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## CHANDIGARH NEWS

### Farm stir: Toll suspension causing ₹4.8-cr daily loss to 24 BOT projects

13 build-operate-transfer (BOT) national highways and 11 BOT state highways in Punjab and Haryana have suffered an estimated revenue loss of ₹1,060 crore till July 31

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Farmers at Ladhawal toll in Ludhiana. (HT Photo)

The farmers' stir in Punjab and Haryana against the Centre's three agriculture laws has led to toll suspension in 24 road projects, causing an aggregate revenue loss of ₹4.80 crore per day



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The projects — 13 build-operate-transfer (BOT) national highways and 11 BOT state highways — have suffered an estimated revenue loss of ₹1,060 crore till July 31 due to the ongoing agitation. The farmers, mostly from the two agrarian northern states, have been protesting against the three agriculture marketing laws, passed by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Centre, for the past more than eight months. They laid siege to toll plazas and have been allowing free passage to vehicles.

Though their implementation has been stayed by the Supreme Court, the farmer unions have refused to budge till the three controversial laws are repealed. Barring a few toll plazas, toll collection on most state and national highways in the two states has remained suspended for the past several months. These BOT road projects are in addition to the highways managed and maintained by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) which has also suffered toll revenue loss.

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There are no signs of the agitation ending anytime soon as both the central government and the farmer unions have not had any talks in the past six months. Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta-Ugrahan) chief Joginder Singh said they would not allow toll plazas to operate till the time the Centre accepts their demands. “They (private companies) collect money from people who are now benefitting from free passage,” he said, dismissing the revenue loss claims.

CARE Ratings, in a statement on Monday, said the disruption of toll collections for state projects since October 2020 accentuated with no fee collection at toll plazas since December. The NHAI, the nodal agency for development of national highway projects, had in July decided to compensate the private highway developers for their toll revenue loss, acknowledging the farmers’ stir as an “indirect political force majeure (FM) event”.

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### ‘Projects may opt for termination’

It said that nine out of NHAI’s 13 build-operate-transfer projects in Punjab and Haryana were facing liquidity constraints even prior to the FM event due to significant underperformance in toll collection. It foresees these stressed BOT projects opting for termination of concession due to sustained force majeure. This is likely to comprise projects worth ₹4,800 crore opting for termination.



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