

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 21-01-2024

Aravalli Range

The Supreme Court recently opined that if the State of Rajasthan believes that the mining activities in the Aravalli Range pose a threat to the environment, it can also prevent mining activities in the Aravalli Range.



About Aravalli Range

- It is a mountain range located in northwestern India.
- It is one of the oldest fold mountains in the world.
- It runs approximately 670 km (430 mi) in a south-west direction, starting near Delhi, passing through southern Haryana and Rajasthan, and ending in Gujarat.
- The range contains a series of ridges and peaks, which have widths between 6 miles and 60 miles, and elevations that vary between 1,000 and 3,000 feet.
- **The highest point of the Aravalli range is Guru Shikhar, which stands at an elevation of 5,650 feet on Mount Arbuda.**

It is 15 km from Mount Abu, which is a popular hill station in the Aravalli.

- **Rivers:** Three major rivers and their tributaries flow from the Aravalli, namely the **Banas and Sahibi rivers**, which are tributaries of

the Yamuna, as well as the **Luni River, which flows into the Rann of Kutch.**

- The Aravalli acts as the edge which separates the Thar desert from the plains and plateaus of eastern Rajasthan.
- Formation:

It is part of the Aravalli-Delhi orogenic belt, which is a large and complex geological structure formed due to the collision of tectonic plates during the Proterozoic era.

It is part of the Indian Shield, that was formed from a series of cratonic collisions.

In ancient times, Aravalli were extremely high, but since have worn down almost completely by millions of years of weathering.

- The range is rich in mineral resources like copper, zinc, lead, and marble.
- It is divided into two sections: the Sambhar-Sirohi ranges, taller and including Guru Shikhar; and the Sambhar-Khetri ranges, consisting of three ridges that are discontinuous.
- There are several national parks and wildlife sanctuaries that fall within the belt of Aravalli Hills. **Sariska National Park, Kumbhalgarh Sanctuary, and Mount Abu Sanctuary** are among them.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-Urban) Scheme

The Prime Minister recently broke down in tears while addressing a crowd during an event to dedicate homes constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-



SarkariYojna.info

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (Urban)



Urban Scheme. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-Urban) Scheme.

About Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U) Scheme

PMAY-U, being implemented since June 2015, is one of the major flagship programmes being implemented by the Government of India under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).

Objective: To provide all weather pucca houses to all eligible beneficiaries in the urban areas of the country by the year 2022, through States/UTs/Central Nodal Agencies.

The scheme covers the entire urban area of the country, i.e., all statutory towns as per Census 2011 and towns notified subsequently, including Notified Planning/ Development Areas.

The scheme is being implemented through four verticals:

Beneficiary Led Construction/ Enhancement (BLC)

Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP)

In-situ Slum Redevelopment (ISSR)

Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS).

In August 2022, the Union Cabinet approved the continuation of PMAY-U up to 31st December 2024, with all verticals except CLSS, for the completion of already sanctioned houses till 31st March 2022.

Funding: **The credit linked subsidy** component will be implemented as a **Central Sector Scheme** while **other three** components will be implemented as **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).**

All houses under PMAY-U have basic amenities like toilet, water supply, electricity, and kitchen.

The Mission promotes women empowerment by providing ownership of houses in the name of female member or in joint name.

Preference has also been given to differently abled persons, senior citizens, SCs, STs, OBCs, Minority, single women, transgender and other weaker & vulnerable sections of the society.

PMAY-U has adopted a cafeteria approach to suit the needs of individuals based on the geographical conditions, topography, economic conditions, availability of land, infrastructure etc.



SUB-CATEGORISATION AMONG SCs

The ongoing legal debate on sub-categorization among Scheduled Castes in India, before a seven-judge Supreme Court bench, revolves around the question of whether states can sub-classify SC reservations or if this authority solely rests with the President.

Summary of the evolution of the legal debate over sub-categorization among Scheduled Castes (SCs)

1975 - Punjab's Sub-Categorization Attempt

The Punjab government issued a notification in 1975, dividing its 25% SC reservation into two categories. The first category reserved seats exclusively for the Balmiki and Mazhbi Sikh communities, giving them preferential treatment in education and public employment.

This sub-categorization aimed to address the economic and educational backwardness of specific SC communities within the state.

