

## National Green Highway Mission launched SIVASISH THAKUR

GUWAHATI, Aug 10 - The ambitious National Green Highway Mission (NGHM) began its journey today in the North East with the first sapling being planted on the Jorabat-Sonapur section of National Highway-37. NGHM has laid out an ambitious plan of planting ten crore shade trees along the national highway and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has set aside one per cent from the road construction budget for this project. The project also plans to sequester approximate 12 lakh metric tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere in the whole country, which will have a dramatic impact in cleaning the atmosphere.



Chief General Manager (NE) of NHAI Raj Chakravarty planted the first sapling in presence of senior NHAI officials.

Speaking on the occasion, Chakravarty said that over a period of time, the entire national highway stretches of the region would be covered under the mission and that as a pilot project, work had started on a 9-km stretch between Jorabat and Totaptoli of NH-37.

This is also the first plantation on the highway under NGHM in the North East following the launch of the Green Highway in New Delhi by Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari on July 1.

Chakravarty added that besides the shade trees on both sides at an interval of 12 metres each, there will be a median with plants being planted at an interval of 3 metres each. Vendors and NGOs manning the plantation will have to maintain the stretch for five years as per the MoU.

Three stretches of national highways in North East India have been incorporated in the pilot project. The other two stretches are in the Amingaon and Bijni sectors.

The ambitious project plans to create job opportunities for one lakh people as the plantation is being carried out by start-ups and vendors, besides NGOs involved in similar projects.

Under the initiative, a plantation drive on 1,500 km of national highways was launched at a cost of Rs 300 crore. The mission aims to provide a green canopy along 1,00,000 km of highways and create jobs for one million youths.

“The objective of the mission is to develop eco-friendly national highways with participation of the community, farmers, NGOs, private sector, institutions, government agencies and the forest department for economic growth and development in a sustainable manner,” sources said.