

Forest fires in India and its impact

10th October, 2018



A report titled “**Strengthening Forest Fire Management in India**”, jointly prepared by the MoEFCC and the World Bank, has been released.

Highlights of the report:

Occurrence of forest fires and their impact: Forest fires occur in around half of the country’s 647 districts every year. Central India has the largest area affected by fire. North-East accounts for 56% of burnt forest land during 2003-2016, followed by southern states and the North-East. However, North-eastern states account for the biggest share of fire detections, with at least 55% of fire incidents reported during 2003-2016.

Concerns: With at least one in four people dependent on forests for their livelihood, India is losing at least ₹1,100 crore due to forest fires every year, says a new World Bank report. The report calls for a national plan for the prevention of forest fire. Repeated fires in short succession are reducing diversity of species and harming natural regeneration, while posing a risk to over 92 million in India who live in areas of forest cover.

Way ahead:

The findings are significant since preventing forest fires is crucial to meet Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) in order to limit global warming. As per the Fifth Assessment Report of IPCC, forest fires globally contribute 2.5 billion to 4.0 billion tonnes of CO₂ to carbon emissions every year. Tackling forest fires is even more important in India as the country has committed to bringing 33% of its geographical area under forest cover by 2030, as part of NDCs.

Facts for Prelims:

India aims to increase its forest cover by 5 million hectares, as part of India’s National Action Plan on Climate Change.

To be looked in UPSC Paper 3 Topic: Conservation related issues