

# Delhi-Meerut travel now in 40 mins, via RRTS

PM also inaugurates Delhi Metro's Phase-IV stretch

DHRUVAKSH SAHA  
New Delhi, 5 January

At the head of the crucial Assembly elections in the national capital, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated two major infrastructure projects for Delhi — direct connectivity between Delhi and Meerut with the New Ashok Nagar-Sahibabad stretch of the Namo Bharat service and extension of Delhi Metro's Magenta Line.

The operationalisation of services on two stations (a 12-kilometre stretch) on the Delhi-Meerut corridor — Anand Vihar and New Ashok Nagar — is estimated to cost around ₹4,600 crore, among other infrastructure projects.

With this addition, Namo Bharat trains will arrive in Delhi, reducing travel time between New Ashok Nagar and Meerut South to under 40 minutes. Of the newly inaugurated 13 km section, 6 km is underground and includes a prominent station on the corridor, Anand Vihar.

"This marks the first time that Namo Bharat trains will operate in an underground section. The other station on this stretch is an elevated



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Sahibabad Railway station in Ghaziabad on Sunday to inaugurate the 13 km stretch of the Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System corridor between Sahibabad and New Ashok Nagar PHOTO: PTI

station at New Ashok Nagar," said the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), the central government arm responsible for the execution of the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS).

This particular stretch is expected to be crucial for the operations of the RRTS service. Passenger traffic since the initial inauguration has been limited, with NCRTC stating that around 5 million passengers have used the services in the 14 months since its launch in October 2023.

For context, Delhi Metro (though not a like-for-like comparison) sees a ridership of around 6-7 million

passengers daily. Several Meerut-Delhi commuters had earlier said the partial opening and lack of direct connectivity to Delhi meant they continued to rely on road transport or railways for their daily commuting needs. However, they expect this to change now that the inter-city semi-high-speed rail service is connected to the capital.

More traffic is expected by June this year, when the service will be fully connected to the heart of the city with its extension to Sarai Kale Khan. The entire project, costing ₹30,000 crore, is expected by NCRTC to handle a daily ridership of

800,000 once the corridor between Sarai Kale Khan and Meerut is completed in 2025, reducing travel time between the two cities to less than an hour.

The train, manufactured by French rail giant Alstom, can travel at speeds of up to 160 kilometres per hour, with a design speed of 180 kmph. With this, the operational stretch of the Namo Bharat Corridor expands to 55 km, featuring a total of 11 stations.

### Metro Phase-4 kicks off

Modi also inaugurated the first operational section of Delhi Metro's Phase-IV, which had faced delays due to Covid-19, an exception for the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) known for its timely project execution. He inaugurated the 2.8 km stretch between Janakpuri West and Krishna Park Extension on Delhi Metro's Magenta Line, worth around ₹1,200 crore.

Train services between Janakpuri West and Krishna Park Extension will operate at a frequency of 16 minutes initially, with services on the extended section beginning at 3 pm on Sunday, according to DMRC.

"The rest of the Magenta Line extension from Krishna Park Extension till RK Ashram Marg will be completed by 2026 in phases. Work is in progress for the remaining corridor as well," DMRC said.

During a public address in Delhi's Rohini, Modi said that before 2014, India's metro network was only 248 kms and was limited to just five cities. In the past ten years, over 752 kilometers of new metro lines have been inaugurated in India. He added that metro services now operate in 21 cities across the country, with over 1,000 kms of routes currently under rapid development.

The PM claimed that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led government has been an "Aapda" (disaster), with the people of the capital continuing to face infrastructure gaps, polluted air, and inadequate housing, while the central government has executed numerous transformative projects for the city.

In response, former chief minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal said the PM offered no vision for the people of Delhi.

"Today, the PM spoke for 38 minutes, and he kept abusing the people of Delhi and the elected government for 29 minutes. I was listening to it, and it felt bad," Kejriwal said.

The AAP leader said the party chose governance over petty politics despite its top leaders being jailed by the central government. "If we had taken the injustices done to us to heart, this Delhi Metro line would not have been built, and its inauguration would not have happened today," Kejriwal said.

# Tighter anti-spam norms in a mth: Trai Pilot soon to onboard past user consents onto digital system

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi, 5 January

Trai will start, this month, a pilot to onboard paper-based and past permissions given by customers for receiving commercial communications onto its digital distributed ledger technology (DLT) platform, a process that in the long-run would include scrubbing and verifying their current validity and offering opt-outs to those keen on it, Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti said, adding that tighter regulations on curbing spam as well as new consultation examining an authorisation framework for telemarketers can also be expected in a month.

only the interest of the industry, but also the interest of the consumer, who must have the option to pay only for services they need, he said.

The regulator is also all set to initiate a massive overhaul of its IT system, a move, it expects, would lead to rationalisation and reduction in multiple instances of filings by telecom companies and other industry stakeholders. Deloitte

which has been roped in as a consultant is on the verge of submitting its report on revamp of its IT systems. The regulator will thereafter appoint an agency for the revamp and the entire exercise will be prioritised and completed this year, Lahoti said.

On Trai's list of priorities for 2025 are recommendations on satellite communications spectrum. Lahoti said the regulator will firm up its recommendations on millimetre wave spectrum band (auction of spectrum in 37-37.5 GHz, 37.5-40 GHz and 42.5-43.5 GHz bands) in about a month's time and also bring out a consultation paper on backhaul spectrum by March this year.



# Cold wave, dense fog grip North India: Several flights delayed, schools shut

Low visibility conditions continued in Delhi on Sunday, while the Jharkhand government announced closure of schools from January 7-13 in view of a cold wave sweeping the eastern state. Also, more than 100 flights were delayed at the national capital's airport.

The mercury neared the freezing point in several parts of Kashmir Valley which received fresh snowfall on Sunday, while cold weather conditions continued at many places in Haryana and Punjab.

Dense fog persisted in the national capital, reducing visibility to zero and disrupting several flights



A flight makes a landing at the Jayprakash Narayan International Airport amid dense fog in Patna PHOTO: PTI

and train schedules, officials said.

Low visibility conditions due to dense fog have been impacting flight operations at Delhi airport for the

past three days. "Compared to Saturday's 9-hour zero visibility spell, Patna experienced a relatively shorter duration of 3.5 hours of zero visibility on Sunday," an official said.

Most parts of Kashmir, including Srinagar, received a fresh spell of snowfall on Sunday.

Patna also witnessed of cold wave, with several places recording a minimum temperature of 10 degrees Celsius or below. Due to the intense cold conditions, the Patna district administration asked all government and private schools till class 8 to remain shut till January 11. PTI

# Parts of US brace for heavy snow, ice, and blizzards

A blast of snow, ice, wind and plunging temperatures stirred up dangerous travel conditions in parts of the central US on Sunday, as a disruptive winter storm brought the possibility of the "heaviest snowfall in a decade" to some areas.

Snowfall and ice blanketed major roadways in parts of Kansas and Indiana, where the state's National Guard was activated to help any motorists getting stuck. At least 8 inches of snow were expected, particularly north of Interstate 70 as the National Weather Service issued winter

storm warnings from Kansas and Missouri — where blizzard conditions were reported — to New Jersey into Monday.

"For locations in this region that receive the highest snow totals, it may be the heaviest snowfall in at least a decade," the weather service said early Sunday.

The polar vortex of ultra-cold air usually spent panned up around the North Pole, spinning like a top. But sometimes it escapes or stretches down to the US, Europe or Asia — and that's when large numbers of people experience intense doses of cold. PTI

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