

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2292
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.03.2025

Increase in forest fires in the Nilgiri region

2292. DR. FAUZIA KHAN:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the Nilgiri forests have lost 123.44 sq. km of forest cover, along with a four-fold increase in forest fires from 2022-23 to 2023-24;
- (b) if so, the reasons for the increase in forest fires, including the role of human activities and climate change; and
- (c) the steps taken by Government to mitigate forest fires and strengthen early warning and fire control mechanisms?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) and (b) Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry, assesses forest cover of the country biennially since 1987 and the findings are published in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR). The wall-to-wall forest cover mapping exercise is carried out using remote sensing supported by intensive ground verification and field data from the National Forest Inventory. Forest fire incidences are also detected by FSI using satellite-mounted sensors.

Regarding the forest cover and forest fire incidents in the Nilgiri forests, FSI has not published this data in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) due to the unavailability of boundaries for the Nilgiri forests. However, for The Nilgiris^H district in the State of Tamil Nadu, the following figures are provided as per ISFR-2023.

Forest Cover and Forest Fire Detections in The Nilgiris^H district (as per ISFR-2023):

- Forest Cover: 1,706.89 square kilometres, which is 24.49 square kilometres less than the assessment as per ISFR-2021
- Number of Forest Fire Detections (SNPP-VIIRS, 2023-24): 400, which is an increase of 300 as of 2022-23.

(c) Most of the forest fires in the country are attributed to anthropogenic reasons, in addition to other natural causal factors. However, the risk of forest fire is accentuated by persistent hotter and drier weather and heat wave conditions.

The Ministry has put in place a National Action Plan on Forest Fire-2018, which provides comprehensive measures to prevent forest fires and to improve the resilience of the forests against fire hazards. The State Governments/UT Administrations also prepare State Action Plans, in tandem with the National Action Plan to undertake State/UT-specific measures towards forest fire prevention and management.

To prevent forest fires, the Ministry through the Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun provides Pre-Fire Alerts (one-week advance), Large Forest Fire Alerts and Near Real Time Forest Fire Alerts to the registered subscribers and State Forest department officials to combat forest fires.

The Ministry in coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) have trained three battalions of the NDRF, comprising a total of 150 personnel to tackle Large Forest Fires. These battalions are deployed as per the requirements to control forest fires.

The Ministry also supports the efforts of the States/ UTs in the prevention and control of forest fires by providing financial assistance under the Centrally Sponsored Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme as well as through CAMPA funds.
