

YEAR END REVIEW 2021: MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Roads

The year 2021 was significant for the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) as it not only continued with the good work done previously but also initiated certain measures which will have far reaching impact on the life of the citizens. The Ministry carried forward with its mission to build good quality of National Highways (NHs) during the year. In the last 7 years, length of NHs has gone up by more than 50% from 91,287 km (as on April 2014) to around 1,41,000 km now. All this happened despite the adverse situation due to Covid restrictions and heavy & long monsoon season.

The Union Cabinet approved “PM Gati Shakti - National Master Plan (NMP)” including institutional framework for rolling out, implementation, monitoring and support mechanism for providing multi-modal connectivity. The Plan was launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at an event at Pragati Maidan in the national capital. The Ministry is working actively to realize the Prime Minister’s vision of building an integrated multi-modal national network of transportation and logistics as part of the “PM GatiShakti – National Master Plan”. Work on the Multi- Modal Logistics Parks (MMLPs) gained momentum in 2021, with tenders being invited for two MMLP projects – at Nagpur (Sindhi) and Chennai.

One of the major initiatives taken in 2021 was the announcement of the voluntary Vehicle Scrapage Policy, which will phase out unfit vehicles from the country. The policy, launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at a function in Gandhinagar (Gujarat), will not only reduce pollution, caused by the old, unfit vehicles from the road but also lead to substantial employment generation. The policy intends to create scrapping infrastructure in the form of Automated Testing Stations and Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs) across the country. Work on it has already started. The first such facility at Noida was recently inaugurated by RTH Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari.

While work continued on the different NH projects and tunnels at high speed, including Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, Bangalore-Chennai Expressway and Zojila Tunnel, the foundation stone was laid for many projects by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, like the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway which will reduce the existing travel time between Dehradun and the National Capital thereafter, and the Zojila Tunnel.

As part of citizen-centric move, the Ministry started a new registration mark for vehicles under BH series, wherein those eligible for the scheme need not change the number plate of his vehicle while shifting to another state. This was done to ease the burden of re-registration, which is a cumbersome and time-consuming process. In a significant step towards seamless movement of vehicles on the National Highways, the Ministry made it mandatory to use FASTag at all the toll plazas.

A number of steps were taken in 2021 to improve the road safety scenario in the country, which includes announcement of reward scheme for Good Samaritan and constitution of Road Safety Board. Similarly, several steps were taken to encourage the use of eco-friendly vehicles and fuel in order to make the environment cleaner.

A Special Campaign was launched to dispose of pending files. Accordingly, monitoring of disposal of pending MP references as on 30 September, 2021 was done on daily basis through

a dedicated portal and efforts were made for its quality disposal through coordination among different offices. Out of 909 references pending as on 30 September, 830 replies were given by the RTH Minister till 14 December and in a day, a maximum of 169 MP references were disposed off. Similarly, through daily monitoring and in collaboration with concerned offices, the Ministry achieved a major target to dispose of 125 State Govt. References, 1339 Public Grievances and 644 PG Appeals during the campaign.

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Union RTH Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari chaired a National Conference on “Investment Opportunities in Highways, Transport and Logistics” in Mumbai. The conference was organized with a view to emphasize on the importance of collaboration between various Central and State Government Ministries, its agencies and the private sector to provide an impetus to India’s logistics sector and in-line with the vision of the Prime Minister, through the “PM Gati Shakti – National Master Plan”. Ministry plans to showcase the investment opportunities in highways, transport and logistics focusing on three central themes – Bharatmala Pariyojana, Asset Monetization and Vehicle Scrappage Policy. Speaking at the occasion, Shri Gadkari urged investors to come forward and invest with an open mind in the infrastructure sector, which offers a diverse array of investment opportunities spanning multiple asset classes including Highways, Multimodal Logistics Parks, Wayside Amenities, Ropeways, Warehousing Zones and more. Secretary Shri Giridhar Aramane said that the aim of the Government under the able leadership of the Prime Minister was to make Indian logistics system comparable to best in the world by reducing the logistics cost of India to 8-10%. He further emphasised that the return from the infrastructure investment is better than other asset class.

2.VEHICLE SCRAPPAGE POLICY: CONVERTING WASTE TO WEALTH

The voluntary Vehicle Scrappage Policy was launched to create an eco-system for phasing out unfit and polluting vehicles in an environment-friendly and safe manner. It will also create a viable circular economy and bring value for all stakeholders while being environmentally responsible. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed an investors’ summit on the issue in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Speaking at the event, he said the policy will play a big role in the modernization of the vehicular population in the country, removing unfit vehicles from the roads in a scientific manner. He said the policy will not only bring in a fresh investment of more than Rs 10,000 crore but will also generate job opportunities. The Prime Minister pointed out that the new scrappage policy is an important link in the circular economy of Waste to Wealth.

