

A portrait of Nitin Gadkari, a man with dark hair and a mustache, wearing a blue shirt. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background of the entire image consists of concentric, curved lines in shades of orange and yellow, creating a sense of motion and energy.

**Politics**  
*for*  
**Development**



**Recreating a Prosperous  
and Secure Maharashtra**

**Nitin Gadkari**

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**FOR**  
**DEVELOPMENT**

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and Secure Maharashtra

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**“ Politics must never come in the way of development. Everyone in the field of politics has to take extreme care that the development of the state is never in any way impeded by political activity. ”**

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## **Politics for Development**

Social work is in my genes. I got interested in social work in my early childhood. My young mind was shaped by the values of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Sangh *Shakha* was where I imbibed the nuances of social service. The inspiration I got during that time has always been my guiding force and it will surely be so in future as well. My definition of social work is as follows:

“To work tirelessly for the welfare and upliftment of the poor, downtrodden, exploited and wronged sections of the society and to help reach the benefits of the nation’s development to these sections.” My entry into politics was precisely to accomplish this goal.

I began my work as a frontline volunteer of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). It was an exercise against all odds. I eventually shouldered the responsibility of leading many projects of

ABVP and the many agitations the organization undertook to protect and further the interests of the student community. My entry in the *realpolitik* in the post-emergency time was also humble; as a party worker. I am at work ever since then, perhaps with greater energy and enthusiasm now. I never look back, nor am I a shirker. I take the bull by the horn and forge ahead. I am extremely happy with what I could achieve in my journey as an ordinary worker of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to the President of the party's Maharashtra Unit. That however, is not enough for me. I will go on toiling for the society while being in the active politics of the country. To catalyze development projects as a politician and carry the fruits of development to the last man on the social ladder is the central idea of my entire work.

I am perfectly fine with not getting a post in the politics of power as I am here to work for the society. I am not here for pure politics. I value my political success as an opportunity to pursue its development dimension.

I will exploit this opportunity to strive for the all-round development of Maharashtra and to make Maharashtra a prosperous and secure state. It's my firm resolve. I don't believe in opposing an idea for the

sake if it. The state's people have witnessed my work as a minister of the Maharashtra government when we built roads and bridges. Now, as a major party, we have followed the approach of transcending political ideologies and supporting the good projects of the government. I honestly think that the state must progress, whoever is driving it. That's why I strongly believe the politics of development and not the politics of opposition, as that will be beneficial to the state.

Maharashtra is celebrating 50 years of becoming a state. The progress the state has made is however not commensurate with this long period. Maharashtra did enjoy leadership position on industrial investment front and in many other fields. The state has now slipped to sixth or seventh position ranking behind Gujarat and even Himachal Pradesh. I have nothing against the states that have left Maharashtra behind, but feel disappointed by the regression the state is experiencing. It won't serve any great purpose to analyse who is responsible for this loss of leadership. What is important is to initiate a thought process about what we need to do to put Maharashtra back on the path of progress and development. No one has the magic wand to make this happen overnight. It's a task which needs a

collective approach and team work. If we return to power we will solicit the co-operation of other political parties to leapfrog the development process and if we don't come to power we will always extend our constructive co-operation to the party which does. It's my belief that the interest of the state and its people is of paramount importance.

### **We need both, Willpower and Vision**

Development of a state is not a cake-walk. It needs both political will and long term vision. Development of a state will be possible only if its policies are formed contemplating its needs after 15-20 years and followed up with effective implementation. I find it pertinent to cite here a quotation of a thinker. He says, "You can donate eyes but can't donate vision." If we want to build Maharashtra, each one of us in politics – not just those who hold the reins of power – must have a vision. More importantly, other thought leaders such as writers, poets, journalists, bureaucrats and intelligentsia must take up a positive role in the process of development.

## **A Positive Attitude**

Those who decide a road-map have a bright future. Those who don't, face huge problems. This can apply to a state as well. A state has multiple issues to tackle. If it develops efficient systems to deal with these issues a bright future can be a simple end to achieve. Maharashtra too can do this.

## **Collective Efforts**

I am engaged in active politics for the last 32 years. As such, I can't devote enough time to focused reading and deep thinking. I am however adding each day to my knowledge and understanding of how a government works, the problems it faces and how it deals with them. Engaging in active politics has given me the opportunity to see 'inside out' the government, the people and politicians. I in fact picked up important insight in this process. I have very clear thoughts on how we can rebuild Maharashtra and the priorities we need to follow to be able to do it. No one person can drive the development of a state. Politicians must take into confidence the state's people. They should conduct surveys to know what people are aspiring to and have to suggest. If the people's aspirations and

own vision are combined with practical reality, there is little doubt the state will regain its leadership and become 'number one' yet again.

### **Dynamic Efforts**

I was the minister for public works for Maharashtra when the Bharatiya Janata Party - Shiv Sena alliance was in power. I constructed bridges and roads, to the extent of ten times the bridges and roads constructed by earlier governments in the preceding 35 years. Many of these bridges and roads were built without expending a penny from the government exchequer. Thousands of kilometres of roads were built in less than four years in this vast state ranging from Gadchiroli in the East to Konkan in the West. Fifty five flyovers were constructed in the city of Mumbai alone. This received kudos from people across sections. I was always asked the question, "How did you manage it?" I am still asked this question. My response to this question was and still is, "dynamic effort and proper direction." I always had in mind the state's interests and never pursued any personal goals. The fact was I was helped by many in my dynamic effort in the right direction. It was my vision to create swanky roads and mammoth bridges. I would like to narrate an anecdote to explain

where I got this vision.

I had accompanied Maharashtra chief minister Mr. Manohar Joshi on his visit to South-East Asia when I was the state's minister for public works. We went to Malaysia and were offered an opportunity to meet the Malaysian Prime Minister. We were sitting in a hall before we met him. A few senior officials of the Malaysian government were with us. As is customary for that country, we were shown a 20-minute film on the ideologies of the Prime Minister. That comprised an outline on "Malaysia Economic Planning 2012." A thick volume on the subject was also handed over to us. Watching the film and browsing through the book made me realize how clear this country was about the direction of its development.

The 20-year roadmap laid out in clear terms how Malaysia wanted to proceed with developing its agriculture, trade, economy, communications, sports and many other areas. Their policies, their clear direction to deliver on these policies and their commitment to take their country forward impressed me very much. Not that they didn't have hurdles; they had the strong will to overcome them and chase the goals set in the development policy. I realized this was their greatest strength.

## **Where There Is A Will**

I returned from Malaysia and got working in the Mumbai-Pune Expressway project and on the flyovers project. The flyovers project had a budget of Rs. 1,800 crore and the expressway would cost us Rs. 2,000 crore. I set up Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation to expedite these projects. I was the ex-officio Chairman of this Corporation. There were numerous problems in the way of these projects and we had to wade through each of them. Preparatory steps such as acquiring land, obtaining environmental clearance, finalizing the project plan and appointing a project management agency were all completed. The ground breaking for the projects was also performed. There however was the issue of raising the funds for them. The government didn't have enough in its coffers. I was however determined to see the projects through. I strongly felt there is a will and there would be the way. If the will is absent and vision missing, all you end up with is surveys, debates, committees and sub-committees. Nothing constructive happens. The crux of the matter is, if you want to give a new face to a city, a state, a nation – what you essentially need is the political will, more than everything else including money.

