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From 22nd September, the next-generation GST reforms will come into effect, marking the beginning of a GST Bachat Utsav: PM

(Gns). Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the nation via video conferencing today. Extending heartfelt greetings to all citizens on the commencement of Navratri, the festival of worshipping Shakti, he remarked that from the very first day of Navratri, the nation is taking a significant step forward in the Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign. Beginning at sunrise on 22nd September, the country will implement Next Generation GST reforms. The Prime Minister highlighted that this marks the beginning of a GST Bachat Utsav (Savings Festival) across India. He emphasized that this festival will enhance savings and make it easier for people to purchase their preferred items. Shri Modi noted that the benefits of this savings festival will reach the poor, middle class, neo middle class, youth, farmers, women, shopkeepers, traders, and entrepreneurs alike. He remarked that in this festive season, every household will experience increased happiness and sweetness. Extending his congratulations, the Prime Minister conveyed best wishes to crores of families across the country for the Next Generation GST reforms and the GST Savings Festival. He underscored that these reforms will accelerate India's growth story, simplifying business operations, foreign newspaper. The article described the challenges faced by a company that found it so difficult to send goods from Bengaluru to Hyderabad—a distance of just 570 kilometers—that it preferred to ship the goods from Bengaluru to Europe and then back to Hyderabad.

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attractive, and ensure that every state becomes an equal partner in the race for development.

Recalling that India took its first steps towards GST reform in 2017, marking the end of an old chapter and the beginning of a new one in the country's economic history, Shri Modi highlighted that for decades, citizens and traders were entangled in a complex web of taxes—Octroi, Entry Tax, Sales Tax, Excise, VAT, and Service Tax—amounting to dozens of levies across the nation. The Prime Minister pointed out that transporting goods from one city to another required crossing multiple checkpoints, filling numerous forms and navigating a maze of differing tax rules at every location. He shared a personal memory from 2014, when he assumed office as Prime Minister, mentioning a striking example published in a

lenges faced by a company that found it so difficult to send goods from Bengaluru to Hyderabad—a distance of just 570 kilometers—that it preferred to ship the goods from Bengaluru to Europe and then back to Hyderabad.

The Prime Minister remarked that such were the conditions due to the entanglement of taxes and tolls. He reiterated that the earlier example was just one among countless instances. He highlighted that lakhs of companies and crores of citizens faced daily hardships because of the complex web of multiple taxes. Shri Modi emphasized that the increased cost of transporting goods from one city to another was ultimately borne by the poor and recovered from customers like the general public.

Emphasizing that it was imperative to free the nation from the prevailing

tax complexities, Shri Modi recalled that upon receiving the mandate in 2014, the government prioritized GST in the interest of the people and the nation. He highlighted that extensive consultations were held with all stakeholders, every concern raised by states was addressed, and solutions were found for every question. He noted that by bringing all states together, such a monumental tax reform in independent India became possible. The Prime Minister stated that it was the result of joint efforts by the Centre and the states that the country was liberated from the maze of multiple taxes and a uniform system was established across the nation. He affirmed that the dream of One Nation-One Tax was realized.

Prime Minister stated that reform is a continuous process, and as times change and national needs evolve, next-generation reforms become equally essential.

He emphasized that keeping in view the current requirements and future aspirations of the country, these new GST reforms are being implemented. Shri Modi highlighted that under the new structure, only 5% and 18% tax slabs will primarily remain. This, he remarked, means that most everyday-use items will become more affordable.

Shri Amit Shah, lays the foundation stone for the building of 'Shri Parasmal Bohra College for the Visually Impaired' and a hostel for students in Jodhpur, Rajasthan

(Gns). Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi changed the world's perspective towards specially-abled people by calling them 'Divyang'

By introducing the word 'Divyang,' Modi Ji awakened a sense of self-respect, new identity, and the dream of becoming self-reliant among all persons with disabilities

When society begins to see persons with disabilities not as objects of pity but as symbols of divinity, then true work for their welfare begins

Shri Parasmal Bohra Blind College has been continuously inspiring people to accept persons with disabilities and to recognize and advance the unique strength they possess

Modi government has worked to recognize the skills of Divyangs and provide them with the right platforms

If society, the governments, and voluntary organizations work together for the welfare of Divyangs, then nothing is impossible

Under the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, Modi government made 1,314 central government buildings and 90 airports accessible to persons with disabilities

From independence till

2014, only 7 lakh people had been provided with artificial aids by the central government, whereas in just 10 years, Modi govern-

inspires countless others. He said that God has bestowed unique strengths upon the differently-abled, and by recognizing these



ment has provided artificial assistive devices to more than 31 lakh people

Posted On: 21 SEP 2025 7:27PM by PIB Delhi

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, today laid the foundation stone for the building of 'Shri Parasmal Bohra College for the Visually Impaired' and a hostel for students in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Rajasthan Chief Minister Shri Bhajanlal Sharma, Union Minister Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat along with several distinguished guests, was present on the occasion.

