

Towards A Mechanically Strong and Safe Road Infrastructure

Regional Editors Conference 2016

Speaking to senior journalists during the Regional Editor's Conference in Chennai today the Chairman, National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), Shri Raghav Chandra said that the goal of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is to create and maintain a countrywide network of road infrastructure that is mechanically strong, designed to ensure safety for commuters and is compatible with the requirements of efficient and sustainable development. With regard to Projects Awarded and Completed during 2014-15 and 2015-16 he gave the broad achievements mentioned below:

	2014-15	2015-16
Total length of roads awarded	7566km	10,000 km
Total length of roads constructed	4410 km	6029 km

While informing the gathering on a major initiative like Bharatmala he said this project aims to build national highways to connect coastal and border areas including small ports, backward areas, religious places, tourist places, improve connectivity to Char Dham and connect all district headquarters to national highways.

Shri Chandra told the gathering how another major initiative , the Setu Bharatam , intends to make road travel safe by constructing Railway Over Bridges (ROB) or Railway Under Bridges (RUB) at all 208 level crossings in the country. The aim is to make national highways free of railway level crossings by 2019. This is being done to prevent the frequent accidents and loss of lives at level crossings. They will be built at a cost of Rs. 20,800 crore .

He also informed that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved development of 1120 kms of national highways in the States of Karnataka, Odisha, Bihar, Rajasthan and West Bengal. The work for development to two lane standards is under Phase-I of the National Highway Interconnectivity Improvement Project (NHIIP) with World Bank assistance. The estimated cost is Rs. 6461 crore.

The Chairman said the government has approved a plan for constructing 1000 km of expressways along high density corridors like the Vadodara-Mumbai corridor and Delhi-Meerut corridor. The approved expressways on high density corridors are Delhi-Meerut (66 km.), Eastern Peripheral Expressway – 135 km long Greenfield Expressway from Palwal in Haryana to Kundali via Dasna and the 135 km long Western Peripheral Expressway which is being executed by Government of Haryana.

He informed that the Ministry has fixed a 2.5 times increase in the target for award and construction of national highways for 2016-17. The ministry has set a target of 25,000 km of national highways to be awarded in 2016-17 as against the 10,000 km awarded in 2015-16. The construction target has been set at 15,000 km as against the 6000 km constructed last year. Of the total length of national highways targeted for award, 15,000 km would fall under the target of NHAI and 10,000 km under the target of the Ministry and National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL). NHAI's target for construction has been fixed at 8000 km while for the Ministry and NHIDCL, the target is 7000 km.

Shri Chandra informed the gathering , the speeding up of road projects has been made possible due to several policy interventions which include the freedom to decide Mode of delivery whether PPP or EPC , Ministry is authorized to appraise projects up to Rs.1000 crores in place of earlier Rs. 500 crores ,Enhanced inter-ministerial coordination ,Exit Policy for contractors, Revival of Languishing projects , Promoting innovative project implementation models like Hybrid Annuity Model,Amendments to the Model Concession Agreement (MCA) for BOT Projects , Segregation of Civil Cost from capital Cost for NH projects for appraisal & approval , Rationalised compensation to concessionaires for languishing NH projects in BOT mode for delays not attributable to concessionaires .

Talking about road safety the Chairman said that the government plans to reduce fatality due to road accidents by 50% by 2020. Several initiatives have been taken for this:

- A National Road Safety Policy has been approved
- The government has constituted the National Road Safety Council as the apex body to take policy decisions in the matter of road safety.
- The Ministry constituted Group of Ministers from eight states to deliberate and propose strategies for reducing road fatalities.
- The Ministry has introduced the Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill 2016.
- The Ministry has launched a media campaign to promote road safety.
- NGOs have been sensitized to work on Road Safety
- Road safety has been made an integral part of road designing; safety audits are being taken up for selected stretches of national highways.
- 723 black spots have been identified which were accident prone and steps are being taken to rectify engineering defects at such spots at a cost of Rs. 11,000 crore.
- The Highway Advisory System was launched on 10th March 2016 as a pilot project on Delhi-Jaipur highway is a free-to-air information distribution system that uses radio to make the travelling experience on national highways safer.
- Ministry has sanctioned **25 Institutes of Driver Training and Research and 15 Inspection and Certification Centers**. Vehicle Inspection Centre at Nashik (Maharashtra) started operation from Oct. 15 and more than 15000 vehicles have been tested so far.
- **Good Samaritans Guidelines:** Guidelines dated 12th May 2015 have been issued by the Ministry to prevent the harassment of “Good Samaritans” who help road accident victims. Hon’ble Supreme Court has accepted these guidelines and has asked States for implementation.

UM/NP/MS

(Release ID :149477)