

Mr. Gupta detailed the current status of India's road network and its maintenance:

"The total length of the road network in India is 4.69 million km. It is the second largest road network in the world, just after the United States. The national highways constitute 82,000 kilometers, 1.7 percent of the total length, and carry 40 percent of the total traffic."

"65 percent of total traffic and 90 percent of passenger traffic are being serviced by roads. The corresponding figures in the 1950s were 12 percent and 31.6 percent. The compounded annual growth rate of traffic on roads during the last two decades has been 9 percent. Road maintenance, however, is not commensurate with the traffic growth rate."

"The Indian Constitution assigns responsibility for the national highway network to the central government while State governments are responsible for developing and maintaining the state highways, major district roads, other district roads, and village roads. The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways is the apex organization in the road sector in the country responsible for the planning, development, and maintenance of the national highways. It extends technical and financial support to state governments for the development of state roads, the connectivity of roads of interest and economic importance; it evolves the standards and specifications for roads and bridges in the country."

"Several road development programs are being implemented in the country. The first, the National Highway Development Program, is one of the world's largest road development programs. It comprises seven phases of development of more than 55,000 km of national highways; of which 21,000 km of road length has already been completed."

"Another is the Rural Road Development Program fully funded by the central government to supplement the efforts of the state governments in the construction and maintenance of the rural road network. It comprises an action plan for the construction of 350,000 kilometers of roads. With the creation of large growth assets, simultaneous requirements for maintenance also emerge. Lastly, the necessary expenditure of resources is accomplished with continuing emphasis on economic development."

"Maintenance categorization being adopted in India is compatible with the conventional international practice of dividing into routine, periodic, and emergency activities. The balancing of routine maintenance activities along with the regular program of periodic maintenance and prompt response to emergencies makes it effective. To improve efficiency, several road administrations have started to contract out more and more of the road maintenance activities to the private sector."

"We have carried out road user cost studies that have brought out some eye-opening conclusions about the economic losses on account of the poor maintenance of roads. India has adopted PPP policy in a big way. These projects contain a built-in mechanism for the operation and maintenance of the roads for a period 30 years. "Regarding rural roads, the contractor who builds the road has a five-year maintenance responsibility. The government of India has recently adopted a new policy initiative for operate, maintenance, transfer (OMT) contracts where concessions are given to contractors for 5 to 9 years with the responsibility for maintenance."

"The road ahead for our country is the introduction of an intelligent transport system for an improved driving experience, road safety, and transport management, and the adoption of global best practices. India is aiming for a road maintenance system that minimizes investment, maximizes cost efficiency, reduces losses for the users, and is energy-efficient."