2004 - Andhra Pradesh's Struck-down Law

In 2004, a five-judge constitution bench in the case of 'E.V. Chinnaiah v State of Andhra Pradesh' struck down a similar law introduced by Andhra Pradesh in 2000.

The Supreme Court held that sub-classifying SC communities violated the right to equality, treating communities differently within the same category. The court emphasized the homogeneity of the SC list defined by the Constitution and the President's exclusive power to create this list under Article 341.

Punjab & Haryana High Court's Decision

In 2006, the Punjab & Haryana High Court struck down the 1975 notification, affirming the principles laid down by the Supreme Court in the Chinnaiah case.

2010 - Attempted Reintroduction by Punjab

In 2010, the Punjab government attempted to reintroduce sub-categorization through the Punjab Scheduled Caste and Backward Classes (Reservation in Services) Act, 2006.

The High Court once again struck down this provision, leading to an appeal to the Supreme Court.



2014 - Referral to Five-judge Constitution Bench

In 2014, the Supreme Court in 'Davinder Singh v State of Punjab' referred the appeal to a five-judge constitution bench to reconsider the 2004 Chinniah decision.

2020 - Reconsideration of Chinniah Ruling

In 2020, the constitution bench held that the 2004 Chinniah decision required reconsideration. The court rejected the notion of SCs as a homogeneous group, recognizing the presence of inequalities within the list.

Introduction of Creamy Layer Concept

Since the Chinniah decision, the concept of a "creamy layer" has been applied to SC reservations. In the 2018 'Jarnail Singh v/s Lachhmi Narain Gupta' case, the Supreme Court upheld the creamy layer concept within SCs, putting an income ceiling on eligibility for reservations.

Current Scenario - Seven-judge Constitution Bench

In the present, a seven-judge constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, is set to hear the case on sub-categorization among SCs.

The key issue is whether states have the power to create sub-classifications or if this power is exclusively vested in the President.

Sub-Categorisation among Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India

Background

Constitutional Protection

Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India, historically referred to as "untouchables," have faced systemic discrimination based on their caste identity for centuries.

The Indian Constitution, recognizing the social injustice and exploitation faced by SCs, mandates protective measures in Article 46. This includes promoting their educational and economic interests, thereby addressing the historical disadvantages.

Reservation Policies

To bridge the socio-economic gaps and provide opportunities for SCs, reservation policies have been implemented in education, employment, and political representation.



However, there's growing acknowledgement that these benefits haven't been uniformly distributed among all SC groups.

Sub-Categorisation

Sub-categorisation of SCs aims to address the intra-group disparities by creating smaller groups based on socio-economic and educational indicators. The goal is to ensure a more equitable distribution of reservation benefits among SCs.

The concept of sub-categorisation has sparked debate due to its complexities and potential challenges. It involves redefining and restructuring the existing reservation system, which has both supporters and critics.

Legal and Political Developments

Supreme Court Rulings: The Supreme Court has upheld the legality of sub-categorisation within SCs, provided it is based on quantifiable data and serves a legitimate purpose.

State-Level Implementation: Several states, including Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Haryana, have implemented sub-categorisation, showcasing the varied approaches at the state level.

Central Government's Stance: The central government has been cautious, setting up committees to examine the issue but has not yet implemented nationwide sub-categorisation, reflecting the need for a comprehensive and considered approach.

Key Issues and Challenges

Defining Criteria: Determining appropriate criteria for sub-categorisation, such as social, economic, educational, and occupational indicators, is crucial to ensure accurate classification.

Data Collection: Accurate and reliable data on SC communities is essential for effective implementation and addressing the unique challenges faced by different sub-groups.

Political Consensus: Building consensus among SC groups and political parties is necessary to avoid conflicts and ensure a smooth implementation process.

Legal Challenges: Potential legal challenges, based on claims of discrimination or violation of constitutional rights, need to be anticipated and addressed.

Administrative Capacity: Ensuring that the administrative machinery can handle the complexity of sub-categorisation is crucial for successful implementation.

FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act)

Recently, the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), a leading Indian public policy think tank, had its FCRA license cancelled, culminating in a series of government actions since IT raids in September 2022.



About FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act)

Purpose: FCRA stands for Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, which is a law enacted by the Parliament of India to regulate the acceptance and utilization of foreign contributions by individuals, associations, and companies.

