



Green Protection to Aravalli

For Prelims: Physical Geography of Aravali Range, Punjab Land Preservation Act, Forest Conservation Act 1980

For Mains: Significance of Aravali Range, Forest Conservation, Supreme Court Judgements

Why in News?

Recently, the [Supreme Court of India](#) extended **Green Protection** to forest land in [Aravalli ranges](#).

- The court's ruling will mean around **30,000 hectares across the Aravallis and Shivaliks** in Haryana will be considered forest land.

What is the Supreme Court Ruling?

- The Supreme Court held that all land covered by the special orders issued under **Section 4 of the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA)** in Haryana will be treated as forests and be entitled to protection under the [1980 Forest Conservation Act](#).
 - Such land covered under Section 4 **can see no commercial activity or non-forest use** without the consent of the central government.
- It also stated that **land covered by the special orders issued under Section 4 of PLPA** have all the trappings of forest lands within the meaning of **Section 2 of the Forest Act**.
- The court directed the **state government to clear any non-forest activity from such land in three months** and report compliance.
- The bench considered a September 2018 judgment which held all land under PLPA could be treated as forest.
 - The recent verdict clarified that the **previous judgment failed to closely examine the scheme of Section 4 of PLPA and its legal effect** in relation to Section 2 of the Forest Act.

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Protecting Haryana's ecology

IN CONTENTION

At the heart of the issue is the classification of land under Section 4 of the colonial era Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA), which remains in force since Haryana was part of undivided Punjab. The Section was used to demarcate certain areas that need to be protected from any sort of erosion

PAST ORDERS

- The issue dates back to past Supreme Court orders, in particular one in 2018 which held that areas notified under Section 4 of the PLPA should be deemed as forest land under the Forest Conservation Act
- The 2018 ruling deemed any construction on those classified lands as illegal, and should therefore be demolished

HARYANA'S RESPONSE

- The state said the 2018 order would mean 100% area of 11 of the state's 22 districts, including Gurugram and Faridabad, would need to be razed
- The state in February 2019 passed an amendment to the PLPA and excluded certain land meant for construction from the PLPA classification. This amendment was stayed by a Supreme Court bench a month later

THE LATEST RULING

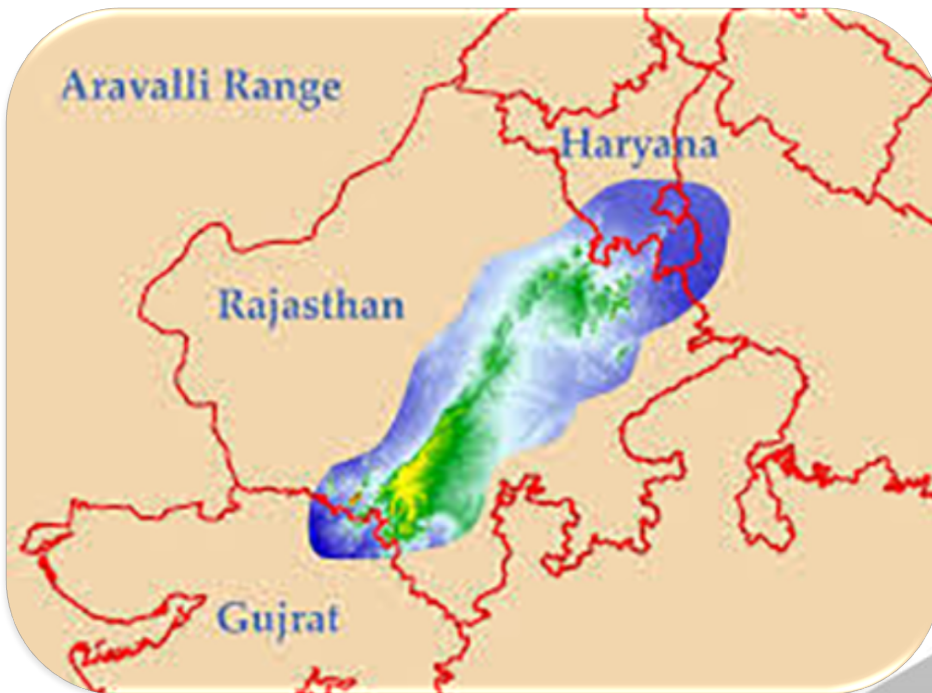
- The SC upheld that Section 4 demarcations were valid and had "trappings of forest lands"
- The court also made a distinction – even if all demarcations were considered to be falling within parameters of protection of the PLPA, this did not make them fall within the Forest Act provisions
- It also rejected the state's contention that all 11 districts will need to be considered as forests, saying that in case of Gurugram, PLPA's Section 4 will apply only 5.4% of the land



What are Section 4 of PLPA & Section 2 of Forest Act?

- **Section 4 of the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA):**
 - Special orders under Section 4 of PLPA are the **restrictive provisions issued by the state government** to prevent deforestation of a specified area that could lead to soil erosion.
 - When the state government is satisfied that deforestation of a forest area forming part of a larger area is **likely to lead to erosion of soil**, the power under Section 4 can be exercised.
 - Therefore, the specific land which a special order under Section 4 of PLPA has been issued will have all the trappings of a forest governed by the Forest Act.
 - While the land notified under the special orders of Section 4 of PLPA shall be forest lands, **not all land under PLPA will ipso facto become forest lands** within the meaning of the Forest Act.
- **Section 2 of the Forest Act:**
 - Section 2 of the Forest Act imposes **prohibitions on the de-reservation of forests or use of forest land for non-forest purposes without prior approval of the central government.**
 - Once a land is covered under Section 2 of the Forest Act, whether the special orders under Section 4 continue to be in force or not, **it shall continue to remain forest land.**

What do we need to know about Aravalli Range?



▪ About the Aravalli Range:

◦ Location:

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

◦ 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.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2015)

Place of Pilgrimage Location

1. Srisaillam : Nallamala Hills
2. Omkareshwar : Satmala Hills
3. Pushkar : Mahadeo Hills

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- Srisaillam is situated on top of Nallamala Hills. It is on the right side of the river Krishna in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. It has been a popular centre of Shaivite pilgrimage for centuries. **Hence, pair 1 is correctly matched.**
- Omkareshwar is situated in the Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh. It is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva. It is on an island called Mandhata or Shivapuri in the Narmada River. The shape of the island is said to be like the Hindu 'Om' symbol. On the other hand, Satmala hills run across Nashik district in Maharashtra. They are an integral part of the Sahyadris range within Nashik. **Hence, pair 2 is not correctly matched.**
- Pushkar is a town in the Ajmer district of Rajasthan. It is a religious pilgrimage site for Hindus and Sikhs. Pushkar is in the centre-east part of Rajasthan, on the western side of Aravalli mountains, whereas the Mahadeo hills are a range of hills in Madhya Pradesh State of central India. The hills are situated in the northern section of the Satpura Range. **Hence, pair 3 is not correctly matched.**
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

Source: HT

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