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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The youth of India coming forward to participate in the Maha Kumbh sends a very big message. This strengthens the belief that the young generation of India is the carrier of our values and culture, understands the responsibility of taking it forward, and is also determined and dedicated towards it."

~ Hon'ble Prime Minister
Sri Narendra Modi

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India is experiencing an extraordinary revival in spiritual & cultural tourism, a movement that transcends a mere rejuvenation of sacred sites or simplistic marketing sloganeering and is reshaping the nation's economic, social, and cultural fabric one day and one civilizational event at a time. The grand consecration of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, the meticulously orchestrated Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, and the continuing efforts through strategic enhancements under the PRASHAD Scheme present a thoughtful roadmap of this transformation. These initiatives, underpinned by the timeless wisdom of Indic Knowledge Systems (IKS), are propelling India toward a unique model of progress - one where tradition and modernity coexist harmoniously - In with the new and bind with the old.

This month's newsletter brings to you a few key perspectives on this transformation and explores how these landmark developments are not only reinforcing India's spiritual identity but also positioning it as a vishwaguru in sustainable tourism and cultural diplomacy. And yes, to live up to our name, we found an economic perspective on a cultural rejuvenation as well!

INDIC KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: BRIDGING THE PAST & FUTURE

At the heart of the rekindling in India's spiritual tourism, as with all our aspects of our renewing cultural awareness, lies the enduring relevance of Indic Knowledge Systems (IKS), a vast repository of ancient

wisdom encompassing astronomy, mathematics, architecture, linguistics and well-ness. Far from being relics of the past, these systems offer practical solutions for contemporary challenges, seamlessly blending

with modern advancements to guide India's development trajectory.

For instance, the astronomical treatises *Surya Siddhanta* and *Vedanga Jyotisha* provide the precise calculations that determine the auspicious timing of events like the Maha Kumbh Mela, aligning planetary positions with spiritual significance. Similarly, *Sthapatya Shastra*, the traditional science of architecture, informs the design of temples and urban layouts, ensuring harmony with nature - a principle evident in the planning of Ayodhya's Ram Mandir and Prayagraj's temporary festival city.

Meanwhile, Ayurveda & Yoga, now globally celebrated, underscore India's contributions to holistic health, drawing millions of wellness tourists annually. The United Nations' recognition of International Yoga Day since 2014 highlights this global embrace of Indian traditions. Our first piece takes you on an insightful examination of this aspect.

By integrating IKS into its tourism and infrastructure strategies, India ensures that its progress is not a break from its heritage but an evolution of it. This fusion preserves cultural identity while addressing modern needs, offering a blueprint for sustainable development that resonates worldwide.

AYODHYA AND THE RISE OF SPIRITUAL TOURISM



The consecration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22, 2024, marked a historic milestone, igniting a surge in spiritual tourism that has redefined Uttar Pradesh's tourism landscape. Official data from the Uttar Pradesh government reveals that Ayodhya welcomed over 13.55 crore domestic visitors in the first 9 months of 2024, outpacing the Taj Mahal, traditionally the state's top tourist draw. This figure reflects not just religious devotion but a broader cultural awakening, positioning Ayodhya as a global pilgrimage hub.

To draw in and support this influx, the state has invested heavily in infrastructure. The Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, inaugurated in Dec 2023, now connects Ayodhya to major Indian cities,

while revamped railway stations and smart roads enhance accessibility. These upgrades, part of an INR 30,000 crore development plan, aim to transform Ayodhya into a smart city while preserving its spiritual essence.

The temple's appeal extends beyond India's borders, with representatives from over 50 countries attending its consecration and contributions like Nepal's *Shaligram* stone and South Korea's cultural performances underscoring its international significance.

Economically, Ayodhya is becoming a powerhouse. Hospitality giants plan to add several hundred hotels by 2025, while real estate and FMCG sectors are witnessing unprecedented investment. This boom promises millions of jobs - both temporary and permanent - aligning with projections that religious tourism could generate \$ 59 billion and 140 million jobs nationwide by 2030.

Ayodhya's rise exemplifies how spiritual dhams can drive economic growth while fostering global cultural unity under the universal narrative that has always adhered to our Lord Ram. Our second article presents a round-up of these developments.

MAHA KUMBH 2025: A CASE STUDY IN OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The Purna Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, held in Prayagraj from 13 January to 26 February 2025, concluded as a monumental success, cementing India's reputation for harmonising tradition with operational brilliance. Official figures report a staggering 66 crore (660 million) cumulative attendees over 45 days, though this includes repeat visitors.

Held once every 144 years after 12 Purna Kumbh cycles, this event drew at least 40 crore unique pilgrims, making it the world's largest peaceful gathering, as recognized by UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage listing.



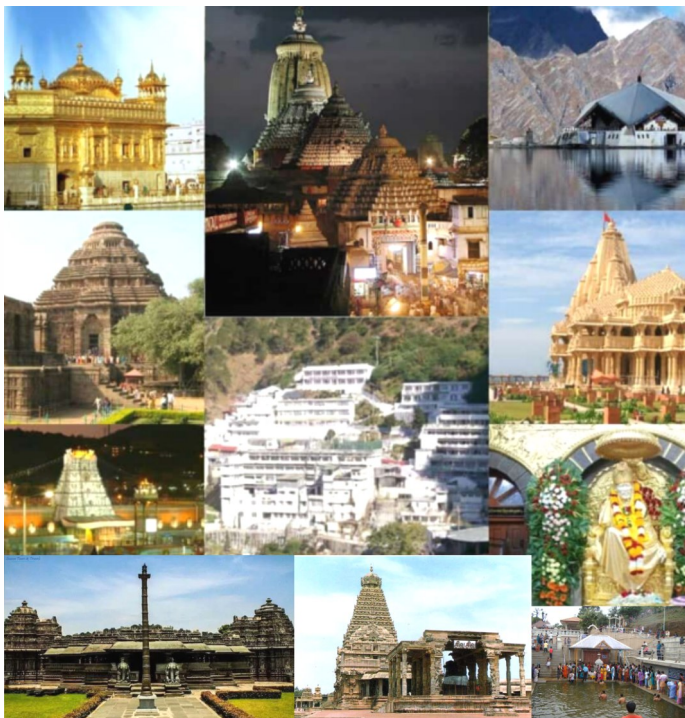
The logistical scale was, needless to say, awe-inspiring. The Uttar Pradesh government, with a budget of INR 6,382 crore (close to \$ 800 million!), constructed over

450 Km of roads, expanded 12 Km of ghats, and deployed 150,000 sanitation units across a 4,000-hectare temporary city. Advanced technology, including 328 AI-enabled cameras and facial recognition at digital lost-and-found centres, ensured safety and efficiency for millions. Indian Railways operated over 13,000 trains, including 3,000 special services, while the "Ring Rail" linked Prayagraj to nearby pilgrimage sites like Ayodhya and Chitrakoot.

