



Environmental Jurisprudence and Wildlife Conservation: An Analysis of the *Aravalli Hills* Decision, with special reference to ‘Wildlife Corridors’ in India

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Abstract

The Aravalli Hills and Ranges in India are one of the oldest geological formations in the world. They act as a natural barrier against desertification and aid in groundwater recharge. They also support diverse wildlife habitats and corridors across north-western India. Over the years, unregulated mining activities, urbanisation and varying regulatory approaches across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat have led to degradation of the entire Aravalli ecosystem, including the wildlife habitat. These issues ultimately led the Supreme Court of India to clarify the critical legal question of what constitutes ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’ in *In re: Issue relating to definition of Aravali Hills and Ranges* (2025 INSC 1338). In this backdrop, this paper examines the Apex Court’s *Aravalli Hills* decision and analyses its implications on wildlife conservation in India. Although the decision has been put in abeyance, it highlights a critical question of law with a significant impact on wildlife conservation. The paper argues that to ensure effective wildlife conservation in India, the legislature and the judiciary need to move beyond adopting a narrow definitional approach, towards recognising landscapes as a ‘functional ecological system’, incorporating legal protection to ‘wildlife corridors’, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 15 (Life on Land).

Keywords: Environmental Jurisprudence, Aravalli Hills and Ranges, Wildlife Conservation, Wildlife Corridors, SDG 15.

1 Introduction

The Aravalli Hills and Ranges play a vital ecological role in north-western India by preventing desertification, recharging groundwater and supporting important wildlife corridors. However, decades of mining, urbanisation and fragmented regulation have led to severe ecological degradation.

In this context, the Supreme Court of India in *In re: Issue relating to definition of Aravali Hills and Ranges* (2025 INSC 1338) [1] (hereafter referred to as the ‘*Aravalli Hills* decision’) addressed the crucial legal question of what constitutes the ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’. Although the decision has been put on abeyance [2], it highlighted a crucial step by the Indian judiciary in addressing the issue of fragmented definition

across states and filling the lacunae by providing a uniform definition of ‘Aravalli Hills and ranges’, thus contributing to environmental protection in India.

In this backdrop, the present paper critically analyses the implications of the *Aravalli Hills* decision on wildlife conservation law in India, with special reference to the relevant provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and Biological Diversity Act, 2002. This paper adopts a doctrinal legal research methodology, analysing judicial decisions, statutory frameworks, government reports and policy documents relating to the governance of the Aravalli landscape and evaluates the implications of the Apex Court’s approach for wildlife corridor protection and landscape-level conservation.

Before analysing the reasoning and implications of the Apex Court’s decision, it is necessary to first understand the environmental significance of the Aravalli range and the issues which have threatened its ecological balance.

1.1 Geological and Ecological Significance of the Aravalli Range

The Aravalli Hills, situated in the northwestern part of the Indian continent, are considered one of the oldest mountain ranges on Earth. Derived from the Sanskrit words ‘ara’ and ‘vali’, Aravalli translates to ‘line of peaks’ [3]. The Aravalli Hills extend over 800 kilometres, crossing the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and the National Capital Territory of Delhi (hereinafter referred to as ‘NCT’) as shown in figure 1 [4].

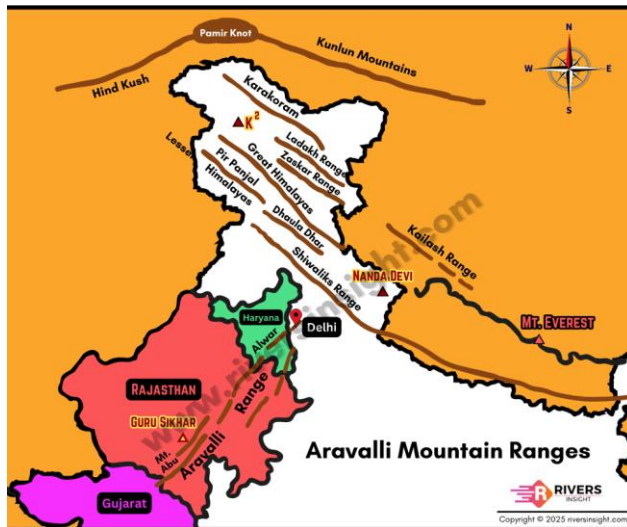


Fig. 1. Map of the Aravalli Range spanning across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat [5]

The Apex Court has recognised the significant role played by the Aravalli ecosystem, as it acts as a green barrier and shields the Indo-Gangetic plains against desertification

[1]. It also plays an instrumental role in sustaining water resources in an otherwise semi-arid north-western region of India. The forested tracts and rocky terrain of the Aravallis enable rainwater percolation, replenishing aquifers that supply water to urban and rural populations [6]. The Aravallis also mitigate the impact of air pollution and regulate the climate in the National Capital Region (hereinafter referred to as 'NCR') [7].

