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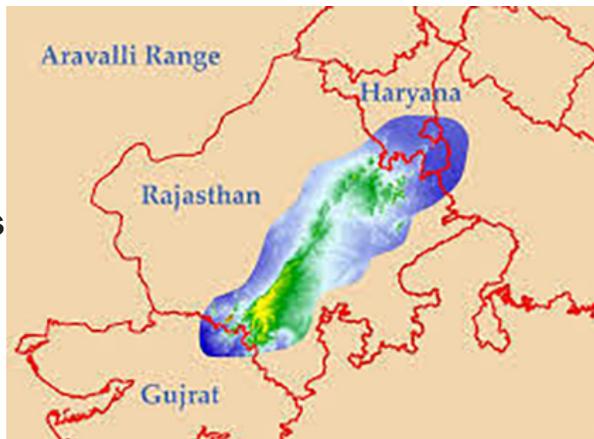
Appeal to Resume Mining in Aravalli Hills

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Why in News

Recently, the Haryana government has appealed to the **Supreme Court** to permit it to resume mining in the Aravalli Hills on the grounds that the pandemic had grounded the State's economy to a halt.

Key Points



- **About the Aravalli Range:**

- **Location:**

They stretch for a distance of about 720 km from Himmatnagar in Gujarat to Delhi, spanning Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Delhi.

- **Formation:**

The Aravallis date back to millions of years when a pre-Indian subcontinent collided with the mainland Eurasian Plate.

- **Age:**

Carbon dating has shown that copper and other metals mined in the ranges date back to at least the 5th century BC.

- **Characteristics:**

- The Aravallis of Northwestern India, one of the **oldest fold mountains of the world**, now form **residual mountains** with an elevation of 300m to 900m.

Guru Shikhar Peak on Mount Abu is the highest peak in the Aravalli Range (1,722 m).

- It has been formed primarily of folded crust, when two convergent plates move towards each other by the process called **orogenic movement**.

- **Extension:**

- The mountains are **divided into two main ranges** – the Sambhar Sirohi Range and the Sambhar Khetri Range in Rajasthan, where their extension is about 560 km.
- The hidden limb of the Aravallis that extends from Delhi to Haridwar creates a divide between the drainage of rivers of the Ganga and the Indus.

- **Their Significance:**

- **Checks Desertification:**

- The Aravallis act as a barrier between the fertile plains in the east and the sandy desert in the west.
 - Historically, it is said that the Aravalli range checked the spread of the **Thar desert** towards the Indo-Gangetic plains, serving as a catchment of rivers and plains.

- **Rich in Biodiversity:**

- Provides habitat to 300 native plant species, 120 bird species and many exclusive animals like the jackal and mongoose.

- **Impacts Climate:**

- Aravallis have an impact upon the climate of northwest India and beyond.
 - During monsoons, it provides a barrier and monsoon clouds move eastwards towards Shimla and Nainital, thus helping nurture the sub-Himalayan rivers and feeding the north Indian plains.
 - In the winter months, it protects the fertile alluvial river valleys from the cold westerly winds from Central Asia.

- **Recharges Groundwater:**

- Aravallis also functions as a groundwater recharge zone for the regions around that absorb rainwater and revive the groundwater level.

- **Checks Pollution:**

- This range is considered the “**lungs**” for the polluted air of Delhi–**National Capital Region (NCR)**.
 - For Haryana, having the lowest forest cover at around 3.59% of the total forest cover in India, the Aravalli range is the only saving grace, providing the major portion of its forest cover (2017 Report).

- **Threats:**

- The Aravalli hills are **an ecologically sensitive zone** but have for years borne the brunt of quarrying and environmental degradation.
 - A 2018 report by a Supreme Court-appointed **Central Empowered Committee (CEC)** found out that **25% of the Aravalli range has been lost due to illegal mining** in Rajasthan since 1967-68.
 - The **consequences** of the mining has been a **destruction of aquifers and deforestation**. Many **rivers originating in the Aravalli like Banas, Luni, Sahibi and Sakhi**, are now dead.

- **Steps Taken:**

- **Mining in the Aravalli region has been banned since 2002** under the Supreme Court orders, unless expressly permitted by the Union Environment Ministry. However, mining continues illegally.
- The **green wall** is being planned from Porbandar to Panipat which will help in restoring degraded land through afforestation along the Aravali hill range.
- Residents along with volunteers from iamgurgaon, a citizen action group involved in the conservation of the Aravallis, were assisted by ecologists to create a self-sustaining Aravalli. This society driven model could be more effective to combat the degradation.

Source:TH