RECLAIM Framework for Mine Closure

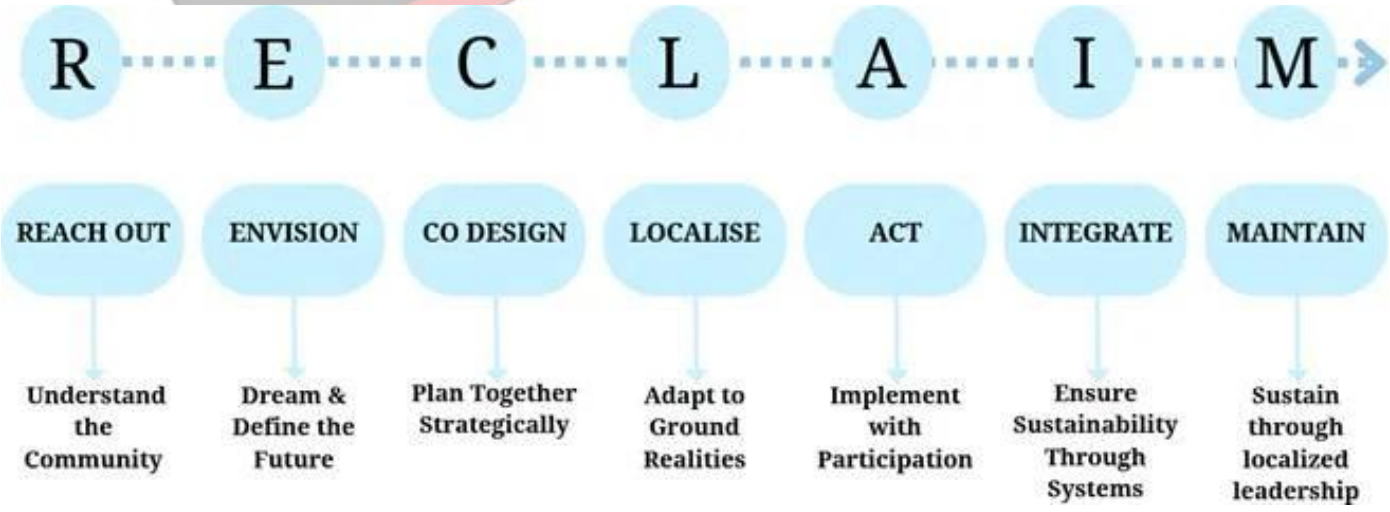
Source: PIB

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Coal** launched the **RECLAIM Framework** to ensure **just and sustainable mine closures** through **inclusive community participation**.

What is RECLAIM Framework?

- **About:** An **India-specific policy tool** developed by the **Coal Controller Organisation (Ministry of Coal)** in partnership with the **Heartfulness Institute**, aimed at **guiding inclusive and sustainable mine closures.**
- **Objective:** To ensure a **just, inclusive, and locally relevant transition** for **mining-affected communities** by promoting **community participation**, **ecological restoration**, and **long-term socio-economic recovery**.
    - **It focuses on gender inclusivity**, **vulnerable groups**, and **convergence with Panchayati Raj Institutions** to build **resilient post-mining economies**.
- **Key Features:**
    - It promotes **community-centric planning** through **local participation**, with emphasis on **gender equity**, **vulnerable groups**, and **livelihood diversification**.
    - It ensures **institutional convergence** by aligning with **Panchayati Raj Institutions** and **local governance structures**, and provides **actionable, field-tested tools and methodologies** tailored to Indian mining regions for effective implementation.
- **Phases of Implementation: Pre-Closure** (needs assessment, capacity building), **Closure** (participatory plan execution), and **Post-Closure** (monitoring, livelihood support, asset repurposing).
- **Significance:**
    - Mitigates **socio-economic and environmental impacts** of mine closures
    - Supports **SDGs** and promotes **transparency, accountability, and trust**
    - Serves as a **replicable model** for other resource-dependent sectors and states.

