

No. NHIII/P/43/78

*Dated the 2nd March, 1979*

To

**Chief Engineers of all State & Union Territories dealing with National Highways**

**Subject : Plantation of Trees on National Highways**

This Ministry's circular No. NHIII-P/15/75 dated 20th May 1976, had spelt out the policy regarding the plantation, maintenance and cutting of trees along National Highways and had stressed the need for further augmenting the roadside avenue trees. Subsequently in June 1978, the Hon'ble Minister for Shipping & Transport had also personally written to the P.W.D. Ministers stressing the need for landscaping along NHs and suggested plantation of fruit-bearing trees. Recently the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, alarmed at the dwindling forest resources in the country and resultant soil erosion, has proposed the undertaking of an intensive programme of tree plantation along highways with the help of the State Forest Departments under State schemes of extension forestry and economic plantations, as well as the Centrally sponsored social forestry programme. The proposal briefly is as under :—

- i) The Public Works Departments may make roadside land available to the concerned Forest Department, for taking up suitable plantation programmes and management of the afforested lands including their fencing etc.

- ii) State Forest Departments will declare the afforested areas as "Protected Areas" under Section 29 of Indian Forest Act, so that they have legal status to protect the plantations.
- iii) Forest Departments will be responsible for raising the nurseries, plantations, and after care of the plants.

2. In the Ministry's circular dated 20th May, 1976 referred to above, it was mentioned that where the plantation and maintenance of roadside trees on National Highways had been handed over to the State Forest Department, the Chief Engineer should communicate the contents of our circular to the Forest Department for compliance and maintain contact with them with regard to the planning and implementation of a proper roadside plantation programme through periodical reviews. Some State P.W.Ds have already entrusted the plantation of roadside trees to Forest Departments and their experience has been quite happy. The Forest Departments are well versed in this task and they also have powers for protection of such plantations. It may therefore, be advantageous to have a cooperative arrangement with them and get benefit of their expertise in raising of nurseries and plantation technology. An additional advantage would be that the Forest Departments will meet most of the extra cost involved from their own budgetary resources. No doubt there would be some difficulties of coordination and an agreed policy about the spacing etc of trees with respect to the road needs. With a view therefore to take a policy decision at the national level. I am to request you to kindly furnish the following information urgently to this Ministry :

- (i) How is the roadside plantation programme being managed in your State? Is it under the control of P.W.D. itself, and whether they have a separate staff set-up for this purpose?
- (ii) If the plantation responsibility has been handed over to the Forest Department, how are the plantations being financed, and whether the revenue from avenue trees is being credited to appropriate central head of account or not? Is the system working satisfactorily?
- (iii) Have any difficulties been encountered about the execution of road improvements involving afforested areas under the charge of Forest Departments? (For instance borrowing of earth, digging of roadside drains, cutting of trees to improve visibility etc).
- (iv) Has the P.W.D. been required to pay any compensation to the Forest Department for removal of trees in the NH land necessitated by road improvement works?
- (v) What are the views of the State P.W.D. about handing over the roadside land to the Forest Department for afforestation?

3. An immediate reply is requested as the matter is proposed to be discussed in detail at the next meeting of the Chief Engineers.