

## Rural road construction changes path for the first time in 8 years

*The rural development scheme has been 'poorly' performing for some time now, as it has been continuously missing its targets for the April-June period since FY16*



The length of rural roads constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) has seen a turnaround for the first time in the last eight years, as it overshoot (106 per cent) the target during the first quarter (April- June) of this fiscal year. This comes even as the government pushes for higher capex to boost economic growth.

In total, 6,403 kilometres of roads were constructed against the targeted 6,000 kilometres, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) in its latest Twenty Point Programme (TPP) progress report for the first quarter of the current fiscal year.

The last time the scheme had achieved its target (206 per cent) in the first quarter was in 2015, when the total length of constructed roads stood at 10,726 kilometres as against the targeted 5,200 kilometres in the quarter.

Currently in its third phase, PMGSY was launched as a centrally-sponsored scheme in 2000 to provide all-weather road connectivity to unconnected areas in the country as part of a poverty-reduction strategy. Nearly 700,000 kilometres of road (around 99 per cent of the sanctioned length) had been completed under the first and second phases of the scheme.

During the Budget for 2023-24, the Centre had allocated nearly ~19,000 crore to the programme, the same as last year.

According to a written reply filed by Union minister of state for rural development Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti in the Lok Sabha earlier this year, only 18,983 kilometres of the sanctioned 99,319 kilometres has been constructed in the third phase, which corresponds to the period between FY20-FY25. This phase focuses on consolidation of the rural road network to and from gramian agricultural markets, higher secondary schools and hospitals with an aim to impact agriculture, health, education, urbanisation and employment generation.