



INDEPENDENCE DAY 2009

ROAD DEVELOPMENT TO TRANSFORM NORTH EASTERN REGION

Development of North-Eastern States has been the priority of the UPA government. The same resolve was reflected in the President's address in the Parliament. One of the basic requirement for over all development of a region is the existence of basic infrastructure such as roads. Roads traverses not only the length and breadth of the country but also affects the lives of all sections of the society, and all sectors of economy be it agriculture, trade or industry. To provide impetus to the development effort in the North Eastern States, the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has undertaken a number of specific programmes to improve certain existing roads as well as to construct new roads in all the States of the region. These programmes are the biggest ever undertaken in this region, in addition to the yearly funds spent by the Ministry on the maintenance and improvement of National Highways and other roads. These programmes are also in addition to substantial investment being made by Central Government on upgrading several State Roads through Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and construction of rural roads under PMGSY by Ministry of Rural Development.

To remove the back log of road development in the region, some specific programmes have been launched. Amongst them, the most important is the East-West corridor, a high capacity, high speed four-lane highway being constructed to connect the region with rest of the country. Out of total 7300 km length of the highway between Silchar and Porbandar, 678 km from Srirampur (West Bengal/Assam border) to Silchar falls in North – East. The cost of the 678 km long stretch of this high quality highway is about Rs 6000 crore. When completed together with a three-lane new bridge across Brahmaputra river at Saraighat near Guwahati, the highway will efficiently link all the states of the region with various parts of the country and would substantially reduce travel time and road transportation costs.



Another programme called Special Accelerated Road Development Programme (SARDP-NE) has been initiated, covering 9940 km roads of various categories to connect all State capital towns with upgraded National Highways; to provide at least two-lane road connectivity to all the District Headquarters of the region; to improve connectivity to neighbouring countries; to provide road connectivity to backward and remote areas of the region and to improve some of the important roads of strategic importance.

Widening and improvement of 706 km long National Highway stretches to four-lane to further improve connectivity of Agartala, Aizawl, Imphal and Kohima is to be taken up under National Highways Development Project, Phase III (NHDP-III) on Build, Operate and Transfer basis. Toll will be levied on the upgraded highways. This include the four stretches of Doboka-Dimapur (124km), Kohima—Imphal (140km), Shillong-Churaibari(252 km) and Silchar–Aizawl(190km).

SARDP-NE is divided in three Phases. 1580 km out of total 2796 km of Phase ‘A’ and 1543 km out of 2319 km of Arunachal Pradesh Package of Roads and Highways have been approved for execution. Out of 1580 km approved for execution under Phase ‘A’, sub-projects covering 1072 km costing Rs 3488 crore have been sanctioned by the Ministry and the implementation has been started. Out of this about 450 km have been completed till March, 2009. The stretches of 1216 km approved ‘in-principle’ under Phase‘A’, the detailed project preparation are in progress by NHAI/ BRO/ State PWD Assam. The entire Phase‘A’ is targeted for completion by March, 2014.

Out of 2319 km approved by the Government under Arunachal Pradesh Package of Roads and Highways, 776 km are to be implemented on BOT(Annuity) basis. The request for qualification for the 4 projects covering these 776 km have been evaluated. Out of these four projects, the bids for the two projects namely Nechipu to Hoj and Potin to Pangin section of Trans Arunachal Highway have been submitted by the Bidders on 10.8.2009. The Government is yet to take the decision to ward the work. For the remaining 1543 km (2319-776) to be implemented on EPC basis, the detailed project preparation is under progress by BRO and State PWDs of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.

Phase ‘B’ of SARDP-NE has been approved only for preparation of Detailed Project Reports, covering improvement/construction of 4825 km long roads and decision to implement these improvements is yet to be taken by the Government:

The estimated investment on these programmes is of the order of Rs 70,000 crore. These programmes when completed would change the face of the region, integrating it with rest of the country, boost up socio-economic development, enhance employment potential and improve plight of the people of the region in general.

All the 16 District Headquarter towns of Arunachal Pradesh will be connected by two-lane roads. The East-West highway called Trans Arunachal Highway of more than 1600 km length would be constructed to provide efficient internal road communication within the State. It would also improve the connectivity with Bhutan through Lumla route. Certain inter basin roads providing inter-connectivity of valleys of the State are proposed and improvement of roads to facilitate Hydro Power Projects of Arunachal Pradesh will also be carried out under these upcoming road programmes.

In Assam, all National Highways will be of minimum two-lane standards and about 1400 km length of them will be of four-lane standards. All the 26 District Headquarter towns of the State will be connected with two-lane roads. A shorter route to Bhutan is being developed from Pathshala on East-West corridor, the hitherto backward areas of Dhemaji, North Lakhimpur,



Barak Valley, NC hills, Karbi Anglong will see excellent road infrastructure and four additional road bridges across Brahmaputra, one across Jia Bharali river will be constructed.

The State Capital town of Manipur will be connected by four-lane highway and all the nine District Headquarter towns of the State will have two-lane connectivity.

Shillong, the State Capital town of Meghalaya will be connected by four-lane highway and all the seven District Headquarter towns of Meghalaya and mining areas of Garo hills will be connected by two-lane roads and Eastern and Western bypasses of Shillong and Jowai are proposed to decongest these important towns of Meghalaya. The existing NH-44 from Shillong to Southern tip of Tripura (Sabroom) will be made four-lane, providing efficient highways to Barak Valley, Mizoram and Tripura.

All the National Highways of Mizoram will be improved to two-lane standards and four-laning will be provided upto Aizawl, all eight District Headquarter towns of the State will be connected by two-lane roads and a trade route from proposed Sittwe port in Myanmar would be laid to facilitate transport of goods by water route through the Bay of Bengal.

Nagaland's Capital town Kohima will be connected by four-lane highways and all the National Highways of the State will be of two-lane standards and all the 11 District Headquarter towns will be connected to national highways with two-lane wide roads and the backward areas of the State will have better primary road connectivity.

Gangtok, the State Capital town of Sikkim will be connected by two-lane highway, in addition an alternate highway connecting Gangtok with other parts of the country will also be constructed. All the four District Headquarter towns of the State will have two-lane connectivity and highway to Nathula will be made two-lane wide.

The backward and remote areas of Tripura will be connected by two-lane primary roads, Agartala will be connected with four-lane highway and all the four District Headquarter towns will also be connected by two-lane roads and the highway between Aizawl and Agartala will be improved to two-lane standards.

Overall, the programmes envisage four-lane connectivity of all State Capital towns (except Gangtok) and two-lane connectivity of all 85 District Headquarter towns of NER. It would also lead to better connectivity of border areas with Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and improving access to remote and far flung areas of the region and formation of a well knit grid of national highways and other primary roads of the region, to facilitate easy inter-state transport and efficient road link from the NER to rest of the country. It is hoped that the new programmes would change the face of the North East region and dawn an era of hope and prosperity to the Seven Sisters. (PIB Features)



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RTS/VN

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