

## Mangaluru: Western Ghats faced with challenge of containing forest fires ahead of summer

Summer is still a few months away. However, forest fires have already been seen in the lush green environs of the Western Ghats.

Usually the wild fires are seen during the month of February. This year in December itself forest fires were seen in the Charmadi Ghat area. Most of the cases are human related and not natural.

The dense forests of Western Ghats are situated bordering the districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. There are environmentally sensitive zones in the forests that cover parts of Sullia, Beltangady, Karkala and Hebri. There are deemed forests as well. Fire in these forests lead to ecological imbalance.

There are many reasons for wildfire. Some estate owners, who have their farmland adjacent to the forest area put fire to the dried grass nearby to prevent forest fire from spreading to their land. But sometimes the fire that is put up by the estate owners engulfs large areas of forests as

The other reason is that the villagers depend on green grass for their cattle. So they put fire to the dried grass in the hope that new grass will grow within a few days in that area. In addition, some even take revenge on the forest department personnel by putting the fire to forest.

On the other hand, changes in nature and climate are also reason for the increase in forest fires. Large parts of forests have been destroyed in the past few years due to landslides. This leads to drying of environment. Under these circumstances even a lighted cigarette butt thrown by miscreants can cause fire. Recurrent forest fires make the land barren thus resulting in drying of river sources.



