

# PM inaugurates ₹2.7K cr Z-Morh tunnel in J&K

Project will provide all-weather connectivity between Srinagar and Leh

**DHRUVAKSH SAHA**  
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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the 6.5-kilometre-long Sonamarg tunnel, and said that several large road and rail projects like the upcoming Zojila tunnel and the Udampur Srinagar Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) would make Jammu and Kashmir among the most well-connected regions in the country.

Located on the strategic Srinagar-Leh National Highway, the ₹2,700 crore Sonamarg tunnel (renamed from Z-Morh Tunnel) will be crucial in providing all-weather connectivity to the Ladakh region.

It is a part of the 12-km-long tunnel project — which along with the upcoming Zoji La tunnel — will ensure round-the-clock connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh. Zoji La tunnel is expected to be completed in 2028.

Union minister of road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari and Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Omar Abdullah were also present during the inauguration.

Abdullah hailed PM Modi for his efforts in bridging the gap between 'Dil (heart) and Delhi' and holding assembly polls in the Union Territory, while expressing confidence that he will soon restore the statehood of J&K.

During his address, Modi said, "You can be sure that this is Modi; if he makes a promise, he keeps it." There is a time for every work, and at the right time, the right thing will be done."

The PM also said Gulmarg, which is preparing to host the fifth edition of Khelo India Winter Games, has become the winter sports capital of the country.

Both PM Modi and Abdullah paid tributes to the seven workers who were killed in a terrorist attack near the tunnel site on October 20 last year. The PM said that the route between Srinagar and Leh would earlier be impacted by snowfall and ava-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flanked by J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha (left), Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah (right), Union Minister Nitin Gadkari (far right), at the inauguration of the Z-Morh tunnel

PHOTO: PTI

"THERE'S ATMOSPHERE OF PEACE IN J&K AND WE HAVE SEEN ITS EFFECT ON TOURISM; TODAY KASHMIR IS WRITING NEW SAGA OF DEVELOPMENT"

**NARENDRA MODI**  
Prime Minister

"MY HEART SAYS PM MODI WILL VERY SOON FULFIL THE J&K STATEHOOD RESTORATION PROMISE"

**OMAR ABDULLAH**  
Chief Minister, J&K

lanches in the valley. "Now the economy of the Union Territory will immensely benefit from uninterrupted connectivity," he said. Sonmarg tunnel, located in J&K's Ganderbal district, was initially being executed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in public private partnership mode in 2012, but was subsequently taken over by the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL). The project faced numerous delays as Srinagar-Sonmarg Tunnelway Ltd, the first concessionaire, was an entity of the IL&FS group, which faced a financial crisis in 2018.

The contract for the tunnel was then awarded to APCO Infratech in August 2019,

with a 42-month deadline.

The bi-directional tunnel features a parallel escape tunnel for enhanced safety. It includes a 3.7 km creeper lane for heavily loaded vehicles, a 4.6 km western approach road, a 0.9 km eastern approach road, 2 major bridges, and 1 minor bridge.

The tunnel, along with other infrastructure projects, is also of strategic importance, as these ensure all-year military access and supply chains for military essentials. Modi said that over ₹42,000 crore worth of road connectivity projects are underway in J&K, including four national highway projects and two ring roads and more than 14 tunnels like Sonamarg are being constructed.