GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 4527
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.03.2020

Forest Area in Karnataka

4527. SHRI P.C. MOHAN:

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

(a) whether the Government has taken cognizance of the report that large amount of forest areas in Karnataka are prone to fire;
(b) if so, the details thereof; and
(c) the safety measures taken by the Government to protect the forests in the country especially in Karnataka?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO)

(a) & (b) Fire prone forest areas of different severity classes have been mapped in the India State of Forest Report 2019 based on the frequency of forest fires. Findings of the study indicate that in Karnataka, only 0.29% of the forest cover is extremely prone to fire, whereas 2.64 % of forest cover is found to be very highly fire prone. Nearly 9.99% of the state's forest cover has been estimated to be prone to frequent forest fires.

As per the information received from the Government of Karnataka, the following steps have been taken to stop the incidents of forest fires:
  i.   Creation and maintenance of fire lines in pre-fire season in sensitive areas
  ii.   Engaging fire watchers from local communities during the fire season
  iii. The Karnataka Forest Department has established a "Forest Fire Monitoring Cell" in collaboration with Karnataka State Remote Sensing Applications Centre, Bengaluru in co-operation with Forest Survey of India and National Remote Sensing Agency, Hyderabad for advance monitoring of fire during the fire season.
  iv.   The Forest Department in collaboration with Karnataka Fire and Emergency Service Department establishes temporary fire stations at strategic locations to attend to the emergencies
  v.   Hiring of vehicles for quick commute during the forest fires
  vi.   Fire extinguishing equipment are provided to field staff.

vii.   Awareness activities, Street plays and other programmes are conducted in the villages on the forest fringes to avoid fire incident in the forest.
viii. Watch towers have been constructed in sensitive areas to find out the place where the fire incidents have occurred.
ix.   Use of satellite imageries and information technology in detection of forest fires.
x.   Providing effective communications devices such as wireless sets.
xi.   In case of major fire, help of Indian Air Force, helicopters are also taken to extinguish the fire.

(c)   Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has prepared a National Action Plan on Forest Fire in 2018 after several rounds of consultation with all the States and Union Territories (UTs). The objective of this Plan is to minimize forest fires by informing, enabling and empowering forest-fringe communities and incentivizing them to work in tandem with the State Forest Departments. The Plan also intends to substantially reduce the vulnerability of forests across diverse forest ecosystems in the country against fire hazards, enhance capabilities of forest personnel and institutions in fighting fires, and speed-up recovery after a fire event.

Since forests are managed by the States and UTs, the responsibility of forest fire prevention and management lies primarily with the respective State Government/UT Administration. The Ministry supports the efforts of States and UTs in prevention and control of forest fire by providing financial assistance for various forest fire prevention and management measures under the Centrally Sponsored Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme.

In addition to above, Compensatory Afforestation Fund Rules 2018 allow the use of CAMPA fund by States and UTs for capacity building, providing appropriate fire fighting equipment to forest fire fighting squads and activities for forest fire management.

Forest Survey of India, Dehradun disseminates satellite-based forest fire alerts to State/UT Forest Departments and other registered mobile users whenever forest fires are detected.

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