I have demonstrated how we (in active politics) can deliver, helped by a positive attitude alone. I always advise my co-workers to eradicate all their negativity. I believe in using energy on constructive things rather than on gossiping about others and trust that if positive thinking is supported by a political will we will recreate a model Maharashtra in ten years, by the year 2020.

Our country is the world's biggest democracy and we are legitimately proud of it. The principle of freedom of expression is built into the concept of democracy. Party politics owes its origin to this freedom of expression. And when you have many political parties you have a multiplicity of opinion. India has successfully bonded its many languages, regions, cultures. There are different political parties in power in different states. A balance is being maintained in development in states where the party in power is different than the one in power at the centre. This is only expected in a democracy. Politics may be the right thing to get into where it is necessary. It is the responsibility of the opposition parties to point out the mistakes of those in power. Politics must however not come in the way of furthering development is what I would like to politely state. Every political worker will have to ensure that his political activism does

not jeopardize development.

In my opinion, watching closely those in power and exercising moral control on them is as important, if not more, as being in power. Those in the opposition have an equal responsibility to facilitate development as the ruling political party has. They can't shirk it. I would say all should concentrate on the politics of development if Maharashtra is to regain its prestigious position.

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## **Dissent: A Sign of Life**

We are in the twenty-first century. Modernisation has taken the world by storm. All are talking development. This is a good sign, but talking alone will not take us ahead. Those in political power as well as others in politics are expected to carry the state ahead. Issues like which political party rules the state must not stand in the way of progress. There is no need to engage in fights over development.

We are a democratic nation. Democracy recognizes the existence of differences of opinion and in fact welcomes it. I personally believe dissent is a sign of life in the political system. It is certainly better to have differences of opinions than not having opinions at all. If we are not encouraging thinking, ideas such as development, policies, plans will lose their importance. These ideas will never be realized.

This is a great problem with our country. People simply don't think.



**“Democracy gives the freedom of holding different convictions. It is the existence of these differences that in fact keeps democracy alive. Differences of opinion are at any time better than no opinions at all. If there are no convictions, then plans, policies and development will come nowhere in the picture, and will never come to fruition.”**

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This situation is dangerous for the development process. Perhaps we need to make people aware about the importance of development. That will lead to a thought process and opinion will begin to flow. This process will help people choose leaders who believe in the politics of development and national service. If the people think beyond caste, religion, language or sect while exercising their voting power, I am sure the state will have a bright future.

We have read about the election of the American President and also read about it in newspapers and magazines. The American voters critically study how a Presidential candidate looks like, how he speaks, how he presents his views and what is his thinking for the country's progress. This alas, is not the case in our country. The votes here are exercised on the basis of caste, religion, sect, language and political party of the candidates. This state of affairs must change. It will be very critical for creating a happy, prosperous and secure Maharashtra. In my opinion, we should choose person when it comes to the choice between person or money muscle, party when it comes to a choice between person or party and philosophy when it comes to choosing between party and philosophy.

If we base our behaviour as a voter on this pattern of choices and

place the interests of the state or nation before the interests of individuals, there is little doubt that the process of development has a greater chance of acceleration. A thinker has made a legendary statement. “I like people who get things done,” he says. What a lovely thought. If the people expect their leader to deliver without giving any excuses, then people are expecting the right thing. But this also entails the responsibility upon the people to select as their leader a person who has a clear developmental viewpoint.

You have every right to decide your own political inclination. If however you observe that the party which you favour has pitched a candidate who is not seen chasing the development agenda, what’s the harm in electing a candidate who is not from the party of your choice but has all the potential to drive development?

This is what I mean by positive attitude. If we exercise a judicious choice and choose a person who holds the promise to develop our city or state, we will have laid the foundation of a bright future. The people must understand that it is they who are primarily responsible to ensure development, though the ultimate responsibility of development rests with the political leadership. Because, it is the people who select the political leadership.



**“The biggest challenge facing us is how to carry the benefits of development to lowest rungs of society, and to the most deprived. A true welfare state is one that takes from one who is in a position to give, and give to the one who has the need.”**

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## **Define The Goal**

It is very important to determine the goal of the state's development. The challenges are multiple. There is poverty to be eradicated, we have to provide food, clothing and shelter to everyone, create jobs for the unemployed, generate adequate power, provide water for agriculture, develop an efficient and modern network of roads and communication, build airports or IT parks. I think we must have a clearly defined goal before we set about developing all these projects. We need to decide what we want to do when we say we want to develop the state. This should be followed by an exchange of ideas and preparation of a project outline and the plan of implementation. The state's development would be possible only if we go about this systematically.

The biggest challenge our country faces today is the provision of

all the basic services and governance to those on the lowest rung of the society and to get them into the mainstream of the development process. We therefore need to define welfare state as giving to him who doesn't have and taking away from one who can give. We should follow the advice of Mahatma Gandhi and treat the poorest of poor as God. Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay has also incorporated this principle in his theory of *Antyodaya*. So has Sant Tukaram elaborated in his theme of *je ka ranjale gaanjale...* (he is a true gentleman who serves the downtrodden like his own. We can see God in his persona).

The principal aim of an economic policy must be the well being of the poorest of the poor. We must think how we can light up his home filled with darkness of ignorance and poverty. Development will have to be always measured on parameters of economics. This will require a fair estimate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As we do this, we must also seek a place in the global process of economic transformation. I am a staunch believer of Swadeshi principle and have always opposed Westernisation. There is a difference between modernisation and Westernisation which we must try and understand. This does not mean we should stick to all old practices saying 'old is gold.' We must adopt everything in the old



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system that is good for development and also embrace newer thinking and methods. It is in the interest of the state that we hear the steps of the time and move at its pace.

We have to accept the changes on the economic front whether we like them or not. Prices of commodities like wheat, sugar, jowar or cooking oil are determined on the basis of their international prices and other global factors. If, for example, sugar production in Brazil drops the Indian sugarcane growers get a higher price for their crop. And the converse happens if Brazil produces excessive sugar. We can no longer stop the global economic forces by closing our doors. With all this in mind we can proceed with setting the goal of our own development process.

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## **Power: A Basic Requirement for Development**

When we think of development of a state, we must consider power as important as roads or water. Power is also of critical importance for the industry. The state is responsible for making available electricity to facilitate growth of industry. Industrial investments will not take place in a state that can not offer adequate power to run the factories and other establishments. If investments don't take place and entrepreneurs turn away from the state how will the state develop? If we don't want to face such a question we have to plan our power generation keeping in mind the needs of the growing industries for the next 20 to 25 years or beyond.

Maharashtra was once self reliant in its power generation and that made the state the leader in industrial investment and growth. The state enjoyed a place of respect with local as well as global investors. If you



“ Recycled sewage water can be used for generation of electricity. It is essential to plan the generation of power by recycling the wastes in cities such as Mumbai, Thane, Pune and Aurangabad. This can make it possible to generate as much as 40,000 MW of power in future.”

were in some part of the country and mentioned you came from Maharashtra you were looked at with respect. Unfortunately for us all, this is no longer the situation. The state is not capable of supplying the electricity the industries need. There is a huge mismatch between need and availability of power. The power shortage is getting more and more serious and becoming a matter of deep concern.

