



Climate Change May Lead to Greening the Thar Desert | Rajasthan | 29 Apr 2024

Why in News?

According to a **theory on rainfall and climate data**, with a focus on the **'Indian Ocean Warm Pool' (IOWP)**, scientists have postulated that the [Thar Desert](#) could become greener due to global warming.

Key Points

- The presence of **IOWP in the Indian Ocean** has been recognised for many years and plays a role in the generation of monsoons. With the **effects of global warming**, the Indian Ocean Warming Pool is **spreading towards the west**.
 - At IOWP's western boundary, **water evaporates and is pulled by the earth's rotation towards India**, causing the northeast to **receive rain for 150 days and the northwest for only 70 days**.
- With the IOWP expanding westward, the 'length of the rainy season' would result in a **50-100% increase in the mean summer rainfall** over the semi-arid northwest of India
- Essentially, the scientists argue that the Thar desert has the potential to experience ample rainfall and gradually become greener.

Thar Desert

- The Thar Desert, also known as the **Great Indian Desert**, is an **arid region** of rolling sand hills on the Indian subcontinent.
- It is one of the largest subtropical deserts in the world.
- It extends across the states of **Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Haryana in India**, and the provinces of **Sindh and Punjab in Pakistan**.
- It is **bordered by the irrigated Indus River plain to the west**, the **Punjab Plain to the north and northeast**, the **Aravalli Range to the southeast**, and the **Rann of Kachchh to the south**.
- The desert is **separated from the Greater Rann of Kutch to the west by the low-lying marshy lands of the Luni River**.

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Gurugram: Highest Electors in Haryana | Haryana | 29 Apr 2024

Why in News?

According to **Haryana's Chief Electoral Officer**, with more than 25 lakh voters, **Gurugram Lok Sabha constituency** has the highest voter count for a parliamentary constituency in the state.

Key Points

- Polling for all the **10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana** will take place on **25th May 2024** followed by **counting on 4 June 2024**.
- To **increase the voting percentage in Haryana** several unique initiatives have been undertaken by the election department, including launching the **Voter in Queue app**, sending

polling invitations to voters akin to wedding invitations, and setting up 31 polling booths in the multi-storey societies of Gurugram.

Chief Electoral Officer

- It is a **statutory authority** created for representing the **Election Commission of India** for **conducting elections in states and union territories of India**.
- The Constitution of India with introduction of **Article 324** made the **powers of Chief Electoral Officer** independent.
- Their duties and powers are bound under **Section 13 A of Representation of the People Act, 1950** read with **Section 20 of Representation of the People Act, 1951**.

National School Boys Basketball Championship | Haryana | 29 Apr 2024

Why in News?

Recently, Haryana chief secretary inaugurated the **'National School Boys Basketball Championship' in Gurugram**.

Key Points

- The **67th national basketball championship** will be held from **27th April to 30th April, 2024 at Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Gurugram** under the auspices of the **School Games Federation of India**.
- A total of **44 teams of boys under 17 years** from across the country are participating in this tournament.

The School Games Federation of India

- The **SGFI (School Games Federation of India)** was established in **1954**.
- It is recognized by the **Ministry of Sports and the Indian Olympic Association**.
- SGFI is an active member of the International School Sports Federation and Asian School Sports Federation.
- Ever since its inception, SGFI has been working for the **promotion and development of games and sports in the schools in India**. It is the base of all the games and sports in schools in India.

Nainital Forest Fire | Uttarakhand | 29 Apr 2024

Why in News?

A large [wildfire](#) was spread across the **forests near Nainital** in Uttarakhand. The crisis prompted the [Indian Air Force](#) to dispatch personnel and [Mi-17 helicopters](#) to help control the intense blaze.

- The fire has allegedly **destroyed 108 hectares** of forests.

