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# Plantation campaign begins around Naimisharanya Dham

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Lucknow: The afforestation drive around the Naimisharanya Dham began on Monday with the plantation of 101 Harishankari formation (in which peepal, pakar and banyan are planted closely) in 60 villages near the pilgrimage site.

The plantation was done with the participation of government departments like agriculture and revenue, besides people's representatives, civil society organizations and villagers.

Last week, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had directed the departments to develop Naimisharanya pilgrimage site as a Vedic city on the lines of Mathura, Kashi and Ayodhya in a phased manner. The action plan for the development of the site has been approved by the government.

Naimisharanya Dham in Sitapur is one of the prominent centres of pilgrimage for Hindus and bears multiple mythological connections. In the current monsoon period, 7,500 Harishankari formations will be planted in 4,000 gram sabhas in Sitapur, which will also include villages around Naimisharanya.

The name of Naimisharanya is derived from 'aranya' which means dense forest. The place in the ancient times was enveloped with dense forest cover, had numerous ponds and a perennial river, Chitwa, which has now dried.

The site has 10 'teerth' situated on its 84-kosi parikrama marg which is about 168km which include Badrinath, Kedarnath, Dwarikadheesh, Rameshwaram, Haridwar and others. According to scriptures, it was on the invocation of sage Dadhichi that the 'teerth' had descended on Naimisharanya.

The place remained in utter neglect for years and its modern day look and feel is far removed from its ancient version.