

Kerala govt. gears up for forest fire management

Controlled burning completed in 6,100 hectares prone to forest fires and 3,000 personnel deployed for prevention of fires, says Kerala Forest Minister

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With the summer season setting in, the government has stepped up efforts to prevent and control forest fires. Forest Minister A.K. Saseendran said fire management plans were being prepared at the State, station, range, division, and circle levels and fire control rooms established. A State action plan comprising guidelines for site-specific fire management would also be formulated.

The Minister said controlled burning had already been completed in 6,100 hectares prone to forest fires and 3,000 personnel comprising fire gangs, fire watchers and members of Vana Samrakshana Samithis and Eco Development Centres deployed for surveillance and prevention of fires. Besides, 1,120 km of fire lines and 2,080 km of fire breaks had been cleared. As many as 5,647 employees of the Forest department were registered with the website of the Forest Survey of India to receive alerts about forest fires.

24-hour control room

A 24-hour control room with a toll-free number (1800 425 4733) had been set up at the Forest headquarters and a team of Assistant Conservators of Forests appointed as nodal officers at the circle level. A system for monitoring field incident response and sending out fire alerts was also functional at the Forest headquarters.

The Minister said all Forest divisions were equipped with firefighting and communication equipment. Efforts were on to conserve water sources in the forests and fringe areas. Check-dams and channels were being constructed and roads leading to forests were being repaired.



He added that local bodies, departments of Revenue, police, Agriculture and Transport, media, students, environmental activists and the general public would also be made part of the surveillance and fire alert mechanism.

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