The state presently needs 15,000 megawatts of power. The generation is 11,000 MW. This deficit between need and availability is hitting the industry very hard and also causing serious damage to the state's agriculture. Agricultural pumps are not getting the required electricity. Though there is water, we can not provide water to the farmers only because we don't have power to run the pumps. This is impacting the productivity of our agriculture and the state's economy is suffering.

We must act to get the state out of this vicious circle as we engage in high-decibel discussions about taking a giant leap into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is meaningless to waste time analysing what happened in the past. We must ramp up immediately our electricity generation so as to build up the requirements of the future when we plan new projects.

Maharashtra generates most of its electricity from thermal power plants. There are large thermal power projects in places such as Koradi, Khaparkheda, Bhadravati, Paras, and Deepnagar. The second largest source of electricity is through hydroelectric projects, Koyna being the biggest among these. We generate nuclear power at Tarapur. Some co-generation power projects have also begun production. We have our Poorti sugar factory at Bela near Nagpur. We have set up a co-generation project in this factory. This plant uses bagasse to generate 32 MW of electricity every day.

In spite tapping all these resources the state has on its hands a peak-time power deficit of over 4000 MW. Some parts in rural Maharashtra are suffering from load shedding of up to 18 hours! This is damaging for the state's image as it impedes development. The reasons why we have such a situation are clear. We have not built any new projects to augment power generation. Not one big power project has started in the state in the last ten years. We simply neglected the power deficit when it was already 1400-1600 MW per year, and have now landed up with this huge problem. It's painful. We must take up power generation projects urgently and on a top priority.

We should get cracking on finalising the project outlines, define the policy, acquiring the required land and set the projects rolling. Only this will help us regain our leadership. Otherwise we face the risk of further setbacks.

It is important to look at alternative feed stocks for power generation. We can rope in the state's sugar factories for this and utilise the energy released from their boilers or turbines to generate power from bio-mass or bagasse. Use of multi-fuel boilers can also add up to 1600-1800 MW electricity.

Any thermal power project needs coal and water as its primary resources. I would like to mention here an initiative taken up by the Nagpur Municipal Corporation. The sewage water of Nagpur is collected at Bhandewadi. It is then recycled and supplied to the Koradi thermal power project which is close by. The Corporation earns close to Rs. 10 crore from this supply of water and uses the income to support the funding needed for its development projects.

Can we consider treating Mumbai's wastewater and carrying it to Nashik via Thane in a pipeline? This water is enough to generate 2000 MW electricity. We can try this formula for cities such as Thane, Pune or Aurangabad too. The local Corporations can benefit from

additional financial resources and also get over the problem of load shedding. We must also keep in mind we are going to face a coal shortage in future. So we must work on the possibility of creating power plants in four places which will run on the recycled wastewater from the state's large cities. If we work on this concept and develop a project profile we can look at the possibility of generating 40,000 MW power.

An expert group to study these and other aspects of the power problem needs to be set up immediately and given a time bound mandate to come up with their recommendations. Definite projects based on their recommendations can then be planned considering all options. If we follow a time bound approach to this problem we can regain our number one position in a very short time.





## **Irrigation: Not Political But Development Agenda**

Development of a region depends largely on the progress of its industry and agriculture. The development of agriculture in turn depends upon how well irrigated the land is. Non-irrigated land has to depend upon the vagaries of monsoon. We have suffered from this problem a number of times.

Therefore, it won't be an overstatement if I say irrigation is at the centre of development of agriculture. In that sense the well-being of the society is closely linked with the state of irrigation. We must therefore create a network of irrigation facilities that are well spread over the state and fulfil the requirements of its different regions. We can make the state's land mass "*sujalaam, sufalaam*" and not bring the subject of irrigation in our competitive politics.

About 80 per cent of Maharashtra land is rain-fed and only the



**“The future of farming depends heavily on irrigation. Every part of the state must therefore have appropriate irrigation projects, helping to make that region productive. Irrigation should more appropriately be a topic of development that a topic of politics.”**

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small 20 per cent part of it enjoys the benefits of irrigation facilities. The state's agriculture is caught in the double whammy of water shortage and population pressure. Thus, the farm sector, the farmer and consequently the entire society can benefit from a balanced irrigation system followed in the state. Development oriented politics will give a fillip to the development process that has currently stagnated. I believe the same will apply to the development of irrigation.

Irrigation is the basic strength of development of agriculture and thus works as the backbone of the state's and the country's economy. Most politicians and bureaucrats concur with this but somehow, one feels, irrigation has been sidelined while determining the priorities of development. It's an unfortunate reality that our politicians simply did not come to terms with the need to formulate a clear irrigation policy and its systematic implementation.

Not all is lost, though. We still have the time. We need to determine the requirements of the different regions of the state and prepare a policy which we will implement to the last word. A balanced irrigation development will make it possible to grow two or three crops in a year and this will lead to the creation of a new, prosper-

ous Maharashtra with strong agriculture and industry sectors.

The irrigation projects which we conceptualise must be based on the projected need in the year 2020. The rainfall in the state is not the same everywhere. To overcome this problem we must make it mandatory to dig ponds to store water within the farms so that we are able to supply water for the farms and to grow fodder for the cattle round the year. The state government can bear the expenses of digging these ponds and follow a time bound policy for completing this process. The farmer can also practice fishing in the pond and augment his cash income.

We must look at the comprehensive development of the state and make sure no region feels neglected or let down in the process of development. It's a sorry state of affairs that some regions do carry this complex. We will have to assess the backlog of development in Konkan, Vidarbha, Khandesh and Marathwada regions and take steps to correct it. While this is so, the irrigation policy will have to be forward looking and plan for the next 50 years. The policy can be implemented in phases, with the necessary budget provisions in the five-year plans.

The issues arising out of mass cutting down of jungles, fallow

stretches of land and the huge risk we are facing from global warming can all be addressed using irrigation policy.

Maharashtra has many large dams. These dams are rendered inadequate as they supply most of their water for consumption of cities and industries, thanks to rapid urbanisation. If water meant for agriculture is diverted, the agricultural productivity is bound to suffer, making farming unremunerative. Only about 20 per cent of Maharashtra's land is irrigated. This must change. If the state's political leadership musters will power, it is not too difficult to create a network of irrigation projects in Maharashtra.





**“ John F. Kennedy had said, “It is not that because America is prosperous, she has good roads; it is because she has good roads that she is prosperous.” Good roads is a development need of any village, district or state.”**

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## **Excellent Roads are Highways of Development**

Most transport in Maharashtra moves on roads. Transport by rail-ways or waterways is very limited. This makes roads very important. Good roads are considered “highways of development” and with good reason. Better roads will facilitate faster, safer and efficient movement of goods. It is said that places where roads are good develop faster. It’s true. The past has proved that the states or coun-tries where roads are good have made faster economic progress.

I always remember and quote to others a statement of former American President late John F. Kennedy. I have in fact got it typed in bold and had it stuck up on the wall of my office. “Roads in America are not good because America is rich. America is rich be-cause her roads are good,” Kennedy had said. If you want to make possible the development of a village, district, state - you will have

to first and foremost think of excellent roads. America, which is the strongest economy in the world, moves its goods primarily on roads.