In his address, Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah said that when a person dedicates their life to service, especially for the differently-abled, that life

strengths, the effort to simplify their lives has been embraced by thousands through the life of Sushila ji.

CR5_0617.JPG

Shri Amit Shah said that three projects, worth approximately Rs. 15 crore, had their foundation stones laid today. He expressed confidence that, based on the institution's track record, all three projects would be completed on time., bringing new light to the lives of hundreds of children. He highlighted that Sushila ji has spread the light of knowledge and vision in the lives of hundreds of visually impaired students through five schools, two colleges, free hostels, meals, audio books, recorded lectures, a Braille printing press, screen readers, a computer lab, and a library.

Shri Amit Shah said that Parasmal Bohra College

for the Visually Impaired became Rajasthan's first college for the visually impaired in 2022. He emphasized that true work for the differently-abled begins when they are seen not as objects of pity but as symbols of divinity. He mentioned that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was the first to use the term "Divyang" instead of "disabled" for the entire country in 2015. He said this term itself signifies that a single decision by Prime Minister Modi has transformed the perspective of the people of India, all state governments, and the central government toward the differently-abled. He added that Prime Minister Modi has instilled new self-respect, identity, and the aspiration for self-reliance in all differently-abled individuals across the country through the term "Divyang."

CR5_0280.JPG

Union Home Minister said that the Modi government has provided a platform for the sporting talents inherent in all differently-abled individuals across the country. He said that the Paralympic Games began globally in 1960, and until 2012, India had won only 8 medals in all Paralympic Games combined. He highlighted that in the last three Paralympic Games3



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According to the World Economic Forum, nearly 40 per cent of core job skills are expected to change in the next five years. Consequently, AI literacy is becoming as important of a building block as reading or arithmetic. It is not only about using technology but also about thriving in a world intensively shaped by it. In this context India cannot afford to lag. However, our response must be rooted in the understanding that any AI-for-education strategy must mirror the diversity, decentralization, and dynamism of Indian education itself. India already has the beginnings of a supportive policy environment in the shape of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. However, to truly succeed, these efforts need to fit different local contexts rather than be copied the same way everywhere. The real test is not whether AI can support education. It is about how AI will be experienced across India's many learning environments. To understand its true impact, we need to look beyond technical potential and focus on how students, teachers, and communities actually use it in everyday settings. Some possibilities like personalized learning and teacher support are already showing promise. These, too, need to be shaped by the diverse realities of Indian education. One of the most promising areas is personalized learning. In theory, AI can tailor lessons to each student's pace, strengths, and learning gaps. In practice, this can look very different depending on the environment. In a pilot by NITI Aayog, AI-powered tutoring led to a 40 per cent improvement in learning outcomes by identifying and addressing individual needs. Yet, the impact of such tools in a rural school with limited connectivity versus an urban private institution with tech-savvy staff will vary. A personalized algorithm must also be context-aware. Equally important is how AI is reshaping the role of teachers.

By its own actions, Pakistan had forfeited the entitlement to receive hydrological data – such as vital flood forecasts and river discharge volumes – that India had regularly shared in the past for early warning and water management. Through its persistent policy of fomenting instability in the neighbourhood via proxy wars and terrorism, Pakistan has lost access to timely alerts. The absence of such information, particularly during the recent surge of the Sutlej crossing 122,000 cusecs, would have greatly aggravated the devastation.

Due to sharing of advanced data by India, Pakistan was able to anticipate or prepare for dangerous inflows, reducing evacuation lead time and exposing vulnerable communities along the Chenab, Ravi, and Sutlej to even greater risk. We all are aware that post the Pahalgam bloodshed in April 2025, India formally suspended the Indus Water Treaty, citing Pakistan's alleged support for cross-border terrorism, and invoking changes in ground realities such as demographics and climate as a justification. India invoked the principle of *rebus sic stantibus* (from international customary law) under Article 62 of the Vienna Convention to defend its position of suspension under a "fundamental change of circumstances".

