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Bihar: Western flank of Mahatma Gandhi setu reopens for traffic

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PATNA: Union minister of road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the rehabilitated western flank of Mahatma Gandhi Setu through a video conference on Friday. Chief minister Nitish Kumar presided over the event. He thanked Gadkari also for the upcoming bridge and road projects and welcomed the works being done under PM Modi's special package in state.

The 'lifeline' bridge connecting north and south Bihar over river Ganga is being rehabilitated by replacing the old superstructure, except pillars, with steel deck superstructure. The rehabilitation of its eastern flank will be started soon. Funds to the tune of Rs 1,742 crore are being spent on the overall rehabilitation of the 38-year-old bridge being carried out since

February, 2017.

Gadkari said it is the first of the kind project in the country executed by replacing the concrete superstructure by a steel framework. "This bridge had a unique problem that its pillars were fine but slabs had been damaged. We got experts from across the world to find out ways to rehabilitate the bridge. A European firm was also roped in for this project along with consultation by IIT-Roorkee to ensure a lifespan of 100 years for the bridge," Gadkari said.

Gadkari said works on five mega bridges entailing an overall outlay of Rs 10,338 crore will commence in Bihar over the next few months. "Bidding process for a 7km-long bridge over Kosi between Bhagalpur and Madhepura has been initiated. The

construction works will start in two months with funds to the tune of Rs 1478 crore. Works on another 4.5km-long bridge parallel to Vikramshila Setu in Bhagalpur will also commence in two months. Similarly, fresh bidding process has been completed for a bridge over river Ganga at Sahebganj,” he said.

The minister said works on a bridge parallel to Gandhi Setu will also commence in October. “The spans of the bridge will be 242m-long, the highest for any bridge in the country so far. Funds to the tune of Rs 3,000 crore will be spent on the project,” Gadkari said.

Speaking on the occasion, deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi thanked PM Narendra Modi for the special package of Rs 1,25,000 crore for Bihar, under which the Gandhi Setu rehabilitation project is being executed. He said 12 new bridges are being constructed on the Ganga.

State road construction minister Nand Kishore Yadav said the eastern flank of the Gandhi Setu will also be rehabilitated in 18 months.

Union ministers Ram Vilas Paswan and Ravi Shankar Prasad were the guests of honour. Other dignitaries present in the virtual event included Union minister General (retired) V K Singh.

Nitish demands more funds for MSME development

CM Nitish Kumar on Friday requested Union minister Nitin Gadkari for enhancing central support to small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs), especially in view of higher population density in Bihar. “The state government has amended Industrial Investment Promotion Policy to get more industrial units and ensure that the returnee migrant workers get sufficient job opportunities here. The Centre is giving Rs 25,000 crore to Bihar in this regard. We would be grateful if more funds are sanctioned by the Centre,” Nitish said.

Nitish also indicated towards the need for a direct route between Buxar and Varanasi. The CM also pointed out the need for

uniformity in width of national highways (NH) for smooth vehicular movement.