Economically, the Maha Kumbh was a juggernaut. The Confederation of All India Traders has estimated a direct turnover of ₹ 25,000 crore from the mela area, with broader projections from the state government suggesting an economic impact exceeding ₹ 2 lakh crore (\$ 23 billion). Sectors like hospitality, retail (e.g., ₹ 5,000 crore in puja items), and transportation reaped massive benefits.

Corporate involvement was unprecedented. Just as an instance, a large Indian conglomerate partnered with ISKCON to serve over 1 lakh meals daily, blending CSR, branding opportunities & organisational values. The event showcased India's ability to orchestrate a spiritual spectacle that doubles as an economic catalyst, setting a new global standard for mass gatherings. Our third article will take you through many more enriching details and connect many more dots.

PRASHAD: STRUCTURING RELIGIOUS TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH



PRASHAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive) scheme, launched by the Indian government in 2014-15, is a cornerstone of this tourism renaissance. With a budget exceeding INR. 1,600 crore as of 2025, it aims to enhance infrastructure at 46 pilgrimage sites nationwide.

Projects like Varanasi's Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, which welcomed over 13 crore visitors in 2 years, and Assam's Kamakhya Temple revitalization illustrate its impact. In Andhra Pradesh, Arasavalli Suryanarayana Swamy Temple is being upgraded with better roads, lighting, and virtual services under PRASHAD, enhancing the visitor experience.

Beyond physical upgrades, PRASHAD fosters economic ecosystems. Improved connectivity - roads, railways, and airports - spurs investment in hotels, eateries & local crafts, creating sustainable livelihoods. For instance, Uttar Pradesh's 2025 budget allocates ₹ 200 crore for the Maa Vindhyavasini Temple and ₹ 150 crore for Ayodhya, signalling continued commitment. By balancing heritage preservation with modern amenities, PRASHAD ensures that pilgrimage sites remain vibrant, accessible, and economically viable, reinforcing India's position as a premier spiritual destination. Learn more about this innovative new scheme in our fourth article.

LOOKING FORWARD

India's spiritual tourism renaissance - epitomized by Ayodhya's transformation, the Maha Kumbh's grandeur, and PRASHAD's strategic vision - heralds a future where economic prosperity and cultural heritage are intertwined. Indic Knowledge Systems provide the intellectual foundation, guiding sustainable urban planning, wellness tourism, and event management. This synergy has elevated India's global stature, drawing 42 million international pilgrims to the Maha Kumbh alone, a 21.4% rise in spiritual tourism visa applications in 2025, per industry reports.



The path ahead surely lies in scaling this model. By leveraging technology, enhancing infrastructure, and promoting lesser-known sites, India can sustain this momentum. The \$ 59 billion spiritual tourism market projected for 2028 is within reach, promising inclusive growth that uplifts rural economies and preserves traditions. In reclaiming its spiritual legacy, India is not just honouring its past but setting a global benchmark for how nations can harmonize heritage, innovation, and progress. Happy reading!

PRASHANTH G. S.

Convener, Economic Cell - BJP Karnataka

THE MAHA KUMBH MELA 2025

A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND A CASE STUDY FOR OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE



The Maha Kumbh Mela, held every 12 years in Prayagraj, India, is not only a profound religious and cultural event but also a significant economic phenomenon. It is planned based on the ancient Indian astronomical and calendrical systems that have existed since the Vedic times.

The 2025 edition has showcased remarkable operational excellence by government agencies and has seen substantial involvement from corporate entities through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and branding efforts. This article delves into the multifaceted impact of the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 on India's economy, the operational strategies employed, and the role of corporate participation.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE MAHA KUMBH MELA 2025

TOURISM & HOSPITALITY SECTOR

The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 has attracted an unprecedented number of pilgrims and tourists. Estimates suggest that over 630 million visitors attended the 45-day festival, significantly boosting the local and national economy. The influx of visitors has had a profound impact on various sectors:

Accommodation: The hospitality industry experienced a surge in demand, with hotels, guesthouses, and lodges operating at full capacity. To accommodate the massive crowd, more than 160,000 tents were erected, doubling the number from the 2019 Kumbh Mela. This expansion not only provided lodging but also

generated employment opportunities in the region. Additionally, there were more than 2,000 Swiss-style cottage tents erected for a premium experience. The area covered by this temporary accommodation was more than 4,000 hectares – making it the largest tent city in the world!

Food & Beverages: Local eateries and food vendors thrived, catering to the diverse dietary preferences of attendees. The food and beverages sector contributed approximately ₹ 20,000 crore to the local economy. With nearly ₹ 4,000 crores worth of milk products sold during the event and many thousand crores worth of raw materials like vegetables, grains, and fruits sold – the event had a direct benefit to lakhs of farmers from the nearby regions.

Tour Operators & Transportation: Tour operators offered curated travel packages, guided tours, and transportation services, earning an estimated ₹ 4,000 crore. The transportation sector, including Indian Railways and bus services, played a crucial role in facilitating the movement of pilgrims, with Indian Railways operating about 13,000 trains, including 3,000 special ones, to accommodate the influx. Private airlines operated more than 900 flights offering over



1,65,000 seats while adding new routes from Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Kolkata to Prayagraj, along with existing connected cities. Airlines also added more premium seats and cabin space to accommodate higher demand during the event.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT



Hosting an event of this magnitude necessitated substantial investment in infrastructure. The Uttar Pradesh govt allocated ₹ 6,990 crores to enhance roads, 12 Km of bathing ghats, bridges, sanitation, and water supply in Prayagraj. These developments not only ensured the festival's success but also left a lasting legacy for the city's residents, improving amenities and connectivity. Nearly, 450 Km worth of new roads were built along with extended parking facilities for the tourists.

