



Driver's seat: Gadkari says the Motor Vehicle Act is an outdated one.

NITIN GADKARI

State govts have a lot of reservation on Land Acquisition Act

BY SHEREEN BHAN
CNBC-TV18

INTERVIEW

PPrime minister Narendra Modi will take a final decision on possible changes to the Land Acquisition Act within 20 days, road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari said in an interview. Gadkari said the government is aiming to build 25 kms of roads per day. Edited excerpts:

What are your views on Land Acquisition Act?

We have a lot of reservation from the state governments, particularly from the chief ministers and the finance ministers. When the chief ministers and the state finance ministers met with our finance minister Arun Jaitley, everyone had some reservation about this Act and their feeling is that it will be very difficult for the state governments to manage the industry, development, manage the road sector. So it will be a very complicated situation in the states.

So what is the solution, some are suggesting that perhaps the Centre will empower the state governments to define the rule, so to speak, as far as the Land Acquisition Act is concerned?

We have already decided to call a meeting of the state chief ministers, concerned ministers and the secretaries and we will consider the types of suggestions they have for the Act.

After that we will decide what type of steps we will select...; regarding the compensation, no problem because as long as the compensation is concerned I feel it will be justified. But as far as the procedural delays and permission are concerned, they will take a lot of time.

On the acquisition part, you are likely to move some amendments?

No, I have not taken any decision. First of all, I will refer all these Acts to the state governments. State governments would have a federal system, some state governments belongs to United Progressive Alliance (UPA), Congress party, some to BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) but in the wider interest of the sector I will consider their suggestions and after their suggestions I will take that note and I will refer it to the prime minister and cabinet and after that the prime minister will take the decision and by his decision we will go ahead.

You talked about consulting state governments, eventually preparing a cabinet note and taking the matter to the prime minister and to the cabinet. What kind of timeline are you working with?

Within 20 days, before the parliament session we will come to conclusion because this is an issue which is related to future development of this country.

As far as your ambitions for roads are concerned and linked to that is the crucial issue of land acquisition, the day you took over you said that 'you should hold me accountable.' Let me ask you what is the measure that we should hold you accountable as far as the road sector is concerned? What would you like to see happen, the UPA had a target, they never fulfilled that target as far as road development is concerned, what is the target that you are going to be working with?

Out of NHAI (National Highways Authority of India) and my department we have problem in the road network to the amount of ₹60,000 crore.

The road network totally was stuck, no progress. There are some disputes in Supreme Court, high courts, lot of problems are there. Within one month, (I) gave orders to my concerning officers that you find out the equilibrium.

We don't want to destroy contractors. Our intention is construction of road should be as early as possible. We are not interested in the legal matters, going to Supreme Court and High Court—that is not our business.

I am very glad to tell you that ₹20,000 crore of the problem we have already solved and within three months by mutual consent we want to solve this problem and we want to start road work immediately.

Do you think it's time to extend the sops given to the auto industry?

I must tell you, Motor Vehicle Act is an outdated one. I already have research reports on motor Acts of America, Canada, Japan, Germany and the UK. I had a meeting with the UK ambassador. Within a month, I will introduce a new Bill of international standards.

Will you impose European and US safety standards on Indian autos? That may translate into huge cost escalation for the industry.

Our traffic rules are very strict; sixty cities with a population of more than 10 lakh will be covered by latest electronic system. If rules are violated, immediately photo is taken and fine imposed.

How serious are you towards the plan to moving to 10% ethanol blending?

I am serious. Within a month I am going to start a bus pilot project in Nagpur. I am going to take the international norms of the US, Brazil and Canada. Collect it and make new Indian standards. Those who are interested can start the production, those who are not can decide about it. Industry should understand that they have to compete with the world.

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