Key Points

- The helicopters are gathering water and using jet-sprays to extinguish the fire in what is known as the **Bambi Bucket operation**.
- According to the **Uttarakhand's Forest Department**, 26 incidents of forest fire occurred in the **State's Kumaon region** in a few hours.
 - While **five incidents occurred in Garhwal region**, where 33.34 hectares of forest area was affected.
- As per a **2019 report** from the **Forest Research Institute (Dehradun)**, which comes under the Environment Ministry of India, **95% of forest fires are caused by humans**.
- There are **four forest-fire clusters in India**: the North-Western Himalayas, North-East India, Central Ghats, and Western and Eastern Ghats.
 - Fires in the **North-Western Himalayas** are attributed to the preponderance of **pine trees and the accumulation of thick flammable litter**.
 - In the summer, there is a large quantity of pine needles that gather on the forest floor, which is highly susceptible to fire.

Number of forest fires detected in Uttarakhand 2019-23*

*2019: until June 30

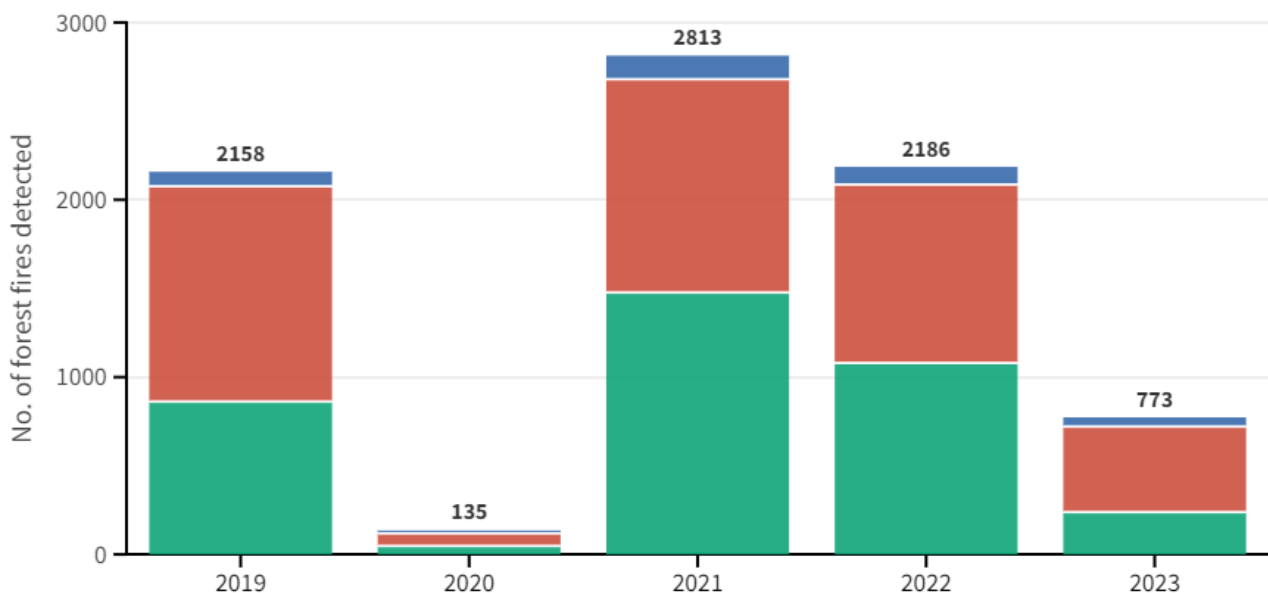
2020: until June 23

2021: until July 23

2022: until August 6

2023: until November 29

■ Garhwal ■ Kumaon ■ Admin, Wildlife



Bambi Bucket operation

- The Bambi Bucket, also called a helicopter bucket or a helibucket, is a specialised container that is suspended by cable under a chopper, and which can be filled by lowering into a river or pond before being flown **above a fire and discharged aerially by opening a valve at the bottom of the bucket**.

- The Bambi Bucket is especially helpful in fighting wildfires that are difficult or impossible to reach from the ground. Around the world, helicopters are frequently commissioned to fight forest fires.

