

WORLD BANK SIGNS PACT FOR \$500-MILLION PROJECT TO DEVELOP GREEN, SAFE HIGHWAYS

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New Delhi: The World Bank and the Government of India on Tuesday inked a pact for a \$500-million project to build safe and green national highway corridors, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said.

The highway corridors will be developed in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

"The Government of India and the World Bank today (on Tuesday) signed a \$500-million project to build safe and green national highway corridors in the states of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh," the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) said in a statement.

The project will enhance the capacity of the MoRTH in mainstreaming safety and green technologies.

The Green National Highways Corridors Project will support MoRTH construct 783 km of highways in various geographies by integrating safe and green technology designs such as local and marginal materials, industrial byproducts, and other bioengineering solutions.

"C S Mohapatra, additional secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, stated that the Government of India is committed to environmentally sustainable development in its infrastructure projects. This project will set new standards in the construction of safe motorable roads," the statement said.

The selected stretches in Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh will also help improve connectivity and promote economic development.

The agreement was signed by Mohapatra on behalf of the Government of India and Sumila Gulyani, acting country director, India, on behalf of the World Bank.

The ultimate objective of transport infrastructure is to provide seamless connectivity and reduce logistics costs, the statement said.

It added that the government has launched many investment programmes in road sector infrastructure to strengthen and improve logistics performance.

This project will also support analytics to map the freight volume and movement pattern on the national highway network, identify constraints, and provide innovative logistics solutions.

"Historically, the transport sector in India has offered limited employment opportunities for women," it said.

The project will support the ministry with an in-depth analysis of gender-related issues in the transport sector, it added. It will also help in creating jobs for women by training women-led micro enterprises and women collectives to implement green technologies in the highway corridors.

World Bank Country Director (India) Junaid Ahmad said, "Connectivity for economic growth and connectivity for sustainable development are two important aspects of a country's development trajectory. This operation brings these two priorities together in support of India's growth strategy."

He added that this project will provide efficient transportation for road users in the four states, connect people with markets and services and promote efficient use of construction materials, among others.

The national highways carry about 40% of road traffic.

However, several sections of these highways have inadequate capacity, weak drainage structures and black spots prone to accidents.

The project will strengthen and widen existing structures; construct new pavements, drainage facilities and bypasses; improve junctions; and introduce road safety features.

"It is imperative that the infrastructure investments are climate resilient. To this effect, disaster risk assessment of about 5,000 km of the national highway network will also be undertaken under the project," the statement said.

The \$500-million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) has a maturity of 18.5 years including a grace period of five years.

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