

POLITY & GOVT POLICES
India's mining policy shift

In Context: Recently, Parliament passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023, in a bid to attract private sector investment in the exploration of critical and deep-seated minerals in the country.

About: The Bill puts six minerals, including lithium — used in electric vehicle batteries and other energy storage solutions — into a list of “critical and strategic” minerals. The exploration and mining of these six minerals, previously classified as atomic minerals, were restricted to government-owned entities.

Import of India's critical minerals

- ✓ The clean energy transitions of countries including India, seeking to meet their net-zero emission goals, are contingent on the availability of critical minerals such as lithium, which has also been called ‘white gold’, and others including cobalt, graphite, and rare earth elements (REEs).
- ✓ These are also crucial for the manufacture of semiconductors used in smart electronics; defence and aerospace equipment; telecommunication technologies and so on.
- ✓ The lack of availability of such minerals or the concentration of their extraction or processing in a few geographical locations leads to import dependency, supply chain vulnerabilities, and even disruption of their supplies.
- ✓ As per figures quoted by the Ministry, India is 100% import-dependent on countries including China, Russia, Australia, South Africa, and the U.S. for the supply of critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, nickel, niobium, beryllium, and tantalum.
- ✓ Also for deep-seated minerals like gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, nickel, cobalt, platinum group elements (PGEs) and diamonds, which are difficult and expensive to explore and mine as compared to surficial or bulk minerals, India depends largely on imports.

Critical minerals exploration

- ✓ The primary step to discovering mineral resources and eventually finding economically viable reserves is mineral exploration, which comes in various stages before mining.
- ✓ The stages of exploration are divided as per the United Nations Framework for Classification of Resources into G4 (Reconnaissance), G3 (Prospecting), G2 (General Exploration), and G1 (Detailed Exploration).
- ✓ Notably, it is estimated that India has explored just 10% of its Obvious Geological Potential (OGP), less than 2% of which is mined and the country spends less than 1% of the global mineral exploration budget.
- ✓ Exploration requires techniques like aerial surveys, geological mapping, and geochemical analyses and is a highly specialised, time-intensive and monetarily risky operation with less than 1% of explored projects becoming commercially viable mines.

India's mining policy

- ✓ The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDR Act), 1957, the primary legislation governing mining in the country has been amended several times since its enactment including recently in 2015, 2020, and 2021.
- ✓ Later, private companies could also get Prospecting Licences (PL) or Mining Leases (ML), and could even apply for early-stage or greenfield exploration through Reconnaissance Permits (RPs).
- ✓ In 2015, the MMDR Act was amended to allow private companies to participate in government auctions for Mining Leases and Composite Licences (CLs).
- ✓ However, due to the Evidence of Mineral content (EMT) rule, only government-explored projects were auctioned, limiting private sector involvement.
- ✓ The amendment also permitted private firms to register as exploration agencies, with the National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) funding for G4 to G1 exploration, but private participation remained limited.

The Mines and Minerals Bill 2023

- ✓ Firstly, the Bill omits at least six previously mentioned atomic minerals from a list of 12 which cannot be commercially mined.
- ✓ Being on the atomic minerals list, the exploration and mining of these six — lithium, beryllium, niobium, titanium, tantalum and zirconium, was previously reserved for government entities.
- ✓ Secondly, the Act prohibits pitting, trenching, drilling, and sub-surface excavation as part of reconnaissance, which included mapping and surveys. The Bill allows these prohibited activities.
- ✓ The Bill also proposes a new type of licence to encourage reconnaissance — level and or prospective stage exploration by the private sector.
- ✓ This exploration licence (EL), for a period of five years (extendable by two years), will be granted by the State government by way of competitive bidding.

- ✓ This licence will be issued for 29 minerals specified in the Seventh Schedule of the amended Act, which would include critical, strategic, and deep-seated minerals.

Way forward

- ✓ Privatization comes with risks of monopolization and black marketeering. Mining sector already prone to irregularities and corruption. Thus, the Government should design a mechanism to include safeguards.
- ✓ Nothing in the Bill ensures that mineral allocation will be prioritized for public sector companies. The Government must make provisions for allocation to public sector first and the remaining should be allocated to the private companies.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
JEDDAH TALKS

In Context: The talks on the Ukraine crisis concluded in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah.

