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Q58

In India, the steel production industry requires the import of (a) saltpetre (b) rock phosphate (c) coking coal (d) All of the above
Official key: C.

UPSC Civil Services Prelims 2015 · General Studies · 2 marks · Geography

Physical, Indian and world geography - Prelims GS Paper I.

Explanation

(a)

Saltpetre is potassium nitrate, used historically in gunpowder and in some fertilisers. It is not a feedstock the Indian steel industry must import. This option is not the key.

(b)

Rock phosphate is a fertiliser raw material. Steelmaking does not rest on imported **rock phosphate**. This option is therefore wrong.

(c) Official key

Indian blast-furnace steel needs metallurgical (coking) coal to make **coke**. Domestic coking-coal quantity and quality are inadequate, so the industry imports coking coal. This option is the official key.

(d)

All of the above would be true only if saltpetre and **rock phosphate** were also steel-import needs. They are not. This option is not the key.

Summary

Official key is (c) coking coal. Integrated steel plants depend on **coke** from coking coal, which India imports in large volume. Saltpetre and **rock phosphate** belong to explosives and fertiliser chemistry, not to the steel import basket asked here. 'All of the above' therefore fails. Only coking coal matches the industry's import requirement.

Related possible facts

These can be asked in a future Prelims paper.

Coke

Reductant and heat source in the blast furnace, made from coking coal

Indian coking coal

Limited reserves, often high ash; imports from Australia and elsewhere

Iron ore

India is largely self-sufficient in iron ore for steel

PCI

Pulverised coal injection can reduce coke rate but does not remove coking-coal need

Rock phosphate

Imported mainly for phosphatic fertilisers (DAP, SSP)

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