

Coonoor fire rages for third day, spreads across vast swathes of forest

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The man-made forest fire at Forestdale near Vandisolai in the Coonoor range of forests in the Nilgiris continued to spread across several hectares for the third day. Sources said around 100 acres of forest land have been damaged so far. However, the DFO has expressed confidence that the fire will be doused completely in another two days.

Fire and rescue personnel and forest field staff are unable to douse the flames completely due to the difficult terrain and forest cover. Nilgiris collector, M Aruna, who inspected the affected area near Coonoor, on Friday, said a helicopter would be deployed to douse the flames, if required.

S Gowtham, district forest officer (DFO), Nilgiris division, who accompanied the collector, said all precautionary measures have been taken to ensure that the fire does not spread to residential areas in Forestdale. "No wild animal has suffered burns, as they have moved away from the fire," he added.

The DFO further said, "We have sought additional forces of fire personnel from neighbouring districts including Coimbatore, Tirupur and Erode." A total of 50 fire and rescue personnel from the district are currently engaged in dousing the flames. Over 100 forest field staff have also been deployed alongside the fire personnel to put out the fire.

The forest fire started on Tuesday when a heap of pruned tea leaves was set ablaze at a private tea estate adjacent to the reserve forest in Forestdale.