



NHAI Tightens Compliance Norms for Plantation Before Issuance of Provisional Certificate of Completion for National Highway Projects

New guidelines mandate minimum 80% plantation coverage and 90% survival rate along National Highways

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To ensure strict compliance with contractual obligations related to plantation along the median and avenues of National Highway projects, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has issued comprehensive guidelines mandating plantation and landscaping as integral components of National Highway development and overall project completion.

Under the new guidelines, NHAI will ensure that median and avenue plantation is undertaken strictly in accordance with the respective contract/concession agreement and prescribed guidelines as per the Green Highways Policy, 2015; IRC:SP:21-2009 and other relevant guidelines issued by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and NHAI.

A key provision of the guidelines is the introduction of a minimum threshold for issuance of the Provisional Certificate of Completion (PCC) / Provisional Commercial Operation Date (PCOD). Plantation works will be considered compliant for the purpose of provisional completion certification only when plantation has been undertaken on least 80% of the available Right of Way (ROW) earmarked for plantation, with planted saplings recording a minimum survival rate of 90% at the time of inspection by the officials.

The guidelines further stipulate that any plantation shortfall beyond the prescribed 80% threshold must be highlighted along with specific timelines for completion. Appropriate financial withholdings, as provided under the relevant Contract/Concession Agreement, will be enforced until the balance plantation is completed and the prescribed target is fully achieved.

NHAI has also strengthened plantation maintenance requirements during the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) period of the National Highways. The release of O&M/annuity payments in Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC), Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM) and Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Annuity projects, as well as assessment of maintenance compliance in BOT-Toll projects will be subject to maintaining a minimum 90% survival rate throughout the O&M period.

The guidelines also mandate timely plant casualty replacement to ensure sustained plantation density. In cases of plant mortality, replacement shall be undertaken with plants of similar age and growth, thereby maintaining uniformity and continuity of the plantation along the National Highway corridor. Before

processing O&M/annuity payments or certifying maintenance compliance, NHAI will seek technical assistance from environment & plantation expert, engaged by NHAI to verify field-level compliance and ensure adherence to the prescribed plant survival standards.

NHAI had earlier observed that development of plantation along the Median and Avenues, which is a contractual obligation, was often not accorded due importance at the time of issuing PCC/PCOD for National Highway projects. The rerevised guidelines reinforce NHAI's commitment to integrate environmental sustainability and plantation management into core implementation and maintenance framework of National Highway projects.

GDH/DS

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