Indian leaders, including External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, and the Ministry of External Affairs, have iterated that the Treaty remains in abeyance until Pakistan "credibly and irrevocably" stops cross-border terrorism claiming legal justification under changed circumstances. Officials argue the

Treaty doesn't provide for suspension by one party alone. Pakistan has raised its concern towards any attempt to divert or block treaty-guaranteed waters. As of August 2025, Pakistan has iterated its commitment to the full implementation of the Treaty and urged India to restore its normal functioning. While we as Indians are very clear about our stance, at an international level, on 27 June 2025, the Court of Arbitration issued a Supplemental Award on Competence," reaffirming that it still has jurisdiction over disputes under the Treaty – even though India has suspended it.

The Court also stated that the Treaty does not allow unilateral suspension or abeyance. We have categorically rejected the Court's authority, calling its formation and decision illegal and void under the Treaty. On August 25, Pakistan again requested for resumption, but the Treaty remains paused. Let us have a look at the practical impacts of "Held in Abeyance" under which several key functions under the Treaty have been suspended. These include Discontinuation of formal meetings between Indus Waters Commissioners", No Hydrological data to be shared with Pakistan such as flood forecasts, glacier data or even river discharge information", Pakistani officials cannot visit J&K to monitor projects", "India's position to proceed with hydro projects without sharing design details with Pakistan" and lastly discontinuation of publication of the Treaty's usual annual reports.

These disruptions have

a direct impact and serious risks, particularly for Pakistan's agriculture – more than 90 per cent of which relies on Indus basin water. On the other hand,



recently, Pakistan's Punjab province, particularly the eastern region, has endured the worst flooding in four decades. Over one million people have been evacuated, with more than 1,400 villages inundated, and at least 12 deaths in one week alone. In southern Sindh, more than 100,000 people were evacuated as floodwaters moved downstream, threatening further catastrophic losses. Newer figures report that over 2,000 villages were submerged, displacing over two million people, with more than 760,000 people and 516,000 livestock evacuated. At least 33 lives have been lost so far.

East Punjab alone has seen nearly 250,000 people displaced, with 1.2 million affected and 1,400 villages hit. Mr Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson of MEA said, "We have timely shared high flood data and hydrological data through our High Commission and through our diplomatic channels with Pakistan on humanitarian grounds, despite the Indus Waters Treaty held in abeyance."

This has reduced dramatically the impact of this year's floods across Pakistan. Without warning or data, communities would have diminished lead time

for evacuation and infrastructure defense, elevating the scale of human, agricultural and economic devastation." If the recent floods underscore the compounded consequences of the Indus Waters Treaty's suspension, Pakistan must reflect on whether persisting with terrorism – at the cost of innocent civilian lives – serves any purpose

The moment has come for Pakistan to look inward and end cross-border terrorism in a credible and irreversible way, and begin to act as a responsible neighbor. This juncture presents an opportunity for Pakistan to change course. It is also worth recalling that neither its proxy warfare nor its conventional military capabilities pose a challenge to India – something conclusively demonstrated during Operation Sindoor, when Pakistan was brought to its knees within 48 hours and forced to plead for a ceasefire. Pakistan is otherwise well aware that it already enjoys the most favorable terms under the existing Treaty and will likely continue stonewalling any

Indian attempt at modification or renegotiation. India, on the other hand, is almost certain to insist that any renegotiation remain strictly bilateral. This prospect is deeply unsettling for Pakistan and explains why some of its experts occasionally float the idea of involving China & Afghanistan (with 8 and 6 per cent of the basin respectively) – should renegotiation ever take place.

After more than six decades, India has finally leveraged its position as the upper riparian state, having exhausted other avenues to deter Pakistan's cross-border terrorism. By introducing a measure of uncertainty in the volume and timing of water flows, India is signaling the potential for serious logistical consequences for Pakistan — hoping this might compel Islamabad to reconsider its actions. However, India's primary intent in keeping the Treaty in suspension is not to disrupt flows, as Pakistan fears, but rather to assert its rightful claim to fully utilize the western rivers. Unbound by strict adherence to the Treaty, India is in no rush to alter the existing stalemate; instead, it appears focused on expediting long-pending water projects in Jammu & Kashmir, irrespective of Pakistan's objections. Keeping other options up our sleeves, we also need to have in-depth analysis of various opportunities that present itself for India.

