

PM dedicates Kochi Metro to the nation



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kerala Governor P Sathasivam, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Union Minister Venkaiah Naidu take a ride in the newly launched Kochi Metro on Saturday

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Kerala took a big leap in the development of modern urban transport infrastructure on Saturday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicating to the nation the first phase of the grand Kochi Metro rail system. Inaugurating the dream project of the entire State, Modi called for bringing about a paradigm shift in urban planning by adopting a people-centric approach.

After cutting the ribbon to open the 13.2-km Aluva-Palarivattom first reach of the ₹5,181-crore Phase 1 of Kochi Metro project, the Prime Minister took a short inaugural ride on the Metro accompanied by Governor P Sathasivam, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Union Urban Development Minister Venkaiah Naidu, India's Metro Man E Sreedharan and others.

Speaking after inaugurating the eighth and the fastest-completed Metro project in the country at Kaloor in the city, Modi called for bringing about a paradigm shift in urban planning. "Over the past three years, my Government has placed special focus on overall infrastructure development of the nation," he said.

Congratulating the entire Keralites over the big achievement the State's commercial capital had made with the completion of the Metro, Modi said the establishment of the mass rapid transport system was necessary for the city, famous as Queen of Arabian Sea and for its place in spices trade and tourism, as its population was expected to touch 23 lakh by 2021.

Showering praises on all those who had worked behind the project, the Prime Minister listed out a number of firsts achieved by the Kochi Metro: In embracing modern technology, adopting a PPP model for ticketing, efforts to attain zero-emission standards, granting employment to nearly 1,000 women and 23 people belonging to the transgender section, etc.

Modi also highlighted the achievements the Union Government had made in the past three years especially in road, rail, and power sectors and in ironing out issues in these sectors. He also said that his Government was also focusing on next-generation infrastructure, including logistics, digital tech and gas.

Referring to the ambitious, multipurpose and multimodal platform, PRAGATI (Proactive Governance and Timely

Implementation), Modi said, "In Pragati meetings, I have personally reviewed nearly 175 projects worth more than ₹8 lakh and resolved bottlenecks.

Minister Venkaiah Naidu, who released the Kochi One smart card that could be used for travel on the Metro and several other purposes, congratulated the people of Kerala by pointing out that the Metro had been completed in record time.

Speaking at the inaugural function, Chief Minister Pinarayi said the fast and efficient execution of the Kochi Metro was Kerala's message to investors that projects could be completed in the State in time. "We never had any doubt over who should inaugurate the Metro as it is part-funded by the Centre," he said, hoping that the Centre would continue to extend its cooperation.

The star of the day, however, was Metro Man Sreedharan, principal advisor to the DMRC which had executed the construction of the Metro who had weathered several harsh difficulties to ensure the materialisation of the State's dream project. Sreedharan shared the dais with the Prime Minister and accompanied him on his first Metro ride despite the initial confusion over his alleged exclusion from the preliminary list of invitees.

When Elias George, managing director of Kochi Metro Rail Ltd, welcomed Sreedharan to the function saying, "Our Metro wouldn't have achieved completion without his dedication and commitment," the applause from the audience lasted several minutes. "It was Sreedharan's extraordinary leadership quality that had led to the success of the project," said Pinarayi.

Normal services of Kochi Metro will start on Monday.