Environmental cost of Russia-Ukraine War

Why in news?

The environmental costs of the conflict are likely to far outlive the fighting itself.

How the Russia-Ukraine war induced destruction?

- **Destruction** - The conflict has seen many damages with incidents involving nuclear power plants, energy infrastructure, mines and industrial sites.
- It resulted in air pollution and contamination of ground and surface waters.
- More than 2 million hectares of forest have been destroyed putting the rare endemic species at risk.

According to claims by the Ukraine's environment ministry, altogether the losses from land, water and air pollution amounted to $51.4 billion.

- **Carbon footprint** - Emission from the conflict was estimated to be around 33 mn tonnes of CO2 and 23 mn tonnes of CO2 from fires.
- The reconstruction could emit 49 mn tonnes of CO2.
- **Leopard 2 Tanks -** The state-of-the-art Leopard 2 tanks have a fuel capacity of 1200 litres.
- This roughly consumes between 3.5-5.5 litres of fuel per km.
- **Radioactive exposure** - Russian troops dug up deep trenches in the protected Chernobyl sanctuary, an area largely untouched since the nuclear disaster in 1986.
- This could have dug up dangerous radioactive material.

What is the way forward?

- Even when the conflict ends, the immediate efforts of reconstruction will focus only on housing and building infrastructure.
- Restoration of environment should not be given priority.
- World Nations should take immediate actions to stop the war and its deleterious impact on environment.
- Restoration of ecosystem should be given equal priority as reconstruction of infrastructure.

References

1. Indian Express | Environmental costs of Russia-Ukraine War
2. BBC | The toxic legacy of the Ukraine war



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