

KERALA

1.4 lakh saplings to be planted to compensate tree loss in Alappuzha

STAFF REPORTER

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70,000 trees to be axed to widen the Thuravoor- Oachira stretch of the NH 66





The Social Forestry wing of the Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department is planning a massive tree-planting drive in Alappuzha as compensatory afforestation for the trees felled for the development of the National Highway (NH) 66.

According to officials, as many as 70,000 trees will be axed to widen the Thuravoor- Oachira stretch of the NH 66 to 45 metres. Of the trees facing the chop, around 12,700 are large ones (over 70 cm in diameter). As per the guidelines, 10 saplings need to be planted for cutting down each large tree.

To compensate for the loss of green cover, the department will plant around 1.4 lakh saplings across the district. "Our plan is to plant one lakh casuarina saplings in coastal areas. Another 40,000 fruit-bearing trees will be planted in public places and educational institutions. The planting of fruit-bearing trees has already begun. We have also recently planted 20,000 mangroves in Pattanakkad block," said John P., section forest officer (social forestry), Alappuzha.

The department has sought funds from the National Highways Authority of India for carrying out the drive.

Officials said that besides the tree plantation drive, the department was willing to translocate 10 per cent of large trees to nearby places if the cost was borne by the NHAI and contractor. "Translocation of trees has been found to be effective to some extent. We had successfully relocated two trees along the Alappuzha- Changanassery (AC) road. It involves

a lot of effort and money. The department cannot afford it without outside support," said an official.

Alappuzha is the only district in Kerala without a natural forest cover. But the efforts of the Social Forestry wing are helping to increase the green cover in the district of late. It has so far created 14 Vidyavanams (miniature forests) in as many educational institutions in Alappuzha. According to officials, Alappuzha is home to the highest number of Vidyavanams in the State.

THE HINDU

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