1.2 The Aravallis as a Biodiversity Corridor

The Aravalli Range supports a diverse network of protected and ecologically significant areas, including national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, wetlands and forest ecosystems (Madhogarh Biodiversity Park, Aravalli Biodiversity Park, Satnali Biodiversity Park etc.) and multiple wildlife habitats (Matanhail Wildlife Area, Masani Barrage Wildlife Area, Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary, Masani Barrage Wildlife Area etc.) that collectively contribute to the conservation of regional biodiversity. Collectively, these areas play a crucial role in sustaining wildlife habitats, protecting migratory bird populations, and maintaining the environmental diversity and ecological resilience of the Aravalli landscape [8].

A wildlife survey conducted between 2019 and 2020 revealed that the unprotected forest tracts of the Aravalli Range in Gurugram and Faridabad support a remarkably rich diversity of mammals, in some cases exceeding that recorded in the nearby Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, which formally enjoys the status of a protected wildlife sanctuary. The survey, undertaken by wildlife researchers with the support of several non-governmental organisations, documented healthy populations of several mammalian species in the Gurugram segment of the Aravallis. The presence of such species in viable numbers highlights the ecological significance of these unprotected forest tracts and underscores the urgent need for stronger conservation and regulatory measures in the region [9].

Taking into account the immeasurable contributions of the Aravalli Hills and Ranges towards maintaining ecological balance in the Indian sub-continent, it becomes essential to examine the challenges threatening their ecological integrity and to explore potential solutions for their protection.

1.3 Environmental Threats to the Aravalli Ecosystem

Despite their ecological significance, the Aravalli Hills and Ranges have undergone severe environmental degradation over several decades, owing to man-made activities like large-scale mining of stone and minerals, urbanization, deforestation and unregulated construction activities, which have resulted in significant alteration of the landscape [10].

Considering the significance of the Aravallis, the Supreme Court appointed a Central Empowered Committee (hereinafter referred to as 'CEC') to assess and determine the current state of the Aravallis. In its report published in 2018, the CEC found that 31 out of the 128 Hills which form part of the Aravallis, located in the state of Rajasthan, have vanished in the last 50 years due to illegal quarrying [11] [12]. Further

studies have found that by 2059, around 22% of the Aravallis might disappear if ‘explosive’ urbanisation and mining continue at the current pace [13].

The Aravalli range is also facing significant threats of encroachments, developmental activities, deforestation, mining and land degradation, leading to serious consequences like drying up of lakes, desertification, loss of biodiversity, increased frequency of dust storms, air pollution and human-wildlife conflicts [14].

A study conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India (hereinafter referred to as ‘WII’) in the Aravalli region, in the state of Haryana, from 2020-25 underlines the growing concerns vis-à-vis the Aravallis [15]. The report observes that unchecked developmental activities are increasingly threatening wildlife habitats and contributing to deforestation in the region. It further notes that existing statutory frameworks and policy measures, as well as directives issued by the Supreme Court of India, have often been disregarded, resulting in a persistent failure to effectively implement conservation measures for the Aravalli ecosystem [11].

The mining in the Aravalli Ranges has indisputably changed the facade and lies at the heart of the issue [16]. Nearly half of all illegal mining instances, as well as First Investigation Reports (hereinafter referred to as ‘FIRs’) registered for illegal mining and associated activities in the state of Rajasthan since 2017 have been filed in the Aravalli districts alone, according to this report in The Indian Express [17]. The CEC in its Report also observed that 25% of Rajasthan’s Aravallis had been lost to illegal mining and stone crushing [18].

Despite numerous reports raising alarms and judicial interventions restricting illegal mining and construction, the exploitation of the Aravalli Hills and Ranges has continued and rather become rampant. These concerns necessitate a uniform approach towards the preservation of the Aravalli ecosystem in a sustainable manner and protecting it from exploitation [8], guided by the precautionary principle, a principle introduced by the Hon’ble Supreme Court in *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum v. Union of India*, AIR 1996 SC 2715.

