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## The road ahead: Quality construction, maintenance of highways

The Economic Times,  
January 01, 2025

### *Synopsis*

*The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways in India plans to enhance the quality of national highway construction and maintenance by 2025. Emphasis will be on quality construction, new benchmarks, and corridor-based infrastructure development. Performance ratings and transparent toll collection bids will be instituted to ensure high standards.*



After constructing a record 56,700 km of National Highways (NHs) in the country in the last 10 years, the road transport and highways ministry will shift focus on quality of construction and maintenance of NHs in 2025.

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) is primarily responsible for development, operation and maintenance of NHs.

Since 2013-14, the length of NHs has increased from 0.91 lakh km to 1.46 lakh km.

New Highways Secretary V Umashankar has held several meetings to step up the quality of national highways construction and its maintenance.

Faced with criticism over poor quality of certain highways, such as Delhi-Jaipur (NH-48) and Amritsar-Jamnagar Economic corridor on social media, the ministry is set to take steps to improve the quality.

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has repeatedly expressed frustration over poor quality of construction of some highways.

To enhance accountability and assess the quality of construction and maintenance of National Highways, state-owned National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) earlier this month introduced a comprehensive rating system for performance assessment of the concessionaires engaged in such works.

A detailed methodology for rating the concessioners has been formulated by NHAI under which concessioners will be evaluated every six months and ratings will be uploaded on the NHAI website and its social media handles.

In 2025, the NHAI is aiming to set new benchmarks in quality construction and management of National Highways and provide a safer, smoother, and seamless travel experience to National Highway users.

Construction of the much-delayed Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, Delhi - Dehradun Expressway, and Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway is also likely to be completed in 2025.

The ministry is also likely to push a corridor-based highway infrastructure development approach focusing on ensuring consistent standards, user convenience and logistics efficiency, as compared to the earlier project-based development approach, focused on addressing stretches of local congestion.

This corridor approach has already led to the identification of a network of 50,000 km of high-speed highway corridors through a scientific transport study based on GSTN and toll data to support India's transformation into a USD 30-plus trillion economy by 2047.

By the end of the ongoing fiscal year, the ministry is aiming to increase the length of operational high speed corridors (HSC) to 4,827 km. Till December 2024, the ministry has been successful in operationalising 4,693 km of HSC in the country.

The ministry is also likely to issue bids in a transparent manner for multi-party interoperable system for barrier-free toll collection system based on satellite navigation technology.

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal told PTI that 2024 has been significant so far as the shipping industry is concerned.

"Of Rs 80 trillion investment projected in the maritime sector in the next 25 years in Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, Rs 54 trillion is estimated in enhancing India's ship ownership, ship-building and ship registration ecosystem," Sonowal said.

He further said steps required to be taken to boost the Indian shipping industry include granting infrastructure status to ships under DEA's harmonised master list, and bringing vessels within the ambit of the SARFAESI Act, allowing creditors to leverage the Act's mechanisms for efficient recovery of dues.

According to the minister, domestic shipyards such as Cochin Shipyard Ltd, L&T Shipyard, Swan Energy (Pipavav Shipyard), Chowgule Shipyard, and Shoft Shipyard are in talks with global players to participate in ship-building and ship-repair clusters.

Sonowal noted that the beginning of construction of the largest all-weather deep-draft mega port of India -- Vadhavan Port -- to become one of the top-10 ports of the world, along with commencement of major infrastructure projects in Kandla Port, Tuticorin Port, and Galathea Bay Transshipment Hub in the coming year would have far-reaching implications for creating a rejuvenated and vibrant Port and maritime ecosystem across the nation.

ICRA Vice-President and Sector Head Vinay Kumar G said the outlook on the toll roads sector is stable.

"The healthy toll collection growth, lower outflow towards operations and maintenance (O&M) should support the debt coverage metrics for BOT toll road assets," he said.

Tata Projects Ltd MD and CEO Vinayak Pai said 2024 has been transformative for the country's infrastructure sector.

