

Delhi: Sowing the seeds of greener future

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NEW DELHI: To increase the green cover on degraded forest land, the Delhi government has decided to plant 10 lakh saplings by next monsoon. The budget for this project worth about Rs 140 crore was approved by deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia at a meeting of the expenditure finance committee held recently.

According to officials, the forest department will plant more than six lakh saplings before the upcoming monsoon and another four lakh saplings during the next monsoon, which is the best time for planting.

Sisodia said the project would also include removal of invasive species from forests and the plantation would be taken care of by the “eco taskforce” appointed by the government. Along with native species of Aravalis, the saplings shortlisted for plantation include specially grown

plant species in the upgraded nursery of the forest department, he further stated.

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“As a part of the project, the forest land in Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, Dera Mandi, Ghittorni, Maidangarhi, Rangpuri, Tughlaqabad, Pul Pehladpur and Rajokri in the Southern Ridge area, which has large chunk of less vegetated forest areas, will be eco-restored by suppression/removal of invasive species, wildlife habitat improvement and soil moisture conservation measures,” Sisodia said.

Pointing out that the green cover of Delhi has increased from 299 sqkm in 2015 to 342 sqkm in 2021, the deputy CM said the project would help further restore Delhi's green lungs.



The government has extended the tenure of the taskforce for another five years, which will be responsible for maintaining the saplings, protecting the forest areas from threat of encroachment, and supporting the forest department in minimising the

threat to thriving wildlife in the area. “Ex-servicemen, officers from the territorial army will be engaged in the eco taskforce for the plantation of 10 lakh saplings and their maintenance for five years,” a Delhi government statement said.

A forest department official said that the project does not include the department’s annual plantation target.