OVERALL ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) estimated that the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 generated over ₹ 2 – ₹ 2.5 lakh crore in revenue. This projection is based

on the average expenditure of ₹ 5,000 per visitor, encompassing spending on accommodations, food, religious items, healthcare, and other services. Such a substantial economic boost underscores the festival's significance beyond its spiritual & cultural dimensions – especially when the global economy is grappling with macro issues.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE DEMONSTRATED BY GOVT AGENCIES

The successful management of the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 required meticulous planning and coordination among various government agencies. Key operational strategies included:



Infrastructure Expansion: The Mela grounds spanned approximately 4,000 hectares, a 20% increase from the 2019 event. This expansion was organized into 25 sectors, with the number of pucca ghats increased from 4 to 9 and pontoon bridges from 22 to 30. Additionally, 400 Kms of temporary roads were constructed, a 35% increase from the previous Mela.



Utilities & Sanitation: To ensure uninterrupted power supply, 2 new power substations and 66 transformers were installed. For water supply, 1,249 Kms of pipelines were laid, feeding over 200 water ATMs and 85 water booths. Sanitation facilities were bolstered with the construction of 150,000 toilets that were maintained by 10,000 sanitation workers.

Transportation Management: The deployment of 550 shuttle buses and 7,000 roadways buses facilitated the movement of pilgrims. The Indian Railways' operation of 350 special trains further eased transportation challenges, accommodating an estimated 1.5 to 2 crore passengers by train.

Safety & Security: Advanced technologies, including AI and facial recognition systems, were employed to manage crowds and enhance security. Despite these measures, challenges remained, as evidenced by a tragic stampede that resulted in 30 fatalities and 60 injuries. This incident highlighted the need for continuous improvement in crowd control and emergency response protocols.

CORPORATE PARTICIPATION: CSR FUNDING & BRANDING INITIATIVES

The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 provided a unique platform for corporate entities to engage in CSR activities and branding efforts:

CSR Initiatives: Many companies collectively allocated approximately ₹ 5,000 crore for Corporate Social Responsibility activities and branding during the mega religious event. Initiatives included setting up community kitchens, distributing free blankets, and providing tents for pilgrims. One of the large Indian

business groups partnered with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) to operate a large community kitchen and distribute 10 million copies of the Gita.

Branding & Marketing: The festival's massive audience offered an expansive platform for branding and promotional activities. Global FMCG majors such as invested heavily in advertising, with total corporate spending on branding and marketing estimated at over ₹ 3,000 crore. Strategies included setting up stalls, launching new products, and engaging directly with consumers to gather feedback. Innovative installations not only served practical purposes but also reinforced brand presence among the vast gathering of attendees.

CONCLUSION

The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 exemplified a harmonious blend of cultural heritage, economic vitality, and operational excellence. The festival's significant contributions to various economic sectors, coupled with the efficient management by govt agencies and active corporate participation, underscore its multi-faceted impact on India. As the event concluded, the infrastructural improvements and economic benefits continued to resonate, leaving a lasting legacy for Prayagraj, the state of Uttar Pradesh and the nation at large.

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AYODHYA RAM MANDIR PROMISE DELIVERED !



Smt. Sudha Murty, in her insightful speech at the Rajya Sabha, remarked, "We have diamonds in hand, but we search for the broken glass pieces". Although this statement was made towards the general tourism, it is very pertinent for spiritual and temple tourism. India's rich spiritual heritage is often overlooked in favor of more conventional tourist attractions. However, it is proving to be a diamond in the rough for the tourism sector as there has been a surge in temple tourism in the past few years.

SURGE IN TEMPLE TOURISM

The Char Dham Yatra in Uttarakhand stands as a shining example. Comprising the 4 Himalayan shrines of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath & Badrinath, the yatra has witnessed unprecedented growth. In 2024, over 3.2 million pilgrims visited the Char Dhams and Hemkund Sahib in the first 100 days of the yatra alone. This represents a staggering 61% increase in pilgrims compared to the previous year, with Kedarnath experiencing a 67% surge in footfall since its opening.

Similarly, the Tirumala Tirupati Temple in Andhra Pradesh, renowned as one of the world's richest Hindu temples, continues to draw massive crowds. In 2024, the temple received an astounding 2.55 crore (25.5 million) visitors. Its financial impact is equally impressive, with the temple amassing ₹ 1,365 crore in Hundi collections during the same year. The temple's popularity shows no signs of waning, as evidenced by the 1.9 million devotees who visited in February 2025 alone, offering ₹ 112 crore in donations.

The top 5 temples in India by visitor numbers and revenue further illustrate this point. The Tirumala Tirupati Temple leads the pack with approximately 24 million annual visitors and a budget of ₹ 5,142 crore for 2024-25. The Char Dham Temples collectively

welcomed over 4.7 million visitors in 2024. The Golden Temple in Amritsar attracts an estimated 30-35 million visitors annually, while the Vaishno Devi Temple in Jammu and Kashmir draws 8-10 million pilgrims, generating over ₹ 500 crore in annual revenue. The Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai rounds out the top 5 with approximately 15 million annual visitors.

HOW DOES AYODHYA RAM MANDIR FARE? LORD RAMA: A SYMBOL OF GLOBAL UNITY AND UNIVERSAL HERITAGE

After several intense legal battles and centuries of wait, the bhoomi pooja for the Ayodhya Ram Mandir was conducted on 5th August 2020. Around 163 million watched its live telecast. The highest viewership came from USA, UK, France, Italy, Canada & Japan. Among the associated Asian countries which were eagerly awaiting for Lord Rama to return to his birthplace were Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, and Sri Lanka.

The temple has witnessed contributions from several countries through both monetary donations and material offerings, reflecting its global cultural resonance. While the temple primarily utilized domestic resources for construction, international participation emerged through symbolic gestures and regulated foreign contributions. Notably, Sri Lankan MP Sri Sennathamby reportedly donated a gold brick post the Bhoomi Pujan ceremony, symbolizing cross-border reverence for the project.

