

Zabarwan forest fire doused

By: Reader Correspondent

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Srinagar: Fire broke out in the Zabarwan Hill forest belt on Sunday and spread to several kilometers of land on Sunday causing significant loss to the green belt.

Panic gripped in the area after a fire broke out in the forest as it could be seen from the Dal Lake side.

“It was a panicky situation for all of us as the flames were high and the forest area was in a close range to the locality and somehow it was brought under control,” said Nayeem Ahmad, a local shopkeeper.

Blaming the forest department for this fire incident, a resident said that they should keep in check and see that there are no illegal activities going on which can lead to such a chaotic situation in future.

According to reports the fire started at the forest area located at the upper reaches of Nishat Brein and quickly spread to its adjoining forest areas.

The cause of the fire is believed to be human error. In a joint operation to control the fire was led by various departments including Forest, Urban forestry and wildlife protection. Soil conservation and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) were also sent to the affected area to control the fire.

“The forest has various entry points. So it is expected that the reason of the fire is because of human error,” said Imtiyaz Lone, Wildlife Warden at Dachigam National Park, adding: “the locals also helped us to control the fire”.

He said: “We started the operation on Sunday evening till 12:30 am. Fearing the shooting stones we had to call off this operation at 12:30 am and at 6am in the morning we started the operation again and it took us 2 hours to control the fire.”

According to Lone, the damaged area includes 3-4 hectare which includes shrubs, excluding pine trees.

“Divisional Commissioner Kashmir monitored the entire situation throughout the night, and because of the night long operation by various departments, the fire was brought under control,” said Aamir Ali, Director Disaster Management Department.

When contacted Chief Conservator Forests, Kashmir Nisar Ahmad Darzi, he said, “We formulated a plan to make sure that fire is brought under control. All the concerned departments are working cordially to douse the wildfire”.

He added: “The main problem is that the forests are dry as Kashmir is witnessing dry spell. So a little mistake can increase the risk of forest fires”.

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Regional Fire Management Resource Center – Southeast Asia (RFMRC-SEA)

Jl. Ulin Lingkar Kampus IPB Dramaga, Gedung Biologi Kehutanan BK 214, Bogor 16680,
West Java, Indonesia

Telp : (0251) 8421929 | Mobile : +62 857 8183 95 97 | Website: <http://rfmrc-sea.org> Email : rfmrcsea.ipb@gmail.com