

All about Forest Fires

What is the issue?

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- In recent times there are various instances of forest fire in India, which has many fold consequences.

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- Policy measures to protect the forests from forest fires are crucial to conserve nature and mankind.

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What are the causes for forest fires?

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- **Climatic conditions** - such as temperature, level of moisture in soil and atmosphere and duration of dry spells naturally cause fires.

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- Friction of tree branches swaying due to high wind velocity or rolling stones which sparks and sets off fires in leaf litter.

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- **Anthropogenic activities** - Traditional practice of shifting cultivation in north eastern regions and eastern coastal regions burns forested land.

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- Introduction of fire in forests due to open flame, cigarette buds, electric spark or any source of ignition by Man leads to forest fires.

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- These causes have been rapidly increasing and it has been accentuated by the growing human and cattle population.

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- It has been estimated that 90% of forest fires in India are man-made, when people enter forests to graze cattle, collect fuel wood, timber and other minor forest produce.

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What are the consequences due to forest fires?

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- Forest fires cause serious health hazards by producing smoke and noxious gases by affecting the local climatic setup.
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- They also lead to increased CO₂ levels and contribute to climate change, which affects everyone individually.
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- Loss of bio-diversity and wildlife habitat affects the ecological setup which may induce problems with other natural resources such as drying up of water resources, loss of soil fertility, etc.
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- Continuous forest fires in forested regions reduces the natural regeneration capacity of the environment.
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What measures are needed to protect the forest from fires?

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- Awareness regarding the long term ill effects of forest fires have to be made to the villagers residing near the forests.
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- Measures to prevent forest fires have to be taken prior to summer season when fires are prevalent.
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- Local people have to be sensitised use online portals or mobile applications to monitor the forested regions for fires and inform forest officials quickly.
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- Alternatives for greener pastures, producing minor forest produce have to be made available to the villagers by the government.
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- Employment and sustainable livelihood opportunities have to be accessible to the village people, through better connectivity and infrastructure.
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- Officers at ground level have to work together with the villagers for bringing about a holistic solution.
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Source: Indian Express

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