

## **The Highways and Shipping Sectors Surge Ahead as the Centre Pushes for World Class Infrastructure**

The Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways and Shipping Shri Nitin Gadkari has said that his two Ministries have together spent a total of about Rs 4 lakh crores in the past two and a half years as they work towards building world class highways and shipping infrastructure in the country. While the Road Transport & Highways Ministry has spent about Rs 3 lakh 17 thousand crores to build a total of 14,594 Km and award 21,247 Km of National Highways, the Shipping Ministry has spent about Rs 80,000 Crores for various projects aimed at modernizing and mechanizing the shipping sector and making it more efficient. The Minister was speaking at Economic Editors' Conference organized by the Press Information Bureau in New Delhi today.

Talking about the ambitious Sagarmala programme of the Shipping Ministry Shri Gadkari said that it will bring about a major reduction of logistics cost for EXIM and domestic trade. The cost savings from this are likely to be Rs 35,000 to 40,000 Crore per annum. He said that various projects amounting to about Rs 12 lakh crore have been identified under the programme. These include projects for enhancing port connectivity, modernization of existing ports and developing new ones, port linked industrialization and coastal community development.

A short film giving highlights of Sagarmala was presented before the audience. Many new and innovative projects are being taken up under this programme. These include port capacity expansion of 142 ports over 20 years, of which work on thirty will start this year; six new ports at Vadhavan, Enayam, Sagar Island, Paradip Outer Harbour, Sirkazhi, and Belekeri; 25 last mile rail connectivity projects by Indian Port Rail Corporation Limited (IPRCL) across 9 major ports; 27 rail connectivity projects to be taken up by Railways/ IPRCL ; 79 road connectivity projects to be taken up by MoRTH/NHAI/Ports, including 18 projects under Bharatmala scheme; heavy haul rail corridor between Talcher & Paradip; 14 CEZs as part of port-linked industrialization of which five pilot Coastal Economic Unit locations have been identified at Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and near Ennore in Tamil Nadu; 29 potential industrial clusters identified based on detailed study of key commodities, across energy, materials, discrete manufacturing and maritime and also initiatives under Coastal Community Development objectives of Sagarmala, like skilling projects and infrastructure projects for development of fisheries sector.

Shri Gadkari also informed that the performance of Indian ports has been consistently good over the last two years, and all major ports are earning profits. This, he said, is the result of many initiatives taken by the Shipping ministry in the last two years like weeding out of obsolete rules, amendment of old legislations, modernization of ports, streamlining of processes, taking steps to reduce waiting time of ships at ports etc. The minister also said that his Ministry is committed to develop inland waterways transport on the 111 National Waterways in the country. While the work on developing Ganga as a waterway is already on, he said work would soon begin on rivers Krishna and Mandovi and Zuari.

Talking about the highways sector Shri Gadkari informed that once it is passed, the Motor Vehicles Act will be a game changer in the transport sector. He said that his Ministry has set a

steep target of awarding 25,000 Km and constructing 15,000 km of national highways during 2016-17, and is trying to achieve the same. Problems of funding and land acquisition are being tackled through new policies wherever required and through negotiations with various stakeholders. He reiterated his commitment for not only providing the country with world class highways and access control expressways, but also for bringing down the number of road accidents and related fatalities and ensuring that pollution from the transport sector gets minimized .

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