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Geography

Zambia

Zambia is a landlocked country in south-central Africa, formerly called Northern Rhodesia.
• **Named after** - The Zambezi River.
• **Economy depends** - heavily on mining and exporting metals.
• **Located -** Situated on a high plateau, Zambia shares borders with eight countries, including the DR Congo, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.
• Most people live near the "Line of Rail," a vital railway connecting the capital, Lusaka, to the mining regions.
• **Minerals -** The country is famous for the **Copperbelt**. It is a top producer of copper, used in electronics, and cobalt, which is essential for electric vehicle batteries and smartphones.
• **Geography -** Zambia features the massive Victoria Falls and deep lakes like Tanganyika.
• Its landscape is split between the Congo and Zambezi river basins, creating rich wetlands like the Bangweulu Swamps.
• **Katangan Complex -** This ancient rock formation is the source of Zambia's immense mineral wealth. These 620-million-year-old rocks contain the copper and cobalt deposits that drive the national economy.
• **Global Importance -** Zambia is a key partner for countries like India. By securing long-term mining rights, India hopes to supply its green energy industry with the critical minerals needed for a sustainable future.

Hindu Kush Range

Hindu Kush is a formidable 800-kilometer-long mountain system in Central and South Asia. Part of the Alpine-Himalayan belt, it is among the world's most seismically active regions.
• **Regional Span -** The range stretches across eight nations, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.
• It merges with the Pamir Knot in the east and transitions into Iranian hills to the west.
• **Tectonic Origins -** Formed by the ongoing collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates, the landscape is defined by major fault lines. This makes the region prone to frequent, deep-seated earthquakes.
• **Physical Geography -** With peaks like Tirich Mir exceeding 7,000 meters, the terrain is rugged and jagged.
• These mountains serve as a massive watershed for the Amu Darya and Indus rivers.
• **Historic Passages -** Famous routes like the Khyber and Salang passes have historically connected civilizations.
• These narrow gaps served as vital gateways for ancient trade and military invasions.
• **Global Significance -** The range is a crucial water tower. Its glaciers and snowmelt provide life-sustaining water for agriculture and hydroelectric power to millions of people across the surrounding dry plains.

Azerbaijan

It is a transcontinental nation at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia.

• Known as the **"Land of Fire"** for its ancient gas seeps, it is the largest country in the Caucasus region.

• **Bordered by** - The Caspian Sea to the east, Azerbaijan shares land boundaries with Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and Iran. Its exclave, Nakhchivan, also touches Turkey to the west.

• **Mountainous Landscape -** The country is defined by the Greater Caucasus Mountains in the north and the Lesser Caucasus in the west. These ranges offer rugged terrain and high, snow-capped peaks.

• **Unique Geology -** Azerbaijan houses nearly half of the world's mud volcanoes, which erupt with methane and cold mud. The central Kura-Aras Lowland provides fertile plains between the mountain ranges.

• **Energy Wealth -** Sitting on massive hydrocarbon deposits in the Caspian basin, the nation is a global energy hub. Its oil and gas reserves are vital for European and Indian energy security.

• **Strategic Connectivity -** Azerbaijan is a key link in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

• This route connects India to Russia and Europe via Iran, drastically cutting global shipping times.

Algeria

Algeria is a North African nation and the largest country in Africa and the Arab world. Known as a gateway between Africa and Europe, it has a rich history and a vital Mediterranean coastline.

• **Bordering Nations -** Located in the Maghreb region.

• **Shares borders** - With 7 neighbours, including Tunisia and Libya to the east, Niger and Mali to the south, and Morocco to the northwest.

• **Sahara Desert -** Covers over **80%** of Algeria's territory.

• This vast desert dominates the southern landscape, though it is home to the dramatic volcanic peaks of the Ahaggar Mountains.

• **Mountains -** In the north, the Atlas Mountains run in parallel ranges. Between them lie high plateaus, while the fertile "Tell" coastal strip houses the majority of the country's population.

• **Energy –** It is a global leader in oil and natural gas production. It also provides essential phosphates and urea, which are critical for supporting India's agricultural sector and food security.

• **Growing Partnership -** India and Algeria are cooperating in pharmaceuticals, mining, and joint efforts to combat global terrorism.

Chokramudi Hills

It is one of the highest and most fragile peaks in Munnar, Kerala. Recently reclaimed from illegal construction.

• **Vital part** of the Western Ghats, featuring unique high-altitude "shola-grassland" ecosystems.

• **A Rare Floral Habitat -** These hills are a primary home for the **Neelakurinji** flower. This rare plant is famous for its mass flowering, which covers the hillsides in vibrant purple only once every 12 years.

• **Ecosystem -** The peak is covered in montane grasslands that act like a sponge, absorbing rainwater to feed downstream valleys. Its proximity to Eravikulam National Park creates a natural corridor for migrating wildlife.

• **Nilgiri Tahr -** Is a sturdy, mountain goat-like animal and the state animal of Tamil Nadu. It is the only goat-antelope species found in tropical India **and is currently endangered**.

• **Living on the Edge -** These agile climbers live on steep, rocky cliffs to escape predators like leopards. They prefer open grasslands mixed with shola forests and are found only in a small stretch of the Western Ghats.