As for material contributions, Nepal and Sri Lanka provided many significant materials as they are directly related to Ramayana. As the birthplace of Mata Sita, Nepal contributed sacred *Shaligram* rocks - 3-billion-year-old fossils revered as manifestations of

Lord Vishnu - for the temple's construction.



Additionally, Janakpur (Sita's *maika*) sent 3,000 gift baskets containing traditional jewellery, clothing, utensils, and sweets, symbolizing wedding gifts for Lord Ram and Sita. This gesture reinforced Nepal's cultural ties to Ayodhya, with business communities eyeing religious tourism opportunities.



Sri Lanka, linked to the Ramayana through Ashok Vatika (where Sita was held captive), donated stones from Sita Eliya temple and Lord Ram's *charan paduka* (footwear) from the same site. These relics, presented by Sri Lankan officials, bridge mythological narratives with tangible contributions.

Over 100 countries contributed water from rivers and oceans, symbolizing the *Saptasagar* (7 seas), for the temple's rituals. This collective effort included water sent by Hindus in Pakistan, emphasizing unity across geopolitical boundaries.



Countries like South Korea highlighted historical ties, referencing an Ayodhya princess' marriage to a Korean king, while Thailand, Indonesia & Cambodia - nations with Ramayana traditions - expressed cultural solidarity. Though these nations did not contribute materially, their diplomatic engagement highlights the

temple's role in becoming a soft power and building economic partnerships.

The symbolic gestures from various countries reflect a shared cultural legacy, making the temple and Lord Rama as a beacon of universal heritage.

VIEWERSHIP: THE DATA

The clear skies welcomed Ram Lalla on 22nd January 2024 when the temple was inaugurated. Representatives from 50 countries participated in the event. The live event was telecast across various TV and social media channels. Doordarshan's live streaming in 4K resolution coverage garnered over 1 crore views across its platforms.

TOURISM RECORDS BROKEN

The inauguration of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir has propelled Uttar Pradesh to unprecedented tourism heights, with the state welcoming 47.61 crore visitors between Jan & Sept 2024 alone. Ayodhya emerged as the crown jewel of this surge, surpassing even the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra to become Uttar Pradesh's most visited destination. The city attracted a staggering 13.55 crore domestic tourists and 3,153 international visitors during this period, driven by the spiritual magnetism of the newly inaugurated Ram Temple. In contrast, Agra attracted 12.51 crore visitors, including 11.59 crore domestic and 9.24 lakh international tourists. This shift underscores the growing prominence of religious tourism in Uttar Pradesh, where spiritual landmarks are redefining travel preferences. Religious tour bookings skyrocketed by 70%, with pilgrims and cultural travellers flocking to witness the temple's historic inauguration and its ripple effects on the region's heritage revival.

The Ram Mandir's influence extends far beyond Ayodhya, as tourists also visit other spiritual places near it. Cities like Varanasi, Prayagraj, and Mathura reported remarkable footfalls, with 6.2 crore, 4.80 crore, and 6.8 crore visitors respectively, depicting a state-wide shift toward spiritual and cultural tourism. Even lesser-known destinations like Mirzapur & Kushinagar witnessed surges, the latter drawing 16.2 lakh visitors to its Buddhist circuit.

RAM LALLA BRINGS DEVELOPMENT TO AYODHYA

Enhanced infrastructure - including upgraded hotels, guided tours, and seamless connectivity - has been pivotal to this boom. Modi ji & Yogi ji's double engine sarkar's focus on upgrading tourist facilities has been commendable. From premium hotels to guided tours and seamless transport, the state now offers a holistic

travel experience. Its strategic focus on religious tourism infrastructure is integral to its goal of becoming a \$1 trillion economy. With Ayodhya alone attracting over 135.5 million domestic tourists in 2024 up from 283,000 tourists in 2016, the state is leveraging partnerships with private players to bridge the hospitality gap. The state government has prioritized upgrading urban infrastructure, including road networks and public amenities, to support the projected 50 million annual visitors by 2030.



Central to this transformation are the redeveloped Ayodhya Dham railway station, the state-of-the-art Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, and a network of widened, beautified roads designed to enhance accessibility. The Ayodhya Dham railway station, redeveloped at a cost exceeding ₹ 240 crore, stands as a testament to the fusion of spiritual ethos and contemporary convenience. The 3-storey structure features lifts, escalators, and spacious waiting halls designed to accommodate the surge of pilgrims visiting the Ram Mandir.

Inaugurated in December 2023, the Maharishi Valmiki International Airport represents a ₹ 1,450 crore investment in air connectivity. The first phase features a 6,500-square-meter terminal capable of handling 10 lakh passengers annually, equipped with modern amenities such as automated baggage handling, biometric boarding systems, and lounges adorned with murals depicting scenes from the Ramayana. The terminal's architecture mirrors the upcoming Ram

Mandir, with intricately carved pillars and domes that reflect Nagara temple design principles, blending Ayodhya's spiritual legacy with aviation modernity.

4 key arterial roads - Rampath, Bhaktipath, Dharampath, and Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Path - have been redeveloped, widened & beautified to streamline traffic flow and enhance safety. Rampath, the primary route to the Ram Mandir, now features dedicated pedestrian pathways, solar-powered streetlights, and median plantations with native species like ashoka and kadamba trees.



The roads incorporate smart city technologies, including IoT-enabled traffic management systems and real-time surveillance cameras, to optimize vehicular movement during peak pilgrimage seasons. Additionally, the integration of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations along Bhaktipath and Dharampath aligns with national sustainability goals, encouraging eco-friendly transport options for visitors.

A unified digital platform, "Ayodhya Dham," offers pilgrims integrated services such as e-passes for temple visits, virtual darshan bookings, and AI-powered multilingual guides. This initiative reduces overcrowding and enhances visitor satisfaction by providing real-time updates on crowd density and ritual schedules. Furthermore, the establishment of a tourism facilitation centre near the railway station offers curated tour packages, including heritage walks and boat rides on the Sarayu.

