

## **Over 5 lakh saplings to be planted in Bangalore this year**

**The Hindu** “With nearly 1,500 vehicles being added on Bangalore roads each day, pollution levels have increased alarmingly,” said Urban Development Minister Suresh Kumar. File photo: K. Gopinathan

The Karnataka Government has proposed to plant five lakh saplings in and around Bangalore this year to mitigate the effects of rapid urbanisation, which has led to increase in pollution levels, Urban Development Minister Suresh Kumar said on Thursday.

“With nearly 1,500 vehicles being added on Bangalore roads each day, pollution levels have increased alarmingly, making undertaking of green initiatives like planting of saplings imperative”, he said, unveiling the “Lalit Suri Green Initiative Conclave” here.

Lauding the Lalit Suri Hospitality Group’s programme of planting 1.5 lakh saplings in and around Bangalore, he said the Government would support any such private-public partnerships.

“We are also looking at 50 tree gardens and initiatives to preserve the bird progeny in the city, besides creating four mini Lalbaghs here”, Mr. Kumar said.

He said the Government would go all out to incorporate the valuable suggestions made in similar conclaves and also consult environment experts and NGOs in the field to make Bangalore “the garden city that it was”.

“We would also like to encourage tree planting by urban industries and such initiatives in schools and colleges”, he said.

Noted environmentalist and “Eco Watch” founder Suresh Heblkar expressed concern over environmental degradation in the city due to unprecedented construction boom.

He also urged the Government to take steps to ensure that hills were not destroyed for granite quarrying.

“We need 16-18 lakh trees in the city for oxygen and trees alone can sequester carbon”, Mr. Heblkar said.