MoEFCC Report on Forest Fires

Why in news?

\n\n

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and World Bank recently released a joint report on forest fires in India.

\n\n

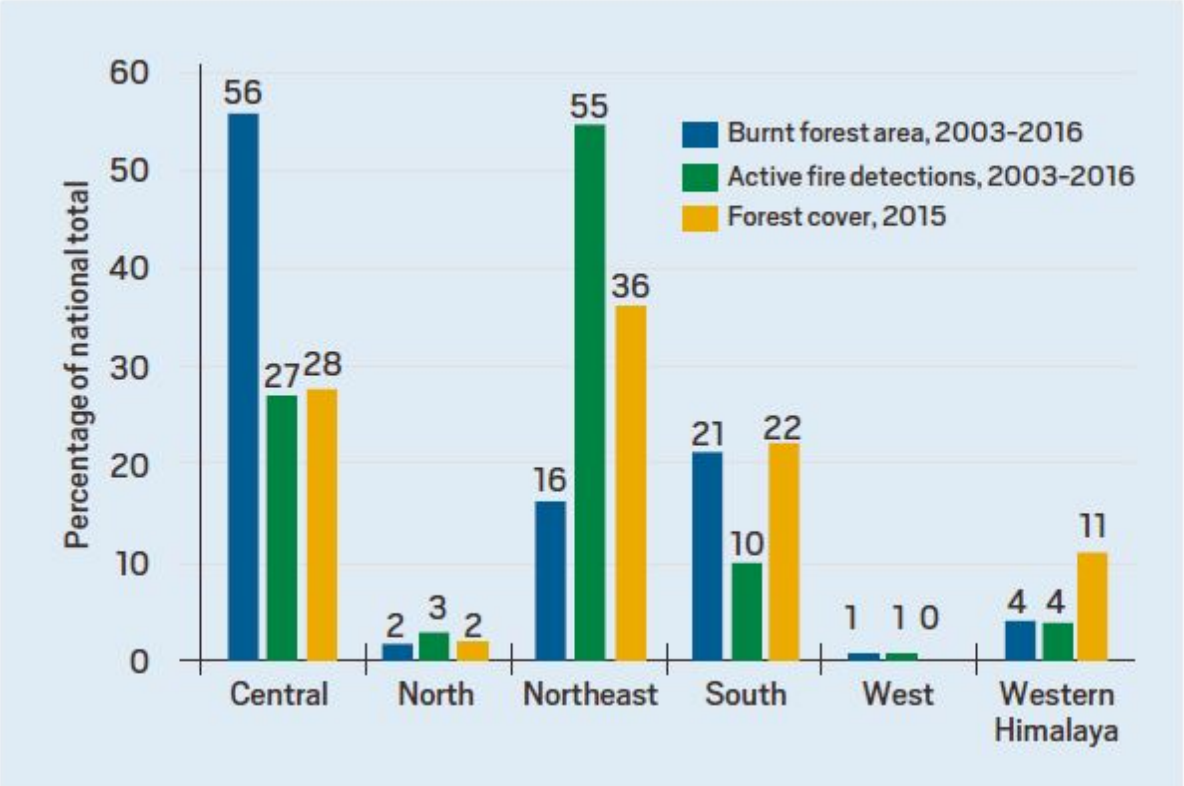
What are the highlights?

\n\n

\n
- At least 60% of districts in India are affected by forest fires each year.
\n
- The top 20 districts in terms of area affected by fire from 2003 to 2016 account for 48% of the total fire-affected area and they mostly fall in Central India.
\n
- The 16 of the top 20 districts in terms of fire frequency are located mainly in the Northeast.
\n
- Here, forest fires tend to be concentrated in a smaller area that is subject to repeated burning.
\n
- The peak fire season is the most concentrated (shortest) in the Northeast and the Northern state of Bihar.
\n
- Fires in other regions, particularly districts in Central and Southern India, are more expansive.
\n
- Districts experiencing widespread and frequent forest fires include areas of dry and moist deciduous forest.
\n
- These include the borderlands of Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and Telangana that are affected by fire on a nearly annual basis.

\n
- Notably, between 2006 and 2015, forest fires were detected in just under half (281 of 614) of the protected areas in India.
\n

\n\n



\n\n

What are the proposed reasons?

\n\n

\n
- In line with other parts of the world, people are the main driver of fires in India.
\n
- Forest fires are distributed close to people and infrastructure in India.
\n
- Also, India’s monsoons are largely responsible for the seasonal nature of forest fires in the country.
\n
- Forest fires peak during the dry months of March or April before the arrival of the monsoon.
\n
- The fire season mainly occurs during the four-month period between February 15 and May 15.
\n

- Besides, the reduced contrast in land-sea temperatures had weakened the engine that drives the monsoon.
  \n
- But it is not yet clear how the drying of the monsoon has affected the intensity or frequency of forest fires.
  \n

\n\n

What is the significance?

\n\n

\n
- Forest fires contribute to global warming and hence climate change, by releasing carbon stored in trees, undergrowth and soil into the atmosphere.
  \n
- Given this, the report gains significance with recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's special report on global warming.
  \n
- The findings are crucial for India’s own pledge on creating additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of Co2-equivalent by 2030.
  \n
- In the long run, climate shifts due to anthropogenic global warming may further alter India’s forest landscape and fire regime.
  \n
- Also, the MoEF issued national guidelines on Forest Fire Prevention and Management (FFPM) in 2000.
  \n
- But these are no longer being implemented in true spirit.
  \n
- The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has documented the shortage of dedicated funding for FFPM at the central and state levels.
  \n
- The recent report is thus expected to be a key input in issuing a national policy on FFPM.
  \n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express

\n

IAS PARLIAMENT

Information is Empowering

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative