India's Forests Fires

Why in News?

Recently, the data showed that in the past 5 fire seasons, over 11 lakh fires incidents reported in India.

- **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** – Mentioned that *4 states* have reported over *1 lakh forest fire incidents* each in the *last five forest fire seasons*.
- **4 States** – Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.
- They accounted for 4,73,834 forest fires, which constitutes approximately 43% of the total forest fire incidents in India.

India has reported a staggering 11,09,588 forest fires. Each year from November to June, forests across the country ignites, threatening ecosystems, wildlife and livelihoods.

- **India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021** – Over 36% of the country's forest cover is estimated to be vulnerable to frequent forest fires.
  - **2.81%** - Extremely fire-prone.
  - **7.85%** - Very highly fire-prone category.
- **ISFR 2023** – Around 275 million rural people in India depend on forests for their livelihood security.
- Communities residing near forested areas rely heavily on forests for Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs).
- **Major Factors** – Collection of *tendu leaves and mahua flowers* contributing to forest fires.
- *Shifting cultivation practices* adopted by local farmers, where an estimated 4.35 million hectares (mha) of forest area is affected by fires.
- **Reasons for fires** – Unsustainable exploitation of forest resources and coupled with increasing human activities threat to the balance of forest ecosystems.
- **Impacts** – It leads to loss of:
  - Human lives
  - Depletion of biodiversity
  - Habitat destruction
  - Reduced agricultural productivity
  - Landscape degradation
  - Disruptions to local livelihoods.

Reference

[The Hindu Business Line| India’s Forests Ablaze]