"As we step into 2025, the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) sector is poised for further growth, driven by progressive policies, increased investments, and a unified push for sustainable infrastructure," Pai added.

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## Revamped infra monitoring system to be unveiled in January

The Economic Times,  
January 01, 2025

### *Synopsis*

*The Centre's infrastructure project monitoring system is being revamped to enhance milestone tracking and detailed step-by-step information for projects. The updated system, launching next month, will identify potential delays to control costs and timelines, and will integrate with other portals for consistent data entry and monitoring.*

The Centre's infrastructure project monitoring system is undergoing a revamp to enhance milestone tracking in the pre-construction stage and provide information on every step of the project, according to sources.

The updated system, set for launch next month, will identify potential slippages so that costs and timelines remain within approved limits, people aware of the development said. It will also capture project start and tender award dates compared with the board approval date recorded previously. Additionally, project completion date will be derived based on the start date.

The Online Computerised Monitoring System (OCMS) of the ministry of statistics and programme implementation (MoSPI), which facilitates project monitoring by the Prime Minister's Office, cabinet secretariat and government think-tank NITI Aayog, tracks central infrastructure projects worth ₹150 crore and above. The OCMS portal releases monthly and quarterly reports on the status of central infrastructure projects across sectors and states. These reports include details on completed, added, deleted and ongoing projects. On the financial side, it provides information on original and anticipated costs, enabling tracking of cost overruns or additional expenditures.

As part of the revamp, OCMS will integrate with the India Investment Grid (IIG)-Project Monitoring Group (PMG) portal through API (application programming interfaces) to ensure single entry of a particular data point and uniformity across definitions and calculations.

The effort will be closely coordinated with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), the source said.

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## Budget 2025-26: Rural roads scheme could get 10% topup; FY26 outlay hike likely

The Economic Times,  
January 01, 2025

### *Synopsis*

*The Modi administration remains focussed on building 62,500 km rural roads in five years by connecting 25,000 rural habitations under the fourth and the latest phase of PMGSY by revamping the ongoing programme, the person said. The target is on top of rural road projects already sanctioned or planned in the earlier phases. The government had announced the fourth phase of the rural roads scheme in the July budget*

*The scheme is aimed at substantially improving road connectivity in remote areas, stimulating economic growth and alleviating poverty.*

The Centre is likely to raise the outlay for its key roads scheme by nearly 10% in the budget for the next fiscal year to deepen its rural push, recognising the high multiplier effect of such productive spending on the economy.

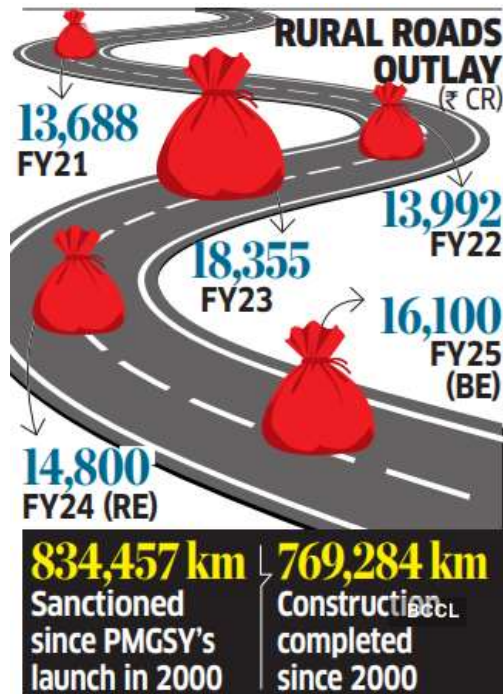
The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) scheme received a budgetary allocation of Rs 16,100 crore for this fiscal.

This was higher from the revised estimate of Rs 14,800 crore in FY24. “The government intends to maintain its rural focus. The PMGSY or the Prime Minister Rural Roads in particular, will see a hike in outlay, considering its multiplier effect,” a person aware of the matter told ET.

