

Where The Ballast Ends, A Forest Begins

On 3.39 hectares of railway land in Jhansi, 115,000 saplings are turning forgotten plots into dense native woodland

Arindam Ghosh | TNN

Jhansi: The land behind an electric locomotive shed is not where anyone expects to find a forest. Fenced, flat, unbuilt — the sort of plot a busy city passes every day without a second look.

In Jhansi, two such plots now hold about 1,15,000 young trees.

The Jhansi Division of North Central Railway working with the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department, has planted them across 3.39 hectares of railway land using the Miyawaki method, a technique that packs native species tightly together so that a dense, diverse forest takes shape in years rather than decades. It is a way of giving a city its green cover back at speed.

The scale is striking for the space involved. About 32,000 saplings have gone into 1.30 hectares at the RPF TA Camp, and another 83,000 into



MAKING OF A FOREST: Two plots in Jhansi now hold over a lakh young trees

2.09 hectares near the Electric Loco Shed. Roughly 35 species are in the ground — native, medicinal and ecologically valuable — among them neem, peepal, jamun, arjun, mahua, banyan, sheesham, ashoka, bel, tulsi, ashwagandha and lemongrass. Names that belong to this landscape, returning to it.

The work follows a memorandum of understanding signed between the Railways and the Forest Department on Jan. 28, 2026, and was

completed comfortably ahead of its target timeline, according to Shivam Sharma, the division's chief public relations officer.

The benefits ahead are substantial. The plantations are expected to absorb more carbon, improve air quality and cut dust and particulate pollution, while offering habitat and food to birds, insects and the smaller organisms that urban land seldom accommodates. As the canopy thickens, it should also soften

the local microclimate — a measure of relief against rising temperatures.

Part of the model's appeal is how little it asks for. Railway premises hold plenty of unused and underutilised land, and the Miyawaki approach turns those remainders into thick green patches without a single acre being acquired.

The care is planned as carefully as the planting. The Forest Department will maintain the plantations for the next four years. Beyond the two Miyawaki sites, the division is greening stations, office complexes and railway colonies, and officials say a wider plan is being drawn up to identify further locations across the division for similar forests.

For now, it is 3.39 hectares of very young trees, taking root where the ballast ends — and a city with more shade coming to it than it had last year.

From breeding numbers to living together: Project 2.0

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The socio-economic study and survey of the areas where these cheetahs are moving near Sheopur have already started," a source said. The move marks a significant shift in focus for Project Cheetah — from establishing a viable population of the species to planning for its long-term coexistence with people and the landscape. The socio-economic assessment is expected to examine communities living around areas used by cheetahs, their livelihoods and the scope for creating economic opportunities linked to conservation.

"Project Cheetah has met and exceeded each of the criteria for short-term project success, as per the Cheetah Action Plan. Now, it is time to focus on the long term, a key criterion of which is making significant



Kuno cheetah Mukhi along with her cubs

economic improvements in local communities through eco-development and employment opportunities," Yannetti told TOI.

Also weighing in on the plan to take Project Cheetah forward, Rajesh Gopal, secretary general of the Global Tiger Forum, said, "The NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) is preparing a master

plan for cheetah conservation in collaboration with WII. As part of this, we will conduct a socio-economic study of the landscape, to be followed by an ecological survey once the rains recede."

The GTF study assumes importance as cheetahs have begun using a wider landscape around Kuno. The findings are expected to help authorities

understand the ecological characteristics of these areas as well as the socio-economic conditions of communities that share the landscape.

The exercise comes as the govt's own four-year status review describes the current phase as the "year of establishment". The country now has 52 cheetahs, including 49 in Kuno National Park and three in Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary. Of these, 32 are India-born, according to the review.

The review records the project's evolution over the last four years — from the difficult first year and subsequent breeding success to the release of cheetahs into the wild and their movement across a wider inter-state landscape. The next phase is now centred on expanding the programme to additional sites while developing a broader landscape approach, officials said. TNN



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Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda

‘This is Narendra Modi’s daughter, give her a proper seat’

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However, TOI could only speak to four of them, as the other one couldn't be contacted.

For 67-year-old Narendra Modi of Burhanpur, the first amusing experience over his name came on a visit to Delhi for an election training programme. As the retired govt school principal and state-level master trainer introduced himself, the clerk seated behind a desk looked up with a frown, asking, "Is this a joke?"

Modi clearly wasn't. However, the clerk remained unconvinced even after he produced his identity card.

It was only after some explaining that the clerk relented saying, "Sorry, sorry."

That experience taught him a lesson he never forgot — to keep his ID card handy as it was the surest way to settle the debate. Here recalled another amusing experience from 2015, when PM Modi was making surprise calls to banks to review the progress of the 'Jan Dhan' accounts. As a school principal, Burhanpur's Modi often had to call bank managers about scholarships and 'Jan Dhan'



Narendra Modi, a retired govt school principal

accounts.

"I called up a bank manager for some scholarship-related work. He was shocked to learn my name. I could almost sense the hesitation in his voice. I had to raise my voice to make him understand that it was not the PM," he recalled. He also recalled ringing up the local MP enquiring if he had a moment, saying he could call back at a more convenient time. To this, the MP said in a lighter vein, "For me, it's a privilege when the name Narendra Modi flashes on my mobile. People sitting around me think it is a call from the PM." TNN

Hundreds say why risk missing diamonds out

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Pans, pickaxes and other equipment used for digging and sifting have also been seized during the action. The search is a laborious process. "People dig out a mixture of soil, pebbles and stones, from the riverbank and areas along the watercourse. The material is then washed and sifted in flowing water. The remaining stones are examined manually for possible diamond fragments," said a local resident.

The forest department has rejected reports that diamonds are being washed down the Runjh river, describing them as rumours. Officials said a team visited the site after learning about the gathering and cleared the area. The department has warned people against unauthorised digging and intensified surveillance in the forest range to prevent illegal mining and damage to forest land. Despite the official denial, hundreds have been drawn to the river by the prospect of finding diamonds, turning a rumour into a diamond rush in one of India's best-known diamond regions, say locals. TNN



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Gap in opening a/cs & their sustained use

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The state also has the third-highest number of zero-balance accounts in the country, at 46.71 lakh, while its 1.36 crore in-operative accounts are also the third-highest, behind Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The data thus highlights a gap between opening bank

accounts and their sustained use. While the Jan Dhan programme has brought millions of MP residents into the formal banking system, the low average balance and large number of inactive or empty accounts indicate that account ownership alone may not reflect the extent of financial security or savings among account holders. TNN

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A **"Walk-in-Interview"** for various faculty positions of **Pt. Ram Sumer Shukla Smriti Government Medical College, Rudrapur** (Udhham Singh Nagar) is scheduled on dated **24 Sep 2026 (Thursday)** from **10.30 A.M** onwards in the **"Office of the Principal" Government Medical College, Rudrapur (US Nagar)**. The appointments will be made on contractual basis for three years (Extendable on yearly basis) or till regular appointments are made, whichever is earlier. The details of vacancy position in various departments are being uploaded in the website www.gmcrudrapur.com and www.medicaleducation.uk.gov.in.
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