Details

- ✓ More than 40 countries, including China, India, the U.S, and European countries, but not Russia, took part in the Jeddah talks.
- ✓ Participants called for continuing international efforts to build a common ground for peace.
- ✓ Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy welcomed the wide range of countries represented in the Jeddah talks, including developing countries that have been hit hard by the surge in food prices triggered by the war.
- ✓ Ukraine said that this is very important because on issues such as food security, the fate of millions of people in Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world directly depends on how fast the world moves to implement the peace formula.

Role of Saudi Arabia – A Possible Mediator

- ✓ Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter which works closely with Russia on oil policy, has touted its ties to both sides and positioned itself as a possible mediator in the war, now nearly a year and a half old.
- ✓ In hosting the summit, Saudi Arabia wants to reinforce its bid to become a Global Middle Power with the ability to mediate conflicts.

Saudi Arabia's Changing International Policy

- ✓ Over the past few months, Saudi Arabia has attracted international attention with one diplomatic initiative after another – from its beginning of normalization with Iran, to peace talks with the Yemeni Houthis, to the reintegration of Syria into the Arab League, to efforts to broker a ceasefire in Sudan, to hosting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during the Arab League Summit in Jeddah.
- ✓ Under Mohammed bin Salman, or MBS, the international profile of Saudi Arabia has risen very fast.
- ✓ It is reimagining itself as a middle power, if not a superpower.
- ✓ Saudi's goal for the next 10-20 years is clear – to become a major non-Islamic, non-oil base geopolitical power.
- ✓ Saudi is trying to earn that position using three major aspects:
 1. **Liberal Islam:** For global acceptability, MBS is looking at liberal Islam. He wants to connect Saudi with the outside world. He doesn't want to be restricted to the Islamic world and wants to come out of the Islamic mindset.
 2. **Qatar Model:** Saudi has observed the Qatar model closely and realized that to become powerful, you have to give a platform to the world. Balancing competing trends needs courage. Saudi is displaying it by holding Iran on the one side, and Syria on the other with America and China. In between, they are also in talks with Russia.
 3. **Renewable Technologies:** Saudi has a huge amount of liquidity owing to the oil money. Taking a cue from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), they are now trying to create a base for newer technologies, especially renewable, the current sentiment and biggest selling point. The aim is to become a vital part of the supply chain, which is difficult for others to dislodge.
- ✓ It highlights an evolution in how Saudi Arabia is positioning itself and operating on the regional and international stage.
- ✓ One of the primary objectives of Saudi foreign policy has always been to counter and contain instability in the Middle East in order to keep threats at bay, limit risks to the free flow of oil exports from the Gulf and facilitate the Kingdom's domestic economic development.
- ✓ Since the rise to power of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the mid-2010s, this has become even more explicit. Riyadh's number-one priority is the implementation of Vision 2030, the hugely ambitious socio-economic reform program that is supposed to transform Saudi Arabia into a modern, globally integrated knowledge economy that is less and less reliant on its hydrocarbon riches. The primary task for Saudi foreign policy is to support and enable this process, not least by reducing the threats posed to the Vision by instability or conflict in Saudi Arabia's neighborhood.

Mediator in Russia Ukraine Crisis

- ✓ Holding Ukraine talks, is an image-building exercise, in line with the Qatar model. The conference is a win-win with no stakes — all Saudi is doing is hosting and taking ownership by issuing a press release. In return, the country will get publicity, become a stakeholder, get a validity for being a responsible country that intervened in global issues, and will come closer to the US and Europe.
- ✓ These talks are a prime example of the success of Saudi Arabia's multipolar strategy of maintaining strong ties with Ukraine, Russia, and China.
- ✓ Moving forward, Saudi Arabia wants to be in the company of India or Brazil, because only as a club can these middle powers hope to have an impact on the world stage.

PRELIM FACTS

1. Amrit Bharat station scheme

In context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday virtually laid the foundation stone for the redevelopment of 508 railway stations across the country at a cost of over ₹24,470 crore.