Prohibition: The Act prohibits the receipt of foreign contributions "for any activities detrimental to the national interest".

Registration: Organizations require the government's permission to receive funding from abroad.

Implementation: The Act is implemented in convergence with various Union government Ministries and agencies, State authorities, and a network of formal and informal institutions and individuals.

Amendments: The Act has been amended over time, with the latest amendment being the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2020. The Bill makes the following changes to the Act:

Public servants and foreign donations: Public servants are prohibited from accepting foreign donations.

Restriction on donation transfer: Foreign donations cannot be transferred to any other person, regardless of their registration status under the Act.



Identity proof requirement: Aadhaar number, passport copy, or Overseas Citizen of India card must be provided as identity proof by those seeking permission, registration, or renewal of registration to accept foreign donations.

FCRA account: Foreign donations can only be received in an “FCRA account” in a specified branch of the State Bank of India in New Delhi.

Unutilised foreign donations: The government can halt the use of unutilised foreign donations if the Act is violated.

Registration certificate renewal: Every person with a registration certificate must renew it within six months before it expires.

Administrative expense limit: The limit for using foreign donations for administrative purposes has been **reduced** from **50% to 20%**.

Voluntary surrender of registration certificate: The central government can allow a person to surrender their registration certificate.

Suspension period: The government can suspend the registration of a person for up to 360 days, instead of 180 days.

Penalties: The Act provides for penalties for making false statements, delivering false accounts, and for contravention of any provision of the Act.

Atal Bhujal Yojna

Recently, the meeting for review of progress of Atal Bhujal Yojna was held at Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh.

About Atal Bhujal Yojna

Atal Bhujal Yojana is a central sector scheme which was launched in 2019.

Duration: Period of 5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25), Increased by 2 years in May, 2023.

Objective: The major objective of the Scheme is to improve the management of **groundwater resources in select water stressed areas in identified states.**

The scheme is being taken up in 8220 water stressed Gram Panchayats of seven states: Haryana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.



Scheme components : It has two major components:

Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building Component for strengthening institutional arrangements for sustainable groundwater management in the States including improving monitoring networks, capacity building, strengthening of Water User Associations, etc.

Incentive Component for incentivising the States for achievements in improved groundwater management practices namely, data dissemination, preparation of water security plans, implementation of management interventions through convergence of ongoing schemes, adopting demand side management practices etc.

The scheme is being funded by the Government of India and the World Bank on a 50:50 basis.

Total cost of scheme is Rs. 6,000 crore, Out of this, Rs. 3,000 is loan from the World Bank and Rs. 3,000 crore is matching contribution from the Government of India.

Implemented Ministry: Ministry of Jal Shakti.

The key results areas are:

Strengthened institutional framework and effective ground water data monitoring and disclosure.

Improved planning and implementation of groundwater management interventions.

Global Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and

India successfully established a "Global Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality" to promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

It is a new alliance for global good, gender equity, and equality established by India on the sidelines of the **54th annual World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Davos.**

The alliance will bring together worldwide best practices, knowledge sharing, and investment opportunities in women's education, health, and enterprise.

This initiative marks a significant stride toward achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), **including SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality and Empowerment), 17 (Global Partnership for Development) and more.**



It has garnered support from industry leaders such as Master Card, Uber, Tata, TVS, Bayer, Godrej, the Serum Institute of India, IMD Laussane, and over 10,000 partners from industry through the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the alliance will be housed and anchored by the CII Centre for Women Leadership.

The WEF has come on board as a 'Network Partner' and Invest in India as an 'Institutional Partner'.

Key Facts about World Economic Forum (WEF)

It is an international organization headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, that brings together individuals of political and business leaders each year to discuss significant issues that impact the global economy.

These include, but are not limited to political, economic, social, and environmental concerns.

The WEF is best known for its annual WEF Meeting at Davos, the Swiss ski resort.

The event regularly draws business and political leaders from around the world for a series of discussions about global issues.

The WEF has no independent decision-making power but seeks to influence people to make decisions that benefit the global community.

WEF meetings introduce new issues, trends, and organizations to members and the public for discussion and are commonly believed to influence corporate and public sector decision-making.

The organization is funded through its membership, which includes many prominent business and political figures.