Assessing National Mission for Green India

What is the issue?

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- A recent study looks critically at India’s National Mission for a Green India.
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- It highlights that the goals under it assume arbitrary targets rooted in habits of “(neo)colonial governance” rather than “sound science”.
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What is the Green India mission?

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- The Green India Mission is one of the 8 missions under the *National Action Plan on Climate Change.*
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- It is a $7billion environmental intervention, laid out in 2011.
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- The mission aims at protecting, restoring and enhancing India’s diminishing forest cover.
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- It is intended at responding to climate change by a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures.
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- It seeks to put a third of the country under forest cover by increasing forest and tree cover to the extent of 5 million hectares (mha).
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- Besides, there are efforts at improving quality of forest/tree cover on another 5 mha of forest/non-forest lands.
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- The mission is also planned with improving forest-based livelihoods.
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How is the afforestation approach in India?

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- Over two centuries, afforestation has been viewed as a solution for a variety of ills.
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- These include civilizational decline, diminished precipitation, warming temperatures, soil erosion, and decreasing biodiversity.
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- Forest cover of Europe in the colonial period was estimated at roughly one-third.
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- An afforestation rate of 30-33% became the widely accepted minimum for civilization.
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- This targeted minimum, as a concept, was exported to India and continued to influence generations of forest policymakers in India.
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- Despite the nature of arid and semi-arid ecosystems and the knowledge of local communities, the imported mechanism continued as a compulsion in India.
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Why is it flawed?

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- There is an obsession with tree-planting in India that has its roots in the colonial forestry bureaucracy.
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- The approach is to plant trees to make up for deforestation and grazing habits of local people, especially pastoralists.
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- The commitment to fixed rates of forest cover encourages tree plantations in ecologically inappropriate sites and conditions.
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- Another problem of plantation ecologies in India is the enthusiasm for fast growing species and exotic and invasive species.
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- Afforestation typically extends the “authority” of Indian state forest departments, mostly at the expense of local livelihoods rather than in support of them.
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- This has historically performed a reverse role of disinheriting forest-rooted populations.
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- Moreover, aggressive afforestation projects in India direct resources toward tree-planting, without addressing the drivers of widespread deforestation.
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- So in all, there is much of 'planting' and essentially less of 'greening'.
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What should be done?

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- Greening would take a socio-ecological approach that treats the system as a whole.
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- It means a ‘Restoration Ecology’ of grasslands, streams, mixed scrub, agro-forestry, and so on.
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- The afforestation efforts should take seriously the peculiarity of local systems to preserve the diversity of the Indian ecological mosaic.
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- The approach should move out from the colonial mindset and adopt a scientific view, for true 'greening'.
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Source: The Indian Express

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Quick Facts

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NAPCC

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The eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) are as follows:

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i. National Water Mission
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ii. Green India Mission
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iii. National Solar Mission
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iv. National Mission on Sustainable Habitat
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v. National Mission on Enhanced Energy Efficiency
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vi. National Mission for Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem
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vii. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture
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viii. National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Changes
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