

Will Toll Order Hit DND Upkeep More?

After Apex Court Order, Onus On Noida, State Govts To Maintain Flyway

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Noida: The 9.2km DND Flyway — connecting Noida with Delhi's Maharani Bagh — has shown visible signs of deterioration since 2016 — when collection of toll was scrapped through an Allahabad high court order.

The roadway exhibits rough and uneven patches on both Delhi and Noida sides — with non-functional streetlights at multiple locations and overgrown trees requiring immediate attention. The absence of a patrolling squad has further compromised security measures.

If not for G20 — when the mandate to give global leaders a proper welcome and a smooth ride overrode arguments about how to fund the flyway's maintenance — DND might have been much worse off today. But even though the concessionaire — Noida Toll Bridge Company Ltd

(NTBCL) — invested around Rs 6 crore in repair and maintenance in May last year, the flyover's current condition falls short of its original operational standards.

The responsibility of maintaining the road lies with NTBCL. But since it was barred from collecting toll in 2016, the company has only done patchwork repair of the key connector, citing lack of funds needed for a recarpeting.

After the Supreme Court upheld the Allahabad HC's order on toll collection on Friday, the onus now is on the state govts, and Noida Authority to ensure the road's upkeep.

The DND project dates back to the 1980s, when UP govt initiated plans to improve Delhi-Noida connectivity. Due to financial constraints, a public private partnership was established in 1992 through an agreement between the Noida Authority, Delhi govt, and Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Li-



NOT IN A GOOD SHAPE

imited (IL&FS).

IL&FS subsequently formed NTBCL in 1996 to execute the project, signing a concession agreement with Noida in 1997. The agreement stipulated a 30-year toll collection period to recover the project cost, with provisions for a two-year extension if needed.

The eight-lane flyway, operational since Feb 6, 2001, faced legal challenges when

the Federation of Noida Resident Welfare Association (FONRWA) filed a petition in 2014. KK Jain, the FONRWA general secretary, argued that NTBCL's cost recovery calculations would perpetually delay the project's return to the Noida Authority.

Finally — in Oct 2016 — HC barred the collection of toll, but allowed NTBCL to continue with its job of main-

taining the flyway because of constitutional validity. The company then moved a petition in SC.

IL&FS expressed disappointment with the SC judgment, saying they would review the detailed order to explore their future course of action. "We completely respect the decision of the apex court while sharing our disappointment on the unexpected verdict. Despite numerous challenges, the company has diligently fulfilled its obligations and ensured the upkeep and smooth operation of this critical infrastructure for the last over 23 years and will continue in its endeavour to do so," it said in a statement.

A Noida Authority official said there were plans to dismantle the toll plaza to ensure smooth traffic flow. "We will study the SC order and take a decision on handover of the maintenance. The toll plaza will also be dismantled," an official said.

Ramesh Sharma