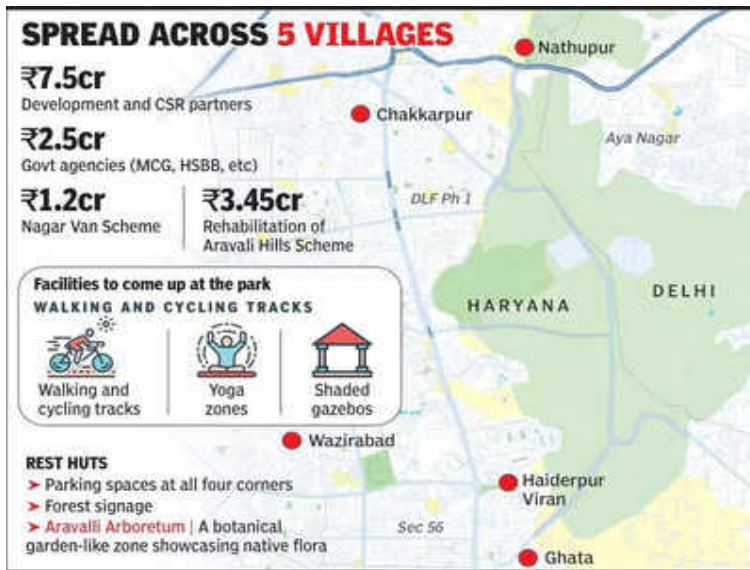


750-acre forest to breathe life into Gurgaon air

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Gurgaon: In a move to combat urban environmental challenges, the city is set to host one of NCR's largest urban forest projects. The 750-acre 'Matri Van' along Gurgaon-Faridabad Road will serve as a green buffer, combining ecological conservation with public recreation spaces.

The project, launched under the govt's 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' initiative, will span five villages — Chakkarpur, Haiderpur Viran, Wazirabad, Ghata, and Nathupur. It will extend from Khushboo Chowk to Ghat Chowk, connecting with the existing Aravali Biodiversity Park and Nagar Van on the Chakkarpur hill belt.

Union environment minister Bhupender Yadav and the minister for housing and urban affairs Manohar Lal Khattar inaugurated

the project in Sector 54 on Saturday. The forest will be developed through partnerships between CSR entities, RWAs, NGOs, multinationals, and govt bodies. While plantation of saplings will start within a week, it will continue for the next five years. The result, according to officials, will be visible in a week.

The project, officials said, will focus on native flora. The plantation drive will feature indigenous species like bargad, peepal, gullar, and Aravali-specific trees such as dhauk, kullu, and khairi. Themed spaces, including Bodhi Vatika, Medicinal Plant Grove, and a butterfly park, will add to the forest's diversity.

"We're not just planting saplings. We're dedicating an entire forest to mothers," said Yadav, adding that invasive *Prosopis juliflora* shrubs would be removed to revive degraded forest patches.

The project's design will incorporate sustainable features like water conservation through recycling and misting systems. Public amenities will include walking tracks, yoga zones, and forest interpretation signage, with 10

thatched huts planned as interim rest points.

An Aravalli Arboretum — a botanical garden-like zone focused on showcasing native flora — will serve as an educational zone, featuring specialised corners for research and learning.

"Cities like Gurgaon are choking on concrete. Urban forests such as 'Matri Van' don't just improve air quality and water retention — they also provide people with access to nature," said Anand Mohan Sharan, additional chief secretary of environment, Haryana.

During the inauguration, minister Khattar highlighted that urban forests helped cool city temperatures, reduce air pollutants, support groundwater recharge, and served as carbon sinks.

"India has committed to creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO₂, equivalent by 2030 through afforestation. Projects like Matri Van are expected to play a significant role in achieving that target," he added.

The project's funding combines multiple sources, including Rs 7.5 crore from development and CSR partners, Rs 2.5 crore from govt agencies, and additional allocations from various schemes, totalling Rs 14.7 crore. An extra Rs 10 crore could be sought from central govt schemes, officials suggested.

"The plantation drive will be phased. The company assigned the project will have to maintain it for three years," said Subhash Yadav, the chief conservator of forests in South Haryana.

Once complete, 'Matri Van' will be one of the largest consolidated green zones of Delhi-NCR, designed not only for ecological restoration but also as a public space for learning, leisure, and climate resilience.