

In a measure aimed at controlling air pollution, the Delhi government on Tuesday decided to plant 14 lakh saplings across the capital during 2015-16.

The decision was taken in a meeting held by Environment Minister Asim Ahmed Khan with various government departments, the three municipal corporations, Delhi Jal Board, NDMC, CPWD and the Delhi Parks and Gardens Society.

Khan asked all the agencies to complete their outstanding plantation targets of last year as well.

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“Based on expert advice, it has been decided that departments such as the PWD and DJB, which have their own nurseries, will first raise saplings up to the height of 5-6 feet and then transfer these for plantation in open spaces to increase the longevity of their lives,” a government official said.

The official added, “The Forest department will be the nodal agency for communicating to greening agencies key facts like recommending appropriate species for different types of soil and topography and the techniques of tall plantation to all greening agencies.”

Khan stressed on the need for third-party evaluation of plantations in the past to assess their survival rates. He also said that all agencies must strictly implement the policy of zero tolerance on burning of garbage, leaves and plastic in open areas under their jurisdiction and help sub-divisional magistrates conducting surprise checks.

The government has decided to convene a meeting of officers concerned from the Delhi Cantonment Board, Indian Railways and DDA to assess the availability of land banks and open areas to increase the green cover in Delhi for effectively reducing air pollution caused due to the particulate matter.