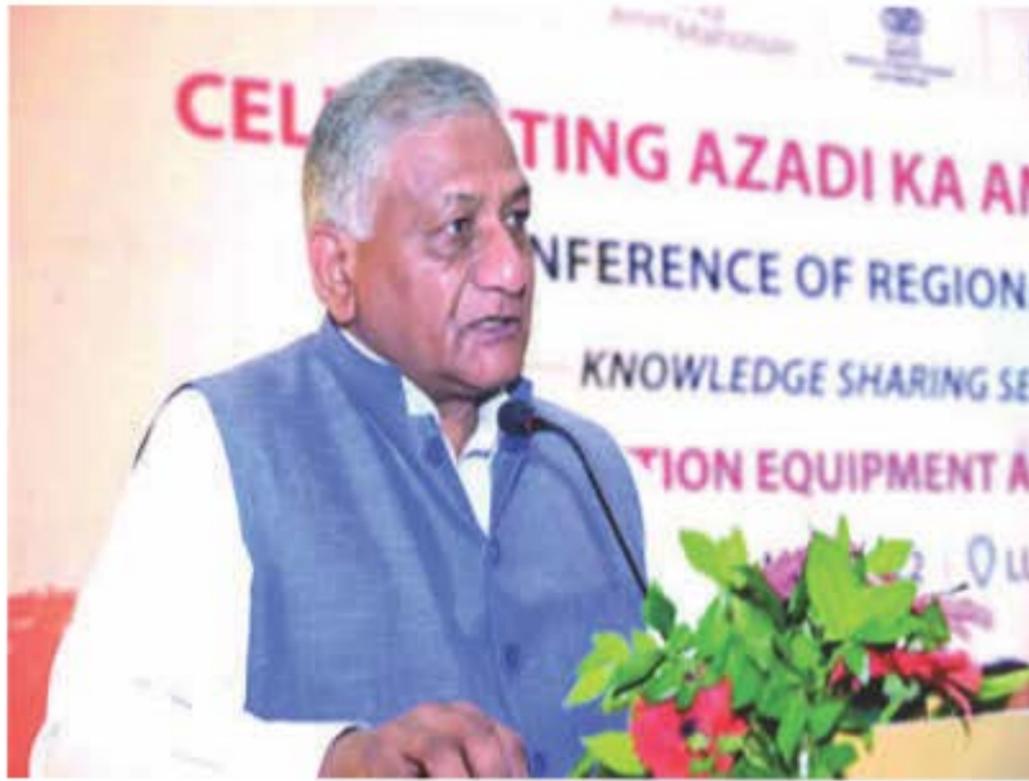


# UP, NHAI ink pact to increase green cover along highways

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Lucknow: In a first-of-its-kind effort, self-help groups in UP will be engaged in plantation work along the national highways.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and UP State Rural Livelihood Mission inked an MoU in this regard on Friday in the presence of Union minister of state for road transport and highways and civil aviation Gen (retd) VK Singh and NHAI chairperson Alka Upadhyaya.

This pact will contribute to enhance the infrastructure of the national highways, said Singh. The second MoU signed for UP was between NHAI and construction giant AMMANN India Pvt Ltd. "The two entities have collaborated to create a talent pool of highly skilled workforce, fully trained on advanced technologies in highway construction, rehabilitation,

and maintenance," an official from NHAI said. Gen Singh said the NHAI was giving full importance to newer technologies to build better quality roads in lesser time and cost. He said good roads can be built only if environmental concerns are addressed.

The minister also chaired a two-day regional conference of NHAI officials and other regional stakeholders from UP, Uttarakhand and Bihar. "India is in the 75th year of independence and Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav is a great opportunity for us to unite and realize the vision of creating 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. The vision of a self-reliant nation can only be fulfilled if it has a robust infrastructure and therefore, we have a huge responsibility to create a sustainable highway network," said Singh.

Upadhyaya said: "To keep up with changing times, NHAI has expanded its vision to have greater coordination, facilitate ease of doing business and enable exchange of technology with all stakeholders. This will not only improve pace of construction but also lend more quality and sustainability in the road building process."

In the past eight years, NHAI has completed 31 projects in UP. Majority of these are either four- or six-lane highways.