We have to find ways to exhaust the water within India, and building dams is one option, but can we build 24 Bhakras in the desired time frame? For

those who know, even the size of the Gobind Sagar reservoir is unimaginably large. Together, India's river water projects on the Jhelum, Chenab, and Indus already allow for storage between 1.2 to 3.6 MAF, and from here either we can expand the storage through more dams and checkpoints, or else, do what the Chinese have done to aid their northwestern region. We can also have a plan which may extend beyond 2035 under which "a six-canal project" (see chart), each canal 40m wide (13-15 DTC buses stacked sideways), running from Jammu region to other states including Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chandigarh, Delhi, and even Gujarat, can be set up.

The lie of the ground doesn't allow one to build through Himachal & Uttarakhand, but the plains are ideal. Think of them as water highways, and a canal network does exist, but the water shortages are soon going to be upon us. We have to give it ten years. Politically, the land acquisition should not be a challenge, given farmers in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh do know that water is getting over. These canals will even help overcome flood like situations as prevailing now in J&K and Punjab. The cost is going to be more than Rs. 5 Lakh Crore, but we can spend. In the Punjab-Haryana belt, it solves a political problem, since abundant water will be available, and once it gets to Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, it can go anywhere. Delhi also needs water with its expanding outer areas and population density. "Win Win For All".







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Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendrabhai Modi

Leopard sighting sparks panic in Lucknow Cantonment

(Gns). The presence of a leopard in Lucknow's Cantonment area has created panic among residents.

A local resident captured a video of the leopard crossing the road early Sunday morning, which quickly went viral on social media. Teams from the Forest Department and the Cantonment Board rushed to the spot and began monitoring the area.

The eyewitness said he noticed movement by the roadside early in the morning. As he stopped his car, the leopard suddenly appeared. Within seconds, it crossed the road and disappeared into the forest. He recorded the entire inci-

dent on his mobile phone. Following the video's circulation, a joint team of

employees have been deployed in eight-hour shifts, and night patrolling



the Forest Department and the Cantonment Board launched a search operation and found leopard footprints in the area. Three

has been intensified. The Forest Department has urged residents to avoid going out alone at night, keep pets safe, and

immediately inform the control room if the leopard is spotted again.

DFO Lucknow, Shitanshu Pandey, confirmed: "Leopard footprints have been found near the Sugarcane Institute. Trap cameras have been installed, and three employees have been deployed in eight-hour shifts."

This is not the first time a leopard has been sighted in Lucknow Cantt and nearby areas. Last year, leopard footprints were also found, leading to the installation of trap cameras. Experts believe the green corridor connecting the forest makes this zone a natural route for leopard movement.

targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The shell remnants were found near Oont Kadal and immediately transported to the nearest police station for further examination and necessary action. The recovery serves as a reminder of the operation's intensity and underscores the ongoing need for vigilance and careful management of affected areas.

It is worth noting that while India confined its attacks to terror infrastructure, Pakistan targeted civilian areas in Rajouri, Poonch, Baramulla, Jammu, Samba, Kathua, and other districts of J&K. Several civilians, including women and children, were killed in these attacks.

railway station expansion project itself is under question. More than 150 houses belonging to the Scheduled Castes have been demolished, and the people whose land is being acquired are neither receiving compensation nor rehabilitation.

He accused the state government and local administration of acquiring land belonging to the poor and selling it to industrialists at throwaway prices.

and religious places.

On the issue of employment, Sahoo accused the BJP of betraying its pre-poll promise to fill 1.5 lakh vacant government posts within two years. "In 15 months, only 57,000 jobs have been claimed and those too were part of recruitment drives initiated during Naveen Patnaik's tenure. The BJP is simply handing out appointment letters and taking credit," he said.

He also flagged irregularities in recruitment, noting that at least 15 exams conducted in the past year were marred by controversy.

On the industrial and economic front, Sahoo said the state's claim of attracting Rs16 lakh crore in investments has not translated into a single project. Instead, several companies that had signed MoUs under the previous BJD government are reportedly leaving Odisha, according to media reports.

