

NHAI, forest dept to sign MoU on monitoring plantations

tnn | Jul 29, 2019, 04:50 AM IST

Nagpur: The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will sign a MoU with Maharashtra forest department for technology transfer on geo-tagging of plantations.

Buoyed by the 33-crore plantation drive by Maharashtra forest department, and its geo-tagging and GPS monitoring, Union minister for roads, highways and transport Nitin Gadkari said on Sunday, “We will sign a MoU with the state forest department for its roadside plantations.”

Addressing a motley crowd while inaugurating the Ambazari biodiversity park project, Gadkari admitted air and water pollution are two major issues which have destabilized ecological balance, and drives like 33 crore plantations is the best solution to overcome the problem.

The Union minister hoped the biodiversity park will be city’s added tourist attraction in future. “Plans are afoot, with MahaMetro, to start water sports at Ambazari,” said Gadkari.

On the MoU, a senior NHAI official told TOI, “Our central team led by chief general manager (environment) had visited the forest department’s command control room at Nagpur to see how the 33-crore plantations are being geo-tagged and tracked online. Though things are at a preliminary stage, the MoU will relate to technology transfer.”

MK Rao, PCCF (information technology & policy) said, “NHAI too has its portal on plantation monitoring. We plan to share our software with them.”

Gadkari said, “We need to learn lessons from Maharashtra’s greening drive, and will sign MoU for roadside plantations.”

Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis was all praise for minister of state for forest Parinay Fuke, who turned his 8-year-old idea of a biodiversity park at Ambazari into reality. “It will prove to be a stepping stone for the city,” he said.

Forest minister Sudhir Mungantiwar said, “It is payback time for us for the damage we have done to the forest and environment over the years. Saving forests is everyone’s job and not forest department’s alone. The biodiversity park will enrich Nagpur.”

Nagpur chief conservator of forest (CCF) P Kalyan Kumar said, “The park will remain open from July 29 from 6am to 6pm. The fee structure will be decided by a committee headed by DyCF Prabhunath Shukla on Monday. For one month, entry will be free, and visitors will have to pay only for safari in e-rickshaw, or to rent bicycles, binoculars etc.”

Box

Students suffer due to VIP delay

More than 1,000 schoolchildren brought to the venue at 2pm faced an ordeal as the function started two-and-a-half hours late. The function was to start at 3pm, but no dignitary showed up on time. All the VIPs turned up at 5.15pm. The students, mostly from tribal hostels in the city, GH Rasoni School, and Hill Fort Public School, were forced to sit without any snacks or food, though the same were provided at the end of the function. The announcers too could only express regret over the delay time and again.