



One-fifth of the Country's Forests Prone to Fire

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Why in News

Recently, the **2019 report by Forest Survey of India (FSI)** was released. It states that **about 21.40%** of forest cover in India is **prone to fires**, with forests in the **north-eastern region** and **central India** being the **most vulnerable**.

- FSI **carried out a study** along **forest fire points (FFP)** identified across the country **from 2004 to 2017**.
- There are total 2,77,758 FFP identified during the 13 years.
- FFPs were analysed using a **moderate resolution imaging spectroradiometer (MODIS)** by **overlaying the points coverage over the grid coverage of 5 km x 5 km**.

Forest Survey of India

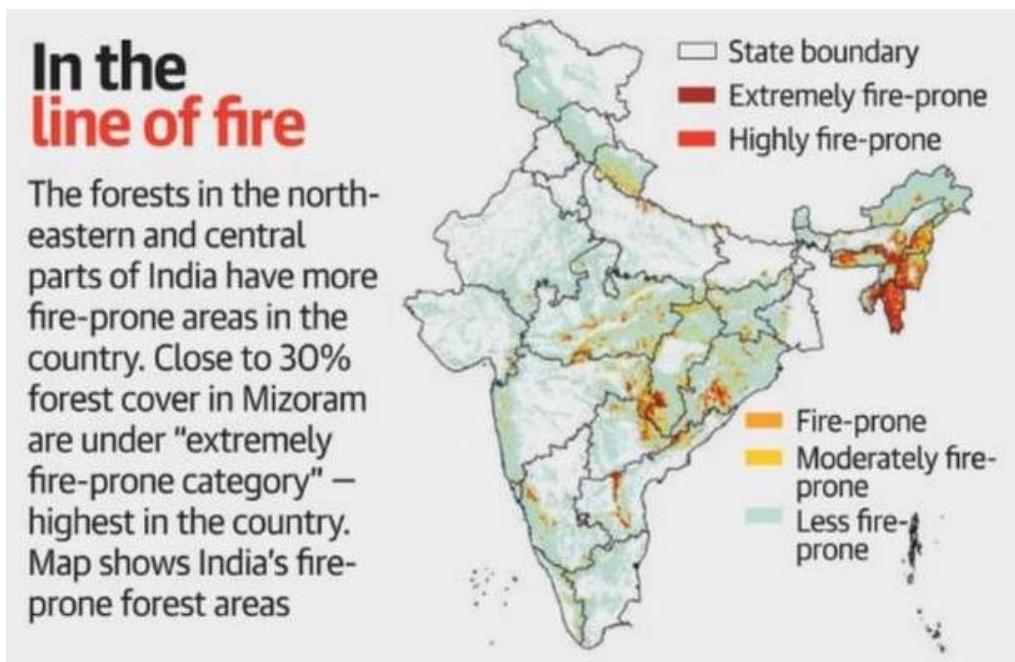
It is a premier **national organization** under the **Union Ministry of Environment and Forests** responsible for assessment and monitoring of the forest resources of the country regularly.

Key Points

- **Extremely fire-prone areas** account for **3.89%** of total forest cover, **very highly fire-prone areas** account for **6.01%** and **highly fire-prone areas** for **11.50%**. Together, the three categories come to 21.40 % of forest cover.
- From **November 2018 to June 2019**, there were **total 29,547 alerts** based on MODIS. **Mizoram** recorded the **highest number** of fire alerts (2,795).
 - The north-eastern region accounted for about one-third of alerts in the country.
 - The **Central Indian States** also recorded a high number of forest fire alerts.
 - **Alerts: Madhya Pradesh > Maharashtra > Odisha > Chhattisgarh**
- The **overall green cover has increased** in the country but the **forest cover in the north-east**, particularly in **Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland**, has **decreased**.

- The **uncontrolled forest fires** can lead to significant loss of forest cover. Climate change influences the frequency and intensity of forest fires and results in forests becoming increasingly inflammable.
- Reasons for Forest Fires**
 - Thunderstorms** are the most likely **natural cause** for forest fires.
 - In **central India**, the reasons are **mainly manmade**, particularly in cases where people visit forests and leave burning bidis, cigarette stubs or other inflammable materials.
 - A major reason for forest fires in the **north-east** is **slash-and-burn cultivation**, commonly called **jhoom or jhum** cultivation.

The north-east has tropical evergreen forests which are not likely to catch fire easily on their own like the dry deciduous forests of central India.



Source: TH