

The Government of India plans to develop 44 highway stretches aggregating 27,000 Km as 'economic corridors'

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The Government of India (GoI) plans to make 44 highway stretches totaling 27,000 km to be developed as "economic corridors" for seamless movement of cargo vehicles, cut delays, deepen economic activities and create jobs. It will help in decongesting 30 top cities in the country by building ring roads and logistics hubs along these corridors. This will be the biggest highway expansion plan since the rolling out of Golden Quadrilateral and North South East West Corridor, totaling 13,000 km.

The stretches pass through and connect major hubs of economic activities such as manufacturing clusters and ports, and have been identified as "economic corridors". The new plan is expected to be completed in six years. The government is exploring several funding options, including road development cess, loans from agencies and also private investment.

Another 15,000 km will be developed as feeder routes to these economic corridors. Almost 40 interconnecting corridors will also be developed to link 44 economic corridors and the Golden Quadrilateral. This network will carry 80% of the country's freight.

The GoI will also rebrand national highways as national corridors, economic corridors and feeder roads, a move aimed at helping in navigation and identifying the roads. The corridors have been identified using satellite imagery.

The work of expanding these stretches will be carried out under the 'Bharat Mala+' programme, a highway project that will link ports, logistic hubs and border areas to boost cargo movement, exports and their overall growth.

Some of the identified corridors are Mumbai to Kolkata, Pune to Vijayawada, Jaipur to Indore, Tuticorin to Kochi and Bengaluru to Nellore.

All these identified stretches will be made into four to six lanes with facilities such as truck lay-by, parking lots and logistics parks. The packages are likely to require at least Rs 6 lakh crore of investment.