Syllabus subtopic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Prelims and Mains focus: about the judgement and its significance; Mining and its harmful impact on the environment

News: The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered that mining lease holders should be held responsible for regrassing mined areas, so that biodiversity gets a second chance in these scarred landscapes.

About the Judgement

- A Bench led by Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde ordered the government to include re-grassing of mined areas as a mandatory condition in every mining lease, environmental clearance and mining plan across the country.

- The government was ordered to file an action taken report in three weeks. The Bench also directed the government to devise methods to ensure compliance by mining lease holders. The cost of regrassing the mined area and wherever damage was caused, would be entirely borne by the licence holder.

- The mandatory regrassing would be in addition to the other conditions imposed on the licence holder in the mine closure plan, to restore biodiversity.

Environmental impacts of mining

Environmental issues caused by mining include erosion, formation of sinkholes, loss of biodiversity, and contamination of soil, groundwater and surface water by chemicals from mining processes, and the effects persist for years.
Conclusion

An area which is mined results in complete elimination of grass, which in turn denies fodder to the herbivores. The only solution can be regrassing of such mined areas. It is not in dispute that regrassing technology is available in India.

Note: to read more about the mining sector in India, click on the link below: