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Fire in Bandipur Tiger Reserve

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The fire has raged through the **Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka.**

- There are concerns about the long-term damage to the ecosystem, which is a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere that hosts the world's largest tiger population, at more than 575 (2014 census).
- The **country's forest policy encourages a zero forest fire approach for its protected landscapes** — whether it is Bandipur or the rainforests of the upper Western Ghats.
- However, Scientist has shown that this blanket approach of zero fire may be doing harm to dry, deciduous forests where trees have evolved to co-exist with fire.



Cause of Fire in Bandipur Tiger Reserve

- The 2018 monsoon was particularly strong, but the year-end northeast monsoon has failed.
- The **monsoon led to dense growth**, while the blistering **heat since September has turned vegetation brittle and dry**.
- As with most forest fires, it is assumed that **Bandipur's ignition was also man-made**.

Positive Impacts of forest fire

- **Healthy Ecosystem**
 - Scientists have said that, **when fires are relatively frequent, adult tree mortality in these systems is very low**.
 - Many saplings sprout shortly after the fire from underground reserves, and the system returns to its original state in a few years.
 - Conversely, when fires are suppressed — including by curbing the tribal practices of controlled fire burning — greater biomass builds up that can lead to high-intensity fires which affect the ecosystem negatively.
 - Moreover, there might be a correlation between fire suppression and growth of forest fire incidents.
- **Curbing Invasive Species**
 - **Forest fires also help in suppressing invasive species**.
 - Scientists have said that that the exclusion of tribal communities from the tiger reserves in Karnataka had, in turn, stopped their traditional use of small “litter fires” just before the dry season set in.
 - **This has led to the abundance of invasive *lantana camara* plant which is native to America**.
 - ***Hairy mistletoe*** — a parasitic shrub that affects mature trees — has also thrived due to fire suppression.