In sports, he said Odisha had earned national and international acclaim under Naveen Patnaik's leadership by developing infrastructure and hosting global events, but the sector is now in decline. Similarly, tourism has suffered due to law-and-order issues, with even the United States issuing advisories against travel to Odisha — a blow to liveli-

Third Edition of Dweep Diksha Dialogue underscores ANC's Role as a Maritime Strategic Hub

(Gns). The Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), India's only operational Joint Services Command, successfully hosted the third edition of the Dweep Diksha Dialogue on September 19-20, 2025 at Sri Vijaya Puram, Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands, under the theme 'Evolution of ANC as a Strategic Hub and Beyond.' The Dialogue, now firmly established as a premier strategic forum, brought together eminent personalities from the Armed Forces, diplomacy, academia, media, and strategic affairs to explore the ANC's unique role in shaping India's maritime and security posture in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

While the Dialogue featured high-profile addresses by Chief of Defence

Staff General Anil Chauhan, Commander-in-Chief ANC (CINCAN) Lt Gen Dinesh Singh Rana and Lieutenant

strategic signalling, and building India's profile as a preferred security partner in the region.



governor of A&N Islands Admiral DK Joshi, its deeper significance lay in fostering dialogue between serving officers, veterans, analysts, and thought leaders on how India can secure its interests in the Indo-Pacific. The forum facilitated discussions on future-ready operational concepts, cognitive and cyber warfare,

Distinguished participants also included former Chief of Naval Staff and first CINCAN Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd); former CINCAN Lt Gen Ajai Singh, (Retd); Rear Admiral Monty Khanna (Retd); Deputy Chief of the Army Staff (Strategic) Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai and former Flag Officer Vice Admiral Anil

UP Police open history sheet against Mukhtar Ansari's younger son Umar

(Gns). The Muhammadabad Police on Sunday officially opened a history-sheet against Umar Ansari, the younger son of jailed mafia-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari who is facing multiple criminal cases across various districts including Lucknow, Mau, Ghazipur, and Muhammadabad.

According to Superintendent of Police Dr. Iraj Raja, Umar Ansari has been charged in a total of seven criminal cases, involving serious allegations such as forgery, fraudulently occupying public land, and delivering inflammatory speeches during elections.

Authorities have linked him to the IS-191 gang, a known criminal syndicate led by his father Mukhtar Ansari.

During a routine patrol and surveillance operation in the Muhammadabad area, SHO RS Nagar and his team gathered intelligence pointing to Umar Ansari's alleged involvement in manipulating land records and inciting communal tension for political gains. These activities have now prompted the opening of his history-sheet, a formal record

maintained for habitual offenders.

As per the police report, three cases are registered against Umar in Mau City Kotwali, one case in South Tola police station, Mau, one case in Mohammadabad police station, Ghazipur, one case in Lucknow, and one case in Ghazipur City Kotwali.

The charges include fraud, forgery, and provocative speech-making, especially during the election period. One of the forgery cases had previously led to Umar's judicial cus-



Chawla (Retd).

Beyond the formal discussions, the Dialogue served as a platform to foster long-term strategic thinking, highlight emerging regional challenges, and envision the future trajectory of India's defence and security capabilities.

Instituted in 2023, the Dweep Diksha Dialogue reflects ANC's evolution from a geographically isolated outpost into a dynamic operational and intellectual hub, capable of influencing policy, operational planning, and regional stability. This year's edition emphasized the growing importance of multi-domain warfare, grey-zone strategies, and maritime security. The dialogue reinforces ANC's position as a hub for professional military education, operational experi-

People in UP are facing exploitation and oppression: Chandrashekhar Azad

(Gns). Azad Samaj Party chief and Nagina MP Chandrashekhar Azad has stated that the people of Uttar Pradesh are suffering from exploitation and oppression and that they will oust the BJP government in the 2027 assembly elections.

Addressing a meeting here on Sunday, Chandrashekhar Azad called on the youth not to rest for the next 17-18

months and to travel from village to village to spread the party's policies and ideology.

The Azad Samaj Party chief stated that he would allocate 50 percent of the assembly seats to the backward classes in the elections and pledged to ensure their political participation.

Speaking to reporters



after the meeting, he said that the Ayodhya Dham

BJD Youth wing slams BJP govt in Odisha over neglect of Gen Z, development and jobs

(Gns). The youth wing of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Odisha's principal Opposition party, on Sunday accused the 15-month-old BJP government of neglecting Generation Z. Charging the government with having "no vision or roadmap for youth development," Biju Yuva Janata Dal (BYJD) president Chinmaya Sahoo said this neglect has created widespread frustration among young people.

Addressing a press conference, Sahoo said unemployment in the state has reached alarming levels. "The government lacks any concrete youth policy and has no structured plan for empowering the youth," he

alleged. He accused the BJP of "double standards," pointing out that while the government organizes marathons

India), it has simultaneously reopened nearly 70 liquor shops that were earlier shut down by the BJD government. Many of these



under the banner of "Nasha Mukti Bharat" (Drug-Free

outlets, he noted, are close to educational institutions

MP achieves historic milestone in renewable energy

Madhya Pradesh has created history in the renewable energy sector, with the state's first 'Solar-plus-Storage' project, being developed in Morena, registering the country's lowest-ever tariff rate of Rs 2.70 per unit.