Forest Fire

- Also called **bush or vegetation fire or wildfire**, it can be described as any uncontrolled and non-prescribed combustion or burning of plants in a natural setting such as a forest, grassland, brushland or tundra, which consumes the natural fuels and spreads based on environmental conditions (e.g., wind, topography).
- A wildfire requires **three essential elements to sustain combustion** like Fuel, Oxygen, and a Heat source.
- Classification:
 - **Surface Fire:** A forest fire may burn primarily as a surface **fire, spreading along the ground as the surface** litter (senescent leaves and twigs and dry grasses etc) on the forest floor and is engulfed by the spreading flames.
 - **Underground Fire/Zombie Fire:** The fires of low intensity, consuming the organic matter beneath and the surface litter of the forest floor are sub-grouped as underground fires. In most of the dense forests, **a thick mantle of organic matter is found on top of the mineral soil.**
 - These fires usually **spread entirely underground** and burn for some meters below the surface.
 - This fire spreads very slowly and in most cases it becomes **very hard to detect and control** such types of fires.
 - They may continue to **burn for months** and destroy the vegetative cover of the soil.
 - **Canopy or Crown Fires:** These occur when **fire spreads through the upper canopy of trees**, often fueled by high winds and dry conditions. They can be particularly intense and difficult to control.
 - **Controlled Deliberate Fires:** In some cases, controlled deliberate fires, also known as **prescribed burns or bushfires**, are intentionally set by forest management agencies to reduce fuel loads, **mitigate the risk of uncontrolled wildfires**, and promote ecosystem health.
 - These controlled burns are carefully planned and executed under specific conditions to minimize risks and maximize benefits to the forest ecosystem.

Child Trafficking | Bihar | 29 Apr 2024

Why in News?

95 children who were allegedly being **transported from Bihar to Uttar Pradesh illegally** were rescued by the **Uttar Pradesh Child Commission**.

- Children were taken to other states to be **kept in madrasas to earn donations** on the **basis of religion** is a **violation of the Constitution**.

Key Points

- The children who were rescued were **between the ages of 4-12**. The incident raised concerns surrounding [child trafficking](#).
- According to the Chairperson of the [National Commission for Protection Of Child Rights](#), the

[Constitution](#) of India has given the [right to education](#) to every child. It is compulsory for every child to go to school.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (**NCPCR**) was set up in 2007 under the **Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005**.
- The Commission's Mandate is to **ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms** are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**.

Child Trafficking

- It manifests in the form of **domestic labour, forced child labour** across industries, and illegal activities such as **begging, organ trade and commercial sex purposes**.
- In 2021, [the National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#) reported a staggering statistic: an average of **eight children fell victim to trafficking every day in India**. These cases encompassed various forms of exploitation, including forced labor, begging, and sexual exploitation.
- The figures reveal a concerning trend, with **2,834 cases documented in 2018, 2,914 in 2019, and 2,222 in 2020**.
 - It's important to note that these statistics only account for confirmed trafficking cases, excluding instances of missing children.
 - The true extent of the issue may be more profound than these numbers suggest.

Preparations for Maha Kumbh 2025 | Uttar Pradesh | 29 Apr 2024

Why in News?

The **Uttar Pradesh government** is working for a grand, divine **Maha Kumbh** scheduled to be held in **2025**.

Key Points

- The state government is preparing great **amenities for visitors** attending the large religious gathering.
 - In addition to **arranging accommodations** in the Kumbh area, **luxury hotels are being constructed** in the city.
- Kumbh Mela comes under [UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity](#).
- Kumbh Mela is the largest peaceful congregation of pilgrims on earth, during which participants bathe or take a dip in a sacred river.
 - It takes place on the banks of the **Godavari river in Nashik**, the **Shipra river in Ujjain**, the Ganges in Haridwar, and the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna, and the mythical **Saraswati river in Prayagraj**. The confluence is referred to as the 'Sangam'.
- As it is held in four different cities in India, it involves different social and cultural activities, making this a **culturally diverse festival**.
- The **over month-long fair** is marked by the construction of a massive tented township, complete with cottages, huts, platforms, civic facilities, administrative and security measures.
 - It is organized immaculately by the government, the local authorities and the police.

- The mela is especially **renowned for the presence of an extraordinary array of religious ascetics** enticed from remote hideaways in forests, mountains and caves.

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