

# Five Lakh Trees to Be Planted Along Rail Tracks in Punjab, Haryana

With an aim of afforestation on the vast tracts of rail land, the Railways on Monday joined hands with the forest departments of Punjab and Haryana for plantation of five lakh trees in the two states as part of the 'Green India Mission'.

After Punjab and Haryana, the Railways will sign similar agreements with other states to carry out the green mission.

## 'Significant step'

Terming the initiative as a 'significant' one, Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu said a joint forest management comprising of Environment Ministry, the two state governments and the Railways will be responsible for tree plantation and maintenance at rail land.

The Railways signed agreements with the forest departments of both the states.

He said Punjab has maximum irrigated land but still tree plantation is required there. "That is why we have this agreement today."

## Five crore target

While about 5 lakh trees are to be planted in the two states, the Railways have a target of planting total five crore trees along the track and rail land across the country.

However, while the forest department will be involved in the plantation along the track on rail land boundary as well as maintenance and disposal of trees, such land will not be declared as protected forest so that it can be utilised at any time for rail projects.

Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar, who was present on the occasion, said "it is a historic agreement which envisages that railway will plant more trees. Our aim is to increase afforestation and not declaring those land as forest. We want more tree cover outside forest."

As per the Environment Ministry plan, besides railway land, tree plantations will be carried out at both sides of the Ganga River and highways to increase green cover.

## Water bodies

Mr. Prabhu said that besides tree plantation, the Railways have finalised an action plan for restoring water bodies all over the rail land and water harvesting at all rail buildings.