

Infrastructure: Giant strides

By : INVC Team Published On : 26 May, 2017 11:00 AM IST

- Namita Tewari -

✘ From Bharatmala to Sethu Bharatam, from highways to expressways and from Chardham to Kailash Mansarovar - giant strides to overhaul India's infrastructure are underway.

On completion of three years of the Narendra Modi regime, government has to its claim a never before award of contracts for construction of 34,018 km of highways during 2014-17. This is more than double of what was awarded during 2011-2014.

If the Modi government had its way, driving through India and its congested cities, towns and villages would be a breeze. Bigger, wider and better road network in India and all the way to Thailand and Myanmar is the dream for which it is willing to pump lakhs of crores of Rupees.

As per India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Motor Vehicle Agreement a trial run of passenger vehicles on the IMT Trilateral Highway up to Naypitaw in Myanmar was carried out during 9-14 November, 2015 in which Indian vehicles travelled to Myanmar on Imphal -Mandalay -Bagan- Naypitaw route and back and Myanmar vehicles joined the Indian vehicles on the return journey from Naypitaw to Imphal and returning to Myanmar.

India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh (BBIN) have already inked a landmark Motor Vehicles pact for the regulation of passenger, personnel and cargo vehicular traffic among the four South Asian neighbors in Thimpu in June 2015.

Several trial runs of Cargo and passenger vehicles have been conducted under this agreement in preparation of its implementation.

On the front of augmenting infrastructure in difficult areas - Chenani-Nashri tunnel, an infrastructure marvel in Jammu & Kashmir, is one of the major achievements as this tunnel India's longest road tunnel has been built in a record time. On the anvil are many such projects including Zozilla tunnel.

Besides, tough Himalayan rocks are being cut to make the pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar, linked to the faith of millions of Indians, easy. The government is constructing a highway through Uttarakhand for Kailash- Mansarovar to make it easy for people to visit the abode of Lord Shiva. Kailash-Mansarovar in the high altitudes could be reached at present only through the arduous Lipulekh Pass route and Nathu La Route, opened by China in 2015.

Also, a Rs 12,000 crore project is on for developing 900 km of National Highways in Uttarakhand for improving connectivity to the Char Dham pilgrimage centers - Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri and Yamunotri in the Himalayas.

When it comes to big cities and Metros the plans are to have futuristic-looking automated and driverless pods 'flying across' to carry commuters around. The dream has only just begun. A metrino pilot project is in the offing between Dhaulakuan and Gurgaon to carry commuters in suspended pods to ease traffic woes.

The total length of National Highways in the country has reached 1,14,158 km now from 91,287 while construction of national highways reached 18,702 during the three years from 15,005 between 2011-2014.

Work is on full swing on some of the expressways that including Eastern and Western Peripheral expressway to decongest the national capital.

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 projects include Delhi-Meerut (66km), Eastern Peripheral Expressway - 135 Km, Western Peripheral - 135 Km, Vadodara-Mumbai Corridor (400 km), Bangalore-Chennai (262 km), Delhi-Jaipur (261 km), Delhi-Chandigarh (249 km), Kolkata-Dhanbad (277 km) and Delhi-Agra (200 km).

However, despite efforts to create a worldclass infrastructure, the stark reality remains that India accounts for one of the highest road related mortalities globally with about 5 lakh road accidents a year in which 1.5 lakh people die and another 3 lakh are crippled.

But, for Road Transport and Highways minister Nitin Gadkari, "nothing is impossible" as he sets out repairing infrastructure and begins laying new highways through mega projects. "People will not believe what they are seeing, when projects worth lakhs of crores of Rupees are completed", Gadkari says. He says the target is to reduce the accidents by half soon.

When it comes to a related legislation --the Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill 2016 has been passed in the Lok Sabha. The much talked about Bill has still to be passed by Rajya Sabha to unleash radical reforms in the transport sector by ensuring 100 per cent e-governance, checking bogus driving licenses and vehicle thefts, slapping heavy penalty on traffic violators and protecting the good samaritans.

Recently the government launched NHAI's Masala bond at London Stock Exchange which met overwhelming response from the investors.

Government also plans to sell over 100 projects completed through government funds to foreign insurance and pension funds.

Forefront among the new highway development initiatives by the government is "Bharatmala", envisaged as an umbrella programme subsuming NHDP and also focusing on initiatives like development of border and international connectivity roads, economic corridors development, inter corridor and feeder routes, national corridors efficiency improvements, coastal & port connectivity roads, and Greenfield expressways.

The Phase I of the programme covers the aggregate length of 24,800 kms with a total fund requirement of Rs 5.35 lakh crore.

Another key initiative of the government during last three years is "Setu Bharatam" with an objective to making all National Highways free of railway level crossings, by 2019, by building Railway Over Bridges/ Under Passes.

As many as 208 RUB/ROB are to be built across 19 states at a cost of Rs 20,800 crore under the programme. In addition, about 1,500 old and worn out bridges on NH will be overhauled in a phased manner at a cost of Rs 30,000 crore.

Also, it has launched a Logistic Efficiency Enhancement Programme (LEEP) to enhance the efficiency of freight transportation in the country, thereby reducing logistics cost by nearly half.

This will be done through an integrated, multi modal logistics and transport policy. The government said the integrated policy would include construction of 50 Economic Corridors and upgrading key feeder and inter corridor routes to improve overall efficiency of freight movement.

The plan also includes developing 35 multimodal logistics parks to serve as centers for freight aggregation and distribution, multimodal transportation, storage and warehousing and value added services. In addition, there are also plans to construct 10 Inter-Modal Stations which integrate various transportation modes like rail, road, mass rapid transit system, bus rapid transit (BRT), auto-rickshaw, taxi and private vehicles.

An overall network of about 56,000 km has been identified including existing national corridors (Golden Quadrilateral and NS-EW Corridor)), proposed economic corridors, inter corridor routes and feeder routes.

In addition to this 191 towns/ cities have been identified on these routes where steps will to be taken to reduce congestion.

According to information, 15 locations have been shortlisted for the development of multimodal logistics parks in the first phase in Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana.

Chennai, Vijayawada, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Guwahati and Surat have already identified land parcels for development of logistics parks.

This is the first time ever that the development of the transport sector is being done in such an integrated manner. The plan would serve to make the economy competitive by reducing logistics costs, bring down pollution levels by reducing congestion on roads, give a boost to industry and create employment. Cost of logistics is about 14-16 per cent of GDP. These steps would help to reduce the cost to about 8 per cent of GDP.

 About the Author

Namita Tewari

Chief Infrastructure Correspondent PTI

Disclaimer : The views expressed by the author in this feature are entirely her own and do not necessarily reflect the views of INVC NEWS.

URL : <https://www.internationalnewsandviews.com/infrastructure-giant-strides/>

INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND VIEW CORPORATION

I N V C

अंतरराष्ट्रीय समाचार एवं विचार निगम

12th year of news and views excellency

Committed to truth and impartiality

Copyright © 2009 - 2019 International News and Views Corporation. All rights reserved.
