

Forest Fire in J&K

Why in News?

A massive <u>forest fire</u> erupted in the Bhaga village area near **NH-144A** in Reasi district, Jammu and **Kashmir**, spreading rapidly across hundreds of hectares of land.

Key Points

- Forest Fire Risk in J&K:
 - In J&K, at least 1,747 square kilometres of forest area have been classified under the 'High Risk' zone for forest fires, while 62 square kilometres fall under the 'Very High Risk' category.
 - As per official data:
 - In 2022–23, a total of 1,553 forest fire incidents were reported, affecting an area of 2,774.21 hectares.
 - In 2023–24, the **number of incidents significantly declined** to 607, impacting an area of 987.24 hectares.
- India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023 and Forest Cover in J&K:
 - The <u>ISFR 2023</u> highlighted a substantial increase in forest cover which showed a rise of 34.78 sq km in the region's forest area compared to the 2021 assessment.
 - The report reveals that **J&K** has shown an increase of 398.12 sq km in forest cover in one decade from 2013 to 2023.
 - According to the Report, the forest cover of J&K in 2013 was 20,948.27 sq
 km while in 2023 the forest cover increased to 21,346.39 sq km.
 - J&K boasts of the highest number of forest types in the country, an impressive 43, along with the highest average growing stock of 296.22 cubic meters per hectare and the highest estimated carbon stock of 174.10 tonnes per hectare.

Forest Fire:

- About:
 - A forest fire refers to an uncontrolled blaze that spreads through vegetation taller than 1.8 metres.
 - These fires often grow into major conflagrations, sometimes **triggered by surface or ground fires** that ignite upper tree canopies.
 - When the flames leap to the top branches of trees (a phenomenon known as crowning), they can bypass the forest floor and undergrowth, rapidly intensifying.
 - Such fires often lead to **violent blowups and can evolve into firestorms**, with erratic and extreme fire behaviour.
- Ecological Role of Forest Fires:
 - Though typically viewed as destructive, many forest ecosystems depend on **fire for their survival and regeneration**.
 - Natural events like lightning strikes in dry forests ignite fires that can benefit biodiversity.
- Related Government Initiatives:
 - National Action Plan for Forest Fires (NAPFF), was started in 2018 with the goal of reducing forest fires by informing, enabling, and empowering forest fringe communities and incentivizing them to collaborate with state forest departments.

• The Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme (FPM) is the only government-sponsored programme dedicated to assisting states in dealing with forest fires.



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