Ayodhya also has a very bold vision of a fully solar powered city by 2028. The NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation) is setting up a 40 MW solar power plant on the Sarayu banks. The Ayodhya Solar Power Project spans 165 acres, with a robust 40-megawatt capacity including 104,000 modules and a fund allocation of ₹ 200 crore. This initiative, aside from being environmentally impactful and preventing around 80,000 tonne of CO2 emissions annually, aims to meet 30% of Ayodhya's electricity needs upon completion by March 31.

BRANDS FLOCK TO AYODHYA

Ayodhya's transformation into a major spiritual and tourist hub has attracted significant investments from various brands across multiple sectors. In the hospitality industry, prominent players are establishing a strong presence. Reputed hotel brands have announced plans for hotels under their brands for more than 1000 rooms to accommodate the anticipated influx of tourists.

Real estate investments are further bolstering Ayodhya's infrastructure with more than ₹ 1,200 crore for development projects near the Ram Temple. The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector is also capitalizing on Ayodhya's growth. The companies have partnered with eateries along highways leading to Ayodhya, branding them with their key products, increasing their distribution centres in the region, anticipating a surge in demand for their products. Major food and beverage chains are expanding their footprint with new outlets on the Lucknow-Ayodhya highway to cater to the expected rise in tourists.

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

The religious tourism sector in Ayodhya, projected to generate \$59 billion in revenue by 2028, is driving job creation, with 140 million temporary and permanent jobs expected by 2030. The infrastructure boom has already generated over 15,000 jobs in construction, hospitality, and retail sectors, with a focus on upskilling local youth through partnerships with ITIs and hospitality institutes. Artisan clusters producing religious artifacts have seen a 300% increase in orders, driven by improved logistics and exposure from tourist footfall. Projections indicate a surge in job creation, with estimates ranging from 20,000 immediate roles in hospitality and tourism to over 200,000 direct and indirect jobs within the next 5 years.

The Ram Mandir's construction has triggered a 15% annual increase in demand for civil engineers, site supervisors & MEP (Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing) specialists, with over 22% of new jobs in the region tied to engineering roles. The Ayodhya Development Authority's \$32 billion infrastructure plan includes road expansions, airport upgrades & smart city initiatives, requiring 50,000–100,000 temporary workers for projects like the 6500 sqm Maharishi Valmiki International Airport terminal. Real estate development around temple corridors has spurred demand for 30,000 construction labourers, masons & architectural consultants, with firms like Larsen & Toubro recruiting locally for specialized temple conservation roles.

With 3-4 lakh daily visitors anticipated, Ayodhya's hospitality sector requires 20,000-25,000 permanent



staff across 500 new hotels. Front-desk managers fluent in multiple languages command ₹ 45,000 monthly salaries, while housekeeping staff earn ₹ 15,000 - ₹ 18,000. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's 70,000-jobs initiative combines public sector recruitment (7,000 recent appointments in Ambedkarnagar) with private partnerships. The Ayodhya Gyan Kosh platform connects 59 local colleges with employers, placing 3,415 graduates in roles ranging from healthcare assistants to IT support technicians.

With 30 new bank branches and 120 ATMs planned, the BFSI sector will create 8,000 jobs in banking and fintech sectors. Payment gateway firms are hiring 1,200 localized agents for QR code deployment at 450 temple donation counters. The ₹ 104 crore medical infrastructure fund has established 17 clinics and 2 multi-specialty hospitals, generating demand for 2,400 nurses, 350 pharmacists & 120 Ayurvedic practitioners. Medical tourism packages combining darshan with yoga retreats require 600 wellness co-ordinators trained in both hospitality and basic healthcare.

Entry-level salaries have risen 18% YoY. Ayodhya's employment surge demonstrates how cultural infrastructure can drive inclusive economic growth, with 34% of new jobs going to women and 19% to marginalized communities.

CONCLUSION

As India begins to recognize the "diamond" of spiritual tourism it holds, moving beyond the "broken glass pieces" of conventional tourism approaches, the sector promises to reshape India's tourism landscape, offering unique experiences to both domestic and international visitors while boosting local economies.

Modiji and Yogiji's combined spiritual yet futuristic vision has shown how sticking to one's principles and walking on the Bhakti Marg can usher in not just global unity in this divided and warring world but also bring economic prosperity to the people of Ayodhya and UP.

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THE TIMELESS RELEVANCE OF INDIC KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Indic Knowledge Systems (IKS), rooted in ancient traditions & wisdom, continue to offer profound insights and practical applications in the modern world. These systems, developed over millennia, encompass diverse fields such as linguistics, logic, science, wellness, mathematics, engineering, arts, and epistemology. Despite their ancient origins, they remain highly relevant today, providing holistic and sustainable solutions to contemporary challenges of the modern world.



VYAKARANA & NIRUKTA: LINGUISTICS & LANGUAGE STUDIES

Many scholars and scientists have opined that the study of Sanskrit provides valuable insights into computational linguistics and artificial intelligence. Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*, a grammar treatise written in the 4th century BCE, is considered one of the most sophisticated generative linguistic models ever created. Its generative structure & structured grammar have influenced modern computational algorithms, machine learning, and natural language processing. Additionally, texts such as *Mahabhashya* by Patanjali and *Shabdakalpadruma* offer deep insights into etymology, phonetics, and semantics, which are useful in fields like speech recognition and linguistic AI modelling.



NYAYA & TARKA: DEBATE, LOGIC & EPISTEMOLOGY

Nyaya & *Mimamsa* schools of philosophy emphasize structured debate, logical reasoning & epistemology. These systems, based on rigorous analytical methods, are highly relevant to modern jurisprudence, critical thinking, and decision-making processes. The *Nyaya Sutras* provide a structured framework for logical inference, influencing contemporary disciplines such as law, philosophy, and cognitive sciences.

Ancient scholars like Udayana and Gangesha refined logical frameworks that today find applications in artificial intelligence, programming & legal reasoning. The *Tarka Shastra*, which systematizes debate, is particularly relevant to modern-day legal and policy-making processes.

VEDANGA JYOTISHA & SURYA SIDDHANTA: SCIENCE & ASTRONOMY

Ancient Indian astronomers like Maya, Pitamaha, Vyasa, Vasishta, Atri, Parashara, Lomasha, Angira, Varahamihira, Aryabhata, Brahmagupta & Bhaskara contributed significantly to our understanding of celestial movements, planetary positions & mathematical calculations.



