

SUBSCRIBE



INDIAMONEYTRAVELLEREATSRESPAWNLUXE

CLIMATE CIRCULARITY INDUSTRY GREEN FINANCING GREEN OPINIONS GREEN VIDEOS SPECIAL ISSUE BUSINESS START-UPS

HOME » PLANET » CLIMATE » **TURN FOREST FIRE SEASON INTO PREVENTION SEASON**

How to Turn the Forest Fire Season into Prevention Season

Turning Himalayan fire response into year-round prevention through incentives, finance and resilience



Sayanta Ghosh |



Jitendra Vir Sharma

Updated on: 5 February 2026 3:46 pm

Follow us on

Add as a preferred source on Google

[SUBSCRIBE](#)



Summary of this article

- Himalayan fire risks now span seasons, overwhelming reactive suppression-only strategies.
- Prevention requires incentives, watershed finance, carbon-aligned funding, and community livelihoods.
- Smoke, water security and disaster costs justify sustained public investment.



INDIAMONEYTRAVELLEREATSRESPAWNLUXE

CLIMATE CIRCULARITY INDUSTRY GREEN FINANCING GREEN OPINIONS GREEN VIDEOS SPECIAL ISSUE BUSINESS START-UPS

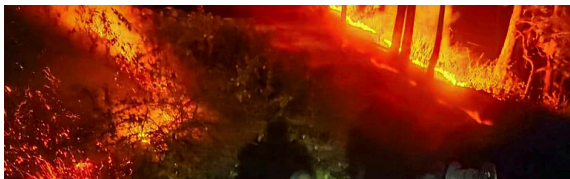


The Indian Himalaya is not a collection of isolated forests. It is a connected landscape where fire affects watersheds, slope stability, tourism, rural livelihoods and, increasingly, air quality far beyond the mountains. Smoke trapped in valleys and transported downwind turns a forest fire into an airshed event, with public health consequences that rarely enter fire planning. In this context, a strategy that relies mainly on suppression is not a strategy. It is a recurring emergency.

Advertisement

The more practical question, therefore, is not how to fight fires better, but how to make the fire season governable.

The answer lies in shifting the centre of gravity from firefighting to prevention and resilience. This is not a rhetorical call for “more awareness”. It requires incentive pathways, dependable finance and technology that supports decisions on the ground. Himalayan fire management must reward prevention as routine work, fund risk reduction as a public good, and treat smoke as a public health outcome rather than an incidental by-product.



Uttarakhand Forest Fires will Blow Out with the Season. Its Economic, Ecological Consequences will Last

BY **Ankita Mookherjee**

Advertisement

Prevention Needs a Payroll

The first reform is also the simplest. Prevention is work and work should be paid.

Across the Himalaya, village institutions and local crews are often the earliest responders. Yet their participation remains largely voluntary and episodic. A performance-based community incentive programme can change this. Van Panchayats, Joint Forest Management Committees, self-help groups and village fire crews should receive payments tied to verifiable outputs: maintenance of fire lines and water points, fuel removal in priority patches, patrol coverage on high-risk days, rapid reporting of ignitions and safe first response until trained teams arrive.

The design must avoid tokenism. Incentives should be linked to measurable performance, not attendance at meetings. Verification can be supported through simple geo-tagged reporting and random checks. If the state expects communities to reduce risk, the state must also share value with them for doing so.



Tree Loss from Fires Peaks Globally in 2024, India Among Most Prone

BY **Outlook Planet Desk**

Make Carbon Finance Serve Risk Reduction

Fire is not only an immediate hazard. It is also a driver of gradual forest degradation and carbon loss. This creates an opportunity for carbon finance, but only if it is framed with discipline.

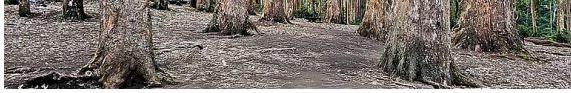
A realistic pathway is to bundle fire prevention, fuel management and post-fire restoration into carbon-aligned programmes where applicable, focusing on reduced degradation and stabilised carbon stocks. The emphasis must be on conservative accounting, safeguards, transparency and credible MRV.

SUBSCRIBE



INDIAMONEYTRAVELLERREATSRESPAWNLUXE

CLIMATE CIRCULARITY INDUSTRY GREEN FINANCING GREEN OPINIONS GREEN VIDEOS SPECIAL ISSUE BUSINESS START-UPS



Treat Fire Resilience as Watershed Finance

A second finance shift is equally important. Fire management is still too often framed as a forestry expenditure. In the Himalaya, this is a category error.

