CONSTRUCTION FEDERATION OF INDIA

# NEWSLETTER

## CONSTRUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2025

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# How NDTV's 'Indian Of The Year' Madhavi Lata Helped Build World's Highest Rail Bridge

NDTV,
December 26, 2025

On December 20, 2025, she was honoured as co-winner of the Indian Science Icon of the Year at the NDTV Indian Of The Year event.

From a barefoot girl in a remote Andhra village who once sold old notebooks for 40 paise to buy kerosene to a celebrated scientist shaping India's engineering marvels - Professor Madhavi Latha's journey is nothing short of extraordinary. Yesterday, she was honoured as co-winner of the Indian Science Icon of the Year at the NDTV Indian Of The Year event, a recognition befitting her pioneering role in one of India's most ambitious infrastructure projects: the Chenab Railway Bridge. She dedicated the award to the Indian Railways and shared it with all the engineers who contributed to the bridge.

This bridge is not just another railway link. It is the world's highest railway bridge, soaring 359 metres above the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir - 35 metres taller than the Eiffel Tower. Part of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL), the bridge connects Kashmir to the rest of India by rail, fulfilling a century-old dream. When the Vande Bharat train rolls across this engineering marvel, it symbolises uniting Kashmir to Kanyakumari, stitching together the extremes of India.

## The Big Bare Facts About Chenab Bridge

1. Height: 359 metres above the riverbed (world's tallest railway bridge)
2. Length: 1,315 metres
3. Design: Arch bridge spanning two steep hills with no intermediate supports
4. Seismic Safety: Built to withstand earthquakes of magnitude 8
5. Wind Resistance: Can endure wind speeds up to 220 km/h
6. Strategic Importance: Enables rail connectivity to Srinagar, reducing dependence on road transport vulnerable to landslides and snow

The bridge posed unprecedented challenges: unstable Himalayan rock slopes, high seismic vulnerability, and sheer inaccessibility. "When I first visited the site in 2005, there were no human footsteps on those slopes," recalls Madhavi Latha. "We had to take a boat across the Chenab and climb hills where landslides could sweep you into the valley any moment."

## One Of The Women Behind the Slopes

As geotechnical consultant, Madhavi Latha's role was critical. She designed slope stabilisation strategies and foundation systems and monitored construction for 17 years. "The arch abuts on two hills without any support in between. "Stabilising those rock slopes was a nightmare," she says. "Every calculation had to factor in earthquakes, landslides, and extreme weather."

Her expertise in earthquake geotechnical engineering and rock mechanics made her indispensable to the project. "There were times when I worked three days without sleep, living in my office, because the bridge slope design was at its peak," she recalls. "This bridge became a part of my life."

## From Edugunlupadu To IISc

What makes this achievement remarkable is the backdrop against which it unfolded. Born in Yedugundlapadu, a tiny village in Andhra Pradesh, Madhavi Latha grew up in extreme poverty. Her father, a farmer, lost his fortunes when she was ten. “I still remember my mother crying in front of the chulha because we had no kerosene,” she says. “I sold my old notebooks for 40 paise to buy kerosene that day.”

Her schooling was in the Telugu medium”at a government school. At 16, she entered Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Kakinada (JNTUK) for a B.Tech in civil engineering – the first engineer from her village. “I didn’t even know what ‘hi’ meant,” she laughs. “I ran away from college within two months because hostel life felt alien. I was ready to join a local B.Sc. college when my grandmother intervened. She told me, ‘You are meant for big things.’ She stayed with me for a month until I felt comfortable.”

That turning point set her on a stellar academic path: M.Tech at NIT Warangal, PhD at IIT Madras, and eventually Assistant Professor at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, in 2003, becoming the first woman faculty in the 53-year-old Civil Engineering Department. Today, she heads the Centre for Sustainable Technologies at IISc and serves as editor-in-chief of the Indian Geotechnical Journal.

## Struggles Behind The Success

Her story is not without sacrifices. After her PhD, she lived in a small house with her husband and a young daughter, surviving on a scholarship of Rs 3,200 a month. "We had two bicycles, one mat, and a lot of books," she recalls. Later, she moved to IIT Guwahati with her one-year-old child and 80-year-old grandmother, while her husband worked 3,000 km away in Bangalore. "There were times I left my kids at 4 am with the maid to catch a flight for a grant presentation and returned at midnight," she says.

