



Forest Fires a Concern for India | Uttarakhand | 12 Jun 2024

Why in News?

Forest patches in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh **burned due to rising temperatures** from April, causing **damage to properties, loss of [wildlife](#)**, and prolonged smoke in tourist areas.

Key Points

- According to data collected by the **MODIS (Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer)** sensor fitted onto [NASA's \(National Aeronautics and Space Administration\) Aqua and Terra satellites](#), **Uttarakhand was the hardest hit** by forest fires this season (November 2023 to June 2024).
 - **Odisha ranked second** with 1,866 fire incidents, **Andhra Pradesh came third** with 1,788 fires, Maharashtra had 1,493, and Chhattisgarh reported 1,330 fires in forest areas.
- In Uttarakhand, the highest number and most intense fires were noted in **Nainital, Champawat, and Udham Singh Nagar districts** in the southwestern part.
 - The **Uttarakhand Forest Department** had **suffered revenue losses** worth more than Rs 25 lakh due to the blaze.
 - The state government has announced plans to file cases against persons found setting the grazing area in forests ablaze.
- As per the [Forest Survey of India](#), 54.4% of India's forests are exposed to occasional fires, 7.4% to moderately frequent fires, and 2.4% to high incidence levels.

Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS)

- Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer is a key instrument aboard the **Terra (originally known as EOS AM-1) and Aqua (originally known as EOS PM-1) satellites**.
 - Terra's orbit around the Earth is timed so that it passes from north to south across the equator in the morning, while Aqua passes south to north over the equator in the afternoon.
- Terra MODIS and Aqua MODIS are **viewing the entire Earth's surface every 1 to 2 days**, acquiring data in 36 spectral bands, or groups of wavelengths.
- These data will improve our understanding of global dynamics and processes occurring on the land, in the oceans, and in the lower atmosphere.
- The primary goal of the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer is to gather information about the Earth's climate and environment, including measurements of various atmospheric, land surface, and oceanic parameters.

Why in News?

The **Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC)**, in collaboration with the [Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board](#), has launched online ticket reservations for the **Bharat Gaurav Express train** from Tamil Nadu to six spiritual destinations in Uttarakhand.

Key Points

- The six spiritual destinations are: **Rishikesh, Rudraprayag, Guptkashi, Kedarnath, Joshimath, and Badrinath.**
 - The journey spans over 13 days and includes a helicopter transfer from Guptkashi to Kedarnath.
- **Kedarnath Dham** is located in **Rudraprayag district**. It is **dedicated to Lord Shiva** and situated on the bank of the [Mandakini River](#). It is one of the [12 Jyotirlingas](#) (divine representations of Lord Shiva) in India.
- **Badrinath Dham** is located in **Chamoli district**. It is home to the sacred Badrinarayan Temple, **dedicated to Lord Vishnu.**
- **Rudraprayag** is one of the **Panch Prayag of Alaknanda River**, the point of confluence of rivers **Alaknanda and Mandakini.**
 - It is **named after Rudra, an aspect of Lord Shiva.** According to a legend, Lord Shiva appeared here as 'Rudra' to bless Narad Muni.
- **Joshimath** is a hilly town located on the Rishikesh-Badrinath National Highway (NH-7) in **Chamoli district** of Uttarakhand.
 - The city serves as a tourist town as it acts as an **overnight rest stop** for people visiting **Badrinath, Auli, Valley of Flowers, and Hemkund Sahib.** among other important religious and tourist locations in the state.
- **Guptkashi** is located in the **Rudraprayag district**. It is known for its ancient Vishwanath Temple dedicated to the god Shiva, which is similar to the one in Varanasi.
- **Rishikesh** is located in the Dehradun district. It is commonly referred to as the '**yoga capital of the world**'.
 - It is situated on the **right bank of the Ganges River** and is a pilgrimage town for Hindus, with ancient sages and saints meditating there in search of higher knowledge.

Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB)

- It is a government body responsible for promoting tourism in the state of Uttarakhand.
- It was **established in 1976** and is **headquartered in Dehradun.**
- The UTDB works to develop and **promote tourism infrastructure, attract investment, and market** Uttarakhand as a tourist destination.