Goods movement in India is largely by railways. The British concentrated on developing railways for their own logistics reasons. In the post-independence time, addition to the railway tracks was restricted and road development was also very slow. What is true on the national level is also true in Maharashtra. We must change this.

People in the rural areas should be able to move to newly industrialising cities for employment, farm inputs should be able to move to the farmers fast and the farm produce should be able to move to the market speedily. We need to therefore connect all the villages in the state by good roads. It is unfortunate that even after completing 50 years of independence, we have not been able to do this.

I was the public works minister for Maharashtra for four years between 1995 and 1999. I gave a new identity to this ministry during my tenure. Construction of 55 flyovers in Mumbai city alone and construction of the Mumbai-Pune expressway were the two high points of my tenure. I encouraged building of good roads in not just Mumbai or Pune but across the state. I also built hundreds of

bridges in addition to building roads. This performance became a talking point in the country. Ministers for public works in different states in the country came to meet me. And I am happy to state that the national level newsmagazine *India Today* also took notice of my work. I however regret the fact that I could not complete the job of connecting all the state's villages.

Maharashtra has thousands of kilometres of roads which are single-lane, two-lane, four-lane or six-lane. These roads are excellent and no other state has that much of road length. However, the traffic pressure on all these roads has increased tremendously. A look at the transport statistics tells you that there is need to build new roads as well as expand the existing ones. This capacity planning has to be based on an estimate of needs in the year 2020.

Many developing nations have realised the importance a strong infrastructure and have gone ahead with creation of a network of good roads. China's capital Beijing which was far behind many cities in the United States understood the importance of roads and now has hundreds of flyovers and thousands of kilometres of roads. Looking at future needs, even Maharashtra should have longer and better roads, in my opinion.

If we take a close look at the pattern of movement on Maharashtra's roads, we observe some other issues coming up in addition to the one of inadequate roads. The increased road traffic in restricted space leads to high carbon dioxide concentration, and this has been affecting citizens' health adversely. It is therefore necessary to expand the widths of roads. It will be ideal if we keep a 20-year time frame before us when planning this expansion.

The number of vehicles in the country has outpaced the capacity of its roads. As the vehicles run through congested corridors their carbon dioxide emission does not dissipate and has an impact on peoples' health, causing respiratory diseases. We can think of planting neem trees along all roads and ensure that they grow straight up so that they don't hinder the traffic in any way. They will help in checking pollution and people can breathe easy. This is in fact the job of the social forestry department but it seems to be not happening right.

Politicians will have to now take it up and get the co-operation of non-government organisations such as *Vanarai* in the task. If you consider Mumbai alone, 70 per cent of its pollution is caused by CO<sub>2</sub> emission from motor vehicles. The city therefore suffers from

many health hazards. The other cities in the state are in similar straits and will soon meet the same fate. That's why the new planning has to be for the next 20 years and implemented in phases.

While I was the minister for public works I built two fly-over bridges on Wardha Road in Nagpur. One was between Gorakshan to Gowari Memorial (zero mile) and the other at Chhatrapati Nagar Chowk. Both the projects faced strong opposition. That was year 1996. Thirteen years ago. Some even went to the court challenging the projects. Questions were raised about the need for flyovers. The work had stopped, and the fate of the flyovers hung in the balance. I had taken the decision to build the flyovers keeping in mind the needs of the city 20 years in future. So when the court allowed us to go ahead we wasted no time in completing the work. Now the people of Nagpur have come to agree there was the need to build the flyovers. The road was cleared, parking space was created under the bridge, and traffic began to move more smoothly. Good roads and traffic discipline are critical for development of any city. Had I changed my decision in 1996 and withdrawn the projects, there would have been serious traffic problems on Wardha Road. I used some political vision and got the flyovers built. There was no intention to

get any political credit or personal mileage in doing this. I was working towards Nagpur's development. That was and always will be my driving emotion.

### **Private Investment**

There was a time when we thought of Public Works Department (PWD) when we mentioned road construction. The roads could be built only when there was money in the government's coffers. The seriousness of the situation is clear from the fact that in the first fifty years of the independence period, only four flyovers were built in the city of Mumbai. No private sector investments came into road building and nobody welcomed even the idea of private investment in this area. That had slowed down the development of roads in the state. After 1990, however, private investment made step by step entry in road building and the results are there for all of us to see. The outlook has now changed and people are welcoming private funding of public projects. As the PWD minister I made a strong effort to establish the concept of Build Operate Transfer (BOT). I was successful in promoting private investments in infrastructure building sector. My tours of countries like Thailand, Indo-

nesia and Malaysia further proved my approach right. All of us know how this theory changed the picture of roads and bridge development in Maharashtra. It was not a simple task to carry out within the limits set by the state government. That is why we utilised the platform of MSRDC to complete the projects.

I had followed the principle of reward and penalty in the road projects that we did. If the project was delivered in time or before we would give incentive payments and those contractors who delayed the projects were made to pay penalties. This principle yielded good results and can be followed while handling future development projects in Maharashtra.

In my tenure as a minister I built cement concrete roads of 50 kilometre length in Nagpur. They won't need any repairs for 200 years to come. There is no cost of maintenance. If all roads are developed like these, there won't be a need to build roads again and again.

I got yet another idea after I returned from my tour of Australia. We have coal based thermal power plants in Vidarbha. These plants generate fly ash, which, if mixed with cement, can lend much greater strength to the construction. The cost of construction also comes

down. There are many such ways of saving money without compromising on the strength of construction. One such is using the used fibre bags that pack fertilisers. If the fibre is mixed into the cement, it makes cement three times stronger.

All of this needs vision and a strong political will. Whichever government is in power, it is the leadership of the state that has to have a futuristic approach. We can then construct thousands of kilometres of roads that will last for a long time to come.

Mumbai is the state capital. It accommodates lakhs of families. The population of this city has burgeoned. Yet, there are limitations to the growth and development of Mumbai as it is bounded by the sea on three sides. If one wants to travel in a car from Churchgate or Bori Bunder to Borivli, it will take two and a half hours. That's the time you take to reach Pune on the expressway. This has prompted many businessmen and professionals to settle in Pune. Only the existence of a good road has made this possible. Therefore we must consider all these and more possibilities which will lead us to a trajectory of unlimited development.





## **Create Employment to Drive Development**

India is the second most populous country in the world after China. Among the severe problems India is facing due to its large population is the problem of unemployment. The story is the same for Maharashtra. Expansion of the education sector in the state has engendered the creation of an army of educated but unemployed youths. The situation is becoming increasingly grave. There is no instant remedy for this malaise but we can certainly undertake a time-bound programme to get over the problem. Here too, there is a need for political will. Maharashtra will need a comprehensive employment policy which will offer equal opportunity to all job seekers.

This is the era of competition and there is competition in every field of life. The competition is more severe in getting government



“ Maharashtra has a high number of educated unemployed, and the problem is getting worse day by day. This can be remedied through a time-bound programme. This calls for strong political will. Maharashtra needs a comprehensive and all-inclusive policy to provide employment to all.”

jobs. Such is this severity that we see one lakh applications coming in for just 100 vacancies. The youngsters can certainly not rely on government jobs alone. There are several employment opportunities in the private sector but there is competition there too. Private sector offers jobs purely on the basis of merit. Besides, there are limitations on how many jobs the private sector can offer. Thus, there is no guarantee that one will be able to get a job of his choice in government or in the private sector. So the question that will be naturally asked is, “What should these unemployed youths do? The answer can come from the policy that the government will follow. The policy, which will not only have to be comprehensive, but it will also have to keep in mind the long term requirements.