Even cultural expectations weighed heavily. "If I travel for a seven-day conference, I cook and freeze food for the family for seven days," she admits.

## Role Model For Young Women

Her advice to young girls is simple yet powerful: “Never hesitate to express yourself. Never be limited by inhibitions. Self-confidence is key.” She regrets losing opportunities early in life because she stayed silent. “Your ideas will be respected because they have merit. Speak up.”

She 4mphasizes resilience: “Never give up. Focus and persistence can turn impossible tasks into achievements.” And kindness: “It’s more important to be considerate than just correct, especially when guiding young minds.”

## Science Icon And Beyond

Winning the Indian Science Icon of the Year award yesterday was a proud moment. "I feel content when I see my students succeed," she says. Many of her proteges are now faculty at IITs. "It's like multiplying your dreams," she smiles.

Her vision? To create something in geotechnical engineering that future generations will always cite. "I want people to say, 'This is Madhavi's contribution.' That's my dream."

## Chenab Bridge: A Symbol Of Her Journey

The Chenab Bridge is more than steel and concrete- it mirrors her life. From the fragile slopes of the Himalayas to the fragile hopes of a young girl in Edugunlupadu, both needed stabilisation. Both demanded courage. And both now stand tall.

"When I look at the bridge, I feel proud," she says. "It's taller than the Eiffel Tower, but for me, the real height is the journey - from a barefoot child to being part of this global engineering marvel."

Her mantra for life: "Once you achieve one level, you aim for the next. Success is what drives me. And love for life keeps me going." Says Professor Madhavi Latha, who is simplicity personified and someone who credits her team more than herself for creating this engineering marvel.

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## Delhi-Mumbai Expressway: NHAI Warns Contractor With "Intention To Termination' Notice Over Delays In Construction Of Gujarat Stretch

PTI,
December 26, 2025

The National Highways Authority of India has taken a decisive step against Roadways Solutions India Infra Ltd (RSIL), issuing an “intention to termination notice” for failing to deliver on construction targets for a 35 km section of the Delhi–Mumbai Expressway in Gujarat, according to a Times of India report.

This marks the final step before the contract can be formally cancelled.

Progress on the stretch has been described as negligible, with physical work completed at only 4.9 per cent and financial progress at 4.6 per cent, far behind expected timelines.

Two additional stretches of 27 km and 25 km being executed by RSIL in the state are performing only marginally better, at 23 per cent and 36 per cent completion. The delays could push back the revised project deadline of March 2028.

RSIL, based in Pune, secured the Gujarat packages in 2021. In an unusual sequence of events, the company previously had two contracts terminated in March 2023 before being re-awarded the same stretches in November 2023 after submitting the lowest bid.

In its letter, NHAI stated that the notice was issued due to the contractor’s “absolute and continued non-performance”.

It said, “…despite the contractor having been granted repeated indulgences and more than adequate opportunities through the execution of three settlement agreements, the contractor has achieved a negligible financial progress of only 4.59 per cent (after lapse of 16 months from the appointed date of Aug 31, 2024).”

Under initial timelines, the contractor should have reached around 70 per cent financial progress within 18 months of commencement. The letter noted that completing the Jujuwa-Gandeva stretch by 15 November 2026 “is wholly impossible”.

An NHAI official added that repeated agreements had clearly stated that failure to meet milestones would lead to termination without issuing a cure-period notice.

Under the contract, the latest communication will act as a 15 day warning, after which NHAI may formally terminate. Two other stretches under RSIL are expected to receive a cure-period notice, giving the firm 60 days to remedy breaches.

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## Chandigarh–Shimla Corridor Moves Forward As NHAI Achieves Tunnel 5 Breakthrough On Shimla Bypass Project

Swarajya,
December 26, 2025

The National Highways Authority of India has achieved another major milestone in the Shimla Bypass road project with the successful breakthrough of Tunnel Number 5 on 23 December.

Tunnel 5 connects Chalonthi, the terminal end of the Shimla Bypass.

Once operational, the tunnel is expected to significantly improve access to the Atal Super Speciality Institute of Medical Sciences at Chamiyana and provide major relief from traffic congestion within Shimla city.

The construction of the 210 metre long tunnel began on 22 May and was completed in a record period of seven months.

