



‘Greening highways will immensely benefit the rural economy; has potential to be linked with NREGA’ - Shri Nitin Gadkari

New Delhi, April 27, 2016: Transplantation projects across the globe may have become a quick and easy option of improving urban landscapes and green cover, but the low success rates make it incumbent upon the government and non-government actors to address some of the critical issues associated with this practice. To deliberate upon the best practices related to the technology and management of transplantation projects, and with the vision to create eco-friendly and aesthetically appealing highways, National Highways Authority of India along with The Energy and Resources Institute organized a workshop today for all stakeholders.

The recommendations that emerged from the various panel discussions are expected to not only improve the efficacy of the complex procedure of transplantation but also help create a carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO₂ through additional forest and tree cover by 2030. Evidently, this will contribute in achieving India’s goals scribed in Intended Nationally Determined Contribution.

In his inaugural address, Shri Nitin Gadkari, Hon’ble Minister of Road Transport & Highways and Shipping said, “Roads must be viewed as green highway opportunities. Aside from the environmental and aesthetic aspects, they have a huge potential to generate jobs and thus benefit the rural economy. It may even be linked with the NREGA scheme.” He further invited interested investors to take up experimental projects and said, “If needed, we will provide technology and financial support as well to the selected agency. Three winners from each state every year will also be awarded for exemplary work.” Projects will be monitored through satellite technology with payments to be made only after the success of projects. He urged research institutes like TERI to share its inputs on the transplantation techniques.

Talking about environmental benefits that accrue from greening highways, the Hon’ble Minister urged the use of biofuels in machines to be employed in the project and organic fertilizers for transplanted trees.

Mr Raghav Chandra, Chairman, NHAI: “We have set aside 1% of our project cost for transplantation, plantation, beautification and maintenance. We have adequate funds and we intend to use it for setting SOPs, build capacity and imbibe the best global practices.”

Dr Ajay Mathur, Director General, TERI remarked, “Given the fact that land for new plantation is limited, additional tree cover would come out from approaches such as intense plantation along highways. The creation of the National Green Highways Mission will help identify and resolve challenges associated with the issue. We need to create unique models for different stakeholders

such as civil society, forest sector and industry and then evaluate their efficacy. Effective and rapid transplantation will help in meeting the carbon sequestration goals of the country.”

The event proceedings ended with remarks from Shri Prakash Javadekar, Hon’ble Minister of State

(Independent Charge) MOEF&CC: “This is a major public initiative (National Green Highways Mission) and the deliberations today will help establish the SOPs for the Mission.” He added that there are plans to release 42,000 crore for afforestation. In the next three years, every state will have to submit an afforestation plan with identified locations. He further said that the government wants to encourage Public-Private Partnership under which 200-hectare patches to private industries who are importing timber. This land will be given on lease for 40-50 years with 90% of the forest for harvest on a revenue-sharing basis. This will encourage business and create jobs. The guidelines for this will be soon issued.

Key recommendations to form part of Green Highways (Plantation and Maintenance) Policy:

- The targeted 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO₂ sequestration by 2030 from forestry sector could be achieved by the combined approach of forest conservation and plantation along with poverty eradication measures.
- Assessment of age, health, stature, strength, endurance of the tree to ensure that the tree has a viable life span and physiology to sustain life after transplantation with respect to the cost going to incur in transplanting the tree.
- Site selection is crucial. The new site for planting the tree should not be selected at long distances. This increases the chances of injury, as well as the stress caused to plant.
- Transplantation of rare endangered and threatened (RET) species shall be prioritized.
- Success of transplantation depends highly on knowledge and efficiency of the arborist/ Transplantation Agency carrying out the procedure. It is advised to appoint certified arborist for the transplantation work.

About TERI

The Energy and Resources Institute is an independent, not-for-profit research institute focused on energy, environment, and sustainable development and devoted to efficient and sustainable use of natural resources. Since its inception in 1974, TERI has emerged as an institution of excellence for its path-breaking research, and is a global brand widely respected by political leaders, policy makers, corporate entities as well as the civil society at large.

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