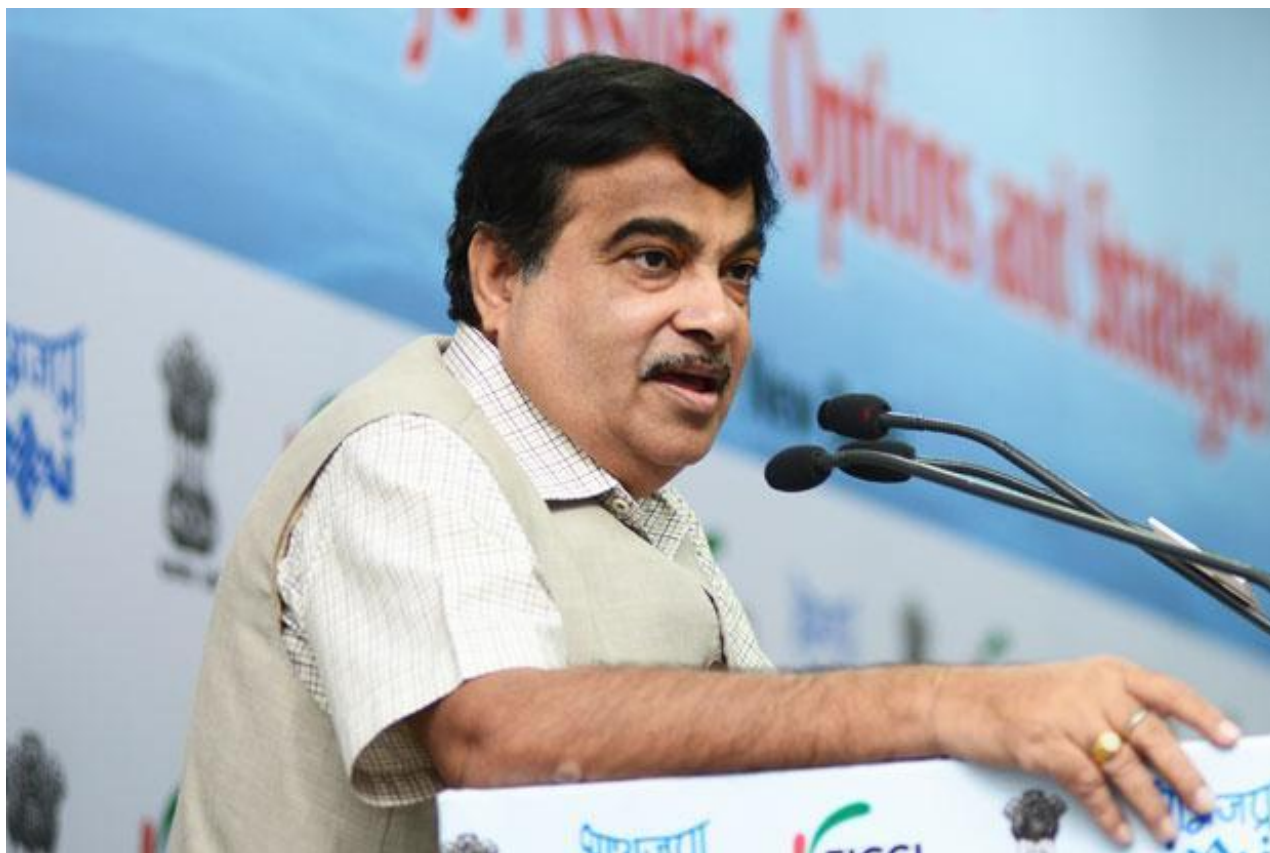


Nitin Gadkari kick-starts national green highways mission

 [livemint.com/Politics/YLIA9Ue6Yn4Jxvlg7iMtYP/Nitin-Gadkari-kickstarts-national-green-highways-mission.html](https://www.livemint.com/Politics/YLIA9Ue6Yn4Jxvlg7iMtYP/Nitin-Gadkari-kickstarts-national-green-highways-mission.html)

7/2/2016



New Delhi: The National Green Highways Mission got underway on Friday, with Union road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari kick-starting the initial plantation drive along 1,500km of national highways at a cost of about Rs.300 crore.

The mission aims to provide a green canopy along 100,000km of highways and create jobs for 1 million youth.

Gadkari said it is a unique venture and the government welcomed start-ups to join it.

The government plans to spend an estimated Rs.5,000 crore, which is 1% of the road construction cost of Rs 5 trillion till 2019, on the mission and link it with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) to boost the rural economy.

“We will soon take the length of national highways to 200,000km from about 1 lakh km and plantation along these is our responsibility. Converting one km of highway into green provides employment to 10 people and today, we launched a scheme for 1,500km which will employ 15,000 people,” the minister said at an event in New Delhi to mark the launch of the plantation drive.

Ten states are already on board. Many large firms have shown a readiness to pitch in. Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has adopted NH 31 for plantation and maintenance of trees. Coal India Ltd has also shown a willingness to join the effort.

Gadkari said plantation will be accomplished on 3,000km of national highways by the end of July. “Highways aside from environmental and aesthetic aspects have a huge potential to generate jobs and can prove to be a game-changer for agriculture and the rural economy. It may even be linked with the NREGA scheme,” he added.

Under the mission, the government has made it mandatory to set aside 1% of the total project cost of any

national highway contract to a Green Fund for plantation.

Calling upon government and private agencies to join hands under the initiative, Gadkari said only serious players need come forward as the projects will be monitored through satellite technology, and payments will be made only after successful implementation. An app to monitor real-time progress of the plantation drive and plants was also launched on the occasion.

Mission director AK Bhattacharya said the National Highways Authority of India will empanel a list of companies, NGOs, cooperatives and institutions to undertake the work of planting trees along the highways. Once empanelled the shortlisted organisations will be given different stretches of highways to plant trees and manage them.

PTI contributed to this story.

First Published: Sat, Jul 02 2016. 01 19 AM IST