Classification of Highways

What is the issue?

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Following the Supreme Court’s order banning sale of liquor within 500 metres of any National/State Highway, some states started to circumvent the court’s order.

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How are roads classified in India?

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- The **Nagpur Plan** divides roads into 4 main categories: National Highways, State Highways, District Roads and Village roads.
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- **Expressways** were added as an additional category.
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- **National Highways -** Roads that are required for strategic movement, those that reduce the travel time substantially, and those that open up backward areas and help economic growth, are also classified as National Highways.
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- They connect all major ports, state capitals, large industrial and tourist centres, and foreign highways.
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- **State Highways** – They are the arterial roads of a state that connect to National Highways, district headquarters and important cities and are also linked to district roads.
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- **Major District Roads** - They connect areas of production, main markets and the State and National Highways crossing the state.
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- Village Roads connect villages to each other or to the nearest District

Roads.
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Who decides the requirements for classification?

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- Indian Roads Congress (IRC) is a semi-official body that was set up by the government in 1934 and registered as a society in 1937.
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- It decides the minimum requirements for roads, keeping in mind geography, speed, volume of traffic and safety.
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- It is also the apex body of road engineers in the country and regularly updates the technical requirements such as width, sight distance and other related parameters.
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What is the length of India’s road network?

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- At the end of 2015-16, India had a total kilometres of
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1. NH and Expressways - 1,00,475
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2. State Highways - 1,48,256 km
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3. Other Roads - 49,83,589 km
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- Roads carry about 65% of India’s freight traffic and 80% of its passenger traffic.
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- NH constitutes approximately 2% of the road network and carries 40% of the country’s total road traffic.
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How are National Highways numbered?

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- According to the new system, all east-west highways have odd numbers.
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- All north-south highways have even numbers.
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- On odd-numbered highways, the number increases from north to south.
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- e.g NH from Jodhpur to Kanpur will have a smaller number than a NH from Mumbai to Chennai.
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- Similarly the numbers increase from east to west.
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- e.g NH from Kolkata to Chennai will have a smaller number than a NH from Delhi to Mumbai.
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Who is responsible for the maintenance?

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- Under the National Highways Act, 1956, NH became the responsibility of the central government.
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- **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** was created to look after National Highways.
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- The **Public Works Departments of states** are mandated to look after State Highways.
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- In Union Territories, the UT government is responsible for State Highways.
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How do states circumvent the Supreme Court’s order?

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- Central government the exclusive right to notify/denotify any road in the country as a National Highway and add it to the list of National Highways annexed to the Act.
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- State governments can send proposals to the central government to upgrade roads to National Highways.
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- After the Union Cabinet approves an upgradation, National Highways Act, 1956, has to be amended to include it in the NH.
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- States cannot upgrade State Highways to National Highways or vice versa.
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- However they have the right to tag State Highways as District Roads.
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- This has been done by some states to circumvent the Supreme Court's order.
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- In such cases, liquor can be bought or consumed near these Highway-turned-District Roads.
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Source: Indian Express

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