About:

- ✓ The 508 stations are spread across 27 States and Union Territories — 55 each in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan (at a cost of ₹4,000 crore), 49 in Bihar, 44 in Maharashtra (₹1,500 crore), 37 in West Bengal, 34 in Madhya Pradesh (₹1,000 crore), 32 in Assam, 25 in Odisha, 22 in Punjab, 21 each in Gujarat and Telangana, 20 in Jharkhand, 18 each in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, 15 in Haryana, 13 in Karnataka and others.
- ✓ It may be noted that in the first phase of this ambitious Amrit Bharat station scheme, a total of 49 railway stations in Bihar will be redeveloped.
- ✓ The foundation stone of two stations (Darbhanga and Sakri station) under the Darbhanga parliamentary constituency was laid through the virtual medium of the Prime Minister under the scheme. Darbhanga railway station will be developed as a world class station at a cost of 340 crores and Sakri station will be redeveloped at a cost of 18.9 crores.

Plan for the Amrit Stations

- ✓ All the Amrit stations will be built to meet the standards of green buildings. Government visions that by 2030, India will be a country whose railway network will run on net zero emissions.
- ✓ Every railway station will be a symbol of the modern aspirations of the country along with its ancient heritage.
- ✓ Jaipur Railway Stations will have glimpses of Hawa Mahal and Amer Fort from Rajasthan, Jammu Tawi Railway Station in Jammu and Kashmir will be inspired by the famous Raghunath Mandir and Dimapur Station of Nagaland will showcase the local architecture of 16 different tribes from the region.

About Amrit Bharat Station Scheme

- ✓ The scheme is set to transform and revitalize 1309 railway stations across the nation.
- ✓ It envisages to take up 76 railway stations over Central Railway for upgradation/modernization and out of that, foundation stone will be laid at 38 stations.
- ✓ It involves preparation of Master Plans and their implementation in phases to improve the amenities at the stations like improvement of station access, circulating areas, waiting halls, toilets, lifts/escalators as necessary, cleanliness, free Wi-Fi, kiosks for local products through schemes like 'One Station One Product', better passenger information systems, Executive Lounges, nominated spaces for business meetings, landscaping etc.
- ✓ The scheme also envisages improvement of building, integrating the station with both sides of the city, multimodal integration, amenities for Divyangjans, sustainable and environment friendly solutions, provision of ballastless tracks, 'Roof Plazas' as per necessity, phasing and feasibility and creation of city centres at the station in the long term.

2. Balladeer Gaddar:

In context: Revolutionary balladeer and folk singer Gaddar passed away here at a private hospital on Sunday afternoon while undergoing treatment for a heart-related ailment.

About:

- ✓ A household name in the two Telugu States, Gaddar, who was born as Gummadi Vithal Rao in Toopran of Medak district in 1949.
- ✓ He was known for his revolutionary songs.
- ✓ His contribution to people's movements in the combined Andhra Pradesh during the peak of the Naxal movement fetched him a cult status among the Telugu people.
- ✓ His role in the Telangana agitation cannot be forgotten and his



iconic song — Podustunna Poddu Meeda Nadustunna Kaalama Poru Telanganama — was a feature of every agitation meeting.

- ✓ Gaddar spent the prime of his youth working underground for the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War Group in the 1980s.
- ✓ He ended that phase of his life when the then Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Marri Chenna Reddy lifted the ban on the People's War Group. He escaped a murder attempt in 1997.

3. Devika Rejuvenation Project

In context:

- ✓ North India's first River Rejuvenation Project of river Devika is nearing completion.
- ✓ The project was launched to protect the sanctity of the holy Devika River in Udhampur, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). It was built at a cost of over Rs 190 crore on the lines of Namami Gange Programme.

Devika river

- ✓ It originates from the hilly Suddha Mahadev temple in Udhampur district and flows down towards western Punjab (now in Pakistan) where it merges with the Ravi river.
- ✓ Devika is also known as Gupt Ganga, as it appears and disappears at many places.
- ✓ The river holds religious significance as it is revered by Hindus as the elder sister of river Ganga. This holy river finds mention in Padma Purana and other scriptures.
- ✓ There are many Shiva lingams on the bank of the river, so great importance is attached to the sacred bathing in its water on special days. Also a fair is organized on the eve of Baisakhi every year on the bank of the river.

4. NIDHI Program

In context: Recently, the union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology informed the Rajya Sabha about the NIDHI Program.

