Lithium-Deal with Argentina

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Mines,** Government of India through the **state-owned** Khanij Bidesh India Ltd (KABIL)**,** has entered into a draft exploration and development agreement with Argentinan miner CAMYEN for possible acquisition and development of **five-odd** lithium blocks.
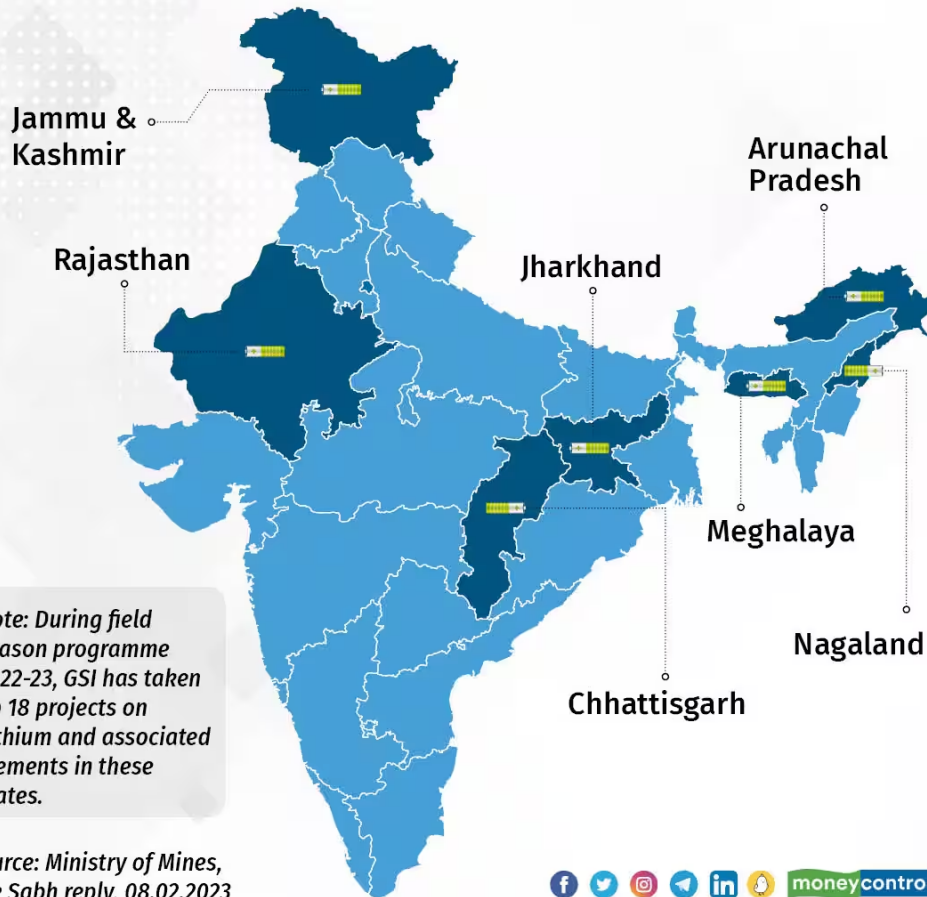
- The company has also entered into a **non-disclosure agreement with Chilean miner ENAMI** for "possible exploration, extraction, processing and commercialisation" of the mineral.

Key Points

- Lithium is an alkali mineral, also called **'white gold'.** It is soft, silvery-white metal, the lightest metal of the periodic table.
- **Major Properties of lithium include** high reactivity, Low Density and Excellent Electrochemical Properties
- Lithium is found naturally in various minerals, including **spodumene, petalite, and lepidolite** and is extracted from these minerals and refined into lithium metal or its compounds.
  - The top producers of lithium are **Australia, Chile, China, and Argentina.**
- It is a crucial component of **rechargeable batteries** used in smartphones, laptops, electric vehicles, and other electronics.
  - Lithium compounds are used to **strengthen glass and ceramics**, making them more durable and heat-resistant.
  - It is used as a **mood stabilizer** in the treatment of **bipolar disorder.**
  - Lithium greases are used in **high-pressure and high-temperature** applications.
- 2023 saw a surge in lithium discoveries:
  - Massive reserves unearthed in **Jammu and Kashmir** (estimated 5.9 million tonnes).
  - **Deposits found in Rajasthan** (potentially meeting 80% of India's demand).
  - Additional reserves identified in **Jharkhand.**
- However, India has put up lithium blocks for auction: **one in J&K and another in Chhattisgarh,** with most of its domestic requirements, across categories like **EVs,** lithium-ion battery making, and other energy storage solutions, being met completely through imports.

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IN LITHIUM SEARCH

Jammu &
Kashmir

Rajasthan

Jharkhand

Arunachal
Pradesh

Meghalaya

Nagaland

Chhattisgarh

Note: During field season programme 2022-23, GSI has taken up 18 projects on Lithium and associated elements in these states.

Source: Ministry of Mines, Lok Sabh reply, 08.02.2023

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