

# Centre Committed to Sustainable Development in Order to Combat Climate Change Challenge, Says India's Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water & Sanitation Minister

The Centre is committed to its agenda of sustainable development and combating climate change challenges is a very important part of it, said Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water & Sanitation, at the concluding session of the National Convention on Innovations in Green Highways late Wednesday evening in New Delhi. "Mother nature allows us to utilize but not overexploit it. Overexploitation of natural resources culminates in climate change and other attendant problems," Shri Tomar said.

It is with the aim of achieving sustainable growth that the government is committed to greening of national highways and roadways through the National Green Highways Mission (NGHM), Shri Tomar added.



Standing (from left to right): Shri Ranjan Chatterjee [Former IAS and Member Expert Member, National Green Tribunal (NGT)], Shri Lal Singh Choudhary [Minister for Forest, Environment and Ecology of J&K ], Shri Narendra Singh Tomar [Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water & Sanitation], Shri AK Bhattacharya [Mission Director, NGHM] and Ms. Induja Rai [Adviser, NGHM]

Talking about the initiatives taken by Jammu & Kashmir on environmental conservation, Hon'ble Choudhary Lal Singh, Minister for Forest, Environment and Ecology of J&K informed the gathering about the massive tree plantation drive undertaken by the J&K Forest Department last monsoon. Invoking the need for systematic planning of infrastructure projects such as roads and highways, Shri Choudhary said, "Construction of national highways by the Centre should be planned in such a manner that it doesn't interfere with the surrounding tree cover. Similarly, disposal of construction waste, too, should be undertaken in a proper manner avoiding disposing the waste in median construction."

Speaking on this occasion, Dr. A.K. Bhattacharya, MD, NGHM, observed that expert opinion of 220 experts from 100 organizations from 18 states and several international experts from diverse fields had participated in the Convention and contributed towards the road-map for implementation of Green Highways project and in the development of a research plan. "It is our objective to develop the concept of green highways under a sustainable business model. In this direction, we are also looking at introducing newer innovations," observed Dr. Bhattacharya.

Ranjan Chatterjee, Expert Member, National Green Tribunal (NGT), Delhi, said "The NGT is looking towards evolving the best possible ways of protecting people living in settlements located close to national highways against dust and noise pollution by using tree cover along them as a strong buffer."



Three MoUs were signed on the concluding day between the NHA regional offices and Forest Development Corporations of J & K, Maharashtra and ITC. "Best Management Practices Manual for Green Highways" authored by Ms Induja Rai, Advisor, NGHM was also released. The manual documents the global best management practices for highways plantations and has the Green Highways Vegetation Management Charter providing guidelines for undertaking plantations along highways. Following this, declaration was done for launch of Delhi Chapter of Bamboo Society of India which aimed at policy advocacy and liaisoning

with different agencies for development and promotion of bamboo related initiatives.

The aim of the National Convention on Innovations in Green Highways was to collate information on innovations and research in the field of green pathways, both locally and globally. Research, training and capacity building requirements for the project stakeholders were identified and analyzed at the forum.

Eminent national and international experts discussed varied themes such as global trends in green highways, recent researches and technologies in the field, accruing carbon credits through green highway plantations, plantation as a road safety tool, scope of roadside bamboo plantations and operational models to involve local communities in the 11 high-level technical sessions spread over three days. Going forward, these deliberations are expected to provide a robust framework for the proposed 'Centre for Innovations in Green Pathways'.

### **National Green Highways Mission (NGHM)**

The National Green Highways Mission (NGHM) was established by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) under National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) with a vision to develop green corridors along national highways for sustainable environment and inclusive growth. The NGHM has been entrusted with the task of planning, implementation and monitoring roadside plantations along one lakh km network of national highways.