The Modi administration remains focussed on building 62,500 km rural roads in five years by connecting 25,000 rural habitations under the fourth and the latest phase of PMGSY by revamping the ongoing programme, the person said. The target is on top of rural road projects already sanctioned or planned in the earlier phases. The government had announced the fourth phase of the rural roads scheme in the July budget. The scheme is aimed at substantially improving road connectivity in remote areas, stimulating economic growth and alleviating poverty.

Subsequently, the government, in September, approved a Rs 70,125 crore package for the latest phase spanning five years.

Earlier this month, rural development minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said under the fourth phase, sanctions had already been granted to construct 6,614 km of rural roads, of which 3,380 km would be built in West Bengal alone.



According to Chauhan, since the scheme's launch in late 2000, rural roads stretching over 769,284 km have been built against the sanctioned length of 834,457 km.



A new phase is typically rolled out by widening the scheme's scope and revamping the implementation method.

## PROJECT COMPLETION

As of April 2, more than 90% of roads identified under the scheme have been built in 16 states and Union territories, with Goa touching 100%. In 13 others, 80-90% of construction has been completed.

However, completion ranged between 60% and 72% in Andaman & Nicobar, Ladakh and Puducherry.

On the multiplier effect, a 2018 World Bank study on the impact of PMGSY revealed that farm produce transported to markets for sale using roads built under the scheme had increased 8% than before.

The rate of primary employment in the non-farm sector had improved about 13% due to the improved road network and the share of people with primary employment outside their habitation had inched up 8%.

Even the share of babies delivered at homes declined by 30% in connected habitations, leading to improved child mortality in rural areas.

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### Asian Development Bank to provide \$500 million loan to support sustainable infra projects in India

The Economic Times,  
January 01, 2025

#### **Synopsis**

*The Government of India and ADB have signed a USD 500 million loan to support green infrastructure projects in alignment with India's climate goals. The loan will be provided to India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd. for projects in connectivity, energy transition, urban development, education, and health care sectors.*

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has signed a USD 500 million (about Rs 4,250 crore) loan to support green and sustainable infrastructure projects aligned with the country's climate commitments. The ADB loan, with a sovereign guarantee, will be extended to the India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL), the finance ministry said in a statement on Monday.

The signatories to the Financing Environmentally Sustainable Growth in Infrastructure Project were Juhi Mukherjee, Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, for the Government of India, and Country Director Mio Oka for ADB.

"ADB financing will help IIFCL provide long-term capital for infrastructure projects focusing on connectivity and energy transition as well as under-resourced sectors like urban projects, education, and health care," said Oka.

To meet its net-zero commitments, the country needs immense private capital investment that will require innovative financing platforms and risk-mitigation instruments to address inherent sector risks and market asymmetries, it said.

As a strategic development finance institution, IIFCL is well-suited to meet these needs, it said.

***"Joining the Hands that Believe in Building Sustainably # Platform for Sustainable Infra"***

ADB has worked closely with IIFCL over the years to develop its operational and risk management capacities.

As IIFCL has developed and evolved, its operations are increasingly geared toward leveraging private sector resources that necessitate the expansion of its product offerings for potential institutional investors, it said.

The project will build the institutional capacity of IIFCL to integrate green and best practices into the infrastructure projects, it said.

A sustainability unit and an environmental sustainability framework and scoring method to assess the sustainability rating of the projects will also be established, it added.

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**Mumbai's Infrastructure Leap: Major Projects Set To Transform The City In 2025**  
The Business Standard,  
January 02, 2025



Mumbai is currently witnessing a surge in various construction and infrastructure projects. (L&T Realty)

Over the past decade, Mumbai has witnessed a surge in construction activities, with several major infrastructure projects being implemented simultaneously.

As the city moves into 2025, some long-awaited projects are finally nearing completion, promising to alleviate congestion and enhance connectivity.

***"Joining the Hands that Believe in Building Sustainably # Platform for Sustainable Infra"***

In 2024, Mumbai saw significant progress with the inauguration of landmark projects such as the Atal Setu, India's longest sea bridge, and the western coastal freeway.

