

Union Cabinet OKs renaming of Kerala as Keralam ahead of polls

PM Hails Decision, Says It Reflects Will Of People Of State

Dipak.Dash@timesofindia.com



New Delhi: The Cabinet on Tuesday approved the proposal for renaming 'Kerala' as 'Keralam', aligning with popular and long standing demand of people in the state. PM Narendra Modi said Tuesday's decision "reflects the will of the people of the state". The state govt had earlier made two requests to the Centre to change the name.

Announcing the decision, I&B minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that after the Cabinet approval, the President will refer the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 to Kerala legislative assembly for expressing its views under Article-3 of the Constitution of India. An official release said after receiving state assembly's view, Centre will take action and will obtain President's recommendation for introduction of the bill for alteration of name in Parliament.

In 2011, the spelling of Orissa was changed to Odisha. People aware of the deve-

lopment said that the Cabinet proposal circulated highlighted how from the beginning people of Kerala were vociferously demanding for naming the state as Keralam, however when it was officially created on Nov 1, 1956, it was named as Kerala. Since then the demand has been raised time and again.

Earlier the state assembly had passed resolutions in 2023 and 2024 requesting the Centre to amend the Constitution and modify state's name from Kerala to Keralam. The resolutions were moved by CMPinarayi Vijayan and only last month state BJP president Rajeev Chandrasekhar had written to the CM extending his

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party's support to this.

In a post on X, Modi said, "It (the decision) is in line with our efforts to strengthen the connect with our glorious culture."

The Cabinet proposal included the June 24, 2024 resolution passed by the state assembly, which mentioned that the name of the state in Malayalam is Keralam and that states were reorganised on linguistic lines on November 1, 1956, which is observed as Kerala Piravi (Kerala Formation Day). "Since the time of national independence struggle, there has been a strong demand for the formation of United Kerala for the people speaking Ma-

layalam language. But in the First Schedule to the Constitution the name of our state is recorded as Kerala. This Assembly unanimously appeals to the Central govt to take urgent steps as per Article-3 of the Constitution for modifying the name as 'Keralam', the resolution added.

The Malayalam-speaking population has always referred to the state as Keralam with many arguing 'Kerala' is an anglicised version introduced during colonial administration. While there are multiple schools of thought about the origin of the name Kerala, one school of thought says that Keralam derived from Cheram, the region between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari.

Vaishnaw dismissed speculations of the decision linked to upcoming election in state. "Decisions are taken by the Cabinet under PM Modi without keeping elections in view," he said, mentioning earlier approvals of railway corridors and Vande Bharat services.

Cabinet OKs three rail projects

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The cabinet on Tuesday approved three multi-tracking railway projects, extension of Ahmedabad Metro and a new integrated airport terminal in Srinagar with a total investment of Rs 11,806 crore. The cabinet also approved an increase in MSP for raw jute.

Announcing the decisions, I&B minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the railway projects — doubling of Gonda-Jabalpur track and laying of third and fourth lines on Punarakh-Kiul and Garmahia-Chandil corridors — will increase Indian Railways' network by about 307 km and will enable the national transporter to introduce 38 more express and passenger



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trains.

The total investment in these projects, passing through eight districts across Maharashtra, Madhya Pra-

des, Bihar and Jharkhand, will be around Rs 9,072 crore and these will be completed by 2030-31.

Vaishnaw also announced development of the Civil Enclave at Srinagar International Airport at an estimated cost of Rs 1,677 crore. "People want to visit the Valley, and there is high demand for air traffic. The new terminal will be built with much higher capacity. The existing terminal spans 20,000 sq metres. The proposed terminal will span 71,500 sq metres with six new aerobridges. It will handle 10 million passengers annually," he said.

The minister added that the existing capacity of Srinagar airport is 950 peak hour passengers (PHP), which will go up to 2,900 PHP once

the project is complete. It will be completed in four years.

In an official release, govt said the cabinet approved extension of Ahmedabad Metro — from GIFT City to Shahpur (3.3 km) — at a cost of around Rs 1,067 crore. It will be completed in four years. The link will have three elevated stations. This extended corridor is expected to benefit approximately 23,700 passengers in 2029 and approximately 58,000 passengers in 2041.

In another decision, the cabinet approved an increase in MSP of raw jute for marketing season 2026-27. The MSP has been fixed at Rs 5,925 per quintal, which will ensure a return of 61.8% over the all-India weighted average cost of production.

India to launch HPV vax drive for 14-year-old girls this month

Anuja.Jaiswal@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: In a major preventive health push against cervical cancer, the Centre is set to roll out a nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination drive for 14-year-old girls later this month, offering the shot free of cost at govt health facilities across the country.

The campaign will target girls turning 14 each year, covering an annual cohort of approximately 1.15 crore adolescents across India. The vaccination will be voluntary and provided at designated govt health centres.

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among Indian women, which causes nearly 80,000 new cases and over 42,000 deaths annually. Persistent infection with high-risk HPV types, particularly 16 and 18, accounts for more than 80% of cases.

The move follows sustained emphasis at the highest level. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly highlighted cervical cancer prevention, calling for vaccination, early screening and affordable treatment, including at the Quad Cancer Moonshot event in September 2024. Unlike routine immunisation under the Universal Immunisation Programme, the HPV drive will be conducted as a special campaign on designated Immunisation Days and tracked through the U-WIN digital platform to ensure rapid coverage.

The vaccine, Gardasil, protects against HPV types 16 and 18, along with 6 and 11. Gavi has committed 2.6 crore doses, with about 1.5 crore already delivered. Officials estimate roughly 1.15 crore doses will be needed annually to cover girls turning 14 each year.

Srinagar airport set for ₹1,677-cr expansion

New Delhi/Srinagar:

Srinagar international airport will be expanded to handle one crore passengers annually at a cost of Rs 1,677 crore.

PM Narendra Modi-headed cabinet committee on economic affairs Tuesday approved the development of the civil enclave at the airport, which will, among other things, now get barracks for security personnel and a multi-level car parking.

The new civil enclave project, spread over 73.2 acres, will feature a state-of-the-art terminal building spanning 71,500 square metres (including 20,659 square metres of the existing structure), designed to serve 2,900 passengers during peak hours and one crore passengers annually.

The expanded apron will accommodate 15 aircraft parking bays, including one for wide-body aircraft (nine existing and six proposed), while the 3,650m x 45m runway continues to be operated by Indian Air Force. www.irmw.com

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