The *Surya Siddhanta*, an ancient astronomical text, contains calculations of planetary orbits with remarkable accuracy. The *Aryabhatiyam* by Aryabhata helped update the astronomical values and models that had been uncorrected for 1,000 years as of around 500 AD when he lived. The zero error calculation of lunar and solar eclipses described by Varahamihira in his *Pancha Siddhantika* and the advanced planetary models of Nilakantha Somayaji in the *Tantrasangraha* have impacted modern astrophysics and space research.

The Jantar Mantar observatories, built by Maharaja Jai Singh II, are physical embodiments of these scientific principles, providing precise astronomical data even today. All these texts provide mnemonics & simple-to-remember tables for popular values needed in mathematical and astronomical calculations for scholars. Apart from these, the same calculations and models were utilized during the construction of several temples and monuments, which are marvels of architecture and engineering even in the present times for construction of buildings and planning townships.

TRIGONOMETRY & CALCULUS: MATHEMATICS & ENGINEERING

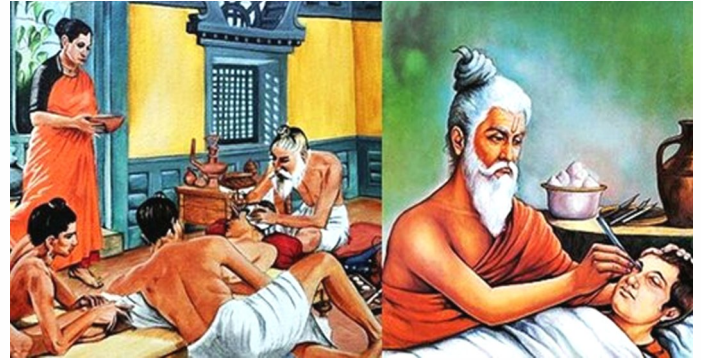
India has a rich legacy in mathematics, from the decimal system and zero to advanced trigonometry. Boudhayana's *Sulba Sutras* elaborated on the principles of geometry that are easier to teach practically to students of mathematics even today using a simple thread or rope with bricks. Works by scholars like Pingala, who introduced binary numbers, and *Brahmasphuta Siddhanta* by Brahmagupta, who formulated rules for zero and negative numbers, have had lasting impacts on modern computational theories.



The Fibonacci sequence, known as *Matrameru* in ancient Indian texts, was first documented in Indian mathematics centuries before its European rediscovery – and it is an easier way to teach the Fibonacci series visually to students. The advanced geometry in temple construction, hydraulic engineering in step-wells, and

sophisticated town planning in the Indus Valley Civilization are examples of India's engineering prowess that continue to inspire modern architecture and urban planning. Bhaskara's *Lilavati* makes mathematics more interesting & creative for students.

AYURVEDA & YOGA: WELLNESS & HOLISTIC MEDICINE



Ayurveda and Yoga are prime examples of ancient wellness sciences that continue to thrive globally. Ayurveda, a system based on balance and holistic healing, provides sustainable solutions to lifestyle diseases, while Yoga enhances physical and mental well-being. The resurgence of these practices in contemporary healthcare underscores their efficacy and adaptability.

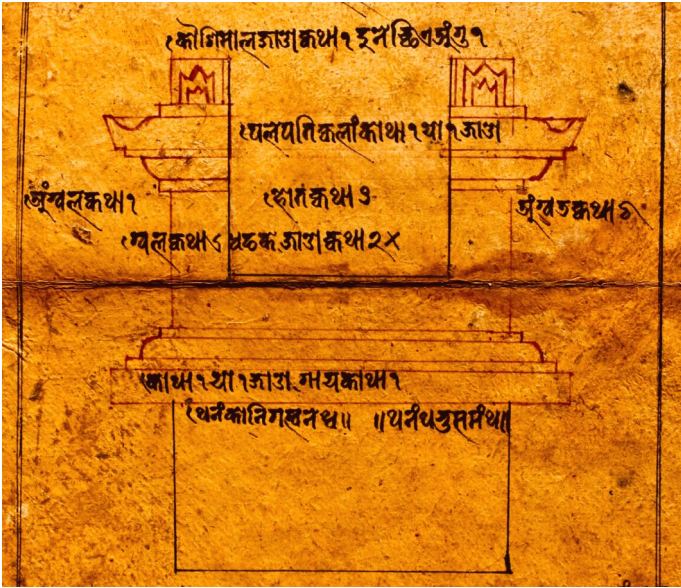
Charaka Samhita and *Sushruta Samhita* contain advanced surgical techniques, including rhinoplasty, cataract surgery, and complex procedures still relevant today – and can be used in battles or rural areas. *Marma* therapy, an ancient practice of pressure point healing, has found parallels in acupuncture and modern physiotherapy.

STHAAPATYA SHASTRA: ARCHITECTURE & URBAN PLANNING

Sthapatya Shastra is an ancient Indian science of architecture and civil construction, deeply rooted in the Vedic tradition. It is synonymous with *Sthapatya Veda*, a subdivision of the *Atharva Veda*, and encompasses principles for designing and constructing buildings, temples, cities, and other structures in harmony with natural laws.

The term “*Sthapatya*” is derived from the Sanskrit root *sthapana* (to establish), signifying its focus on creating balanced and functional spaces. Site selection, spatial organization, and city planning principles are central to *Sthapatya Shastra* and that helps in architecture and urban planning even in modern times as it emphasizes orientation, proportions, and layout for harmony between built environments and natural elements. It also focuses on sustainable practices by aligning structures with natural forces like wind, sunlight, and water flow. Incorporating climatological considera-

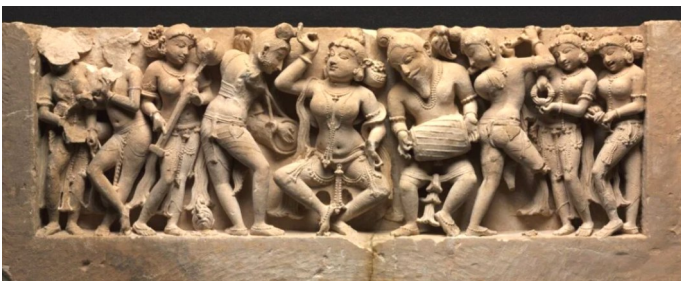
tions to ensure comfort and energy efficiency will help our Vikasit Bharat to become a sustainable developed nation even in urban areas.