In order to facilitate setting up of Automated Testing Stations (ATSSs), the Ministry came out with

Rules for recognition, regulation and control of ATs. These Rules take into account vehicle safety & emission requirements and global best practices and have been incorporated according to the vehicles and systems in place in India. An automated testing station uses mechanical equipment to automate the various tests required to check fitness to a vehicle.

The Ministry also came out with detailed procedures for setting up of Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility, as per Motor Vehicles (Registration and Functions of Vehicle Scrapping Facility) Rules. These Rules are applicable to all Automobile collection centres, Automotive Dismantling, Scrapping and Recycling Facilities and recyclers of all types of automotive waste products.

The Ministry issued a notification G.S.R 714(E) waiving registration fee for new vehicles, purchased against Certificate of Deposit issued by a Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility (RVSF). There will be an increase in fee for conducting fitness test and renewal of fitness certificate for motor vehicles, more than 15-years old. As per another notification, concession will be granted in motor vehicle tax for a vehicle registered against Certificate of Deposit, issued by a RVSF. The concession shall be up to 25% in case of non-transport (personal) vehicles & up to 15% in case of transport (commercial) vehicles. This will be effective from 1 April 2022.

Union RTH Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurated a Vehicle Scrapping and Recycling Facility at Noida. The Facility has been set up by Maruti Suzuki in collaboration with Toyota Tsusho Group. It is spread in an area of 11,000 square km with a capacity of handling 24,000 vehicles per year.

3. NATIONAL HIGHWAYS: CONSTRUCTION & ACHIEVEMENTS

Pace of construction increased from 12 km per day in 2014-15 to 37 km per day in 2020-21 (by more than 3 times). 4,410 km NHs constructed in 2014-15, while 13,327 km NHs constructed in 2020-21. In the last 7 years, length of NHs has gone up by more than 50% from 91,287 km (as on April 2014) to around 1,41,000 km now. In the current financial year 2021-22, the Ministry has so far built 5,407 km on NHs (as on 24 December).

4. CITIZEN-CENTRIC MOVES

5. FASTag MADE MANDATORY

In a significant step towards seamless movement of vehicles on the National Highways, the Ministry decided that all lanes of the fee plazas on NHs would be declared as "FASTag lane" with effect from midnight of 15-16 February, 2021. The step has promoted fee payment through digital mode, reduce waiting time and fuel consumption, and provide for seamless passage through the fee plazas. More than 4.35 crore FASTags have been issued (as on 21 December, 2021). The average daily collection has reached Rs 106 crore (till November 2021) with average daily Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) transactions of 71.38 lakh. FASTag penetration across the country is at around 97% and many toll plazas are having 99% penetration. As many as 728 National and 201 State Highway Fee Plazas have already been made FASTag enabled. As per estimates, FASTag will save around 20,000 crore per year on fuel, that will save precious foreign exchange and help the environment as well.

6. ACTION AGAINST NON-STANDARD VEHICLES

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7.FOCUS ON NORTH EASTERN REGION

Vice President Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu laid the foundation stone of improvement and widening of Shillong-Dawki section of National Highway-40. The upgraded Highway will not only provide better connectivity in the region, but also form a key link for trade and people movement with neighbouring countries Bangladesh and Myanmar.

8. MAKING ROADS SAFER: HONOURING GOOD SAMARITAN

A reward scheme was announced in 2021 for Good Samaritan who has saved life of a victim of a fatal accident involving a motor vehicle by administering immediate assistance and rushing to Hospital within the Golden Hour to provide medical treatment. The amount of award would be Rs 5,000 per incident. An individual Good Samaritan can be awarded maximum 5 times in a year.

9. COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITY OF NSW, AUSTRALIA

The Indian Academy of Highway Engineers (IAHE), under Ministry, signed an Agreement with University of New South Wales (UNSW), Australia for setting up a Centre for Advanced Transportation Technology and Systems at IAHE campus, Noida. The Agreement, signed in a virtual ceremony, chaired by Shri Nitin Gadkari, is for a project for capacity building, technology transfer and creation of enabling environment for establishment of the Centre in IAHE. The UNSW will also deliver a course, certified by it, on smart transport systems and modelling.

10. PRESERVING HERITAGE

In a significant move, the Ministry amended the Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989, formalising the registration process of vintage motor vehicles. Accordingly, all 50-plus, 2&4 wheelers, which have been maintained in their original form and have not undergone any substantial overhaul, can be registered as vintage motor vehicles. This is aimed at preserving and promoting the heritage of old vehicles In the country.

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