The first target would be to focus on and remove unemployment in the rural areas. Some crash programmes would be necessary to achieve this goal. one of the approaches could be to pay incentive to the village worker (*gram sevak*) when he draws up a work schedule to offer at least 100 days of employment in rural areas in a year per head and penalise the village worker if he does not find work to offer employment of at least 50 days in a year per head. If there is a provision to penalise both the *gram sevak* and the village *Sarpanch*,

more and more opportunities of employment in the rural areas would come up. Much can be achieved if we could build groups of rural youths, train them in the service industries and finance them to run their own service units. Also we can conceptualise housing projects in the rural areas and assign all the projects to firms set up by youths. Ideas such as these will generate employment and in turn, facilitate development in rural areas. We can set up a commission to reorganise the existing employment schemes to develop region-specific schemes. Even the existing employment guarantee scheme can be modified to include productive work in it. For the youths who are not capable of taking up permanent employment we can create skill pools and rope them in whenever there is a need to offer to them employment suitable to their skills. If this approach is followed we can revolutionise employment in the state and there won't be a single hand without work.

### **Foreign Languages**

The policy of globalisation and liberalisation has given a turn to our economy. Rise in international trade has raised the level of employment. People from all over the world have begun visiting

India for a variety of reasons including business and tourism. Not all of them know Indian languages and need interpreters. Tourists from France, England, Spain, Japan, Germany, Russia or Saudi Arabia come to India. Also most countries of the world have their embassies and consulates in India. These embassies and consulates also need translators and interpreters. Foreign tourists need guides. This is actually a big employment opportunity.

Excellent employment opportunities are available for those who can read, write and speak at least three languages out of French, Spanish, German, English, Russian, Urdu or Arabic. Those who know English can add these languages to their skills. Those who don't can begin with learning English. Interpreters can earn a handsome remuneration of Rs. 300-500 per hour. It is therefore beneficial to learn these languages. The government should undertake an initiative to create centres for learning foreign languages across the country. This will benefit thousands of our young people.

International cargo hub MIHAN is being developed near Nagpur. This project has the potential to create 5 lakh jobs of various types. The businesses that will come in this project will need 50,000 security guards, 10,000 drivers, 10,000 engineers. The manpower these

businesses will need to include interpreters as well. Nagpur Municipal Corporation has set up a foreign languages training centre. This can be replicated by other civic bodies in the state as well as the universities in Maharashtra. This will develop a new work force which will find employment in India and overseas.

There are many tourist attractions in Maharashtra. The state has nature's beauty in abundance, which can be leveraged to promote tourism and, in turn, employment. This will also help development of the state.

### **Encourage Aviation**

The state must encourage aviation industry to boost industrial progress. I strongly feel that we must have an airport at every district headquarters if we want to expand industries in the state. Entry of private companies in the aviation sector has seen its big scale expansion and also the rise of competition. Aviation industry in the country was controlled for a long time. Indian Airlines was the only monopoly airline for domestic travel and Air India for overseas travel. This has changed. We now have multiple airlines such as Jet Airways, Kingfisher and IndiGo. This has created a spirit of competition and



“ Connectivity by air needs to be urgently encouraged for the progress of Maharashtra. If industry is to prosper and grow, every principle town and district capital must have an airport.

Airports will improve mobility, attract businesses, businesses will bring in capital, capital will create more jobs, and more jobs will lead to increased per capita income and prosperity.”

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brought down the fares which led to increase in the number of air travellers. The expansion of aviation industry has generated sizeable employment but we have yet to exploit its full potential.

Aviation industry needs ground staff as much as it needs pilots and air hostesses. The state's leadership should initiate a process to train and develop manpower necessary for the aviation sector. If we open aviation training academies in each district headquarters to train youngsters as pilots and air hostesses, we can develop human resource that can find employment in not just India but anywhere in the world. This is a highly rewarding option for the youth and will add to the prosperity of the state.

The private airlines have decided 55 years as the age of retirement for their pilots. This has resulted in a shortage of pilots to replace the retiring ones. Companies like Kingfisher are hiring pilots from Europe and pay them a massive Rs. 20 lakh to Rs. 40 lakh as salary. This money is drained out of our country and adding to the strength of other economies. This must stop. We must encourage private institutions to set up aviation schools and help create a force of pilots and air hostesses which the country's airlines will need. The state's leadership must give a serious thought to this opportunity or

else we will have a situation where we have the industry but the employment is created somewhere else.

### **Growth of The Industry**

Air travel may be a luxury for the common man but it is a necessity of a businessman. Industrialists who have the capacity to invest thousands of crores live in big cities like Mumbai. They haven't the time to travel by road to reach the state's district places. In fact many of them own aircraft and insist on travelling in these aircraft as that saves them time. This makes it important to develop airports just as we develop facilities for power, water or telephones. Airports will attract industrial investments and create employment leading to rise in incomes.

Aviation industry can be promoted by the public-private partnership route too. If an airport is being planned in a district the local residents and political leaders should support the proposal instead of trying to block it. We must shed the 'dog in the manger' attitude of "if it's not me, it's not you either." These projects were unthinkable until a few years ago. It is changing now, but we have a long way to go still. All I would like to state is, let's all work together to achieve the development objective. ●



## **Information Technology: The Harbinger of Progress**

IT — information technology. It's impossible to find a person who is not familiar with this term in this state. India ranks very high among the nations that have performed brilliantly in this field. Information technology has brought the world closer together and created a huge number of jobs that pay very handsomely. The revolution in IT has extended to public life and has made a number of routine transactions simpler for people. It will be important for Maharashtra to keep up its progress and leadership in this field and that will really determine how fast and far the state progresses.

Aurangabad, Nashik, Nagpur are following in the footsteps of Mumbai and Pune to become the new clusters of IT and IT driven services. It is however important to use this technology as a tool to make people's life easier rather than allowing it to serve the interests

of a very few. This will be possible if we encourage greater use of IT in daily life. IT and communication technology can be together harnessed to make the government and the administration truly people oriented. That will undoubtedly accelerate the state's progress.

With the intention of expanding IT use and making it a method to achieve public good, all villages with a population of five thousand or above can be targeted to provide broadband facility at the price of cable television. We can devise a specific scheme to make this possible. A network of optic fibre cable can be set up in the state to extend broadband service to the remotest corners of the state. In short, we can look at IT as an instrument of development. The critical idea—like in many other things—is the vision and the political will.

Benefits of IT can not be restricted to urban areas. We will have to take it to the villages. It will be important to plan and implement programmes with that objective at the base of all thinking. The capabilities IT can bring revolution in many areas of state's responsibility such as health. The Internet will be of immense help in providing health advice and other health facilities in rural areas. Linkages between rural primary health centres and the national

telemedicine network, insurance backed cashless admission in hospitals, digitising the traditional therapies is all possible with the help of IT. Different government departments should be encouraged to use the Internet to speed up people interfaces and to co-ordinate with state owned undertakings and other state governments in the country. In fact we can encourage competition among the various government departments for making the public interfaces more and more effective. The transactions between people and the government will be completed much faster through e-governance schemes if we are able to link all *taluka* places in the state with the state headquarters in Mumbai. We can implement this on an experimental basis and then extend it as a formal system. The benefits will be there to see.





