

From Waiting for Days to Reaching in Minutes: How the Digdol–Panthyal Twin Tube Tunnels in J&K Are Set to Change Lives

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For decades, the stretch between Ramban, Digdol and Panthyal on National Highway 44 was known by a name that locals rarely spoke about without concern — Khooni Nallah. Falling rocks, landslides, heavy rains and a high number of fatal accidents frequently brought traffic to a halt. Travellers often found themselves stranded for hours, sometimes even days, waiting for the road to clear. Today, that story is changing with the construction of the 4-lane Twin Tube Tunnels from Digdol to Panthyal in the Ramban-Banihal section of NH-44.

Ratan, a resident of Digdol, remembers how unpredictable travel once was. “Earlier, when rocks used to fall and during heavy rains, many people would be forced to wait for days on either side. Now, we can reach from Digdol to the Ramsoo–Magarkote side in just 5 minutes. I would like to sincerely thank the government for the tunnel works,” he says.

Part of the ongoing four-laning of the Ramban-Banihal section of NH-44, the Digdol–Panthyal Twin Tube Tunnels are a significant step towards strengthening connectivity in this challenging Himalayan terrain. High in the Himalayas, the Ramban–Banihal stretch forms a vital link connecting the Kashmir Valley with the rest of India. Known for its steep terrain and frequent landslides, this section has long posed challenges for travellers and transporters alike. To make this critical route safer, faster and more reliable, a major infrastructure initiative by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is nearing completion — the Digdol–Panthyal Twin Tube Tunnel project.

A Corridor of Strategic Importance

The Digdol–Panthyal Twin Tube Tunnel project represents an important step towards strengthening all-weather connectivity along the Jammu–Srinagar National Highway. The entire project is set to reduce the travelling time between Jammu and Srinagar, a move that will directly benefit goods transporters, tourists, local residents and security agencies in terms of both time and cost. In addition, the reduced travel time will facilitate faster movement of the Army and other security personnel along this critical corridor, enabling quicker response during emergencies and strengthening strategic connectivity in the region.

Safer Roads, Easier School Days

For Naresh, who lives in Digdol, the difference is visible in everyday life, especially for children. “Earlier, there were accidents almost every day and traffic jams were common here,” he recalls. “We had trouble going to Ramban, and our children faced many problems travelling to school.”

Long travel times meant children returned home tired, with little time left to study. “The journey used to take so long that by the time they reached home, they barely had time to focus on their studies,” he says. With improved connectivity, that situation is changing. “Now, we can reach Ramban in about five

minutes. Travelling back and forth has become much easier,” Naresh explains. “Our children can come home earlier and spend more time studying. In the coming years, accidents will also reduce and travel time will be saved.”

Key Highlights of the Project

Project: 4-Lane Digdol–Panthyal Twin Tube Tunnels in the Ramban-Banihal section of NH-44

Location: Jammu & Kashmir

Tunnel Length: North Bound: 2.6 km & 0.619 km

South Bound: 3.08 km

Project Cost: ₹866.37 crore

Current Physical Progress: 87.2%

Advanced Engineering in Difficult Terrain

The Digdol–Panthyal Twin Tube tunnels are being built using the New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM), a widely used approach for underground excavation in complex geological conditions. Work on the tunnels began simultaneously in 2022 and has since progressed rapidly, with the project now approaching its final stages. The excavation has been carried out through a combination of heading and benching to ensure stability and safety during construction.

Towards Safer and All-Weather Connectivity

Once operational, the Twin Tube tunnels will significantly improve safety along the Ramban–Banihal stretch. By routing vehicles through the mountains instead of along landslide-prone slopes, the project will reduce exposure to shooting stones and weather-related disruptions. This will ensure reliable all-weather connectivity throughout the year.

From Hazardous Curves to Safer Tunnels

Across the Ramban–Banihal section, tunnel and bridge construction is progressing steadily, marking a major step towards modernising this vital highway corridor. For the people who travel this route every day, the transformation is already clear. Where travellers once waited for hours — sometimes days — vehicles will soon pass safely through these tunnels in minutes. And for residents like Ratan and Naresh, that change will mark a world of difference, turning a once difficult and uncertain journey into a safer, faster and more reliable part of everyday life.







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