

Gadkari: Global market sets agricultural prices

See job creation against growth in population, says minister

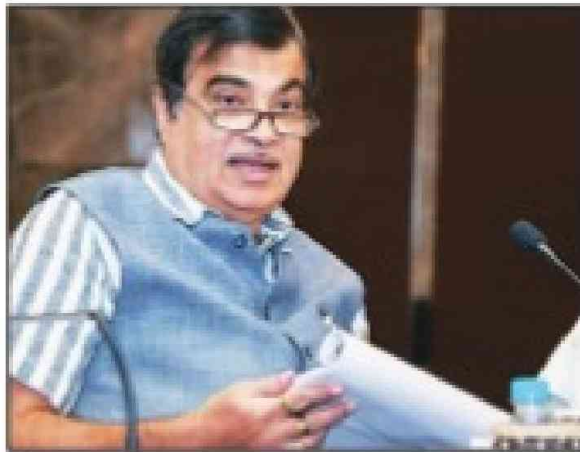
VIVEK DESHPANDE
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ADDRESSING CRITICISM of the Central government on the issues of farmers' protests over the government's allegedly anti-farmer policies and lack of job creation, Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Saturday said that agricultural prices are influenced by the international market, and that the number of jobs created by the government needs to be seen also in the context of the growing population.

Gadkari, the Minister for Surface Transport, Shipping and Ganga Rejuvenation, said, "Jobs are definitely getting created but we have to also see this against the backdrop of growing population. On one side we are creating jobs, *lekin log bhi jansankhya badhane ke liye puray taqat se bhide hain* (on the other hand, people are also exerting themselves with full force to increase population)."

Gadkari was addressing the media on achievements of the Narendra Modi government in the last four years.

Among other achievements of the Central government he listed was the effort to provide succour to the distressed farm sector. One



Gadkari on Saturday. PTI

of the measures taken, he said, was giving 1.5 times the minimum support price (MSP) to farm produce.

Gadkari said there are many difficulties in addressing farmers' distress. "Agricultural prices are determined by the international market. For example, Brazil controls sugar (prices), Malaysia edible oil, and Argentina soybean prices. Currently, deflation has suppressed agricultural prices internationally. So our effort is to increase productivity and decrease cost of production," he said.

But the government, he said, is trying to do "something innovative", such as involving more farmers in ethanol production under diversification plan. "The effort is also to increase the percentage of ethanol blending in petrol and diesel to 22 per cent — from

the present 8 per cent," he said. "We have also hiked import duties on various agricultural produces to help farmers get a good price domestically."

On jobs front, Gadkari said, "In my ministries, lakhs of jobs — both direct and indirect — have been created. We have expedited the rate of mileage in roads and waterways construction. Currently we are assessing the exact figures; we will have them soon."