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CURRENT AFFAIRS

Date: 21 March 2024

FOREST FIRE IN NILGIRIS

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "FOREST FIRE IN NILGIRIS". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Lately, there have been extensive forest fires occurring in the Coonoor forest range located in the Nilgiris region of Tamil Nadu. To aid in combating these fires, the Indian Air Force has become involved in the ongoing firefighting endeavours led by the state forest department. They have deployed a Mi-17 V5 helicopter to carry out numerous operations using "Bambi Buckets."

ABOUT FOREST FIRES

- Forest fires, also known as wildfires, bushfires, or vegetation fires, are a terrifying force of nature. They are uncontrolled and unplanned blazes that erupt in natural areas like forests, grasslands, brushlands, or even tundras. Fueled by dry vegetation and driven by environmental conditions like wind and topography, these fires consume everything in their path, leaving a trail of destruction.
- For any fire to burn, three key ingredients are essential: fuel, oxygen, and heat. In a forest, the fuel comes from dead leaves, twigs, dry grasses, and other organic matter on the forest floor and within the trees themselves.
- Oxygen is readily available in the atmosphere, and the heat source can be triggered by lightning strikes, human activities, or even natural friction from rubbing branches during strong winds.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FOREST FIRES

Forest fires can be categorised into the following types based on where they burn:

- **Surface Fires:** These are the most common type, burning the forest floor litter like leaves, twigs, and dry grasses. They are generally easier to contain compared to other fire types.
- **Underground Fires:** These stealthy fires creep beneath the surface, consuming organic matter like peat and roots. Often found in dense forests with thick layers of organic matter, they can be challenging to detect and extinguish, sometimes smouldering for months.

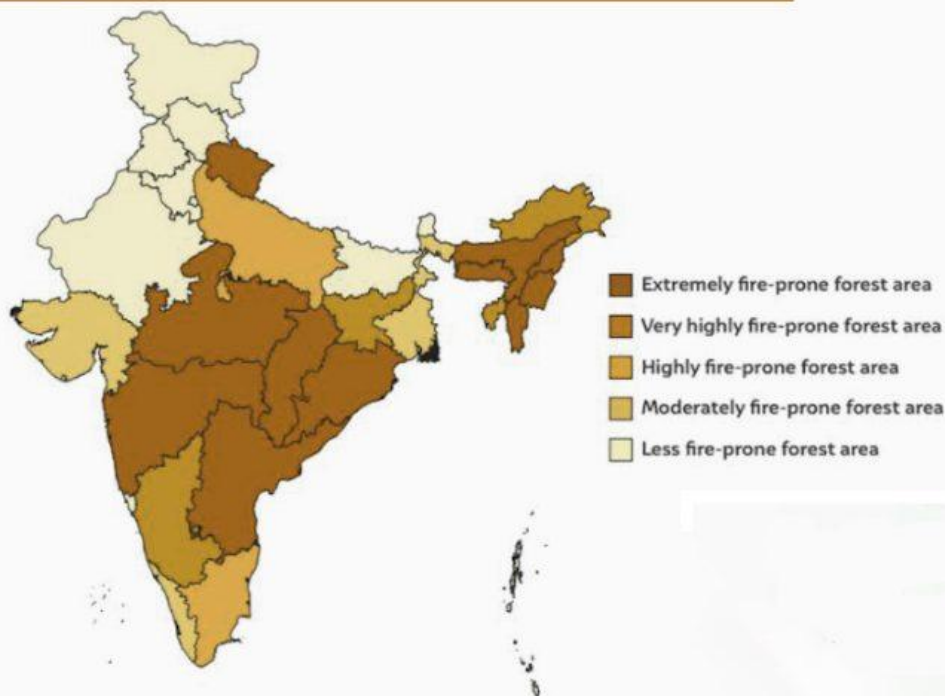
- **Canopy or Crown Fires:** The most ferocious of the bunch, crown fires rage through the upper tree canopy, fueled by dry leaves and branches. Driven by strong winds, they are incredibly intense and difficult to control, posing a significant threat to both life and property.
- **Controlled Burns:** Not all fires are destructive. Prescribed burns, or controlled deliberate fires, are strategically set by forest managers. These controlled fires help reduce built-up fuel loads, minimising the risk of future wildfires and promoting overall ecosystem health. Careful planning and execution are crucial for prescribed burns to achieve their intended benefits.

