

How Chenab bridge project conquered Himalayan odds

Afcons Infra engineers broke ground ferrying gear on horses and mules

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To realise the vision of travelling from Kashmir to Kanyakumari by rail, the project team behind the construction of the Chenab bridge faced several challenges. Among them was how to reach the location surrounded by the steep Himalayan slopes.

The team had only one option — horses and mules.

According to Afcons Infrastructure that constructed the bridge, one of the main and earliest challenges was the access to the bridge location to transport equipment and construction materials.

"Initially, mules and horses were used by the project team to reach the location. Slowly over a period, temporary roads were laid to access the site," a spokesper-



Situated at a height of 359 m above the river, the Chenab bridge is 35 m higher than the iconic Eiffel Tower in Paris.

son from the company said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated the iconic Chenab Bridge, the Anji Rail Bridge and the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link project, flagging off a Vande Bharat train, connecting Katra to Srinagar.

The Afcons spokesperson added that eventually, on the North side of the river bank, an 11-km road was constructed and a 12-km road on the South side.

SYMBOL OF GRIT

Krishnamurthy Subramanian, Executive Vice-

Chairman, Afcons, said the Chenab bridge is more than just a marvel of engineering. "It is a symbol of India's resolve to conquer the most formidable challenges with ingenuity and courage," he told PTL.

The company used the world's tallest crossbar cable cranes and specialised heavy machinery for this ambitious project. "The steep slopes of the Himalayas were tamed using massive consolidation grouting, making them sturdy for the colossal arch foundations," the company said, highlighting the challenges it faced.

"With the foundations set, the erection of the arch from both sides was planned by the cantilever construction technique. The first big moment of triumph came on April 5, 2021, when a single majestic arch approaching steadily from both banks

met at the crown," it added.

"The viaduct construction was another unique challenge. There were multiple transition areas. Keeping this in mind, the launching sequence was meticulously planned in four sections," the spokesperson said.

S Paramasivan, Managing Director, Afcons, said, "This bridge will inspire generations of engineers and stand as a tribute to the power of Indian engineering and teamwork." For the first time in the Indian Railways' history, a laboratory accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration (NABL) was set up to monitor quality at every stage of the project.

Soaring 359 metres above the river, the Chenab bridge is 35 metres higher than the iconic Eiffel Tower in Paris and the world's highest railway bridge.