

GS Paper-3
Disaster Management – Oct'18

Forest Fires In India

In News

- 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, ***Strengthening Forest Fire Management in India***, jointly prepared by the ministry of environment, forest and climate change (MoEFCC) and the World Bank.

Key Points

- Forest fires occur in around half of the country's 647 districts every year. However, 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.
- Central India has the largest area affected by fire. The region, which has the highest forest cover in India after North-East, accounts for 56% of burnt forest land during 2003-2016, followed by southern states and the North-East.
- North-eastern states account for the biggest share of fire detections, with at least 55% of fire incidents reported during 2003-2016. The report calls for a national plan for the prevention of forest fire.

Significance

- 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 its Nationally Determined Goals (NDC) and increases its forest cover by 5 million hectares, as part of India's National Action Plan on Climate Change.

Way Forward

For combating forest fires, apart from incentivizing communities and forest departments, there is also a need to bring a social movement across states to address the issue.