“ Maharashtra has large tracts of arid land. Non-edible oilseed crops such as *jatropha*, *moh* and *laal karanji* can be grown in these lands, and these will provide valuable inputs for biofuel. Biofuels hold the potential of giving a massive fillip to the economy of the state.”

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## **Bio Fuels—The Need of the Hour**

India imports huge amounts of crude oil from oil producing countries in the Gulf region. These imports are rising every year, making a deep dent in the country's foreign exchange reserves. It is possible for us to change this situation by bringing together people's will power and the government's financial might. The end, obviously be, prosperity for all.

Much research has been done in the last few years to develop alternatives for petrol and diesel. Some alternatives have come up out of which bio-diesel is the most practical. Unfortunately we have not encouraged this option to the necessary extent. What is important is a farmer is an important link in the bio-diesel idea. Therefore we should fix an objective that all the automobiles in the state will soon run on bio-diesel. Ethanol is another option to petroleum.

Agricultural commodities like sugarcane are used to manufacture ethanol. We can look at Brazil as a model for this. Out of the 26,000 gas stations in that country, 22,000 supply ethanol in addition to petrol. Most automobiles in Brazil run on ethanol. Maharashtra can consider following Brazil in ethanol manufacture. The state has large tracts of barren land where we can grow plants like *jetropha*, *mob*, *sal karanji* which are all non-edible oil seeds plants. These seeds can be processed to manufacture bio-diesel. This is one activity which holds the potential of tilting the economic situation in the state's favour. It will be important for the politicians as well as people in the state to look at the serious implications of the bio-fuels opportunity and not take the subject lightly. If the state gets a leadership which has foresight and will, the state will certainly benefit a lot. The farmers will prosper, and farmer suicides will stop.

I am the chairman of Poorti sugar factory situated at Bela near Nagpur. We produce ethanol in this factory in addition to sugar. We have the permission to blend ethanol with petrol and therefore we have set up a petrol pump to dispense fuel blended with ethanol. The response from people is very encouraging. Similar petrol pump stations can be set up across the state. The barren lands in the state

can be utilised to plant oilseed plants like jetropha. These plantations and the downstream activities of extracting bio diesel can create employment for youth and women in rural Maharashtra.

Our neighbour state Chhattisgad has encouraged plantation of *jetropha*. The state has in fact used all its barren land to plant jetropha. The government there has also set up a biotechnology park which is worth seeing. In fact we in Maharashtra can consider setting up biotechnology parks in various locations in the state. It is an imperative for a bright future.





## **Security is the Key to Progress**

Times have told us that peace and an excellent law and order situation have always helped the development process. In fact peace and security should be regarded as the highway to the state's progress. There is a need to create a law and order system which will complement the state's development process. The law and order in Maharashtra has deteriorated to such an extent that we have become number one in all crimes such as robberies, burglaries, rapes and murders. This is detrimental to the state's development as it is shameful for it socially. It is extremely essential to keep the law and order situation very strong if you want to attract industrial investment in the state.

The terrorist attack on Mumbai on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008 has proved an eye-opener and underlined the need for an efficient security

network. The attacks that shook the entire nation has left Mumbai and Maharashtra reeling. The state also faces the challenge of Naxalism. The Naxalite infested districts of Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara and Gondia are underdeveloped largely because of the Naxal threat. As the investors have no confidence about the safety of their investment, they have given this region a go-by and thus the development of these districts is trailing. This bane of Naxalism must end if they have to be developed and brought on par with the other parts of the state.

It is important that the police force of the state is not weakened by political interference. The police must be left alone to handle the law and order and security systems in the way they know best. Of course it is the responsibility of the politicians (government). We can afford to let corruption get in the way of police efficiency. But at the same time it must be ensured that the police force gets the freedom to perform their work efficiently. There should not be frequent transfers of police officers. The state must recognize good officers and punish those who derelict from duty. Frequent transfers have a negative impact on the morale of the police staff. That also destabilizes their families. Politicians must avoid interfering with police transfers,

knowing fully well that their high morale alone will ensure a strong law and order record.

We have noted earlier that Naxalism is a major obstacle in the path of development. We do have a special force to deal with the Naxal menace. The personnel assigned to this force are however drafted from the state's police ranks. Their mental make up is not best suited to handle the task they have on hand. The recruitment for this force must be specific for the purpose. That will make sure that the personnel which join this force will have a strong morale and it will show the results in terms of eradication of the Naxal menace. It will be useful to set up a state security commission to evaluate the performance of the police force and administer police transfers. A time bound programme needs to be drawn up to put in place the police reforms as directed by the Supreme Court. Whichever political dispensation comes to power, all this is would be necessary to create a fearless Maharashtra which will be poised to take the leap to development.

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“About 60 per cent of the state’s population lives in its 43,000 villages and this emphasizes the importance of rural Maharashtra. If we pay adequate attention to development of the rural areas of the state we will be able to check the influx into the cities effectively.”

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## **Maharashtra is in Villages**

With the advent of modern communication, the country and especially Maharashtra is urbanizing rapidly. Cities like Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad, Thane, Nashik or Nagpur have grown very big. Yet, the real Maharashtra still exists in its villages. About 60 per cent of the state's population lives in its 43,000 villages and this emphasizes the importance of rural Maharashtra. If we pay adequate attention to development of the rural areas of the state we will be able to check influx into the cities effectively. If one takes an overall view of the state one gets to see the pathetic scene in the state's rural areas. We still suffer from regional imbalances. The rural Maharashtra is facing the wrath of many ills such as the vagaries of monsoon, farmers' suicides, unemployment and joblessness. The per capita income in rural Maharashtra still languishes under Rs 1500. This

can't go on. Some immediate efforts in the rural parts of Maharashtra are needed to reinstate the state's lost glory.

A beginning can be with the establishment of a rural development academy which will develop human resource trained in the task of development of these areas. The rural artisans need to be trained in modern production methods and supported by a flow of easy finance. A fund for development of traditional occupations can be created to facilitate this. Another important step would be to create state-wide '*Shilp Gram*' clusters to market and sell the products made by these artisans.

Bio-gas has the potential to help self reliance in energy and employment in occupations ancillary to agriculture. Villages can become self reliant helped by local employment channels such as poultry, dairy, construction, motor mechanic, electrician or first aid. The state's technical education department creates short courses in these occupations. We will be able to develop human resource and accelerate development. If we are thinking of rural development we must use the yardstick of higher per capita income to measure it. Also important would be to increase the wages of farm labour to bring it on par with the inflation. It needs to be immediately raised

to Rs. 125 per day if we consider the present level of prices of essential commodities ruling now. Government grants for rural development schemes must be released on time and officials not conforming to this must be punished. All the *grampanchayat* offices in the state should be computerized. This will streamline their operations and programmes of poverty eradication will be implemented more effectively.

