

200 CR TREES TO BE PLANTED ALONG HIGHWAYS: GADKARI

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Road Transport and Highways Shipping Minister, Nitin Gadkari at a discussion on river rejuvenation in New Delhi on Friday. Photo: Meeta Ahlawat

The government plans to plant 200 crore trees along the entire 1 lakh km National Highways network across the country to employ jobless youth.

“The length of National Highways in the country is one lakh kilometre. I have asked officials to come out with a plan to plant 200 crore trees along these stretches which in turn would create jobs for the unemployed on the one hand and protect the environment on the other,” Road Transport, Highways, Shipping and Rural Development Minister Nitin Jairam Gadkari said in New Delhi on Friday.

A similar scheme could be implemented under MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) along the village and district roads and state highways. That has the potential to employ 30 lakh youth, he said while inaugurating a conference on “Regeneration of Rivers”.

Mr. Gadkari said Gram Panchayats will be taken into confidence and the unemployed youth could be assigned 50 trees each which could fetch livelihood for them from the produce.

He also stressed upon the need for water conservation stating that if even 15 per cent of rainwater could be tapped out of the 60 per cent that goes to the sea, the water-scarcity could be avoided and people can be supplied with potable water besides irrigation of agriculture land.

The government will lay stress on building check-dams instead of mega projects, he said, adding that the biggest impediment in way of water schemes is lack of electricity and steps were on to improve the power situation by fixing accountability and regular auditing.

He said measures were also on to save Rs. 6 lakh crore on imports of petrol, diesel and gas by way of promoting bio-fuels.

He added that his departments in coordination with others are preparing roadmaps for cleanliness of Ganga and Yamuna rivers and developing waterways in the country for environment-friendly and quick movement of cargo and passenger traffic.

Mr. Gadkari also said that the project monitoring committee was looking into realignment of National Highways in calamity torn Kedarnath region, which faced flash floods last year that killed and displaced thousands of people.

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