About NIDHI Program:

- ✓ National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing innovations (NIDHI) program was launched in 2016.
- ✓ It is an umbrella programme conceived and developed by the Innovation & Entrepreneurship division, Department of Science & Technology.
- ✓ Aim: To nurture start-ups through scouting, supporting and scaling innovations.
- ✓ Key stakeholders: Various departments and ministries of the central government, state governments, academic and R & D institutions, mentors, financial institutions, angel investors, venture capitalists and private sectors.
- ✓ Funding: By the National Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB).

Key Components of the Program

- ✓ The NIDHI- PRAYAS (Promoting and Accelerating Young and Aspiring Innovators and Startups) program at Proof-of-Concept level provides mentoring and financial support to innovator for converting their ideas into prototypes.
- ✓ NIDHI Entrepreneurs-In-Residence (EIR) Program provides fellowships to the students opting for entrepreneurship.
- ✓ The NIDHI Seed Support Program provisions availability of early-stage seed support funding to startups and the NIDHI Accelerator program speeds up the investment readiness of the startups.
- ✓ The NIDHI program has been helpful in creating state-of-the art infrastructure for incubating startups in technology sectors through Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) and Centres of Excellence (CoE).
- ✓ NIDHI Accelerator: An accelerator is typically a 3-6 months fast track structured program helping ideas get accelerated to the next orbit.

5. Durand Cup:

In Context: The 132nd Durand Cup began on August 5, 2023, in Kokrajhar, Assam. The Union Defence Minister participated in the opening ceremony. The event was organized by the Armed Forces and supported by the Assam government.

About Durand Cup:

- ✓ It is Asia's oldest and the world's third oldest football tournament, in which top Indian football clubs from across the country participate.
- ✓ The inaugural edition took place in Shimla in 1888, when it started off as an Army Cup, open only to the British Indian Army troops in India.
- ✓ The tournament is named after its founder Sir Henry Mortimer Durand.
- ✓ It was begun as a football tournament for different departments and regiments of the Armed forces of India and the princely states.

- ✓ Since independence, the army's presence is maintained by the participation of several clubs of different regiments of the Indian Armed Forces as guest invitees.
- ✓ The Durand Cup tournament is unique where in the winning team walks away with three trophies,
- ✓ The Durand Cup (a rolling trophy and the original prize).
- ✓ The Shimla Trophy (also a rolling trophy and first given by the residents of Shimla in 1904).
- ✓ The President's Cup (for permanent keep and first presented by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, India's first President, in 1956).

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Assess the role of British imperial power in complicating the process of transfer of power during 1940s.

Introduction: Initially, the British did not pay any attention to the demand of transfer of power by India, but when World War II started, Britain came under immense pressure, as it needed full Indian support. British came up with different plans and mission in 1940s. But these plans were not made with noble intention in favour of India, hence making the process of transfer of the power difficult. Why it complicated the process of transfer of power Cripps Mission- 1942

The main proposals of the mission were as follows:

- ✓ An Indian Union with a dominion status would be set up; it would be free to decide its relations with the Commonwealth and free to participate in the United Nations and other international bodies.
- ✓ After the end of the war, a constituent assembly would be convened to frame a new constitution. Members of this assembly would be partly elected by the provincial assemblies through proportional representation and partly nominated by the princes.
- ✓ **The British government would accept the new constitution subject to two conditions:**
 - I. Any province not willing to join the Union could have a separate constitution and form a separate Union, and
 - II. The new constitution-making body and the British government would negotiate a treaty to affect the transfer of power and to safeguard racial and religious minorities.
 - III. In the meantime, defence of India would remain in British hands and the Governor-General's powers would remain intact.

✓ **Various parties and groups had objections to the proposals on different points:**

- I. The Congress objected to the offer of dominion status instead of a provision for complete independence;
- II. Representation of the princely states by nominees and not by elected representatives;
- III. Right to provinces to secede as this went against the Principle of national unity; and absence of any plan for immediate transfer of power and absence of any real share in defence; the Governor-General's supremacy had been retained, and the demand that the Governor-General be only the constitutional head had not been accepted.