A scheme for “employment for every family” can be conceived to stop rural people from flocking to urban centres. This will also mean that the cities won’t be overcrowded and their systems coming under pressure. The power of information technology is being debated on all forums. The state’s rural masses must be extended the benefits of this technology. This will be possible if we set up IT parks in different places in rural Maharashtra. It will prove a milestone in rural development. In short, the development process should be kept devoid of politics if we want to lead Maharashtra on the growth path.

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## **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Belongs to Maharashtra**

We have entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The advances in air travel and other fields such as information technologies have brought the world closer and it is now a smaller place. Maharashtra has a bright future and everyone must play his role to make it brighter. I must say it is the politicians who should lead this future but people's participation in development is also significant. We should together shoulder the challenge of taking Maharashtra ahead.

The politics of the twenty-first century will be based on efficiency and calibre of politicians. The politicians' ability to serve the people efficiently will be put to test in these times. Their credibility will also be at stake. Maharashtra needs visionary leaders to take it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A development outlook will not be enough. They will have to demonstrate a strong capability to think in future. It will not

be enough that just one field progresses. The progress will have to be overall. Power, water, transport, communication, IT, education, and health – all sectors are equally important. Concentrated and dynamic effort in all these areas will ensure a bright future for Maharashtra. Not just financial but also the functional responsibility will be tested as we progress. Performance is important in all fields. We have all the resources and facilities. The efficiency will lie in optimal utilization of these resources. If we do this we can face any challenge. How would and should the Maharashtra of 2015, 2020 and then 2025 be? We must have a clear idea of this as we start. It is possible to draw up a plan for that long term. In all fields, may it be art, culture, and sport – planning is essential.

The state's debt is a huge Rs. 1,51,000 crore. This has not blown up overnight but it is something we have to deal with. The state's coffers, on the other hand, are empty. The state has to walk this tight rope of heavy financial needs and empty coffers. It will require very meticulous financial planning and not permitting any avoidable expenditure. Higher revenue collection and identifying newer sources of income will be necessary. The government in power will have to turn every stone to pull the state out of this immense burden of

debt. A tighter discipline can help generate an additional income of Rs. 10,000 crore from excise and sales tax. But we will need a strong will.

The people in the state will have to actively participate in this process of making the state debt free. This is not a very big task. All people need to do is exercise discretion to elect the right leaders to rule the state. We must send efficient leaders to seats of power. Sadly, the voters don't vote efficiency. They vote on the basis of caste or religion. This politics of caste must end as it will hamper the state's progress. Politics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – the present century – is politics of development and efficiency.

When we marry off a girl into a family, we consider many factors such as the groom's maturity, family background and financial stability. Similar tests should be applied when we choose a candidate in an election. A candidate who is educated, has a strong character and a vision for development must always be chosen over others. If we select a leader who understands people's problems, has a genuine desire to solve them and has time to devote to people's good, the Maharashtra of tomorrow will undoubtedly be the number one state in the country.

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**“ If we depend solely on the government for the state’s development, it would not be possible to meet the target. But roping in the private sector and encouraging privation is to bring the underprivileged and neglected into the main stream. ”**

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## **The Necessity for Balanced Development**

The state's progress implies the progress of all its regions. If all regions like Konkan, Vidarbha, Marathwada, Western Maharashtra and Khandesh develop side-by-side, we can say the state has achieved progress. When a region is left undeveloped or is neglected, its people protest and sometimes even ask to be separated from the state and made a state in its own right. This is not in the interest of the state. The right approach would be to decentralize industrial development which will ensure balanced development. Those in power should think of the entire state and not only the region from which they come.

This, unfortunately, does not happen. A minister or the chief minister is selected from those who get elected to Vidhan Sabha or Vidhan Parishad. A minister is a minister of the entire state – not of

a region or a district. Sadly, however, we see that some ministers don't look beyond their own region. They are less conscious about the needs of their region than they are about other regions in the state. Consider the issue of water management. The river Godavari flows from Nashik. So dams were immediately built by people from that region. The moment one became a minister one built a dam in his constituency. Nobody cared where the water to store in these dams will come from. I don't want to criticize any particular project but would certainly say that it is in the interest of the state to build dams only where necessary and feasible. The same principles of necessity and feasibility are applicable to all development projects.

Maharashtra should consider a river linking project for its own water management needs. We must ensure that the dams in the state have enough stock of water. A plan should be made to move water from excess water areas to water deficient areas. A balanced development of the state is what we should aim for. We must rise above the narrow thinking of developing only a taluka or a district.

I once travelled from Satara to Solapur via Sangli. I had with me my engineers from the public works department. We passed by one village after another and I went on telling them which one had

sufficient water and which one lacked it. When we reached Solapur one of them asked me how I knew the water availability of each of the villages we passed by. “Simple,” I told them. “The villages where cement concrete houses were being constructed, hotels and markets were crowded had enough water supply. On the other hand, the places short of water looked deserted.” Prosperity follows water.

Every village in the state must have at least gravelled roads. Produce of villages such as milk, vegetables, grain and fruits needs to be transported to the cities. The villages therefore have to be connected to the towns. If there are no roads the produce of villages will not reach the markets in towns. I have toured the tribal areas of the state, such as Melghat in Amravati district, Jawhar in Thane district, Sironcha, Etapally, Aheri in Gadchiroli district or others in Dhule or Nandurbar districts. These tribals not just didn't have roads; they didn't have basic supplies such as salt. They used red ants as salt. I battled against all opposition to build roads in Melghat region. But many tribal areas still lack roads. Chandrapur and Gadchiroli are in a very serious situation. We must build roads, bridges and make available efficient means of communication in areas affected by Naxalism.

All of this need not be done by the government. It will be necessary

to allow private investment to create telecommunications facilities in these areas. A similar approach can be resorted to for irrigation. We can commission these projects on deferred payment terms on a build-operate-transfer principle. Private investments can deliver projects of thousands of crore and these can change the face of the state. I have proved it myself. Government of any political party can do this by resorting to appropriate policies. The underlying approach however should be people's welfare rather than earning profit. Good people among the society should now lead the process of welfare of the common members of the society. Blaming the politicians and government is not going to take us anywhere. An active lead by the society's elite is needed.

A hundred per cent success may not be achieved if we relied entirely on the government. If however we welcome private participation the development process will speed up. The very base of privatization is to rope in capital for schemes and programmes to involve the deprived and exploited classes in the social mainstream. I, as a minister in the state government, got projects worth Rs. 8,000 crore executed. Rs 4,000 crore were raised in the capital market. That saved money going out of the government funds. This made possible building

16,000 km of good roads in Maharashtra's rural areas. I was particular about building roads in as many villages as possible. We were criticized for charging toll on these roads built out of private investment. However, it must be observed that toll is charged only from those who have the capacity to pay. Scooters, auto rickshaws or bullock carts don't pay toll. There is no harm in charging toll from commercial vehicles or private cars. I can understand that the common man has to indirectly bear the burden of toll. But one has to compare the long term development advantages of such roads with the toll burden. I don't think there is anything wrong in taking away from the rich and giving it to the poor. We must look at every alternative possible to ensure development.

I am in active politics for the past 30 years. I have undertaken several tasks of responsibility and am still engaged in this work. I was confident that the party in which I began my political career will come to power some time. We actually came to power in 1995 as an alliance formed with Shiv Sena. We delivered many projects with a trail blazing speed and gusto. While in this process, I realized that there is a need for committed and efficient officers if projects are to be delivered in this spirit. The role of an efficient bureaucracy is very

crucial in the journey to balanced development.