In recognition of the ecological significance of the Aravalli ranges, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (hereinafter referred to as ‘MoEF&CC’) has launched the ‘Aravalli Green Wall Project’, aimed at preventing desertification, restoring degraded land and improving the ecological health of the Aravalli landscape [19]. It aims to restore 1,400 kilometres of degraded land through afforestation with native species, enhancing carbon sequestration and biodiversity corridors [20].

2 Legal Background of the Aravalli Hills Dispute

2.1 Background of the Aravalli Litigation

The issue concerning what constitutes ‘Aravallis’ came before the Hon’ble Apex Court in two sets of proceedings i.e. *M.C. Mehta v. Union of India and others*, WP (C) No. 4677 of 1985 and *In Re T.N. Godavarman Thirumalpad v. Union of India and Others*, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 202 of 1995 (the *Aravalli Hills* decision). The two

matters were placed before the same bench, considering the similarity of legal issues raised in both the proceedings.

2.2 The Issue of Inconsistent Definition of the Aravallis

The immediate legal issue before the Supreme Court vis-à-vis the Aravallis was fragmented and inconsistent definitions of ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’ adopted by different States. It was noted by the Apex Court that the state of Haryana has no definition at all, while the State of Rajasthan used administrative or revenue-based classifications, enabling mining to continue [21].

It is pertinent to note that the Entry titled ‘*Regulation of mines and mineral development, subject to the provisions of List I with respect to regulation and development under the control of the Union*’, falls under Entry 23, List II (State List), Schedule 7 of the Indian Constitution, 1949, providing states with the primary power to regulate mining activities within their territory. They can frame rules, policies, zoning regulations and definitions relating to mining areas, including identifying or defining specific geological areas like the Aravalli Hills for regulatory purposes. This has created a situation where the prerogative of defining the Aravalli Hills and Ranges within the territorial limits of a particular state falls at the discretion of the state government itself. This has been acknowledged as the root cause of concern by the CEC, as well as the Apex Court, as different states have defined ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’ differently, using their power under List II of the Indian Constitution, 1949. However, this power is not absolute. Often, defining the Aravalli Hills and Ranges for the purposes of mining also impacts the environment. In case of such an intersection, the power of the state governments can be limited through Entry 17A (Forests) and Entry 17B (Protection of wild animals and birds) of List II (Concurrent List), Schedule 7 of the Indian Constitution, 1949. Therefore, the constitutional source of power for states to define areas like the Aravalli Hills and Ranges for mining regulation is subject to Union legislation under Entry 54, List I (Union List) and environmental laws under the Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution.

Regardless of the overlap of the powers of the Centre and the State with respect to regulating mining activities and the restrictions placed on the powers of the State Governments, having a uniform definition of what constitutes ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’ across the four states is crucial, as what is included or excluded from ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’ directly determines whether mining is allowed, and if mining is allowed, then to what extent (the inclusions and exclusions).

2.3 The Definitional Controversy: What Constitutes the ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’?

The Hon’ble Supreme Court of India, in the *Aravalli Hills* decision, explicitly acknowledged that regulatory failure, the inconsistency and the ambiguity in defining what constitutes ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’ have significantly contributed to the persistence of illegal and rampant mining activities being carried out in the region.

The Court further observed that one of the principal factors contributing to illegal mining was the absence of a consistent definition of the ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’ across different states. In light of this concern, the Court directed that a committee be constituted to develop a uniform definition of the same.

2.3.1 Definition Proposed by the Forest Survey of India: The first definition discussed by the Apex Court was the one proposed by the FSI, as provided below [1] –

“The hill as well as the uniform 100-meter-wide buffer surrounding the downside of the Hills-

- (i) slope $> 3^\circ$,*
- (ii) foothill buffer = 100m,*
- (iii) inter hill distance or valley width = 500m and*
- (iv) the area enclosed by above defined Hills from all sides.”*

2.3.2 Definition Proposed by the Central Empowered Committee: The second definition discussed by the Apex Court was the one proposed by the CEC. Definition of the ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’ in the context of mining by the CEC is as follows [1] –

“Aravalli Hills: Any landform located in the Aravalli districts, having an elevation of 100 metres or more from the local relief, shall be termed as Aravalli Hills. For this purpose, the local relief shall be determined with reference to the lowest contour line encircling the landform”

“Aravalli Range: Two or more Aravalli Hills located within a proximity of 500m from each other, measured from the outermost point on the boundary of the lowest contour line on either side forms Aravalli Range.”

