



IAF Continues to Douse Forest Fire in Uttarakhand | Uttarakhand | 09 May 2024

Why in News?

Recently, The Uttarakhand government informed [the Supreme Court](#) that the [forest fire](#) emergency is no longer present, with only 15 small to intermediate fires reported.

Key Points

- The Chief Minister emphasized the need for an **efficient strategy to gather 'Pirul' (pine leaves) from the forests.**
 - He **urged all residents** of the State to **participate in a widespread campaign** to collect Pirul and safeguard the surrounding forests.
- Additionally, he mentioned that the government is implementing the '**Pirul Lao-Paise Pao**' initiative **to incentivize the collection of pine leaves** and prevent forest fires.
 - Under this mission, **Pirul will be purchased at the collection centre at the rate of ₹50/kg** with the aim of reducing forest fire.
- Meanwhile, the [Indian Air Force \(IAF\)](#) continues to help the State in dousing forest fires. It has taken **23 sorties, for 11 and half hours and used 44,600 litres of water** to douse the raging forest flames in the mountain.
 - In response to the **raging forest fires at the Pauri Garhwal** sector in Uttarakhand, the IAF provided much-needed relief by undertaking [Bambi Bucket operations](#) by its **Mi17 V5 helicopters.**

Bambi Bucket operation

- The Bambi Bucket, also called a helicopter bucket or a heli bucket, is a specialised container that is suspended by cable under a chopper, and which can be filled by lowering into a river or pond before being flown **above a fire and discharged aurally by opening a valve at the bottom of the bucket.**
- The Bambi Bucket is especially helpful in fighting wildfires that are difficult or impossible to reach from the ground. Around the world, helicopters are frequently commissioned to fight forest fires.

Wildfires Threaten Uttarakhand's Wildlife and Ecological Balance | Uttarakhand | 09 May 2024

Why in News?

The [wildfires in Uttarakhand's forests](#) are **endangering the state's rich wildlife**, which includes [tigers](#),

elephants, leopards, as well as a range of birds and reptiles.

Key Points

- The ecosystem is under severe pressure, particularly for birds and reptiles who are having difficulty fleeing the fires due to their limited mobility.
- According to environmental photographer, wildfires have resulted in the tragic loss of numerous bird species, including nesting ones.
- A conservator of forests (research), is concerned about the **critically endangered yellow-headed tortoise** as they are at increased risk during the fire season when they **seek shelter under dried Sal leaves**.
 - The loss of even a small number of these tortoises could have a significant **impact on the survival of the species**, considering their **already declining population**.
- Gajendra Pathak, associated with the **Jungle Bachao Jeevan Bachao campaign**, emphasizes the wider ecological consequences of the wildfires.
 - The burning of leaves not only damages wildlife but also interferes with the important **humus layer vital for soil health** and erosion prevention.
 - The **disappearance of insects** such as beetles, ants, and spiders adds to the **challenges of maintaining the fragile ecological equilibrium**.

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The Vision

Yellow-Headed Tortoise

- **Scientific name:** *Indotestudo elongate*.
- **Common name:** Elongated tortoise, Yellow Tortoise and Sal forest tortoise.
- **Distribution:** It is a species of tortoise found in **Southeast Asia** and parts of the **Indian Subcontinent**, particularly Northeast India.
- **Physical description:** These up to **1 foot-long tortoises** have elongated somewhat narrow **carapaces and yellow heads**. Shells are typically a pale tannish-yellow to caramel color, with blotches of black.
- **IUCN Red List Status:** **Critically Endangered**.
- **Population:** According to the **IUCN** the population of the species may have fallen by about 80% in the last three generations (90 years).
- **Threats:** It is heavily hunted for food and collected both for local use, such as decorative masks, and international wildlife trade. In china, a **mixture, made by grinding up the tortoise's shell, also serves as an aphrodisiac**.

Thunderstorms | Uttarakhand | 09 May 2024

Why in News?

According to the [India Meteorological Department \(IMD\)](#), a fresh [western disturbance](#) is poised to affect Northwest India, whose influence will surge a myriad of different types of weather over the region.

Key Points

- Rain accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds has been forecast over most parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand from 9th to 12th May 2024.
- Western disturbances are **storms that originate in the [Caspian](#) or [Mediterranean Sea](#), and bring [non-monsoonal rainfall](#) to northwest India.**
- They are labelled as an **extra-tropical storm** originating in the Mediterranean, is an area of low pressure that brings sudden showers, snow and fog in northwest India.
- It brings winter and pre-monsoon rain and is important for the development of the [Rabi crop](#) in the Northern subcontinent.
- It is not always the harbingers of good weather. Sometimes it can cause extreme weather events like floods, [flash floods](#), [landslides](#), dust storms, hail storms and [cold waves](#) killing people, destroying infrastructure and impacting livelihoods.

Rabi Crops

- These crops are **sown around the Retreating Monsoon and Northeast monsoon season**, which begins in October and are called rabi or winter crops.
- The harvest for these crops happens **typically during April and May, during the summer season.**
- These **crops are not much affected by the rainfall.**
- **Major Rabi crops** are wheat, gram, peas, barley etc.
- A **warm climate is required for seed germination** and cold climate for the growth of crops.