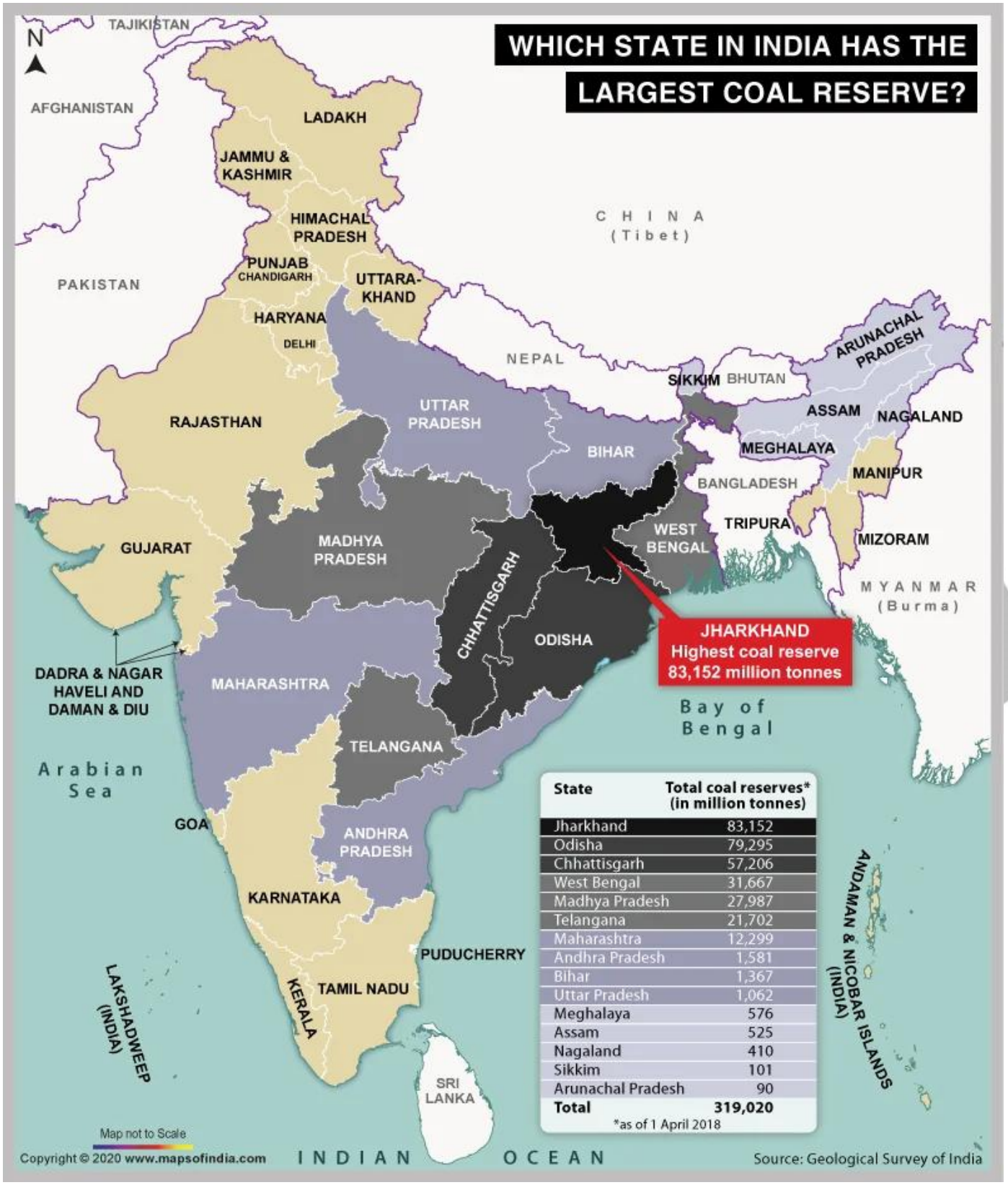


What are the Key Challenges Related to Coal Mine Closure?

- **Gap Between Policy and Practice:** Despite **mine closure guidelines since 2009**, only **3 coal mines** have been formally closed.
    - Of the **299 non-operational mines (2024),** only **8 applied for closure,** while the rest **remain abandoned or discontinued without scientific closure**, causing ecological degradation, methane emissions, and increased risks of accidents and illegal mining.
- **Lack of Proper Rehabilitation**: Unsustainable mining and degradation of local resources have led to **unemployment** and **forced migration**, reducing **community capacity and resource availability** during mine closure. This hampers **local participation** and poses a major challenge to implementing **effective and inclusive closure**.
- **Lack of Land Return Framework:** The **lack of clear mine closure and land return policies** often results in land **being transferred to other departments or used for renewable projects without scientific closure** or community consultation, delaying just transition efforts, especially in states like Jharkhand.
    - The **2024 draft Coal Bearing Areas (CBA) Amendment Bill** proposes returning unused land to original owners, but **lacks enforcement clarity.**
- **Technological & Economic Challenges:** India's **mine closure plans** are mostly **technical**, neglecting **social, economic, and environmental justice** aspects.
    - **High escrow requirements** (Rs 14 lakh/ha for opencast mines) deter mine operators from undertaking closure activities.

About Coal

- **About**: Coal is a **fossil fuel** formed from the **remains of ancient vegetation**, found in the form of **sedimentary rock**, and often referred to as **'Black Gold'** due to its high economic value.
    - It is a **conventional energy source** widely used for **domestic fuel**, **thermal power generation**, and in **industrial sectors** like **iron and steel** and **railway steam engines**.
- **Global Producers: As of 2025, top 5** coal-producing countries are **China**, **India, Indonesia**, **United States** and **Russia.**
- **Coal Distribution in India:**
    - **Gondwana Coal Fields: Gondwana coal contributes 98% of India’s coal reserves and 99% of its production**, providing **superior and metallurgical-grade coal**.
        - Major deposits are in the **Damodar (Jharkhand–West Bengal)**, **Mahanadi (Chhattisgarh–Odisha)**, **Godavari (Maharashtra)**, and **Narmada (Madhya Pradesh)** valleys.
    - **Tertiary CoalFields: Tertiary coal fields (15–60 million years old)** have **lower carbon content** but are **rich in moisture and sulphur**.
        - They are mainly found in **extra-peninsular regions** such as **Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Darjeeling foothills (West Bengal), Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala**.



- **Classification of Coal:**
  - **Anthracite (80–95%)**: Highest carbon content, limited presence in **Jammu & Kashmir**.
  - **Bituminous (60–80%)**: Most abundant, found in **Jharkhand**, **Odisha**, **Chhattisgarh**, **West Bengal**, and **Madhya Pradesh**.
  - **Lignite (40–55%)**: Lower grade, high moisture, found in **Tamil Nadu**, **Rajasthan**, and **Assam (Lakhimpur)**.
  - **Peat (<40%)**: Initial stage of coal formation with low heating value.

Drishti Mains Question:

Critically analyse the socio-economic and ecological consequences of unscientific coal mine closures in India. How does the RECLAIM Framework aim to address these issues?

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q1. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. The coal sector was nationalized by the Government of India under Indira Gandhi.
2. Now, coal blocks are allocated on lottery basis.
3. Till recently, India imported coal to meet the shortages of domestic supply, but now India is self-sufficient in coal production.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q. Despite India being one of the countries of Gondwanaland, its mining industry contributes much less to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in percentage. Discuss. (2021)

Q. “In spite of adverse environmental impact, coal mining is still inevitable for development”. Discuss. (2017)