

## Plant trees to compensate loss of forest area on Char Dham highway: SC

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**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Central government to undertake plantation activities to compensate for the loss of forest area due to the construction of Char Dham national highway in Uttarakhand.

A bench headed by Justice Fali Nariman also ordered the Centre to comply with the 2018 circular of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways on the aspect of the width of the road while constructing Char Dham national highway in Uttarakhand.

As per MoRTH 2018 circular, the intermediate carriageway of 5.5 meters tarred surface is adopted for hilly terrain. The Centre has sought top court's permission to make it seven-meter but the court refused saying that the government can't violate its own circular.

Recently, one report with the signatures of four members of the 26-member committee, including chairperson Ravi Chopra, an environmentalist and former director of the Dehradun-based People's Science Institute, had recommended that the Supreme Court take the final call on road width while suggesting an intermediate width of 5.5 metres.

It cited a circular issued by the Union MoRTH in the year 2018.

The other report has the signatures of 21 members and suggests the government stick to the project's present design and roads all along the highway be expanded to double lanes as planned.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, had in March 2018, recommended against 'double laning and paved shoulders' in hilly terrain and recommended a narrower intermediate road width.

The Supreme Court had set up the High Powered Committee in August 2019 and mandated it to consider the ecological impact of the 900-km project, which the government has said will improve access to four Hindu pilgrim sites in Uttarakhand.

Char Dham national highway connectivity programme, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December 2016, comprises projects of improvement of over 889 km length of national highways leading to Yamunotri Dham, Gangotri Dham, Kedarnath Dham, Badrinath Dham and part of the route leading to Kailash Mansarovar yatra.

Source: <https://telanganatoday.com/plant-trees-to-compensate-loss-of-forest-area-on-char-dham-highway-sc>