The principles of *Vaastu Shastra*, an ancient Indian architectural science, emphasize harmony between structures & natural elements, influencing sustainable architecture today. Iconic temples like Brihadeeswara, Konark & Khajuraho showcase advanced construction techniques and aesthetic brilliance, inspiring modern architects and engineers. The structural engineering in the Kailasa Temple at Ellora, which was carved from a single rock, stands as an unparalleled example of architectural genius.

Traditional wooden and stone temple construction in Kerala and Hoysala temples display earthquake-resistant designs that modern architecture can learn from. Most of these ideas, aesthetics and designs can still be copied for building beautiful structures instead of concrete jungles with glass walls that increase the heat inside and around the buildings in urban areas.

NATYA & SANGEETA: AESTHETICS, MUSIC & PERFORMING ARTS

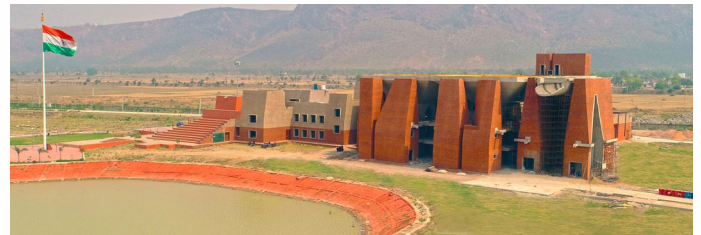


Natya Shastra, authored by Bharata, is a comprehensive treatise on drama, dance, and music. It provides detailed methodologies for performance arts, many of which remain relevant in modern theater & cinematography. Indian classical music, with its intricate raga system, continues to influence global music compositions and therapeutic applications.

The *Sangita Ratnakara* by Sharngadeva provides an advanced framework for melody and rhythm, still studied by musicians today. Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, and Odissi, with their intricate *mudras* and storytelling techniques, have influenced global dance forms and theater practices right up to modern times.

IKS: MORE REFINED & ELEGANT THAN THE MODERN COUNTERPARTS

Indic Knowledge Systems exhibit unparalleled depth, refinement, and elegance compared to modern disciplines. Unlike contemporary approaches that often focus on fragmented knowledge, IKS integrates science, philosophy, and art into a holistic framework. For example, Ayurveda does not just treat symptoms but aims for overall well-being, unlike allopathy, which predominantly focuses on symptomatic relief. Similarly, Vedic mathematics simplifies complex calculations through elegant shortcuts, demonstrating an intuitive grasp of numerical patterns. The Indian system of debate, which includes the *Purva Paksha* method of considering the opponent's viewpoint, is more refined than the adversarial styles used in modern discussions.



BENEFITS OF REVIVING INDIC KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

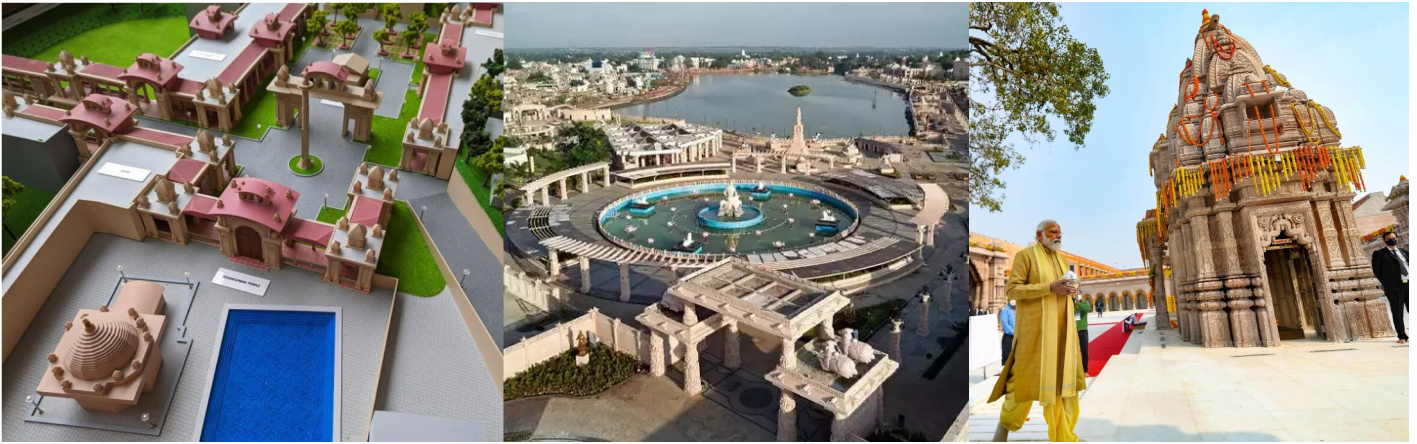
The rediscovery and integration of IKS into modern education and research can offer sustainable solutions in healthcare, environmental conservation, mental well-being, and technology. By adopting these time-tested principles, future societies can cultivate a balanced and harmonious approach to knowledge, ensuring innovation while staying rooted in wisdom. Schools and universities can integrate these systems into their curricula, and businesses can adopt sustainable and ethical models based on ancient wisdom.

Governments can implement policies aligned with these principles to promote holistic development and well-being. Indic knowledge systems, though ancient, are not relics of the past but blueprints for the future. Their continued exploration and application can enrich modern life, offering a unique blend of tradition, innovation and sustainability.

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The PRASHAD Scheme



A CATALYST FOR RELIGIOUS TOURISM & ECONOMIC GROWTH IN INDIA

The Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) scheme, launched by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in 2014, has emerged as a pivotal initiative for developing and enhancing infrastructure at key religious and heritage sites across the country.

This ambitious program aims to bolster religious tourism by improving amenities, accessibility, and facilities at pilgrimage destinations, ultimately contributing to economic growth at both regional and national levels. This article delves into the various facets of the PRASHAD scheme, including its impact on religious tourism, its role in stimulating local and national economies, and the long-term capital multiplier effect it generates. Additionally, we examine budget allocations, spending trends, and the tangible benefits that have materialized from this initiative.

