

Rain saves forest from wildfire on Pavagadh hill in Gujarat

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VADODARA : Fire broke out in the dense forests of Pavagadh hill in Halol taluka of Panchmahal district damaging over 6 hectares of forest on Saturday night.

The forest fire sent the district administration into a tizzy. Firemen and forest officials who rushed to the spot found it a bit difficult to douse the flames that were raging due to strong winds.

The Pavagadh hill that houses a popular Ma Kali Temple is frequented by thousands of tourists and devotees daily. But no one was injured in the incident as the fire occurred at night when the hill hardly has any visitors.

“We learnt about the fire at about 9.30 pm and reached there. It was difficult to reach the spot where flames were raging as it is in the middle of nowhere,” said S Baria, range forest officer (RFO), Halol. The fire had occurred at about 500-feet above the ground level near the Khuniya Mahadev Temple on the hill. The forest officials and firemen had to trek through the arduous climb through the forest to reach the place and start dousing the fire. “It was dark too and arranging for water there wasn’t possible. We tackled the fire with some equipment and bare hands,” Baria told TOI.

“Dry grass and bushes in the forest caught fire but we are yet to ascertain the reason. It is possible that big stones

rolling down the mountain may have caused some spark and caused the fire. We cut off the dry branches and trees around the fire to contain it," Baria added. It took the administration about six hours to douse the fire that spread over about 6 hectares.

The authorities breathed a sigh of relief as Pavagadh received rainfall at about 3am extinguishing minor fires in the area.

The forest is home to wild animals including leopards, wild boars, jackals, porcupines and a variety of birds.

The forest officials said that the fire didn't harm the wildlife that may have escaped from the spot in time.