

# PM urges private sector to step spend on infra, asks departments to implement budget announcements from April

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NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called upon the private sector to piggyback the Centre's capital spending plan to spur economic activity and contribute to the country's development, besides calling upon government departments to start rolling out budget announcements from April.

Addressing a post-budget webinar on PM Gati Shakti, Modi said that the focus should be on implementing the budget announcements and removing problematic "commas and full stops" that may have crept in.

The government has been pitching the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan that provides data on existing projects to help improve planning and implementation of infrastructure projects.

"The scale at which the government is working on infrastructure development, PM Gati Shakti is a major requirement... Infrastructure planning, implementation and monitoring can be improved due to PM Gati Shakti. Time and cost overrun can also be reduced... I urge that the government and private sector should incorporate this in its functioning," Modi said.

While seeking the use of modern technology to improve quality and cost effectiveness, he said that there was a need to focus on disaster resilient infrastructure and reduce logistics cost.

"Infrastructure investment has a huge multiplier effect. This helps improve ease of living and ease of doing business, the economic productivity of every sector benefits. When infrastructure is getting an unprecedented boost, economic activity and job creation will gain," Modi said, while pointing out that the Centre's capital spending had jumped four times from Rs 1.75 lakh crore in 2013-14 to the budgeted Rs 7.5 lakh crore during the next financial year.

"National highway, railway, waterway, optical fibre connectivity, gas grid, renewable energy, in every sphere the government has stepped up investment. In these sectors the government is moving ahead with very ambitious targets," he said, adding that the private sector can use the Gati Shakti platform in the best possible way.

The government is hoping that sustained capital expenditure will boost the demand for raw material and inputs, using up excess capacity in steel and cement plants, and generate jobs and fresh investment in the private sector. The Centre has also been urging banks to be proactive in lending, without diluting the prescribed norms.

During the webinar, Modi made a repeated call to the private sector to join hands and invest, a suggestion that finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has also been making.