The CEC definition requires 100 meters of elevation from local relief to classify a landform as an Aravalli Hill.

2.4 Limitations of the Proposed Definitions

The definitional approaches proposed by the FSI and the CEC reveal significant challenges in accurately delineating the Aravalli Range for regulatory purposes.

On the one hand, the definition adopted by the FSI considers land with a slope greater than 3 degrees as part of the hill area. Such a low threshold risks including extensive tracts of land that may not be geologically identifiable as hills. On the other hand, the definition proposed by the CEC requires a landform to have an elevation of at least 100 metres above the local relief in order to be classified as part of the ‘Aravalli Hill’ system. This relatively high threshold may exclude several low-lying yet ecologically significant hillocks and ridges that form an integral part of the Aravalli landscape. This issue concerning the proposed definition by the CEC was also raised by the learned *Amicus Curiae* during the proceedings before the Apex Court [1].

The ambiguity surrounding what constitutes the ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’ has far-reaching implications not limited to mining regulations but extendable to wildlife conservation across the region.

3 Wildlife Conservation Implications of the *Aravalli Hills* Decision

3.1 ‘Wildlife Corridors’ in Landscape-Level Conservation

The Aravalli Hills and Ranges support a diverse ecological landscape comprising numerous protected areas and biodiversity-rich habitats, including 22 wildlife sanctuaries, 4 tiger reserves and multiple wetlands (Siliserh Lake, Sambhar Lake etc.). In its observations, the Apex Court emphasised the ecological significance of these interconnected landscapes and noted that these must be considered before permitting any form of sustainable mining activity within the region [1].

In its decision, the Court repeatedly referred to tiger habitats, wildlife sanctuaries and biodiversity-rich landscapes. However, it did not confer an independent legal status to ‘wildlife corridors’ in the Aravalli region. This non-inclusion has severe implications for wildlife conservation in the region, as the wildlife corridors play a crucial role in landscape-level conservation by enabling ecological connectivity between fragmented habitats.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (hereinafter referred to as ‘NTCA’), constituted under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, through the 2006 amendment, defines ‘wildlife corridors’ as “*inherent geographical linkages, such as forest tracts, river courses, or other habitat features, that facilitate the movement of tigers and other wildlife between source populations*” (WWF India, 2016). These corridors enable wildlife to move across landscapes for purposes such as dispersal, mating and seasonal migration, thereby sustaining genetic diversity and ecological resilience [22]. However, increasing infrastructural development has significantly disrupted such ecological connectivity.

Recognising the importance of such ecological linkages, the MoEF&CC, through a 2019 release by the Press Information Bureau, published a list of 32 tiger corridors identified jointly by the NTCA and the WII. Similarly, the Wildlife Trust of India identified 101 elephant corridors in 2017, a number that was later revised to 150 elephant corridors by the Government of India in 2023 [23].

It is pertinent to note that although tiger corridors and elephant corridors are widely recognised and prioritised, wildlife corridors critical for numerous other species remain largely unidentified and unrecognised within the current conservation framework. This gap highlights the need for a more comprehensive legal and policy approach to recognising and protecting wildlife corridors as integral components of landscape-level conservation.

3.2 Legal Framework for Wildlife Corridors in India

With respect to the significance of the ‘wildlife corridors’ in the Aravalli Hills and Ranges, legal protection of wildlife corridors in India can be addressed through the following legislations-

- The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
- The Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986
- The Biological Diversity Act, 2002

3.2.1 The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, although the term ‘wildlife corridor’ has not been defined, certain provisions implicitly address aspects relevant to corridors through the concepts of ‘Conservation Reserve’, ‘Community Reserve’ and ‘Tiger Reserve’.

In India, corridors are not formally recognised as a distinct category of protected areas. However, tiger conservation plans mandated under Section 38V of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, explicitly acknowledge corridor management alongside core and buffer zones. Section 38V requires state governments to prepare a Tiger Conservation Plan when notifying an area as a tiger reserve. The plan must ensure *“ecologically compatible land uses in the tiger reserves and areas linking one protected area to another, addressing livelihood concerns of local communities and providing dispersal habitats and corridors for spillover populations of wild animals from core tiger habitats or other protected areas.”* Despite this recognition, the term ‘corridor’ itself remains undefined under the Act.