We have considered many ways of future needs of Maharashtra's development and achieving its aspirations of becoming number one position in the country, keeping in mind the present and future opportunities. If the government that is in power – whichever party forms the government – plans and implements development projects on the lines I have discussed, the future of Maharashtra is certainly bright.





**“ For several days I had planned to reach out to the Indian citizens, not just in the state of the country but all over the world, through the Internet, and hold a dialogue with them. I was able to contact as many as 27 lakh citizens in the space of just one hour and a half through rediff.com. This must be the first time in the country that a political leader established contact with citizens through the Internet. ”**

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## **Heart to Heart with The People**

We are in the age of information technology. This technology has brought the world close and made a dialogue much faster and easier. Internet has also contributed significantly to this communication revolution. I decided to use this medium of internet to start a dialogue with my countrymen not just from the state or the country but from all over the world. I got preparing to respond to any doubts or questions any of them had in mind and made a plan to make the dialogue happen. Great help came from Vineet Goenka, my colleague in the BJP and the regional co-ordinator of BJP's IT cell. He and his team took great pains to plan out how we would proceed about the task. And, I established contact with 2.7 million people in a matter of 90 minutes. This was perhaps the first time a politician communicated with such a large number of people and shared his

views about how Maharashtra's development could be put in a high gear. Internet site rediff.com was of great help in making this ideas exchange possible.

My office is on the first floor of my house in Mahal area of Nagpur. This office is well equipped with the most up to date communication set up. The office was inaugurated in the presence of senior BJP leaders on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2009. The following day – 28<sup>th</sup> August – I chatted live with people for a good hour and a half. People from different walks of life asked me 1042 questions during this hour and a half and I could reply 142 of them live. I could not answer the remaining 900 questions as the time was limited. Of course I replied to all those questions eventually. Journalists from Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad and Nashik were invited for this live chat. They asked me questions and I responded. The response from the public was unprecedented. About 27 lakh people visited rediff.com to know my answers to the many questions that were asked of me and tried to understand my vision.

## **50 Lakh Jobs in 5 Years**

I made a promise in this live chat that if the BJP-Sena alliance came to power in the state 50 lakh youths in Maharashtra will be given jobs in the 5-year term. I explained that not all would get a government job but five million employment or self-employment opportunities would be offered to suit the education and training background of the youths. I made clear that the task will be completed in five years time.

I made another big promise in a response to another question. The severe most problem the state has to face today is that of power availability. The state is resorting to load shedding to match the demand and supply of power. Some parts of rural Maharashtra are facing load shedding of more than 16 hours every day. This has hit agriculture severely. Also hit are small and cottage industries. Students have a problem in their preparations. I have made a resolve that I will rid the people of this problem. That is why I made the promise of making the state free of load shedding in two years of we come to power.

Yet another problem is that of farmers' suicides. Farmers committing suicides because of crop failures leading to indebtedness is not

something the state can be proud of. My policy is, both farming and the farmer must be pulled out of this vicious circle. Also important is to improve the productivity of agriculture. Therefore it is our promise that we will implement policies to create a situation where a farmer would not be forced to go the suicide route. We will try and supply to him seeds as well as soft loans at 4 per cent per annum interest rate. The progress of the state will accelerate if we get over the three problems of power, employment and farmers' indebtedness is what I emphasised in my chat with people. I know the responsibility I have when I make these promises. I firmly believe that the people have a direct stake in the development process. This belief in fact encouraged me to have a direct dialogue with the people. I believe it is important to know the people's expectations before giving shape to any development plans. The first experiment in this direction, the chat on rediff.com was very successful. The following are some of the questions and answers that were recorded in the course of my dialogue with people on rediff.com

Q: Do you agree that India needs a second green revolution?

A: Certainly. Bharatiya Janata Party is committed to this.

Q: Do you agree that the BJP lacks internal democracy?

A: Certainly not. BJP believes in democracy and follows democracy within the party. All have the freedom to express opinion in the party fora. In fact I would say BJP is the party which is truly democratic.

Q: In the biggest democracy of the world, there is a huge backlog of legal cases. Even the case of 26/11 is still not decided. What would you say?

A: If BJP comes to power, we will speed up the system of justice. More fast-track courts will be set up.

Q: What did BJP do to save the Ram Setu?

A: The party is doing its best to save Ram Setu. We took up many protests to bring pressure on the government.

Q: The prices of everything have touched the sky; what is BJP doing? Why are there no agitations on this issue?

A: It was BJP that first raised a voice against price rise. We held *jail bharo* protest country-wide. We took to the people the Congress government's failure to check prices.

Q: Why does BJP encourage communalism?

A: This is absolutely wrong. BJP does not have a place for

communalism. In fact it is the only political party which is secular.

Q: What is the future of BJP?

A: BJP is a party that engages in politics of development and nourishes nationalism. The party will go strength to strength and will come before people as a strong alternative.

Q: Will BJP survive till the next Lok Sabha polls.

A: This is a complete non-issue.

Q: Many politicians make promises and don't fulfil them. What will you say about this?

A: Don't count us amongst these politicians. We do what we say. And often talk only after doing.

Q: Many engineers rush to Bangalore after completing education. Why not to Nagpur?

A: An international cargo hub is taking shape in Nagpur. The MIHAN project is shaping up where companies like Infosys and Wipro are going to set up operations. These projects will create opportunities for young engineers in Nagpur.

Q: Why is primary education not offered free to all?

A: Congress led government is in power in state as well at centre. If a BJP led government comes to power we will make primary

education free for all.

Q: What will you do if you come to power in Maharashtra?

A: We will make all out effort to make Maharashtra the number one state by comprehensive plans and effective implementation.

Q: Nitinji, why is your party against non-Hindus?

A: You are asking a wrong question. We are not against anyone. We respect all religions and believe in being Indian.

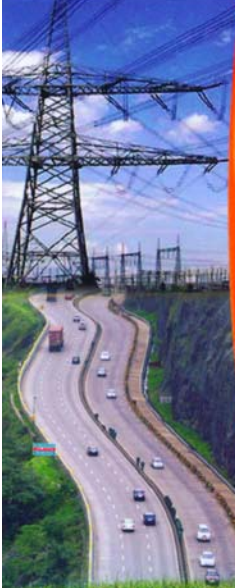
Q: You did the Mumbai-Pune expressway. What will be the next big idea?

A: If we get an opportunity we will connect all important towns in the state with expressways. This will give momentum to the state's progress.

Q: What about Ram temple in Ayodhya?

A: Ram is our ideal and we are committed to build Ram temple in Ayodhya.





United States President Barack Obama has harnessed the concept of 'Politics of Consensus' for all-round development of the country. The positive response from the American citizens indicates that the concept will soon catch the fancy of other societies in the world.

Nitin Gadkari has put forward the idea of getting development in the centre stage of political activity and is working to promote it in political and social circles. He de-tastes the narrow approach of opposition for the sake of opposition. According to him, political parties should set aside their ideological differences and unite in the cause of development, thus contributing to the progress of the state. It is in this background that he has penned his thoughts in "*Politics for Development*".



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