

## **Hindustan Times**

### **Patanjali launches mega food park at Nagpur industrial hub**

Yoga guru Ramdev-promoted Patanjali Ayurveda launched its mega food park on a 230-acre land at an industrial hub in Nagpur on Saturday, promising to employ 10,000 people and engage 50,000 farmers of the region in trade.

“We are fighting to bring economic independence from multi-nationals by promoting indigenous and natural products,” Ramdev said at the launch in the presence of Union minister Nitin Gadkari and Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, and a huge gathering of farmers.

The company plans to develop a Rs 1,000-crore food park at Multi-modal International Cargo Hub and Airport, Nagpur (MIHAN), where juices would be made from famous Nagpuri oranges and for the first time packaged as a brand.

The plant would be Patanjali’s first expansion from its facility near Haridwar in Uttarakhand.

Gadkari, who was instrumental in getting the yoga guru to invest in the region, claimed that Patanjali would be a boon to farmers of Vidarbha region, infamous for farmer suicides, and it would transform Nagpur.

He said tribals from Gadchiroli, Gondia and Chandrapur, who make a living collecting forest produce, like medicinal plants and herbs, will benefit tremendously.

Farmers will be trained by Patanjali to grow crops like orange, aloe vera, tomato and herbs and given a purchase guarantee. A team of scientists and experts would also provide help.

Fadnavis dismissed Congress leader Vilas Muttemwar’s allegations that the government has given MIHAN land to Patanjali at a throwaway price, saying there was a total transparency.

“We floated tenders thrice and Patanjali Ayurveda was found to be the right choice as per central vigilance commission norms,” he claimed.

He also said that Ramdev's company had also assured to procure raw materials worth Rs 100 crore from farmers and tribals in the region, and train at least 2,000 farmers a year across Maharashtra to improve productivity, quality and acquire market intelligence for agro business development.

“Patanjali has assured to fulfill all these norms,” he said.

The plant is expected to link nearly 50,000 farmers' suppliers, create direct employment for over 10,000 people and eventually provide indirect employment to lakhs of families.

Muttemwar had demanded a CBI probe into the deal, accusing the state government of giving land at Rs 25 lakh per acre as against the market rate of Rs 60 lakh an acre.

He said the BJP-led state government had acquired land from farmers and was “giving it on a platter to Patanjali as a special favour” in return for Ramdev campaigning for 2014 polls.