Section 36A of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, *“empowers the state government, after consulting local communities, to declare any government-owned area, particularly those adjacent to national parks and sanctuaries or linking protected areas, as a Conservation Reserve, aimed to protect landscapes, seascapes, flora, fauna and their habitats”*. Conservation Reserves can be used as an effective tool to safeguard wildlife corridors and ecologically sensitive zones, considering the success stories of such reserves in Borgad and Chharidhandh [24].

Section 36C of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 provides for the *“declaration of Community Reserves on private or community lands not already included within national parks, sanctuaries or conservation reserves. This provision applies where communities or individuals volunteer to conserve wildlife and their habitats, thereby protecting fauna, flora and traditional or cultural conservation values and practices.”* Unlike Conservation Reserves, which can only be established on government-owned lands, Community Reserves allow for protection on community and privately held lands.

3.2.2 Eco-Sensitive Zones under the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986: The concept of Eco-Sensitive Zones (hereinafter referred to as ‘ESZs’) was introduced by the MoEF&CC while exercising its powers under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. ESZs are designated areas within a 10 kilometre radius of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries [25] [26]. The primary objective of ESZs is to regulate and manage activities around protected areas in order to minimise adverse environmental impacts on these

ecologically fragile ecosystems. ESZs serve as critical buffer zones that enhance the conservation of biodiversity and ecological integrity surrounding national parks and sanctuaries.

3.2.3 Biodiversity Heritage Sites under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002: Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, empowers state governments, in consultation with local bodies, to notify areas of ecological, biological, cultural or aesthetic significance as Biodiversity Heritage Sites (hereinafter referred as to ‘BHS’). However, it is pertinent to note that Section 37 does not impose automatic or blanket restrictions on developmental activities within these sites.

3.3 Limitations of the Existing Legal Framework

Despite multiple legal provisions across environmental legislations in India aimed at conserving wildlife and their habitats, the existing legal framework in India presents significant challenges when it comes to the effective recognition and protection of ‘wildlife corridors’. The declaration of ESZs is carried out through executive notifications, resulting in significant variability across states [27]. Furthermore, although Section 38V of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 includes a provision for ‘maintaining corridors’, the absence of a statutory definition creates ambiguity regarding the legal status, identification and management of wildlife corridors. Lastly, indirect mechanisms like Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves could be utilised to protect wildlife corridors. However, these provisions are discretionary and dependent on voluntary participation or initiative by the state government, rather than mandatory measures as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Comparative Table of existing legal provisions for corridor protection as published by WWF [28]

Zone	Legal Provision	Restriction on Development Activities
Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)	Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and allied rules/notifications	Partial restriction on development. Certain activities are prohibited, regulated, or permitted. Agriculture and small-scale development activities are generally allowed subject to conditions.
Community Reserve	Section 36C of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972	Restriction on change in land-use pattern after notification, except by a resolution passed by the management committee. Certain restrictions similar to those applicable in a sanctuary may be implemented.
	Section 36A of the	Partial restriction on development.

Conservation Reserve	Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972	Only government land can be declared as a conservation reserve. Certain restrictions similar to those in a sanctuary may be applied.
Biodiversity Heritage Site	Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002	No mandatory blanket restriction. The management committee may regulate development activities in consultation with local communities.

In light of the limitations of the existing legal framework and the consequential treatment of wildlife corridors as ‘subsidiary’ to protected areas, represents a critical oversight and legal lacunae, particularly in ecologically sensitive regions such as the Aravalli Range, where vital wildlife corridors connect forests, wetlands and other habitats. Many of these corridors lie outside formally notified zones. This issue, coupled with the issue of definitional ambiguity vis-à-vis the Aravalli Hills and Ranges across states, further undermines their legal protection.

4 Towards a ‘Landscape-Based’ Approach to Aravalli Conservation

4.1 Re-Conceptualising the Aravalli Ecosystem

The Aravalli Range is not merely a geological formation but a ‘living, functional landscape-based ecological system’ that sustains biodiversity, regulates climate and supports human livelihoods across north-western India. Narrow definitional approaches, treating land as forest, revenue or mining blocks, highlight the failure to understand and acknowledge the ecological complexity and continuity of the Aravalli ecosystem.

It is pertinent to note that the core issue is not actually what constitutes ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’. The Aravallis are already defined. It is a relic fold mountain running through Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and the NCT of Delhi. What needs to be defined, construed and regulated by the legislature and/or the judiciary is its land use.