ENHANCING RELIGIOUS TOURISM: A STRUCTURED APPROACH

India is home to a vast array of religious sites that attract millions of pilgrims annually. However, many of these destinations have historically suffered from inadequate infrastructure, sanitation, and basic amenities. The PRASHAD scheme was introduced to address these gaps and provide world-class facilities to enhance the overall experience for visitors.

Under the scheme, key pilgrimage sites receive financial support for improving roads, accommodations, sanitation, lighting, parking, and information centers. The emphasis is on holistic development,

ensuring that tourists and pilgrims have access to clean and well-managed facilities. The Ministry of Tourism works in collaboration with state governments, local bodies, and private stakeholders to execute these projects efficiently.

For example, one of the prominent projects under PRASHAD has been the rejuvenation of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple corridor in Varanasi, Mahakaal Corridor in Ujjain and infrastructure development at the Kamakhya Temple in Assam. These projects have significantly increased tourist footfall, leading to higher economic activity in the surrounding areas.

ECONOMIC IMPACT: STIMULATING GROWTH THROUGH PILGRIMAGE

Religious tourism contributes significantly to India's tourism industry, with millions of devotees travelling across states to visit sacred sites. According to the Ministry of Tourism, religious tourism accounts for nearly 60% of domestic travel in India, making it a vital sector for economic development. The PRASHAD scheme plays a crucial role in enhancing this segment by upgrading infrastructure, thereby making travel more convenient and attracting larger numbers of pilgrims.

The economic impact of religious tourism extends beyond direct revenue from temple visits. Improved infrastructure leads to a surge in demand for hotels, transport services, restaurants, local handicrafts, and guide services. This creates employment opportunities and generates revenue for local businesses. The development of pilgrimage sites has also encouraged investments in the hospitality sector, with several hotels and guesthouses opening near religious hubs to accommodate the growing number of visitors.



For instance, after the PRASHAD-led renovation of the Somnath Temple in Gujarat, the region witnessed a sharp increase in tourist arrivals. This led to the growth of local businesses, including restaurants, tour operators, and retail shops selling religious artifacts. The multiplier effect of this development is evident in the rising economic output of such regions, further justifying continued investments under the scheme.

CAPITAL MULTIPLIER EFFECT: A LONG-TERM GROWTH ENGINE

One of the most significant aspects of the PRASHAD scheme is its potential to create a capital multiplier effect in the long run for the region and the location. By developing essential infrastructure, the scheme not only enhances immediate appeal of pilgrimage sites but also encourages private investments in ancillary industries such as hospitality, retail & transport.

A classic example of this phenomenon is seen in the case of the Kumbh Mela, held in Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik. This massive congregation of pilgrims necessitates extensive infrastructure development, and the investments made for this event have a lasting impact on the region's economy. A study by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) estimated that the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj in 2019 generated an economic impact of approximately ₹ 1.2 lakh crore, benefiting multiple sectors such as tourism, transport, and food services. And estimates for this year's Maha Kumbh Mela have been in the range of ₹ 2 – ₹ 2.5 lakh Crores in economic benefit to the nation.

The capital multiplier effect is particularly evident in areas where religious tourism projects lead to the establishment of new hotels, transport hubs, and small-scale businesses. Once basic infrastructure is developed under PRASHAD, private enterprises step in to capitalize on the increased visitor influx, thereby creating a self-sustaining economic ecosystem. This ensures that the benefits of the scheme are not short-lived but continue to generate economic returns over the years.

Since its inception, the PRASHAD scheme has seen substantial financial commitments from the govt. According to official reports, a total of 46 projects

covering 51 destinations across 26 states and Union Territories have been sanctioned under the scheme, with an estimated budget of ₹ 1,632 crore.

CASE STUDY: VARANASI'S TRANSFORMATION

Varanasi, one of the oldest and holiest cities in the world, has undergone a major transformation under the PRASHAD scheme. The redevelopment of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor aimed at providing seamless access to the temple from the Ganga Ghats, reducing congestion, and modernizing amenities. The project has significantly boosted tourism, with millions of additional pilgrims visiting the site since its completion. The Ganga water has also been cleaned significantly for pilgrim usage.

CONCLUSION

THE ROAD AHEAD FOR PRASHAD

The PRASHAD scheme is a landmark initiative in India's efforts to modernize and promote religious tourism. By enhancing infrastructure and accessibility at key pilgrimage sites, it not only preserves the country's spiritual and cultural heritage but also acts as a major economic driver. The long-term benefits of this scheme extend beyond tourism, fostering regional development, boosting employment, and attracting private investments.

Moving forward, it is essential to address implementation challenges, ensure timely execution of projects, and leverage technology to maximize the scheme's effectiveness. If managed efficiently, PRASHAD has the potential to transform India's religious tourism landscape, turning it into a global spiritual tourism hub while driving economic growth across multiple sectors.

As India continues to invest in its rich spiritual and cultural legacy, the PRASHAD scheme stands as a testament to the country's commitment to harmonizing tradition with modernity, ensuring that its sacred sites remain not only places of worship but also engines of sustainable economic progress.

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NEWS IN PICS

INTERACTION ON UNION BUDGET

15 FEBRUARY 2025 @ SHANGRI LA HOTEL - BENGALURU



The Economic Cell of BJP Karnataka organised an Interactive Programme with Hon'ble Union Minister of Railways, Communications, Electronics & IT Sri Ashwini Vaishnaw on 15 Feb 2025, in Bengaluru. The event also witnessed talks by Sri B. Y. Vijayendra (State President - BJP Karnataka), Sri G. S. Prashanth (State Convenor - Economic Cell - BJP Karnataka), and Sri S. Venkataramani (Independent Director - Kirloskar Ferrous Industries Ltd.,).

Sri R. Ashoka (Leader of Opposition - Karnataka Legislative Assembly), Sri Chalavadi Narayanaswamy (Leader of Opposition - Karnataka Legislative Council), Sri Lehar Singh Siroya (MP-Rajya Sabha), Sri S. Dattatri (State Cells Co-ordinator-BJP Karnataka) Sri Venkatesh Prasad (Former International Cricketer), Chartered Accountants, Doctors, Industrialists, Advocates and other professionals participated in the programme.

