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Q5

What are non-farm primary activities? How are these activities related to physiographic features in India? Discuss with suitable examples.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · GS I · 10 marks · World's Physical Geography

Salient features of world's physical geography.

Core demand of the question

- **Define non-farm primary activities:** mining, quarrying, fishing, forestry, animal husbandry where it is extractive
- Tie each to Indian physiography with mapped examples
- Keep them distinct from secondary manufacturing

Revision summary

Non-farm primary work takes minerals, fish, forest produce and pastoral products from nature.

Mining in India clusters on the **Chota Nagpur** and central Indian plateaus because that is where the ore is.

Fisheries follow the western and eastern shelves and the delta lagoons.

Forestry and pastoralism follow rain, slope and grass from the Ghats and Northeast to Rajasthan and the Himalaya.

These are extractive livelihoods, not factory jobs.

Introduction

Primary activities take things **from nature** before a factory reshapes them. Farming is the obvious one. **Non-farm primary work is the rest of that first layer: mines, quarries, forests, livestock ranches and the sea. In India each of these sits on a physical stage - a plateau, a coast, a mountain - which is why physiography is not a decoration on the answer.**

Body**What counts**

Mining and quarrying pull ore and stone from the crust. **Fishing and aquaculture** harvest rivers and seas. **Forestry** takes timber, fuelwood, lac and resin. **Hunting** is now marginal and mostly illegal. **Animal husbandry** is primary when it lives off pasture and fodder rather than a meat factory (the factory would be secondary). These are not "rural side jobs" in the census sense of a farmer driving a tractor to town. They are **extractive livelihoods**.

Mapped onto Indian land and water

The **Chota Nagpur plateau** and the **Dandakaranya-Bastar** belt hold coal, iron, bauxite and manganese because ancient cratons and Gondwana basins stored them. Jharkhand, Odisha,

Chhattisgarh and parts of Madhya Pradesh are mining states for that geological reason, not by accident of policy alone. **Kolar** and the Deccan schists tell an older gold story. **Makrana** marble sits in the Aravallis of Rajasthan. The **Himalaya** offers limestone, slate and, in pockets, magnesite; it also makes mining a landslide risk.

Western and eastern coasts shape fisheries. The **Kerala-Karnataka** shelf and the **Odisha-Andhra** coast feed artisanal and mechanised fleets. The **Sundarbans** and the **Chilika** lagoon are brackish worlds of crab and fish tied to delta and monsoon. Inland, the **Ganga** and **Brahmaputra** still support river fishers, though dams and pollution have cut the catch.

Forests follow rainfall and relief. The **Western Ghats**, **Northeast hills** and **Central Indian** sal belt are timber and non-timber zones. Pine and deodar belong to the **Himalayan** slope. **Pastoralism follows grass: Bakkarwal** and **Gaddi** movements in the western Himalaya, **Raika** camels on the Rajasthan arid margin, and cattle on the **Deccan** plateau where rain-fed pasture survives.

Physiography does not freeze destiny. A port can industrialise a coast. But the **first location** of a mine or a fishing harbour is still a map of rock, rain and shelf.

Flow diagram

Peninsular plateau
Chota Nagpur coal iron
Deccan livestock stone
Coasts
Kerala-Karnataka fishery
Odisha-Andhra fishery
Hills
Western Ghats forest
Himalaya pasture timber
Arid west
Rajasthan marble pastoralism

Conclusion

Non-farm primary activities are mining, fishing, forestry and pastoral extraction. In India they sit on plateaus of ore, coasts of fish, wet forests and dry grass. The physiographic map is the first page of their geography.

Facts & figures

Chota Nagpur

A plateau store of Gondwana coal and iron-bearing rocks that still structures eastern India's mining belt.

Chilika

A coastal lagoon in Odisha whose fishery depends on a monsoon connection between river and sea.

Western Ghats

A UNESCO biodiversity slope that is also a timber and plantation edge of peninsular India.

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