In an attempt to regulate the activities being carried out in the Aravalli Hills and Ranges, while the Supreme Court of India acknowledged the need for a Management Plan for Sustainable Mining [1] in the *Aravalli Hills* decision, it did not mandate ‘species-specific impact assessments’ or evaluate seasonal migration patterns, thereby, overlooking the impact of its decision on the wildlife and its conservation in the Aravalli region.

The *Aravalli Hills* decision also highlights both the strengths and limitations of judicial environmentalism. Although the judiciary can formulate environmental norms to prevent and prohibit immediate ecological damage, it cannot, however, substitute for legislative action or administrative enforcement [29]. Sustainable protection of the

Aravalli ecosystem requires coordinated, ‘landscape-level governance’ that integrates legal clarity, scientific assessment and institutional accountability.

4.2 Suggestions for ‘Landscape-level’ Conservation of the Aravallis

In light of the *Aravalli Hills* decision by the Apex Court and the definition of ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’ provided by the FSI and the CEC, key suggestions for wildlife conservation, specifically in the Aravalli region, include:

4.2.1 Adopt a Statutory, ‘Landscape-Based’ Definition of Ecologically Sensitive Areas: Laws should recognise the Aravalli Hills, forests, wetlands, aquifers, wildlife corridors and buffer zones as a ‘single functional landscape-based ecological system’, interconnected with and interdependent on each other, rather than fragments defined by revenue, forest or mining categories.

4.2.2 Integrate Controls on Illegal Urbanisation and Encroachment: A major drawback of the *Aravalli Hills* decision by the Apex Court is the lack of redressal of issues apart from illegal mining activities, which contribute to the overall degradation of the Aravallis, like rapid urbanisation in the NCR and illegal encroachments. Legal regulatory frameworks must also address these sources of Aravalli degradation.

4.2.3 Mandate ‘Landscape-Level’ Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs): To effectively understand the environmental implications of any development project, EIA regimes must move beyond project-specific assessments to cumulative, ‘landscape-level’ evaluations, especially in ecologically fragile regions like the Aravallis, taking into account biodiversity, wildlife corridors, groundwater recharge and long-term ecological connectivity.

4.2.4 Legally Recognise and Protect Wildlife Corridors Beyond Protected Areas: The existing legislation in India, specifically, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, should be amended to introduce a separate legal category for ‘wildlife corridors’ and ecological linkages, with mandatory restrictions on mining, infrastructure development and urban expansion. This would safeguard the movement of wide-ranging species, not just tigers and elephants, and contribute to maintaining landscape-based connectivity. The following definition can be included, by virtue of an amendment, to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972-

“Wildlife corridors mean a habitat linkage that joins two or more areas of wildlife habitat, allowing movement of wildlife from one area to another.”
(The Wildlife Corridors Bill, 2019, § 2)

This definition of wildlife corridor has been proposed under Section 2 of The Wildlife Corridors Bill, 2019, a private-members bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2019. The Bill also talks about constituting a Central ‘Wildlife Corridors Identification Board’ (The Wildlife Corridors Bill, 2019, § 3) to identify areas in every state, which would be developed as exclusive wildlife

corridors. The Bill also proposes restrictions on certain activities, namely (The Wildlife Corridors Bill, 2019, § 5)-

- a) Using the wildlife corridors;
- b) Constructing any building in or near the wildlife corridors;
- c) Cutting any tree in the wildlife corridors;
- d) Riding any vehicle within one kilometer on either side of the wildlife corridors;
- e) Setting fire or using any firecracker in or near the wildlife corridors; and
- f) Using any firearms in or near the wildlife corridors

It is pertinent to note that a separate legislation on the protection of the wildlife corridors is not required, if an amendment can be made to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which acts as an umbrella legislation for providing protection of all species of wildlife in India. Since legal recognition and protection of ‘wildlife corridors’ is a mechanism towards the objective of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, amendments can be made to incorporate a legal definition and providing specific protections to such wildlife corridors.

5 Conclusion

The Aravalli Hills issue highlights the imminent need for a landscape-level, ecologically coherent approach to environmental governance. Protecting the Aravalli Hills and Ranges requires moving beyond fragmented land-use categories, integrating scientific and legal tools, and ensuring administrative and community participation. Only by recognising the Aravalli as a ‘connected ecological system’, where hills, forests, wetlands, aquifers and corridors are mutually interdependent and interconnected, can India ensure the long-term conservation of its biodiversity, ecological resilience and human well-being in this critical landscape, thereby fulfilling its obligations under Sustainable Development Goal 15 (Life on Land).

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