

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
REMINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-2031
ANSWERED ON- 05/08/2026

ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS IN NH CONSTRUCTION

2031. SHRI SANT BALBIR SINGH:

Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether during National Highway (NH) construction, old and mature trees are uprooted, if so, whether Government has explored any alternative engineering solutions to preserve such trees without hindering development work;
- (b) what is the tree transplantation or compensatory afforestation policy being followed in Punjab and other States and how many trees have been replanted against those cut; and
- (c) what steps are being taken to develop green belts, service road plantations and biodiversity corridors along National Highways in the State?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

(SHRI NITIN JAIRAM GADKARI)

(a) to (c) The Government has issued the ***Green Highways (Plantation, Transplantation, Beautification & Maintenance) Policy-2015*** to develop eco-friendly National Highways in the country.

The development of green belts along all the National Highways are taken in accordance with ***IRC: SP-21:2009 Guidelines*** and Standard Operating Procedure developed to implement the Green Highways Policy-2015.

To take care of Biodiversity aspects while undertaking development of Green Belts, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) promotes planting of native tree species suited to that agro-climatic zone. NHAI is also promoting development of ***Bee Corridors*** and ***Aarogya Vans*** to attend to bio-diversity aspects in its Avenue and Median plantations.

Compensatory Afforestation (CA): For alignments passing through forest areas, the permission for tree felling and diversion of forest land is governed under the provisions of ***Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980***.

As per the statute, the Forest Department stipulates conditions for Compensatory Afforestation on Degraded Forest Lands (DFLs) or Non-Forest Lands (NFLs), and the required funds are deposited with them to carry out the Compensatory Afforestation as per the approved scheme.

As per the ***Tree Transplantation Guidelines - Standard Operating Protocol (SOP)*** issued by NHAI on 19th April 2022, trees need to be preserved and no tree be unnecessarily removed while implementing the development projects.

The SOP emphasizes that trees suitable and worthy of preservation be protected by exploring all possible alternatives. It recommends exploring alternative routes, considering better engineering designs, and adjusting highway alignments to avoid cutting of trees and to maintain tree cover.