These developments are expected to ease traffic in parts of the city, a trend likely to continue in 2025 with the completion of more transformative projects.

The much-delayed Navi Mumbai International Airport, initially conceived in 1997, is set to be inaugurated in April 2025 and will commence commercial operations by May.

Adani Airport Holdings Ltd CEO Arun Bansal confirmed the timeline after a successful trial landing of a commercial aircraft.

Earlier in December, the Airports Authority of India validated the Precision Approach Path Indicator system, essential for guiding pilots during landing. In October, the Indian Air Force's C295 aircraft conducted a trial landing at the site.

The airport will initially operate with a single runway and a terminal building (T1) capable of handling 2 crore passengers annually. Once fully developed, it will feature two parallel runways and taxiways spaced 1,550 metres apart.

Delays in site selection, environmental clearances, and pre-development work, including hill cutting and river diversions, had stalled progress. Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone in 2018, with construction commencing in 2021.

In 2024, Mumbai inaugurated the first phase of its underground Metro, the Colaba-Bandra-Seepz Metro, also known as Metro 3.

The 12.69 km stretch from Bandra Kurla Complex to Aarey Colony marked a significant milestone for the city.

By March 2025, the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC) aims to operationalise the line up to Acharya Atre Chowk in Worli, with the entire 33.5 km corridor to Cuffe Parade expected to be completed later in the year.

An MMRC official stated that most of the work is done and just the finishing touches remain—like work on some stations and systems testing formalities.

The project, initiated in 2016, faced delays due to controversies, particularly over the location of the car depot at Aarey Colony, which led to protests in 2019. The issue also became a political flashpoint between the Shiv Sena and the BJP.

The final stretch of the 701-km Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Mahamarg is expected to open in early 2025, connecting Igatpuri in Nashik to Amane in Thane district.

Once completed, the expressway will reduce travel time between Mumbai and Nagpur to approximately eight hours, down from 16 hours.

The first phase of the expressway, spanning 520 km from Nagpur to Shirdi, was completed in December 2022, with subsequent stretches opened gradually. The project, initiated in 2019, was spearheaded by BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis during his tenure as Chief Minister.



The Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) is working to complete the ‘missing link’ on the Mumbai-Pune expressway in 2025. This project aims to alleviate congestion on the heavily trafficked route, particularly at the Lonavala ghat section.

The project involves constructing two tunnels and two bridges, which will reduce travel time on the expressway by at least 30 minutes. Despite significant progress, MSRDC officials have refrained from setting a definitive completion date, citing ongoing work on a critical viaduct.

In 2025, a new southbound bridge along Thane Creek is expected to open, complementing the northbound bridge that was inaugurated in October 2024. These bridges are vital connectors between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.

The original two-lane bridge, constructed in 1973, has been closed for over two decades due to structural concerns. The second bridge, built in 1997, currently bears the brunt of traffic but often faces congestion as vehicles from the 10-lane Sion-Panvel highway merge into its six lanes.

The new twin bridges, proposed in 2012 but only initiated in 2020, aim to streamline traffic flow and enhance connectivity.

From improved air travel at Navi Mumbai Airport to reduced travel times on major expressways and enhanced urban connectivity through the Metro, these developments mark a significant step forward in addressing the city’s growing demands.

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**Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project: Here Are The Milestones Achieved In 2024**  
Swarajya,  
January 02, 2025

The National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) has made significant progress on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project in 2024, marking a year of notable achievements in infrastructure development and construction.

NHSRCL is the implementing agency for the 508 Km long Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train project.

### **Key Construction Milestones in 2024**

Over 243 km of viaduct construction has been successfully completed, accompanied by 352 km of pier work and 362 km of pier foundation work.

The project has also seen the construction of bridges across 13 rivers and crossings over multiple railway lines and highways through five steel bridges and two PSC (Pre-Stressed Concrete) bridges.

