

**Package one of Delhi-Meerut Expressway project to be complete by year-end Package done in record 14 months
Shri Gadkari says development and environment protection should go together**

The Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Nitin Gadkari has reiterated the Government's commitment for speedy completion of highways projects in Delhi NCR in order to decongest the region and cut down vehicular pollution levels by nearly 50 percent. Shri Gadkari did an on the spot inspection of one such project - the Delhi – Meerut Expressway project today, and briefed media persons near Akshardham temple on NH 24.

Speaking on the occasion he said that the first package of the Delhi – Meerut Expressway project stretching from Akshardham Temple to Delhi-UP border will be ready by December this year. The 9 km, 14 lane highway is being completed in a record time of 14 months as against the earlier expected construction period of 30 months. This is also the first national highway in the country with 14 lanes, and has several features that would help reduce pollution. These include a 2.5 metre wide cycle track on either side of the highway, a vertical garden on the Yamuna Bridge, solar lighting system and watering of plants through drip irrigation only. Shri Gadkari said this highway will be developed further upto Lucknow, and will be a lifeline for the people of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. The highway will also reduce traffic congestion on the Delhi – Meerut route, which in turn will lower the pollution levels in the region, he said.

Shri Gadkari further said that work on the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways around Delhi is also going on at full speed, and the former is likely to be ready before 26th of January next year. Once the NH-24 and the two peripheral expressways are ready, vehicles destined for neighbouring states will be able to bypass Delhi and this will reduce pollution by 50 percent.

The Minister also said that projects worth Rs 40,000 crore are being undertaken to decongest Delhi. These include plans for Dhaula Kuan stretch, Dwarka Expressway and a Ring Road for Delhi the cost for which will be borne jointly by the Centre and Delhi Government.

Apart from speedy construction of highways the Ministry is also taking other steps to check pollution arising from the highways sector. These include actively promoting the use of bio fuel driven vehicles and electric vehicles, greening of highways, covering construction sites to contain dust and promoting the use of waterways. He added that tenders have been issued for dredging of river Yamuna and linking Delhi and Agra through waterways.

Emphasizing that ecology, economy and development should go side by side, Shri Gadkari said that these projects will pave the way for development, employment generation, cleaner atmosphere and hassle free travel for people.

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