Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) and Government of Bihar Sign MoU for Scientific Desilting of Water Bodies and Utilisation of Silt in National Highway Projects

Scientific desilting to enhance water-carrying capacity, improve drainage and reduce flood risks

‘Nadi Sanjivani’ initiative to integrate river restoration, flood management and agricultural conservation with highway infrastructure development

243 lakh cubic metres of silt to be utilised in 16 ongoing National Highway projects; 835 lakh cubic metres proposed for 27 future projects

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In a significant step towards integrating water-body restoration with infrastructure development, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and the Government of Bihar today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for scientific desilting of identified rivers and other water bodies and utilisation of suitable excavated silt in National Highway construction projects in Bihar. The MoU was signed in New Delhi in the presence of Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari and Bihar Chief Minister Shri Samrat Choudhary.

Envisioned as **‘Nadi Sanjivani’**, the initiative seeks to restore the water-carrying capacity of rivers and water bodies, strengthen flood management, conserve agricultural land and provide a sustainable source of construction material for National Highway projects. It presents an integrated approach to addressing water-management challenges while supporting infrastructure expansion.



Addressing the gathering, Shri Nitin Gadkari highlighted that accumulated silt has significantly affected the carrying capacity of rivers, contributing to floods, damage to agricultural land and loss of property. Bihar faces recurring challenges of flooding and water scarcity, particularly due to rivers originating in Nepal that carry substantial quantities of water and sediment into the State. He emphasised that scientific desilting would help improve water flow and drainage, restore water bodies and make suitable excavated material available for highway construction.

The Union Minister stated that the initiative would create a mutually beneficial framework in which river restoration supports infrastructure development, while utilisation of excavated silt reduces dependence on fresh earth material and agricultural soil. This would help conserve productive agricultural land, reduce construction costs and facilitate faster completion of highway projects. He further emphasised that implementation would be undertaken in coordination with the Bihar Government with appropriate technical assessments and safeguards. Expressing confidence in the initiative, Shri Gadkari said that the model could be extended to other States facing similar challenges, promoting sustainable infrastructure development and improved water management.



Shri Samrat Choudhary, Chief Minister of Bihar, highlighted the State's longstanding vulnerability to recurring floods, which cause substantial losses to farmers, agricultural land, livelihoods and infrastructure. He underscored the need for scientific management of rivers and water bodies to address the adverse impact of accumulated silt on their water-carrying capacity.

The Chief Minister informed that the **Bihar Water Sources Restoration and Silt Management Policy, 2026**, has been formulated to provide a structured framework for restoration of water bodies and management of accumulated silt. The policy also facilitates removal of sand and silt deposited on agricultural land following floods, providing relief to affected farmers.

Welcoming the MoU, Shri Choudhary said that the initiative would strengthen Bihar's efforts towards flood management, agricultural development and infrastructure expansion. He noted that restoration of water bodies would improve their carrying capacity, enhance water availability for irrigation and drinking purposes, support groundwater recharge and contribute to reducing flood-related risks. He assured full cooperation of the State Government in facilitating implementation and timely processing of proposals.



Significant potential for utilisation of silt in highway projects

NHAI has identified substantial potential for utilisation of excavated silt in National Highway projects in Bihar. Under the initiative, **243 lakh cubic metres of suitable silt will be utilised in 16 ongoing projects**, while an estimated **835 lakh cubic metres is proposed for utilisation in 27 future projects**, subject to technical suitability and requisite approvals.

Currently, 39 NHAI projects covering approximately 1,561 km, with an estimated investment of ₹58,340 crore, are under construction in Bihar. Another 11 projects covering around 1,982 km and involving an estimated investment of ₹1,85,200 crore are proposed.

The availability of suitable excavated silt is expected to meet a significant part of the material requirement of these projects, reduce construction costs and facilitate timely execution of highway works.

Scientific implementation with safeguards and monitoring

The MoU establishes an institutional framework for coordinated and time-bound implementation between NHAI and the Government of Bihar in accordance with the Bihar Water Sources Restoration and Silt Management Policy, 2026, and applicable environmental and statutory provisions.

The Road Construction Department (RCD), Government of Bihar, will act as the nodal department, supported by a State-level Coordination Committee to examine proposals, facilitate approvals, monitor implementation and resolve operational issues.

Desilting will be undertaken through scientific methods following detailed technical assessments of identified water bodies. Extraction will be permitted only at approved locations and within prescribed technical limits, ensuring that river ecosystems, riverbanks, embankments, bridges and other structures are not adversely affected.

The suitability of excavated silt for National Highway construction will be established through appropriate testing in accordance with applicable MoRTH specifications and relevant Indian Roads Congress (IRC) codes. Joint measurement, digital record-keeping,

regular monitoring and periodic reconciliation of extracted, transported and utilised quantities will ensure transparency and accountability.



Expanding connectivity across Bihar

The Government of India has significantly expanded National Highway infrastructure in Bihar, with the network increasing from 4,615 km in 2014 to approximately 6,500 km at present. Since 2014, construction of around 29 new bridges over major rivers in Bihar has also been taken up to strengthen regional connectivity and facilitate movement of people and goods.

The MoU marks an important step towards integrating river restoration, flood management, agricultural conservation and infrastructure development through sustainable resource utilisation. By converting excavated silt into a productive construction resource, the initiative will help conserve agricultural land, improve efficiency in highway construction and support restoration of water bodies.

'Nadi Sanjivani' represents a sustainable development model in which river restoration and infrastructure creation complement each other, paving the way for a more resilient, better-connected and prosperous Bihar.

The occasion was attended by NHAI Chairman Shri Santosh Kumar Yadav, Director General Shri Sudeep Chaudhary, NHIDCL Managing Director Shri Krishna Kumar, Bihar Government Secretaries Shri Pankaj Pal and Shri Atul Kumar, and other senior officials and dignitaries.



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