

FASTAG MANDATORY FOR ALL VEHICLES

TAGS: GS-3: Economy, Infrastructure-Road

CONTEXT:

- The Union Ministry of Road Transportation and Highways Nitin Gadkari has said that FASTag will become mandatory from Monday midnight and vehicles.
 - Without FASTag will have to pay twice the toll amount.

NEWS IN DETAILS:

- **Radio Frequency Identification tag**, which facilitates **electronic payment of fees at toll plazas**.
- FASTag is India's **electronic toll collection chip for national highways**,
- From February 15, FASTag is going to be **mandatory for all vehicles**. The government is keen on moving to a system wherein 100 per cent of the toll collected are through FASTag and no cash handling at toll plazas.
- Already, over 80 per cent of all toll **collected across national highways** is through FASTag. Therefore, not having a FASTag installed in your vehicle may prove to be very inconvenient while driving on national highways.
- In fact toll collection has reached around **Rs 93 crore per day**, inching towards the **Rs 100-crore per day mark**.

WHAT IS FASTAG?

- It is a **sticker or a tag** usually pasted **on the windscreen** of the car.
- The device uses **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology** to communicate with scanner installed at toll plazas.
- Once the car crosses the toll plaza the requisite toll amount is **automatically deducted** from a bank account or a prepaid wallet linked to the FASTag.
- Vehicles can drive through plazas without stopping.
- If the tag is linked to a **prepaid account like a wallet, or a debit/credit card**, then owners need to recharge/top up the tag.
- If it is **linked to a savings account**, then the money will get deducted automatically after the balance goes below a pre-defined threshold.
- Once a vehicle crosses the toll, the owner gets an SMS alert on the deduction. The alert is like money getting debited from accounts or wallets.

HOW DO I GET A FASTAG?

They are available online on all major retail platforms like Amazon, Paytm, Snapdeal etc. They are also available at points of sale locations set up by 23 banks.

The list includes all major banks. Road Transport Authority offices also sell these tags. The government is expanding the network to cover dealers, agents, fuel stations, commercial centres et al so that access to a FASTag is not a problem. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) through its subsidiary Indian Highway Management Company Limited (IHMCL) sells and operates FASTag. FASTag taken from one bank cannot be used with the account of another bank. So users prefer buying FASTag from the bank in which they have their bank accounts.

Besides, NHAI sells bank-neutral FASTags issued by the IHMCL online which are not linked to any bank and the user is free to choose his mode of payment to be linked to the FASTag account. This type of FASTag is currently the most popular. There are around 20 million FASTag users. There are an estimated 50 million vehicles in India. The number of FASTag users has grown 400 per cent in a year. In December last year it was not even one crore.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST AND WHAT ABOUT VALIDITY?

Banks are allowed to charge up to Rs 200 for issuing the tag including all taxes, according to the IHMCL. A security deposit, usually around Rs 200 for most cars (it depends on the vehicle type) is also charged. Then there is a minimum recharge amount, usually Rs 100, to keep the tag active. That apart, individual banks may charge additional transaction fee for every recharge. It is best to check out bank's or prepaid wallet's websites to see how much they are charging. The security deposit currently cannot be used to pay toll. There is a thinking in the establishment if this security deposit can also be used as toll but it is not yet final. FASTag is valid forever as long as the tag can be read by the scanner. FASTag is specific to vehicles and not persons.

WHICH HIGHWAYS ACCEPT FASTAG?

All the 615-odd toll plazas of NHAI and in addition 100 toll plazas of state highways have adopted FASTags for toll collection. The number will increase gradually.

HOW TO OPERATE FASTAG ACCOUNT, LIKE RECHARGE, TOP UP ETC?

The IHMCL has My FASTag mobile app (Android and iOS) which can be linked to the FASTag. Every FASTag has a unique number. Banks have their own web-based mechanisms. It is like operating any other prepaid e-wallet. 📞 Express Explained is now on Telegram

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU ENTER A FASTAG LANE WITHOUT HAVING A FASTAG BY MISTAKE?

Ideally the highway marshals should not allow you to enter a FASTag lane. But in the event that you find yourself in a FASTag lane, double the toll amount is to be paid. Even if your FASTag is not functional due to some damage to the RFID or it does not have enough balance, you are liable to pay double the toll amount. There is a thinking among policymakers to rope in a system with banks wherein in such cases the user can pay cash and the tag is recharged through a payment gateway (like Bharat Bill Payment System) on the spot. But that is still at a planning stage.

DO YOU NEED FASTAG EVEN IF YOU DO NOT TAKE YOUR CAR TO THE HIGHWAYS?

Ideally yes, because from April this year, the government has sought to make FASTag mandatory for third-party insurance, which is a minimum insurance cover mandatory for all cars. Besides, to incentivise adoption, the government is planning to integrate FASTag for payments at wayside utilities at highways, parking lots etc. So that the tag becomes a multi-utility payment tool.

WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED TO GET/ACTIVATE A FASTAG?

Copy of your valid driver's license (as address proof and photo ID), the registration certificate of the vehicle. Banks require KYC documents, like Aadhaar or passport or PAN.

If you reside within 10 km of the toll plaza, you need to submit residence proof to get a FASTag and avail of concession.

HOW TO RESOLVE COMPLAINTS ABOUT FASTAG?

The all-India helpline number operated by NHAI is 1033. Generally complaint redressal is fast when it pertains to NHAI's FASTags. However, for FASTags issued by banks, customers are redirected to bank's customer care and complaints take more time to get resolved. To solve this, the government is considering integrating the helpline some way so that a complaint generates a "ticket" and is passed on to the bank and the issue is resolved without the customer having to chase the complaint. Mostly complaints are about damaged RFID, low balance, recharge queries, and such technical glitches as deduction SMS arriving late etc.