• **Characteristics -** Adult males, known as **Saddlebacks**, are darker than females and have a light-coloured patch on their backs. Both sexes have backward-curved horns and live in social groups called droves.

Aghanashini–Vedavathi

Aghanashini–Vedavathi project aims to link two different river systems. Because this involves sensitive areas, UNESCO has urged India to follow strict conservation rules to protect natural heritage.

• **Aghanashini River** - Is a rare, pristine river in Karnataka. It is "free-flowing," meaning it has no large dams or heavy pollution. It starts in the Sirsi forests and flows west into the Arabian Sea.

• **Vedavati River - F**lows east through the dry regions of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. It is formed by two streams, the Veda and the Avati, which meet in the Bababudangiri mountains.

• **River Pathways -** While the Aghanashini flows directly into the sea, the Vedavati is a major tributary. It joins the Tungabhadra River, which eventually feeds into the massive Krishna River basin.

• **Geographic Origins -** Both rivers begin in the Western Ghats of Karnataka but travel in opposite directions.

• The Aghanashini drains into the Indian Ocean's west coast, while the Vedavati serves the eastern plateau.

• **Environmental Importance -** Linking these rivers is controversial because the Aghanashini is an ecological treasure. Protecting its undammed flow is vital for maintaining the unique biodiversity of India’s west coast.

Economy

Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust (RIIT)

RIIT is like a mutual fund for roads. It is a special investment group that owns completed National Highways and is now listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange.

• **How it Works -** The trust collects money from investors to buy income-generating highways from the NHAI. A dedicated management team then handles the daily operations and toll collection for these roads.

• **Investor Returns -** RIIT is designed to provide steady, long-term income. By law, it must distribute at least 90% of its net cash earnings back to its investors as dividends.

• **Public Participation -** Previously, only big banks could invest in highways. Now, this listing allows everyday retail investors to own a share of India’s infrastructure and profit from its growth.

• **Building the Future -** By selling these finished roads to the trust, the government gets immediate cash. This money is then used to build new expressways without relying solely on the national budget.

Environment

Humpback Whale

Is a massive sea mammal and one of Earth's largest animals.

• **Known for** - Their "songs" and for jumping out of the water, a behavior called breaching.

• **Global Habitat -** These whales live in all major oceans. They make incredible journeys, traveling up to 16,000 miles every year between cold feeding areas and warm tropical waters where they breed.

• **Distinctive Looks -** Humpbacks have long side fins and bumpy heads. Their tails have unique black-and-white patterns, much like a human fingerprint, which helps scientists tell different individual whales apart.

• **Feeding Habits -** As filter feeders, they use baleen plates to catch tiny shrimp and fish. They sometimes blow bubbles in a circle to trap their food, a clever trick called bubble-net feeding.

• **Complex Songs -** Male humpbacks sing long, beautiful songs that can last 20 minutes. These songs can be heard for miles underwater and actually change and evolve over time.

• **Ocean Health -** Humpbacks are vital to the planet. They help move nutrients through the ocean and store carbon in their bodies, which helps fight climate change when they die and sink.

Security

INS Aridhaman

INS Aridhaman is India's third indigenous nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN).

• **Developed under** - The Advanced Technology Vessel project, it is designed to launch nuclear missiles from underwater, strengthening India's maritime defense.

• **Strategic Goals -** The submarine completes India's nuclear triad, allowing weapon launches from land, air, and sea.

• It ensures a guaranteed retaliatory strike, supporting India's **"No First Use" nuclear policy** while countering naval threats in the Indian Ocean.

• **Enhanced Firepower -** Aridhaman is larger than its predecessors, featuring eight launch tubes. It can carry either eight K-4 missiles (3,500 km range) or twenty-four K-15 missiles (750 km range), doubling the strike capacity of the INS Arihant.

• **Propulsion -** Powered by an 83 MW nuclear reactor, the vessel can stay submerged for months. Its endurance is limited only by food supplies, making it nearly impossible for adversaries to track.

• **Technological Upgrades -** This vessel represents a major leap in domestic engineering.

• It features superior sonar, advanced communication systems, and indigenous stealth technologies that make it quieter and more effective than earlier models.

• **Global Significance -** With this induction, India solidifies its place among an elite group of nations—including the **US, Russia, and China**—capable of operating a full nuclear triad, ensuring a credible deterrent against any first strike.

Miscellaneous

Force Majeure

Force majeure is a legal clause that lets a person or company pause their contract duties without penalty. It applies when an extreme, unexpected event makes it impossible to finish a task.

• **Meaning and Origin -** The term is French for "superior force." It is a standard part of global trade and shipping laws used to handle major disruptions.

• **Goal -** It provides legal protection during "Acts of God" or "Acts of Man." This prevents businesses from being sued for failures caused by things they cannot control, like war.

• **Unforeseen Events -** To use this clause, the event must be impossible to predict and come from an outside source. Simply having higher costs is not enough; the task must be truly impossible.

• **Required Actions -** Companies must officially notify their partners immediately. They must also prove they tried every reasonable way to deliver their goods before giving up.

• **Global Impact -** In the energy sector, this allows countries to stop oil or gas shipments during crises. It helps prevent legal fights while the world deals with unexpected chaos.

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