

Toll policy for vehicles plying on state highways soon

The Statesman 07 Nov 2014

Arunima Ghosh

arunima@thestatesman.net

Kolkata, 6 November

The state government is set to come up with a toll policy for levying user charges or toll on vehicles plying on the state highways.

The West Bengal Highway Development Corporation, which is entrusted with maintenance of the state highways, has invited proposals for preparing the policy.

Although Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee initially had reservations on levying toll tax, she has finally given her nod.

"Most states possess toll policies of their own and if things go as planned, our policy too will be ready by January 2015", said an official of the corporation. Once the policy is in place, user charges will be collected for using some of the 19 state highways which span a total length of 4400 kilometre.

The toll policy, which is likely to be on the lines of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), will lay down the particular roads wherein the tax will be levied.

The selection of the stretches and the quantum of tax will be determined depending on the road's industrial traffic. Infact, more the traffic, higher will be the toll tax.

To start with, Request for Proposal (RFP) has been sought on 29 October from nine consultants empanelled by the Finance department.

These are namely CRISIL, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India Pvt. Ltd, PricewaterhouseCoopers Pvt. Ltd, Feedback Infrastructure Services Pvt. Ltd, Jones Lang LaSalle, Ernst & Young Pvt. Ltd, KPMG Advisory Services Pvt. Ltd, IL&FS Financial Centre and RITES Ltd.

The corporation has set a deadline of 13 November for receiving the proposals following which necessary financial clearance will be sought.

"For empowering the state government to levy toll and grant concession to private investors for collecting and retaining toll there is a need to make a host of amendments including the West Bengal Municipal Act, 1993, the West Bengal Highways Act 1964 and the West Bengal Motor Vehicle Rules 1989", the official added.

The move to levy toll tax will help the state to tide over the ongoing financial crisis. This apart, it will also help in proper maintenance of the roads. Presently, a substantial part of the state budget is spent on road maintenance.