

Budget 2017: Arun Jaitley lines up Rs 91,000 crore for roads and highways

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In the government's constant attempts to improve the country's infrastructure, it has allocated a total of Rs 91,000 crore for roads and highways sector for fiscal year 2017-18, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said in his Union Budget speech.

Budget 2017 provides for an outlay of Rs 64,000 crore for roads and highways, which will be allotted to National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

Jaitley has also announced Rs 27,000 crore would be specially earmarked for its rural roads programme, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in FY18 to promote the country's sprawling rural economy in the aftermath of demonetisation. Last Budget, the government had earmarked Rs 19,000 for this scheme.

"Pace of construction of roads has increased to Rs 133 km per day in 2017 from 73 km per day earlier," said Jaitley.

Last year, the government had earmarked a sum of Rs. 97,000 crore for roads and highways, which also included Rs 15,000 crore that was raised by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) through bonds.

Prior to the Budget, experts had predicted that rural road development would be a key focus point in this year's Budget announcement.

The total budget for the transport sector came up to Rs 2.41 lakh crore this year.

The Finance Minister has also identified around 2,000 kilometres of coastal roads that can be developed for better port connectivity.

The Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has been urging the Finance Ministry to increase the outlay for highways so as to improve safety measures for travellers with better road signs.

He also plans for better systems to manage traffic, mainly the installation of digital means of paying toll to decongest toll plazas. He has also mulled the possibility of setting up logistics parks along the highways for better port connectivity to encourage water transport.

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