



JANASANYOG, ASSAM
CHIEF MINISTER'S PUBLIC RELATIONS CELL, DISPUR

PRESS RELEASE

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CM plants tree at AIIMS site in Van Mahotsav week

Authenticity of tree planation would be checked with drones: CM

Dispur, July 7: Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today attended the mega plantation programme synchronising with 72nd Van Mahotsav week organised by Environment and Forest Department at the AIIMS construction site at Changsari in Kamrup and planted a *rudraksh* sapling.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that COVID19 pandemic taught the importance of oxygen and therefore, all must strive towards preserving the state's forests and biodiversity. He also reiterated the importance of Van Mahotsav in spreading the awareness about the importance of greeneries and trees for sustaining ecology.

Saying that the reforestation drive under Assam Project for Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC) would have to be monitored for quantifying the performance, the Chief Minister stressed on the need to increase the use of technology like satellite imaging by the Forest Department for monitoring activities. He also said that drone surveys would have to be conducted for verifying the authenticity of all tree plantation programmes carried out under CAMPA and other biodiversity projects.

Highlighting the need for working dedicatedly by the Forest Department officials to protect the forests and rich biodiversity of the state, Dr. Sarma informed that massive reforms would be initiated in the department soon so that incidents like elephants' death in Bamuni Hills in Nagaon, where rampant deforestation took place, do not reoccur. Accountability will be fixed and strict action will be taken against Forest Department officials if forests are jeopardised, he asserted.

He also informed that the State Government is considering the option of giving one-month compulsory paid leave to forest guards working in the sanctuaries and forests. He also said that Forest Department officials must work for preserving the forest resources like sand, stones etc and informed that forest beats and gates would now be abolished to check corruption and illegal supply of forest resources.

He also advocated simplifying rules for enabling people to grow and sell Agar, red sandalwood or other valuable trees in their private lands without hassle along with allowing them to dig their own lands and selling for the purpose of earth fills.

Forest Minister Parimal Shuklabaidya, Health Minister Keshab Mahanta, Industry Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, MP Queen Ojah, BJP Assam President Bhabesh Kalita, MLAs

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Diganta Kalita, Suman Haripriya, Hemanga Thakuria, Nandita Das, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Alka Bhargava were present on the occasion among others.

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