The strongest case for investment is risk reduction for watersheds and disasters. A landscape-scale restoration and fire-resilience package should allow states to pitch integrated programmes combining soil and water conservation, assisted natural regeneration, fire-resilient species in appropriate zones, slope stabilisation and spring-shed protection. The argument is not only about trees. It is about reduced sedimentation, more stable flows, fewer slope failures and lower disaster costs.

Advertisement

This framing also opens doors to blended finance. Investors and development agencies may not fund firefighting but they can fund resilience if outcomes are defined clearly and measured consistently.



Forests As Carbon Sinks, A Vital Tool In Climate Mitigation

BY Sunith Reddy

Put Numbers to What We Avoid Losing

Prevention often loses in budgets because its benefits are dispersed and long-term, while its costs are immediate and visible. This is precisely why ecosystem services valuation matters.

States should quantify the benefits of reduced burned area in terms of avoided erosion, avoided sediment loads, improved watershed protection, biodiversity benefits, reduced smoke exposure and avoided expenditure on emergency response. Total Economic Value framing is not an academic exercise. It is a way to justify stable public allocations for prevention, equipment, training and post-fire recovery. If Himalayan forests protect water and reduce disaster risk, then fire prevention should be funded as infrastructure protection.

Advertisement



Amazon Fires Drive Record Global Forest Loss in 2024, India Not Spared

BY Outlook Planet Desk

Payments for Smoke and Water Protection

In the Himalaya, upstream fires impose downstream costs. Municipal bodies, utilities, tourism operators and downstream communities benefit when upstream forests do not burn. Cleaner air, more reliable water flows and reduced silt loads are not abstract services. They are real economic outcomes.

This creates a logic for Payments for Ecosystem Services, particularly in river basins where beneficiaries are identifiable. A well-designed PES model can support upstream fuel management, community brigades and restoration, financed by downstream stakeholders who benefit from lower risk. Those who gain from reduced smoke and stable water should contribute to the upstream work that delivers it.

Advertisement



SUBSCRIBE

INDIAMONEYTRAVELLEREATSRESPAWNLUXE

CLIMATE CIRCULARITY INDUSTRY GREEN FINANCING GREEN OPINIONS GREEN VIDEOS SPECIAL ISSUE BUSINESS START-UPS

insurance and parametric cover can be piloted with triggers based on fire danger indices, burned area thresholds or sustained smoke episodes. Payouts can support rapid response, restoration works and livelihood buffers.

Fuel build-up is one of the most avoidable drivers of high-intensity fire. Community enterprises for pine needle and litter collection, converted into briquettes, pellets, biochar or compost, can turn prevention into a steady livelihood. Guaranteed offtake, sustainability caps and transparent revenue sharing are essential.

At the same time, smoke must be treated as a public health issue. Advisories, guidance for schools and outdoor work and preparedness for respiratory surges should be triggered routinely during fire episodes. Prevention spending should be justified through climate and health co-benefit accounting, because avoided emissions and avoided illness are real public gains.



Sacrificing Our Future: How Delhi's Air Pollution Threatens an Entire Generation

BY **Sonali Mukherjee**

A New Contract for the Fire Season

India's **Himalayan** states do not need seasonal firefighting alone; they need year-round prevention. That requires a prevention economy built on three pillars: incentives that pay communities for measurable prevention work, finance that treats fire resilience as a public good, and technology that turns early signals into early action. Forest fires may remain part of the Himalayan ecology, but smoke and disruption need not remain part of its politics.

(Sayanta Ghosh is associate fellow, land resources, while JV Sharma is senior director, land resources at TERI. The views expressed are personal.)



Published At: 5 February 2026 12:42 pm

SUBSCRIBE

Tags

- Green Finance
- Himalayas
- Forest Fires
- Disasters

« PREVIOUS STORY



Amazon, IIT Roorkee Turn Farm Waste Into Green Packaging to Tackle Stubble Burning

Govt's Supreme Priority Is Energy Security of 1.4 Bn Indians, Says Piyush Goyal



NEXT STORY »

Own 3/4 BHK Luxury Residences in Gurgaon

Discover 3/4 BHK luxury residences at Suncity Monarch, Sector 78, Gurgaon. Price starts at ₹3.76 Cr*. 20 Acres Land Area, 5 Iconic Towers, 1.25 lakh sq ft clubhouse & sports arena.

Suncity Monarch | Sponsored

Get Quote

The cost of hearing aids in Delhi might surprise you

Recommended by audiologist

Hearing Aids | Sponsored

Learn More