### **Track Construction Advances**

In Gujarat, track construction is advancing rapidly. Reinforced Concrete (RC) Track Bed construction is actively underway in Anand, Vadodara, Surat, and Navsari districts, with 71 track km completed.

Additionally, welding of rails has commenced on the viaduct, marking a critical step toward operational readiness.

## Progress in Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, the first concrete base-slab for the Mumbai Bullet Train Station has been successfully cast at a depth of 32 metres, equivalent to a 10-storey building.

The 21 km tunnel connecting Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) and Shilphata is under construction, with an Intermediate Tunnel (ADIT) of 394 metres already completed to facilitate main tunnel development.

## Tunnel Construction in Palghar and Gujarat

The construction of seven mountain tunnels using the advanced New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM) is progressing in the Palghar district of Maharashtra.

Meanwhile, the only mountain tunnel in Gujarat has been successfully completed.

## World-Class Stations Underway

The corridor's 12 stations are being constructed with thematic elements and energy-efficient designs.

These stations are set to provide a world-class passenger experience, focusing on user-friendly features and sustainability.

The stations aim to be energy-positive, aligning with the project's commitment to environmental responsibility.

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## Andhra Pradesh's Rs 80,112 Crore Godavari-Banakacherla Link Project To Provide Water For 8 Million People And Irrigate 7.5 Lakh Acres

Swarajya,  
January 01, 2025

The Andhra Pradesh government has unveiled plans for the ambitious 'intra-linking of rivers' initiative, with the Godavari-Banakacherla project at its core. Estimated at Rs 80,112 crore, the project aims to provide drinking water to 80 lakh people and irrigate 7.5 lakh additional acres, promising to transform the State's water infrastructure.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, addressing the media at the Secretariat in Velagapudi on 30 December, emphasised the three-segment approach for project execution.

**Segment-I:** Water will be diverted from the Polavaram project to the Krishna River, with an estimated cost of Rs 13,511 crore.

**Segment-II:** The Bollapalli reservoir will be constructed to facilitate water transfer, costing Rs 28,560 crore.

**Segment-III:** Water will be diverted from Bollapalli to Banakacharla at Rs 38,041 crore.

"Banakacharla will be the gateway to Rayalaseema. This project will benefit not only the Rayalaseema districts but Nellore and Prakasam," CM Naidu said.

Highlighting its significance, the Chief Minister called the project a “gamechanger for Andhra Pradesh”, envisioning it as the country’s largest irrigation infrastructure.

The Detailed Project Report (DPR) will be finalized within three months, with tenders invited shortly after. Discussions with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman have already been initiated.

To ensure execution, 48,000 acres of land will be acquired, and funds may be raised through a hybrid model involving private companies. “If private companies are involved, the government can adopt the payment model used in Rajasthan” CM Naidu added.

Dubbed ‘Telugu Thalli Ki Jala Harathi’, the project symbolizes a water offering to Telugu Thalli, aiming to eliminate water scarcity for future generations. With steps to secure 2 tmc (thousand million cubic feet) feet of water daily, the initiative seeks to integrate reservoirs across districts, ensuring economic and social benefits for the state.

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## Himachal to Metal 1,500 km of Rural Roads Under PMGSY-IV

The Financial Express,  
January 02, 2025

The central government has approved Himachal Pradesh’s proposal to metal the rural roads under Phase IV of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-IV), Public Works Department Minister Vikramaditya Singh announced.

This initiative will see the metalling of approximately 1,000 to 1,500 kilometres of rural roads, significantly improving connectivity in the state’s remote areas. Singh credited Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan for supporting the project, which he emphasised will bolster rural infrastructure and enhance accessibility for residents in far-flung regions. Additionally, Singh highlighted efforts to restore road connectivity in areas impacted by heavy snowfall.

Adequate manpower and machinery have been deployed to ensure roads are cleared promptly. With the ongoing tourism season, the state government is focused on ensuring safe and seamless travel for both tourists and locals. Singh reaffirmed the government’s commitment to maintaining smooth transportation and addressing road-related challenges efficiently.

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