Bharatmala Phase I at nine: 8,375 km of approved highway not awarded under the programme

In this report: the findings; the approved length, awarded and built; the cost per kilometre; how the figures were made.

The Cabinet approved 34,800 km of national highways under Bharatmala Phase I on 24 October 2017, and the Ministry told Parliament that the work would be done over five years, from 2017-18 to 2021-22. When the Ministry answered the Rajya Sabha on 22 July 2026, 8,375 km of that length, which is 24.1 per cent, had not even been awarded under the programme.

CAG found that by 31 March 2023, when only 75.62 per cent of the approved length had been awarded, 158.24 per cent of the approved outlay had already been sanctioned.

Finding	What the Government's record and CAG's audit show
Not awarded	On the Ministry's answer of 22 July 2026, projects had been awarded for 26,425 km of the 34,800 km approved. That leaves 8,375 km, which is 24.1 per cent, not awarded under Phase I. The same answer says that new sanctions of projects under Phase I have been discontinued since November 2023. The Ministry told the Lok Sabha on 5 February 2026 that Bharatmala "has been discontinued since November 2023 with only awarded projects being taken up for completion".
Not built	The Ministry told the Rajya Sabha that 22,709 km had been constructed up to May 2026, which is 65.3 per cent of the approved length. So 12,091 km of the length approved in 2017 had not been built by May 2026, although the five years that the Ministry gave Parliament ended with 2021-22.
CAG's count	In its Report No. 19 of 2023, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India counted the progress of Phase I up to 31 March 2023, after those five years had ended. CAG found that 13,499 km had been completed by then, which was only 38.79 per cent of the approved length.
The cost	On CAG's own count, the projects awarded up to 31 March 2023 carried a sanctioned cost of Rs 32.17 crore per km, while the Cabinet's approval worked out to Rs 15.37 crore per km. CAG also found that 158.24 per cent of the approved outlay had been sanctioned when only 75.62 per cent of the length had been awarded. The Ministry itself told the Lok Sabha on 31 July 2025 that projects covering 26,425 km "were awarded at a cost of about Rs 8.53 lakh Crore", against the Rs 5.35 lakh crore estimated in 2017 for all 34,800 km.

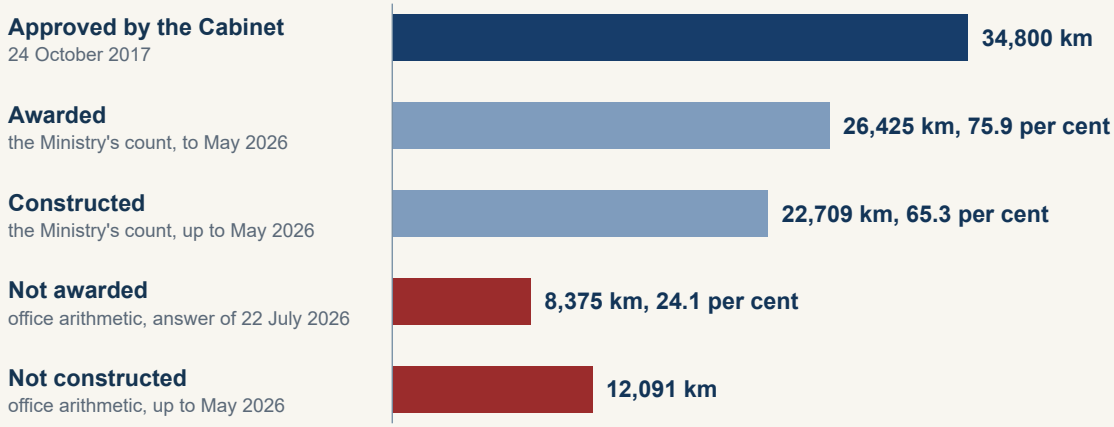
Sources: Read on 22 October 2026. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, written reply in the Rajya Sabha, released by PIB on 18 December 2017 (Release ID 174465); Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 414, 'Implementation of Bharatmala Pariyojana', answered on 22 July 2026; CAG Report No. 19 of 2023, Performance Audit on Implementation of Phase-I of Bharatmala Pariyojana, listed on 10 August 2023; Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1975, 'Cost Escalation under Bharatmala Pariyojana', answered on 31 July 2025; Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1025, 'Completion of Projects under Bharatmala Phase-I', answered on 5 February 2026.