FOREST FIRES IN INDIA

- Forest fires in India present a significant environmental challenge, with various statistics and facts shedding light on their impact. **According to the Forest Survey of India**, there have been **approximately 277,758 forest fire points detected across the country from 2004/5 to 2017**, highlighting the widespread nature of this issue.
- Mizoram stands out as one of the areas with a high incidence of forest fires in India.
- The forest fire season in India typically **coincides with the onset of summer**, characterised by rising temperatures and dry conditions that create a conducive environment for wildfires. **For instance, between 13 and 20 February 2023, nearly 1,156 forest fires were reported in India**, marking an early start to the forest fire season and indicating a spike in daytime temperatures.
- **Human activity** has been identified as a **primary cause of forest fires in India**, with climate change exacerbating the situation.
- Studies have shown a link between climate change and the increased frequency and severity of fire weather, with **rising global temperatures, heatwaves, and droughts** contributing to the likelihood of wildfires by creating hot and dry conditions favourable for fire outbreaks.

More than 62% of Indian States are prone to high-intensity forest fire events (2000-19)

Yojna IAS
शिक्षण २०२३



REASONS BEHIND THE FOREST FIRES

NATURAL FACTORS

- **Lightning Strikes:** One of Nature's Ignition Sources: Lightning strikes, especially during dry seasons, can trigger forest fires by igniting dry vegetation.
- **Extreme Weather Conditions:** Fueling the Flames: Hot and dry weather conditions create a conducive environment for the rapid spread of forest fires, amplifying their frequency and intensity.

HUMAN ACTIVITIES

- **Agricultural Practices:** The Double-Edged Sword: Clearing land for agriculture through slash-and-burn techniques or improper disposal of crop residues can inadvertently spark forest fires.
- **Uncontrolled Burning:** The Unseen Consequences: Deliberate burning of vegetation for various purposes, such as land clearing, hunting, or waste disposal, often leads to uncontrolled wildfires.
- **Industrial Activities:** Igniting Environmental Hazards: Industrial activities like mining, logging, and construction can inadvertently cause forest fires through machinery sparks or negligence.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

- **Discarded Waste:** A Smouldering Issue: Improper disposal of cigarette butts, glass bottles, or other flammable materials in forested areas poses a significant fire risk.
- **Human Settlements:** Living on the Edge: Encroachment of human settlements into forested areas increases the likelihood of accidental fires due to cooking, smoking, or other human activities.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding National Disaster Management Authority:

1. The President is the head of the National Disaster Management Authority in India.
2. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was established in 2005
3. Disaster Management Act, 1999 provides the legal framework for the functioning of the National Disaster Management Authority in India

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

ANSWER: A

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the socio-economic impacts of forest fires on local communities in India. How do these events affect livelihoods, biodiversity, and ecosystem services, and what strategies can be employed to address these challenges?

IMPORTANCE OF GLOBAL HAPPINESS INDEX 2024 IN INDIA

SOURCE - THE HINDU AND PIB.

GENERAL STUDIES - INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, UNITED NATIONS, UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK, UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND WHR, INDIA'S PLACE IN GLOBAL HAPPINESS INDEX 2024, INDEX RELEASED ON THE BASIS OF EDUCATION, HIGHER EDUCATION, GENDER AND ETHNIC GROUP IDENTITY.

