



Current Affairs of the Day

Land-use change disrupted Kinnaur's ecology, says study

After nine people lost their lives in a landslide in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur district, a debate surrounding the degradation of the environment in this ecological sensitive hill terrain is bound to gain momentum.

Highlights:

1. A recent study suggests that both hydropower projects and afforestation efforts, carried out as compensation for the forest land diverted for hydropower projects in the name of 'mitigation', have altered land use and are negatively impacting the forest ecosystems.
2. The study, conducted between 2012 and 2016, used information from government records and ground research to examine the extent, nature and impact of forest diversion for hydropower projects in Kinnaur.
3. The study found that not only have construction activities for hydropower projects impacted existing land-use, disturbed forest biodiversity and fragmented the forest landscape, but the related compensatory afforestation plantations are also ridden with problems.
4. These include the abysmally low presence of surviving saplings [up to 10%], inter-species conflict, infringement on local land usage and damage by wildfires and landslips.
5. Studies show that the tunnelling in mountain areas will result in the risk of more landslips as large amounts of water percolate into surfaces. The use of dynamite for blasting through the surfaces and underground components of the projects disturb existing slopes and fragile geology.

Southern Europe battles wildfires as the north cleans up after floods

Wildfires burned in regions across southern Europe, fuelled by hot weather and strong winds, as some northern countries cleaned up after a weekend of torrential rain and flooding.



Highlights:

1. In Greece, firefighters had battled around 50 fires during the past 24 hours and it was likely there would be more with meteorologists warning that a further heatwave was in prospect.
2. On the Italian island of Sardinia, firefighting planes from France and Greece reinforced efforts to battle blazes. More than 4,000 hectares of forest were destroyed in the fire.
3. In Spain, the Northeastern region of Catalonia saw more than 1,500 hectares destroyed near Santa Coloma de Queralt, forcing dozens to be evacuated.
4. Conditions in southern Europe were in sharp contrast to the rainstorms that lashed northern countries from Austria to the U.K. following the catastrophic flooding in Germany and neighbouring countries last week.