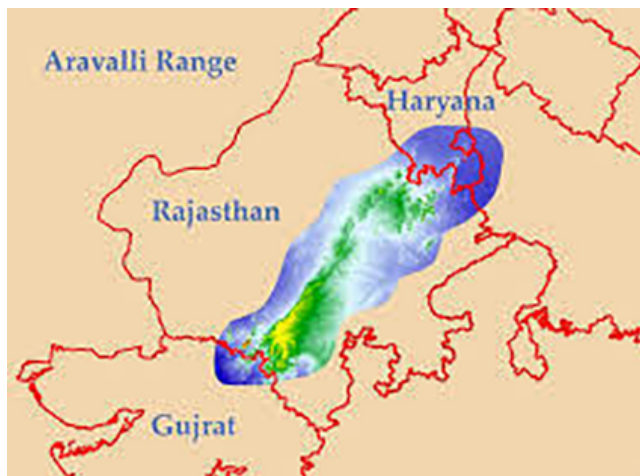




Appeal to Resume Mining in Aravalli Hills

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 Aravalli 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.

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