The work is being carried out using the New Austrian Tunnelling Method, which is considered one of the most efficient and advanced tunnel construction techniques in use today.

The 27.4 kilometre-long Shimla Bypass project is an important part of the Chandigarh–Shimla corridor and includes a total of five tunnels.

After completion, the project is expected to reduce travel time to Shimla (Dhalli) by nearly one hour.

In addition to easing traffic congestion, the bypass is expected to support tourism and help apple growers during the harvest season by enabling smoother transportation of produce to Shimla and other markets.

Once fully commissioned, the bypass is expected to divert through-traffic away from Shimla's crowded inner roads, improving daily commuting conditions and reducing congestion pressure in key city areas.

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## Gujarat's Tharad–Ahmedabad Greenfield Expressway Advances With Land Notification Across Patan

Business Standard,
December 26, 2025

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has taken another step towards advancing the Tharad–Ahmedabad Greenfield Expressway in Gujarat, issuing a fresh notification declaring its intention to acquire land under the National Highways Act, 1956.

The notice was published on 8 December 2025 and triggers the official acquisition process for part of the proposed corridor. The stretch identified covers approximately 40 km, cutting across Patan district.

Villages named in the notification include Lodhpur, Kamlivada, Matpur, Ruvavi, Visal Vasna, Charup, Kimbua, Kotavad, Kuntavada, Morpa, Rakhav, Renchavi, Vadu, Vagdod, and Vayad.

Around 55.54 hectares are set to be acquired, including agricultural and non-agricultural holdings, government-owned parcels, and common-use lands belonging to Patan and Saraswati talukas.

The expressway is planned to enhance mobility across northern Gujarat, and the land is being secured for construction, widening, maintenance, and long-term management.

Depending on final design requirements, the road may be developed as “two-laning with paved shoulders or four-laning”, pointing to a scalable model that leaves room for future expansion.

Those whose land is affected, or individuals with a legitimate interest, have been given 21 days from the publication date to submit objections.

Concerns must be provided in writing to the Competent Authority – the Sub-Divisional Magistrate in Patan – and must clearly lay out reasons against the acquisition.

Once submissions close, the authority will offer each objector an opportunity to be heard, either personally or through a representative. After all comments and enquiries are reviewed, a final order will be issued, which will be binding on all parties.

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## Bhubaneswar–Cuttack–Puri–Paradip Corridor In Odisha Set For Major Infra Expansion With 645 Km Ring Roads

Swarajya,
December 26, 2025

Odisha has outlined a major development push for the Bhubaneswar–Cuttack–Puri–Paradip region, unveiling plans to convert it into a large-scale integrated economic corridor supported by extensive new transport links, industrial infrastructure and tourism expansion.

During a high-level meeting held at Lok Seva Bhawan on Wednesday (24 December), Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi instructed departments to draw up a dedicated roadmap that will turn cities within the belt into strategic “growth hubs” for manufacturing, commerce and tourism.

The project is anchored around a sweeping 645 km ring road network designed to ease traffic flow and strengthen connectivity across the state’s capital region.

At its core is a 432 km Capital Ring Road stretching from Paradip to Puri via Tangi, Saptasajya and Rameshwar, which will be integrated with the Centre's proposed 111 km Capital Region Ring Road.

Complementing it will be a 148 km outer ring road linking Jatamundia, Trisulia, Urali, Balipatna, Pipili, Jatni and Khurda, and a 65 km inner ring road between Tamando and Dhauli through Chandaka and Pahala.

These corridors are expected to divert heavy freight away from urban centres while linking rural and semi-urban settlements to major economic supply chains.

Alongside the road blueprint, a new 32 km rail line between Puri and Konark and a 70 km line from Konark to Bhubaneswar via Nimapara have been pitched, aimed at easing pilgrim and logistics movement.

With direct access to Paradip Port, officials anticipate sharp growth across sectors such as port-based manufacturing, agro-processing, fisheries, chemicals, textiles, logistics, IT and tourism.

Majhi also instructed departments to coordinate closely with NITI Aayog to accelerate execution, and called for policy updates to unlock further investment.

At a recent stakeholders' meet, NITI Aayog's principal economic advisor Anna Roy said the corridor strategy would be a key driver to propel the state towards its long-term vision of becoming a $1.5 trillion economy by 2047.

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