

After fires, forest dept gears up for reforestation this monsoon

TNN | May 11, 2023, 12.50 AM IST

Panaji: After forest patches totaling an area of 340ha were affected by fires throughout the state this summer up to April, the state forest department has begun an exercise to assess the types of trees burned down. The deputy conservators of forests will accordingly take up plantations at the onset of the monsoon, which is also expected to arrest the proliferation of any invasive grasses, said chief conservator of forests Saurabh Kumar. In many cases, the fires started in horticultural plantations, like those of cashew trees, and then spread to nearby forests. Kumar said that to address this issue, the forest department will be working with the state agriculture department to propagate scientific methods of burning dry waste on farms.

“We have the GPS locations of every forest patch where fires occurred. The deputy conservators of forests will plant the same species of trees that were burned down, so that the forest type does not change. Along with the agriculture department, effective dry biomass management measures will be taken up outside forest areas. We want to ensure that farmers burn dry biomass in a farmer-friendly and environment-friendly manner,” said Kumar.

Principal chief conservator of forests for Goa, Rajiv Kumar Gupta, said that many new equipment are also being procured based on the department’s learnings from the recent forest fires.

“In areas that were inaccessible for fire tenders, shoulder-mounted leaf blowers were found to be the most effective way to create a fire line immediately to stop the spread of fires. We will be procuring more of these leaf blowers. We will also be installing additional watch towers in critical forest areas,” Gupta told TOI.

The forest department is also in the process of acquiring specially designed fire tenders that can reach inaccessible terrain.

Forest fires affected various patches across the state from March 5 to 15, including in sanctuary areas, with the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary being the worst affected. Manmade fires have also not been ruled out, besides other causes.

Kumar said that the department will also assess the number of fire watchers to deploy so that high-risk forest areas are better manned.

“We engage local fire watchers in strategic forest areas who know the terrain well. Their job is to patrol the area and immediately alert the department in the case of incidents like fires. They are engaged from December to May, after some basic training. We are now assessing their numbers and will be engaging more fire watchers in identified high-risk locations in view of the increase in fires this year,” said Kumar.



**Get top news alerts from
The Times of India**

Enable

Maybe later