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



- Finland remained the happiest country in the world for the seventh consecutive year in the annual Global Happiness Index 2024, published on March 20, 2024, sponsored by the United Nations.
- According to the Global Happiness Index 2024, the top 10 happiest countries around the world are Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Australia. According to the declared findings of this index - after countries like Libya, Iraq, Palestine and Niger **India is at 126th position in this index like last year.**
- **'International Day of Happiness' is celebrated every year on 20 March all over the world.** The main objective of celebrating this day is to inform the people of many countries around the world about the importance of happiness as a way of living a healthy life and to make people aware to adopt a healthy lifestyle. On this occasion, people of many countries around the world are made aware globally about the importance of happy moments in their lives and the benefits that come from these happy moments in their lives.
- The Nordic countries have retained their place among the 10 happiest countries according to the Global Happiness Index 2024, with Denmark, Iceland and Sweden still far behind Finland.
- Afghanistan, which has been plagued by humanitarian devastation since the Taliban took control in 2020, is at the bottom among the 143 countries included in the Global Happiness Index 2024 and is the unhappiest country in the world.

- For more than a decade and for the first time since the index was published, the US and Germany are not among the top 20 happiest countries in the world.
- According to this index of 2024, America and Germany are the happiest countries globally for the first time, ranked 23rd and 24th respectively.
- According to the Global Happiness Index 2024, China is ranked 60th, Nepal 93rd, Pakistan 108th, Myanmar 118th, Sri Lanka 128th and Bangladesh 129th.
- Among Middle Eastern countries, UAE was ranked 22nd and Saudi Arabia was ranked 28th. Singapore ranked 30th among Asian countries. Japan is at 50th place and South Korea is at 51st place.
- **World Happiness Index Gallup World Poll Data is a publication of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, run by the Oxford University Research Centre, UN Sustainable Development and WHR. This reflects a worldwide demand for greater focus on happiness and well-being as a benchmark of government policy. It reviews the state of happiness in the world today and shows how the science of happiness explains individual and national variations in happiness.**



MAIN TOPICS OF GLOBAL HAPPINESS INDEX 2024 :



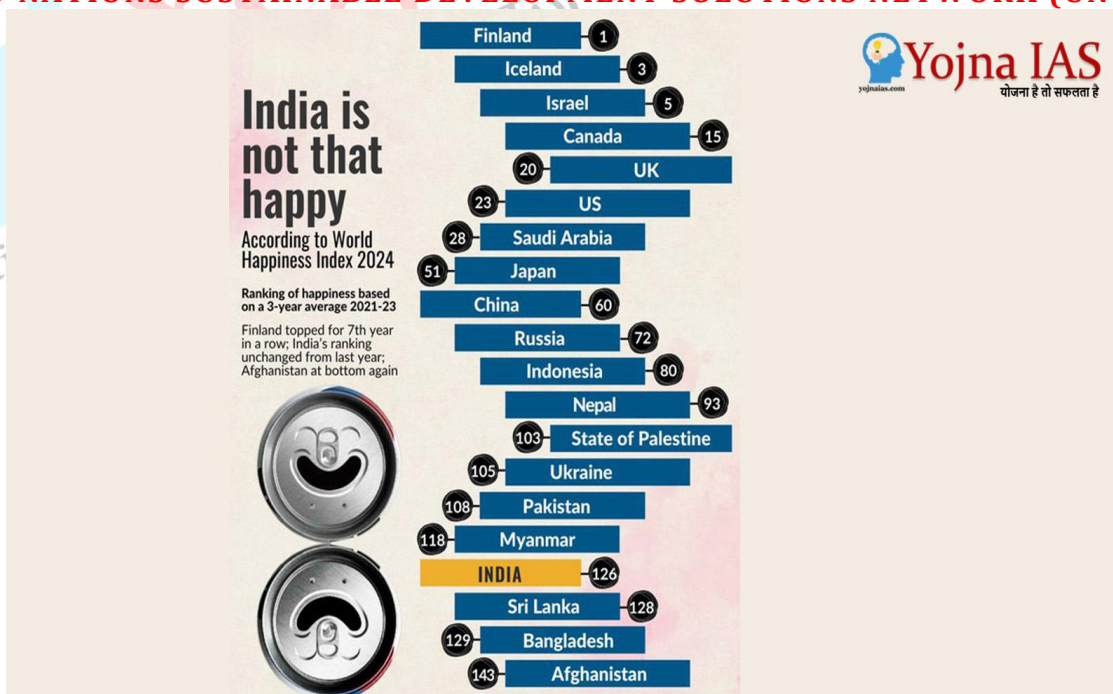
- Every year at the global level, a theme is set to celebrate the International Day of Happiness.
- The main theme of the International Day of Happiness for the year 2024 is – **“Reconnecting for Happiness: Building Resilient Communities”**.
- The United Nations invites people from all countries globally to join in celebrating the International Day of Happiness.

HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS :

- The history of this day starts from 2013 when it was first celebrated by the United Nations (UN).
- It was launched in 2012 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to recognize the importance of happiness in life and ways to make people happy.
- According to the United Nations, this proposal was initiated by Bhutan.
- On 12 July 2012, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution declaring 20 March as the International Day of Happiness.
- The first ‘International Day of Happiness’ was celebrated in the year 2013.
- Therefore, since 2013, this day has been celebrated globally on 20 March every year.
- Bhutan had recognized the value of national happiness on national income since the early 1970s. Bhutan had adopted the goal of gross national happiness over gross national product.
- Bhutan during the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly **“Happiness and Well-Being: Defining a New Economic Paradigm”** also hosted a high-level meeting on the topic.



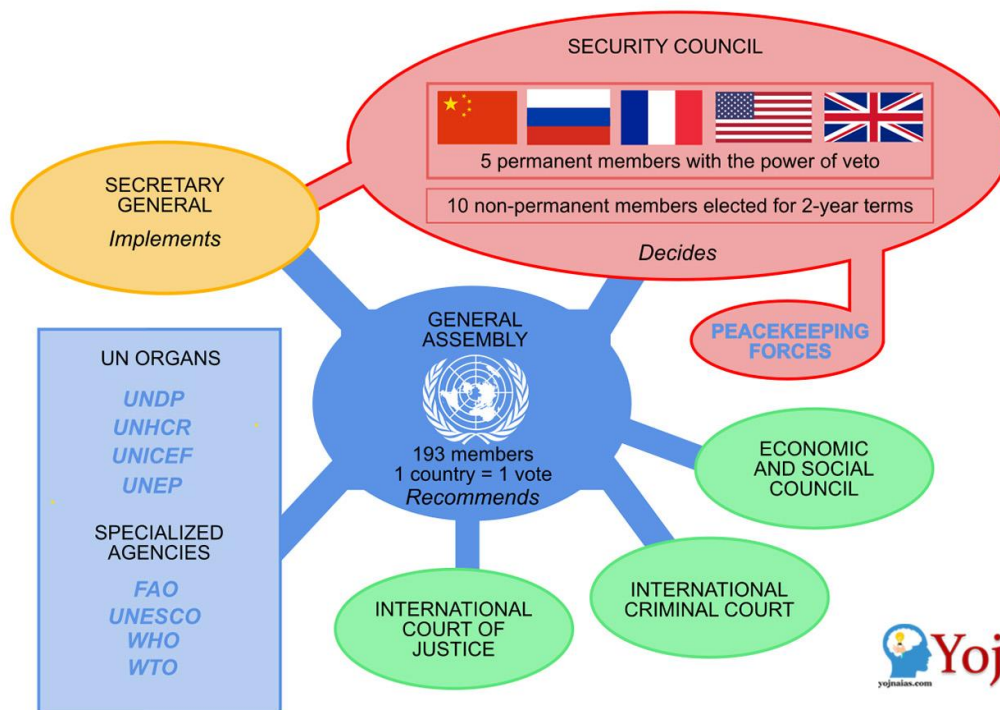
UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK (UN SDSN)



- The UN SDSN has been operating under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General since 2012.

