

## **Cherry Blossom Avenue launched in Mizoram creates new jobs**

In a bid to promote sustainable eco-tourism, a Cherry Blossom Avenue was launched in this Mizoram capital on Tuesday.

Mizoram Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla planted the first cherry blossom sapling at the New Secretariat Complex here in the presence of Planning Minister Lalsawta and Mizoram State Planning Board Vice Chairman H. Liansailova. The ceremony was also attended by Principal Secretary (Home and Personnel) Renu Sharma, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Lalram Thanga and other senior government officers and members of civil society.

The Cherry Blossom Avenue is a joint initiative of Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development (IBSD), a national institute under the Department of Biotechnology and the Mizoram government.

Explaining the concept, IBSD Director Dinabandhu Sahoo said in a statement that Japan has a long tradition of Cherry Blossom Festival (Sakura Festival), which attracts millions of tourists from across the world.

Although cherry blossoms are native to the Himalayas, other countries like the US, Holland, Brazil, Turkey, New Zealand and Australia have also adapted the concept and created such avenues in the respective countries, which attract tourists from across the world.

Sahoo further said that since UN has declared the Year 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the launching of this programme in Mizoram would not only put the northeastern state in the global map for taking this initiative but would also attract a large number of domestic and foreign tourists in the future.

So far, IBSD has implemented the concept of cherry blossom festival for sustainable tourism in two other northeastern states -- Manipur and Meghalaya. Lal Thanhawla thanked IBSD for taking this important initiative in Mizoram, which would not only create a number of new jobs for the people but also improve the economy of the state.

He further said IBSD can play a significant role in management and sustainable utilisation of the state's bioresources and promised to provide all necessary help in this regard.