



Sikari Utsav

Why in News?

South-west Bengal faces ongoing [wildlife protection](#) challenges, including the ritualistic hunting celebrated during the regional festival **Sikari Utsav**.

Key Points

▪ About Sikari Utsav:

- The event takes place during the dry season, specifically from March to May, across the districts of **Jhargram, Paschim Medinipur, Bankura, Purulia, and Birbhum**.
- During this period, thousands of villagers participate, joined by people from neighbouring districts and states, including Jharkhand, Odisha, and Bihar.
- The primary activity involves **entering the forests to hunt small wildlife species**, such as **wild boars and wild hares**.

▪ Issues:

- It **harms wildlife populations** in the short term and has long-term **ecological consequences**.
- Since the festival coincides with the peak season for [forest fires](#), it exacerbates environmental damage.
- The **vast, open forests** in this region, **located near human settlements, are easily accessible** and thus **vulnerable to exploitation**, especially during festivals.
- The **Forest Department has limited manpower**, which **hampers its ability to enforce conservation laws** effectively, resulting in the continued allowance of destructive activities.

▪ Way Forward:

- **Community-Based Forest Management:** Building on the success of West Bengal's **Joint Forest Management (JFM) committees**, it is essential to broaden this participatory model across more regions.
- **Intensify Awareness and Education Campaigns:** Shifting the narrative from **exploitation to coexistence** through dialogue and education will cultivate a shared commitment to **protecting ecosystems** for future generations.
- **Enhance Law Enforcement and Infrastructure for Forest Protection:** Strengthening legal frameworks, enforcing existing forest protection laws rigorously, and **investing in infrastructure** are necessary to curb destructive human activities such as encroachment and overexploitation.
- **Foster Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation for Long-Term Sustainability:** Collaborative **action plans and continuous dialogue** must **prioritize ecological balance**, ensuring that environmental protection remains a collective and sustained priority for the future.