- SDSN mobilizes global scientific and technical expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development, including the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement.
- It aims to accelerate joint learning and promote integrated approaches that address the interconnected economic, social and environmental challenges facing the world.
- SDSN works closely with United Nations agencies, multilateral funding institutions, the private sector and civil society.
- The organization and governance of the SDSN aims to enable a large number of leaders from all sectors and diverse backgrounds to participate in the development of the network.
- **SDSN has a small secretariat with offices in New York, New Delhi and Paris.**

IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR RANKING COUNTRIES IN THE GLOBAL HAPPINESS INDEX :



Global Happiness Index Provides ranking to many countries of the world on the basis of many factors. **of which the important factors are the following -**

1. **Real social support,**
2. **GDP per capita,**
3. **Freedom of choice in one's life,**
4. **Healthy Life Expectancy and Life Expectancy Rate**
5. **Perceptions of corruption and**
6. **Kindness.**

IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL HAPPINESS DAY :



- Being happy in the life of every person in this world is a universal right and no citizen of any country in the world can be deprived of the right to be happy.
- We find many ways to please our loved ones. When we see them smiling and happy, those moments only make our life happy.
- International Day of Happiness provides an opportunity to make everyone around us happy with the small efforts or initiatives we take.
- Through this day, we include efforts ranging from inspiring people to achieve happiness in their lives to having a 'positive attitude towards life' in the lives of the people around us and spreading it to our society. Can.
- The United Nations General Assembly calls for a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic development globally that promotes happiness in the lives of all around us and a vision of well-being for all and humanity. gives.
- International Happiness Day encourages people to consider that there are many ways to find happiness, including meaningful relationships with others, good mental health and self-fulfillment. The day is celebrated as a call for people and organizations to focus on raising the standards of happiness of themselves and their communities.
- An important purpose of celebrating International Day of Happiness is that if we accept the happy moments in our life and make them the main priority, then we can make this world a happier and more fulfilling place for all the people. Are.
- This index/report states that women are less happy than men in every region around the world. |
- According to this index, with the increase in age at the global level, the gender gap (difference based on gender) is also increasing.

IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL HAPPINESS INDEX IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIA :



- India has always had the feeling of **“Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”** towards all the living beings of this entire world.
- Indian religious scriptures have always **“ May all be happy and may all be in good health. Let all look for the good and let no one suffer.” That is, all the creatures of this world should be happy, all should be free from diseases, all should be witnesses of auspiciousness and no one should have to become a part of sorrow. There should not be any trouble in anyone’s life.**
- In India, older age is associated with higher life satisfaction. However, older Indian women have reported lower life satisfaction and lower life expectancy than older men.
- This index also states that education and its caste also play an important role among the people in India. |
- Older adults with secondary or higher education and people from higher social castes reported higher life satisfaction than their counterparts without formal education and people from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- The index also shows that India’s elderly population is the second largest in the world. Of which there are 14 crore Indians aged 60 years and above, which is second only to their Chinese counterparts of 25 crore.
- The average growth rate of Indians aged 60 years and above in India is three times higher than the overall population rate of the country.
- Education found among Indian citizens in terms of happiness in India. Higher education, caste and social status (his status on economic basis) is also an important factor.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY EXAM :

Q.1. Consider the following statements regarding Global Happiness Index 2024.

1. India ranks 126th among 134 countries in this index.
2. In this index, Finland is the happiest country in the world for the seventh consecutive year in 2024.
3. The main theme of the International Day of Happiness for the year 2024 is – “Reconnecting for Happiness: Building Resilient Communities”.
4. Afghanistan ranks lowest among the countries included in the Global Happiness Index 2024 and is the happiest country in the world.

Which of the above statement / statements is/ are correct?

- (A) Only 1 and 3
- (B) Only 2 and 4

(C) Only 1 and 4

(D) Only 2 and 3

Answer - (D)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM :

Q.1. Outline the factors used to provide ranking in the Global Happiness Index and discuss which factors are important for happiness in the context of India and what measures can be taken to improve the overall happiness rank in the lives of the citizens of India. What can be the solution for this? Present a logical explanation.

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योजना है तो सफलता है