This is the first project in India where firm and dispatchable renewable energy (FDRE) will be available at a cost of less than Rs 3 per unit.

Moreover, with 95 per cent annual availability of power, the project has set another new benchmark.

While previous such projects across the country could ensure only about 50 per cent peak-hour availability and 85 per cent annual availability, the Morena project is changing this trend by ensuring 95 per cent supply during peak hours.

The Morena project combines two systems, including a composite solar project that charges batteries with solar energy, and a 'Storage-as-a-Service' project, where excess grid power at night recharges batteries for the morning peak supply.

This mechanism ensures efficient utilisation of surplus night-time electricity from the state grid to meet morning peak-hour demand.

The project sets a benchmark for equal supply during daytime and peak hours, laying the foundation for future projects that can provide a flat power profile across 24 hours.

This will give renewable energy the same reliability as conventional energy, making it technically and commercially equivalent.

Two killed, 3 seriously injured in blast at illegal firecracker unit in Odisha

(Gns). At least two people died and three others were seriously injured on Sunday in an explosion at an illegal firecracker factory in Odisha's Boudh district, police said.

The powerful explosion occurred at highway-side Jiakata-Chhatrapur village in the Puruna Cuttack area, ripping apart the concrete building where the fire crackers manufactured without a mandatory license were stored.

The impact of the blast was so severe that the structure, where the fire-crackers were being made,

was blown up and was extensively damaged.



Besides, the houses in the vicinity of the mishap site were also damaged. The deafening sound from the

blast site triggered panic in the village, with locals ini-

tially believing that it was a bomb blast.

The two bodies were severely burnt and are diffi-

cult to recognise, police said, adding that the exact cause of the incident would be ascertained after the investigation.

An inquiry into the incident was launched, and police personnel, fire brigade, and Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) were stationed at the site. Forensic experts are on the job to gather legal evidence at the mishap spot. The team carried out the operation to rescue the victims trapped under the debris. Three severely injured people were later rescued from the rubble, police said.

Footfall of foreign, domestic tourists substantially increased in Odisha

(Gns). Odisha, endowed with a huge tourism potential, has recorded a substantial increase in the footfall of foreign tourists to coastal state in recent years after a considerable decline in 2020 and 2021 due to the outbreak of Covid-19.

Last year, 54,000 international tourists visited the state while the number of foreigners visiting Odisha in 2023 was 45,000. The footfall of overseas tourists stood at 22,121 in 2022. Likewise, the footfall of domestic tourists is on the rise with the state attracting 44 lakh tourists from different parts of the country in 2024. In 2023, there was a footfall of 47 lakh domestic tourists, Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida told the Odisha Assembly on Saturday.

The state government has so identified and accorded recognition to 378 sites as tourist destinations, extending tourist-friendly infrastructure to these tourist centres. To

ensure safety of tourists, special police setup has been put in place in eight prominent tourist destinations. To promote tourism, 78 tourist officers are posted across the State,

Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) Schemes to the State of Odisha. Additionally, the Ministry has also sanctioned projects under the 'Assistance to Central Agencies for



Deputy CM Parida informed.

It should be noted here that the Ministry of Tourism has provided financial assistance for the development of tourism related infrastructure under the 'Swadesh Darshan' and 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage

Tourism Infrastructure Development' Scheme in the State of Odisha.

The state's tourism policy promotes beach tourism, Buddhist tourism, heritage tourism, religious tourism, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism, Caravan, Campervan/Camping Van

Tourism, health and wellness tourism, marine, cruise and yacht tourism, sand art tourism, adventure tourism.

A sizable bulk of tourists, both domestic and international tourists, prefer visiting Puri, Bhubaneswar and Konark in coastal Odisha as these places have received greater pan-India exposure.

The Jagannath temple and sprawling beach in Puri are the major attractions that draw lakhs of tourists every day, along with Konrak, which is a UNESCO heritage site. The 13th century Sun Temple, intricately built as a huge solar chariot with 12 pairs of ornamented wheels dragged by seven horses, is a hugely popular tourists' destination of the state while the state capital city Bhubaneswar is popularly known as a city of temples, housing the famous Shaivite shrine of 11th century Lingaraj temple, besides Buddhist heritage sites.