



Chile Rewrites Its Constitution

For Prelims: Lithium Ion Battery, India-Chile Relations, Location and geographical features of Chile.

For Mains: Climate Challenges posed by Lithium Extraction, Significance of Chile for India.

Why in News

The South American country of Chile has formed a Constitution Convention to write a new constitution to tackle a **"climate and ecological emergency."**

- As climate catastrophes become inevitable, countries that are already struggling with resource depletion (water, in Chile's case) are being forced to take action by its people.

Key Points

▪ **Background:**

- Chilean politicians want to **leverage its lithium to make the country richer**. As Most Chileans disagree with the government's approach, similar measures in the past (including privatisation of water) have **done little to help out people who need these resources the most**.
- Under the leadership of military ruler Augusto Pinochet (who overthrew communist Salvador Allende in a coup in 1980), Chile began its ongoing journey of resource exploitation.
- There's a problem - lithium mining causes soil moisture to decline and causes daytime temperatures to increase which in turn makes the area drier. While more lithium may be extracted, **it may become even more unfit for humans**.

▪ **About:**

- The new constitution will focus on lithium mining and its regulation. In addition, it will foresee how lithium mining benefits indigenous communities. The architects of the new constitution will also assess whether Chile's political system needs a revamp.
- Their work will not only shape how this country of 19 million is governed. It will also determine the future of a soft, lustrous metal — lithium — lurking in the salt waters beneath this vast desert beside the **Andes Mountains**.
- This reworking of the constitution is **a reminder of changing priorities in a world moving towards climate catastrophes**.

▪ **Challenges:**

- Many fear that the **new constitution will impose hefty royalties and restrictions** on mining and improve focus on local decision-making.

▪ **Lithium in Chile:**

- Chile's **extremely rich in lithium** (second-largest lithium producer after Australia) - an essential component of batteries that support almost all modern smart devices.
- As the world races to replace fossil fuel consumption, the demand for **lithium is causing a surge in its price**.

India- Chile Relations

- Chile is **India's window to Latin America and to the Pacific Alliance.**
- Chile is the **fifth largest trading partner of India** in the Latin American region.
- India- Chile signed the [Preferential Trade Agreement in 2017](#) to enhance the trade.
- The bilateral trade is growing and stood at **USD 2.8 billion in 2017-18.**
- India and Chile are **partners in the [International Solar Alliance.](#)**
- Both countries cooperate extensively in multilateral fora and share similar views on climate change/renewable energy issues and on expansion and reforms of the [UNSC \(United Nations Security Council\).](#)
- India- Chile has signed three Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) in the fields of -mining, culture, disability.

Lithium's Usage in Batteries

- With countries looking for quick ways to decarbonise, lithium is **being seen as the choice of metal.** With electric vehicles being pitched as the future of transportation and all industries looking for cleaner alternatives, **lithium is seen as their best bet.**
 - Seen as a key part of renewable energy, lithium ion batteries are considered "**energy-dense, cheap and safe.**"
- Lithium ion batteries do pack a **lot of power and energy into a small package** with a longer life-cycle.
 - Most gadgets including smartphones and laptops use **lithium-polymer batteries, an alternative** to lithium ion batteries.
- Since lithium is considered the standard non-renewable mineral that makes renewable energy possible, **its demand is expected to continue shooting up.**
- But in this fight against climate change, lithium mining **might create toxic regions where water (saltwater brine)** is unfit for human consumption and chances of growing vegetation are low.

Chile



- Chile is officially known as the Republic of Chile. Its capital is Santiago.
- It is a South American country occupying a narrow strip of land between the Andes to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west.
- It borders Peru to the north, Bolivia to the northeast, Argentina to the east, and the Drake Passage in the south.
- The **Atacama desert** is one of the driest places in the world and touches Chile in its northern side and is a source of sodium nitrate fertilizer.
 - It owes its aridity due to a constant temperature inversion of **cool north-flowing Humboldt ocean current.**
- **Chuquibambilla is the World's largest copper town** of Chile.

[Source: IE](#)

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