

Farmers to get railway work in select areas

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NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways plans to hire farmers in the arid regions of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh as maintenance operators of traction substations (TSAs) that act as electricity feeders to railway lines.

The plan will be rolled out in those parts of the country that have non-arable land and is part of the government's efforts to double farm income. To start with, an initial capacity of 50 MW will be offered to farmers in these three states, following which a 15 GW substation capacity will be given to farmers across the country.

Of the 64,689 route km of Indian Railways' broadgauge network, 71% has already been electrified and the national transporter is looking at 100% electrification by December, 2023. According to a senior official, farmers will be given the option to maintain the TSAs, their solar panels and other equipment for a fee of around 20-30 paise per unit.

"This will help in more than doubling the farmer income to Rs 1 lakh per acre from the present ₹30,000-40,000 per acre he gets in those areas. It will be a win-win for both as farmer will get better income and railways' TSAs will get proper maintenance," the official said.

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