The approved length, awarded and built

The Ministry's answer of 22 July 2026 sets the length awarded and the length built against the 34,800 km the Cabinet approved. Both counts run to May 2026. The office's arithmetic on that answer gives the two gaps, which the chart shows in red.

Bharatmala Phase I: approved, awarded, constructed

Kilometres of national highway



Source: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, answer to Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 414 of 22 July 2026 and its annexure; the approval, PIB, 18 December 2017.

On the Ministry's own answer, nearly a quarter of the approved highway had not been awarded under the programme, and more than a third of it had not been built.

Figure	What it counts	As of	Where
34,800 km	Length the Cabinet approved for Phase I	24 October 2017	PIB, 18 December 2017
26,425 km	Length awarded under Phase I	May 2026	RS USQ 414, page 1 and annexure
22,709 km	Length constructed, 65.3 per cent of the approved length	May 2026	RS USQ 414, page 1
8,375 km	Approved length not awarded, 24.1 per cent	22 July 2026	Office arithmetic on RS USQ 414
12,091 km	Approved length not constructed	May 2026	Office arithmetic on RS USQ 414

Sources: Read on 22 October 2026. Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 414, 'Implementation of Bharatmala Pariyojana', answered on 22 July 2026; Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, written reply in the Rajya Sabha, released by PIB on 18 December 2017 (Release ID 174465).

The cost per kilometre, on CAG's own count

CAG set the sanctioned cost of the projects against the cost the Cabinet approved, and both comparisons below are its own. The sanctioned cost is the cost fixed for each project when it was cleared. The civil cost is the cost of the construction work alone.



Source: CAG Report No. 19 of 2023, listed on 10 August 2023, pages iii, vi and 6.

Each kilometre awarded up to 31 March 2023 was sanctioned at more than twice the cost per kilometre that the Cabinet approved. The construction work alone was sanctioned at Rs 23.89 crore per km, against Rs 13.98 crore per km approved.

Measure	Approved by the Cabinet	Sanctioned, up to 31 March 2023	Where
Whole cost per km	Rs 15.37 crore per km	Rs 32.17 crore per km	CAG, page iii
Civil cost per km	Rs 13.98 crore per km	Rs 23.89 crore per km	CAG, page vi
Whole cost, in total	Rs 5,35,000 crore for 34,800 km	Rs 8,46,588 crore for 26,316 km	CAG, page iii

CAG put the result in these words: "Upto 31 March 2023, when only 75.62 per cent of CCEA approved length has been awarded, 158.24 per cent of CCEA approved financial outlay has already been sanctioned." CCEA is the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, which approved Phase I.

Sources: Read on 22 October 2026. CAG Report No. 19 of 2023, Performance Audit on Implementation of Phase-I of Bharatmala Pariyojana, listed on 10 August 2023.

How the figures were made

Every figure in this brief comes from five official documents. The first is the Ministry's written reply of 18 December 2017, which the Press Information Bureau released. The second is the Ministry's answer to Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 414 of 22 July 2026, and the third is CAG's Report No. 19 of 2023. The last two are the Ministry's answers in the Lok Sabha of 31 July 2025 and 5 February 2026. Each was read in a saved copy, and every quotation was found again, word for word, before this brief was built.

Five figures are the office's own arithmetic on the answer of 22 July 2026, and each uses two figures that stand in one table of that answer. The length not awarded is 34,800 km less 26,425 km, which is 8,375 km, or 24.1 per cent. The length built, 22,709 km, is 65.3 per cent of the approved length, which leaves 12,091 km not built. The length awarded is 75.9 per cent of the approved length.

CAG's figures are printed as CAG printed them, and they are counted up to 31 March 2023. The Ministry's lengths are counted up to May 2026, and its cost figure is the one it gave the Lok Sabha on 31 July 2025. The two counts were made on different dates, so this brief gives each figure its own date and does not join them into one series.

Nine years after the approval, the Government's own answer to Parliament shows that close to a quarter of the highway it approved in 2017 had not been awarded under the programme, and that more than a third of it had not been built.

Sources: Read on 22 October 2026. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, written reply in the Rajya Sabha, released by PIB on 18 December 2017 (Release ID 174465); Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 414, 'Implementation of Bharatmala Pariyojana', answered on 22 July 2026; CAG Report No. 19 of 2023, Performance Audit on Implementation of Phase-I of Bharatmala Pariyojana, listed on 10 August 2023; Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1975, 'Cost Escalation under Bharatmala Pariyojana', answered on 31 July 2025; Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1025, 'Completion of Projects under Bharatmala Phase-I', answered on 5 February 2026.