The main proposals of the Wavell Plan were as follows:

- ✓ With the exception of the Governor-General and the commander-in-chief, all members of the executive council were to be Indians.
- ✓ Caste Hindus and Muslims were to have equal representation.
- ✓ The reconstructed council was to function as an interim government within the framework of the 1935 Act (i.e. not responsible to the Central Assembly).
- ✓ The Governor-General was to exercise his veto on the advice of ministers. Representatives of different parties were to submit a joint list to the viceroy for nominations to the executive council. If a joint list was not possible, then separate lists were to be submitted.
- ✓ Possibilities were to be kept open for negotiations on a new constitution once the war was finally won.
- ✓ Why Wavell Plan complicated the process of transfer of power Congress Stand
- ✓ The Congress objected to the plan as an attempt to reduce the Congress to the status of a purely caste Hindu party.
- ✓ It insisted on its right to include members of all communities among its nominees.

Muslim League's Stand

- ✓ The League wanted all Muslim members to be League nominees, because it feared that since the aims of other minorities— depressed classes; Sikhs, Christians, etc.— were the same as those of the Congress, and this arrangement would reduce the League to a one-third minority.
- ✓ The League claimed some kind of veto in the council with decisions opposed to the Muslims needing a two-third majority for approval.

Conclusion: The end of colonial rule in 1947 was undoubtedly a defining moment in the modern South Asian history. Though it was difficult due to the British policies in 1940s for transfer of power, the event can be

treated as the twin process of independence and partition - both affecting the future trajectories of the two nations.

MCQ

1. Considered the following statement regarding Chief Justice of Orissa High Court:
 1. Recently, Justice Talapatra is take charge as Chief Justice of Orissa High Court.
 2. Shri Bira Kishore Ray.is the first Chief Justice of Orissa High Court
 Which of the above statement is/are correct?
 - a) Only 1
 - b) Only 2
 - c) **Both1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. Considered the following statement regarding NIDHI program
 - a) National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing innovations (NIDHI) program was launched in 2022.
 - b) It is an umbrella programme conceived and developed by the Innovation & Entrepreneurship division, Department of Science & Technology.
 Which of the above statement is/are correct?
 - a) Only 1
 - b) **Only 2**
 - c) Both1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Considered the following statement regarding Devika river
 - a) It originates from the hilly Suddha Mahadev temple in Udhampur district of Ladakh.
 - b) Devika river is also known as Gupt Ganga, as it appears and disappears at many places.
 Which of the above statement is/are incorrect?
 - a) **Only 1**
 - b) Only 2
 - c) Both1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Considered the following statement regarding 2. Balladeer Gaddar:
 1. He was known for his revolutionary songs.
 2. He was a part of People's War Group
 Which of the above statement is/are correct?
 - a) Only 1
 - b) Only 2
 - c) **Both1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. Consider the following statements in the context of the Durand Cup.
 1. The Durand Cup was started in 1858 to promote friendly relations among princely states.
 2. The first edition of the tournament was held in Kolkata, the capital of British India.
 3. The tournament was initially a military affair.
 4. Kolkata FC is the current holder of the Durand Cup.
 How many of the above statements is/are correct?
 - a) **Only 1**
 - b) Only 2
 - c) Only 3
 - d) All
6. Which of the following is the correct relation for the Jeddah talk?
 - a) **Ukraine crisis**
 - b) Climate change crisis
 - c) Syria crisis
 - d) Afagnisthan crisis
7. Consider the following statements, with reference to Havana Syndrome
 1. It refers to a set of mental health symptoms such as hearing certain sounds without any outside noise, nausea, vertigo and headaches, memory loss and balance issues.
 2. It is result of unregulated mining activities in particular region.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) **Only 1**
 - b) Only 2
 - c) Both1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. With reference to Sugar production in India, consider the following statements
 1. India became the world's top sugar producer in 2021-2022, surpassing Brazil.
 2. Over-cultivation of sugarcane has caused a sugar surplus and high exports, impacting groundwater negatively.
 Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 - a) Only 1
 - b) Only 2
 - c) **Both1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. The term Swathi Mountains, sometimes seen in the news, is related to
 - a) **Weapon locating radar**
 - b) Volcanic mountain
 - c) Pile of Garbage
 - d) Guyots
10. With reference to the Committee of Parliament on Official Language, consider the following statements:
 1. It was set up under the Official Languages Act, 1963.
 2. This committee consists of members from both Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha.
 3. It is chaired by the Lok Sabha speaker.
 How many of the statements given above are correct?
 - a) **Only 1**
 - b) Only 2
 - c) Only 3
 - d) None