocked by a wave of protests over inflation and currency devaluation.

New Delhi also advised Indian citizens in Iran to exercise due caution and avoid travelling to areas witnessing protests or demonstrations.

"In view of recent developments, Indian nationals are advised to avoid non-essential travel to the Islamic Republic of Iran until further notice," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

"Indian citizens and PIOs (Persons of Indian Origin), currently in Iran, should exercise due caution, avoid areas of protests or demonstrations, and closely monitor news as well as the website and social media handles of the embassy of India in Tehran," it said. The MEA also advised Indian nationals living in Iran on resident-visas to

register with the embassy, if not already done so.

The protests against worsening economic conditions began in Tehran around nine days back.

Now, around 25 provinces out of 31 have witnessed the protests in which over 10 people have been killed. The protests were triggered by a sharp fall in the value of the Iranian currency, rial, against the US dollar.

Last week, US President Donald Trump warned Iran against a crackdown on protesters.

"We are locked and loaded and ready to go," he said in a post on social media without elaborating. "Trump on Sunday night said Iran would be 'hit very hard' if more protesters died. 'We're watching it very closely. If they start killing people like they have in the past, I think they're going to get hit very hard by the United States,'" he said.

In June last year, the US carried out air strikes on Iran's nuclear sites.

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