The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

All about the revised Green India Mission to increase forest cover, address climate change

The Green India Mission document was revised to account for on-ground climate impacts and feedback received from implementing partner states and scientific institutions, environment ministry officials told The Indian Express.

Written by Nikhil Ghanekar
New Delhi | Updated: June 20, 2025 06:44 IST

5 min read

In addition to the core objectives of increasing and restoring forest and green cover, the mission will focus on restoration in the Aravalli ranges (seen here), Western Ghats, Himalayas and mangroves. (Express File Photo - Gajendra Yadav)

The Centre on Tuesday (June 17) **released a revised roadmap** for the National Mission for Green India, also known as the Green India Mission (GIM). In addition to the core objectives of increasing and restoring forest and green cover, the mission will focus

on restoration in the Aravalli ranges, Western Ghats, Himalayas and mangroves.

The GIM is a key component of India's efforts to combat the effects of climate change. While the focus remains on improving forest cover, tackling land degradation and desertification will also feature prominently in the revised roadmap.

What has the Green India Mission achieved so far?

GIM was rolled out in 2014 as one of the eight missions under India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). Its core aim is to combat climate change by increasing forest and tree cover, and the ecological restoration of degraded ecosystems and forests. It also aims to improve the livelihoods of communities dependent on forest produce. More specifically, its objective was to increase forest and tree cover on 5 million hectares and improve the quality of forest cover on another 5 million hectares.

Between 2015-16 and 2020-21, the mission facilitated tree plantation and afforestation activities across 11.22 million hectares (mha) of land, through central and state schemes. Between 2019-20 and 2023-24, the Centre released Rs 624.71 crore to 18 states for interventions under GIM and Rs 575.55 crore has been utilised, according to an Environment Ministry response tabled in Lok Sabha this February.

Activities under GIM are concentrated in states based on mapping of ecological vulnerability, potential for sequestration (the process by which plants and trees store carbon using photosynthesis), forest and land degradation, and restoration potential.

What does the revised roadmap entail?

The Green India Mission document was revised to account for on-ground climate impacts and feedback received from implementing partner states and scientific institutions, environment ministry officials told The Indian Express. A central focus of the revised mission plan will be on the restoration and saturation of vulnerable landscapes through regionally conducive best practices. This will see area and landscape-specific restoration activities in three important mountain ranges – the Aravallis, the Western Ghats, and the Indian Himalayas, along with the mangrove ecosystems.

For instance, GIM interventions will be synced with the Centre's recently launched Aravalli Green Wall project, aimed at combating the degradation and desertification in one of the world's oldest mountain ranges, which acts as a natural barrier against the Thar desert.

Also in Explained | Chopper crash in Uttarakhand: What ails the private aviation sector in the hill state

Studies by the Wildlife Institute of India have revealed in the past that 12 gaps that exist within the Aravalli range have widened due to the loss of forests and degradation. These gaps have contributed to frequent sandstorms and dust pollution in the districts of Delhi-National Capital Region and even in Punjab. Under the Green Wall project, restoration works have been planned initially across 8 lakh hectares spanning 29 districts and four states. This would be done in forest areas, grasslands, water systems and their catchment areas, and through the plantation of native, locally conducive species. The project is estimated to cost Rs 16,053 crore and aims to create a buffer zone of 5 km around the mountain range, covering 6.45 million hectares.

In the Western Ghats, where degradation, deforestation and illegal mining are prevalent, the GIM will push to conserve through afforestation, groundwater recharge and eco-restoration of abandoned mining areas.

How will the revised GIM combat land degradation and desertification?

Around a third of India's geographical area – 97.85 million hectares – underwent land degradation during 2018-19, according to the Indian Space Research Organisation's Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas. India aims to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide through additional forest and tree cover by 2030, according to its national commitments to tackle climate change submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The natural carbon sinks of forests, restored grasslands, wetlands, and mountain ecology will help offset greenhouse gas emissions and act as natural sponges and barriers in absorbing climate change impacts.

India has also made an ambitious commitment to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. The GIM and allied interventions, such as the Green Wall project, are all designed to help meet these goals. During the 2005-2021 period, an

additional carbon sink of 2.29 billion tonnes of CO_2 equivalent has been created, as per an environment ministry statement made in the Lok Sabha this year.

To restore large swathes of forests and degraded lands, restoration of impaired open forests is key, cost-effective and high-impact for CO_2 sequestration, the revised GIM roadmap says, based on Forest Survey of India's (FSI) estimates. According to the FSI, this approach alone has the potential to sequester 1.89 billion tonnes of CO_2 over approximately 15 million hectares. It also estimates that by aligning ongoing schemes and intensifying afforestation efforts, GIM can help India expand its forest and tree cover up to 24.7 million hectares. This would be enough to achieve a carbon sink of 3.39 billion tonnes of CO_2 equivalent by 2030, as per the FSI's projections.

Nikhil Ghanekar Follow

An award-winning journalist with 14 years of experience, Nikhil Ghanekar is an Assistant Editor with the National Bureau [Government] of The Indian Express in New Delhi. He primarily covers environmental policy matters which involve tracking key decisions and inner workings of th ***... Read More***

This article went live on June nineteenth, twenty twenty-five, at thirty-eight minutes past five in the evening.

TAGS: **Express Explained** **Express Premium**