

## CENTRE, ADB SIGN \$300 MILLION LOAN TO EXPAND RURAL CONNECTIVITY IN MAHARASHTRA

Relevant for: Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Urbanisation and related Issues

The central government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Wednesday signed a \$300 million loan as additional financing to scale up improvement of rural connectivity to help boost rural economy in Maharashtra, the Ministry of Finance said.

The additional financing for the ongoing Maharashtra Rural Connectivity Improvement Project will help improve an additional 1,100 rural roads and 230 bridges for a total length of 2,900 kilometers (km) in 34 districts, the ministry said.

The ongoing project with \$200 million financing, approved in August 2019, is already improving and maintaining the condition and safety of 2,100 km of rural roads across Maharashtra, it added.

After signing the loan agreement, Rajat Kumar Mishra, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance said that with the additional financing, the overall project will improve the condition and safety of 5,000 km of rural roads and over 200 bridges connecting rural communities with productive agricultural areas and socioeconomic centers in Maharashtra.

Takeo Konishi, country director of ADB's India Resident Mission, said that improved connectivity through climate-resilient, all-weather rural roads will help accelerate Maharashtra's economic recovery from Covid shock by generating rural employment and transforming agriculture.

The new project is expected to generate about 3.1 million person-days of employment for local communities, of which at least 25% will be for women, over the construction and maintenance periods.

A gender action plan has been prepared to focus on capacity development of women workers so that they can benefit from the semiskilled and unskilled labor opportunities, the ministry said.

The additional financing will rebuild and rehabilitate roads and bridges in Maharashtra destroyed by the devastating floods in August 2019.

The design incorporates flood and climate resilience measures, pilot test the use of environment-friendly materials on selected road segments, use of mobile mapping technology to monitor the project roads and utilize new technologies such as fiber-reinforced concrete and pre-cast concrete arch bridge.

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