Introduction

The importance of Salem in South India for a person looking at the environment critically cannot be understood unless one visits the area. The city and it's suburbs are surrounded by hills and one can find all the three stages of mining in the region.

Therefore from a mining activists perspective it is a good area to visit so that a person gets a picture of all the stages of mining and it's effects on the local environment. I would recommend a compulsory visit to Salem for anyone concerned with the way we use our natural resources especially minerals. In this area one will get to meet people who do not want any new mines, people who are out of job due to closure of mines and people who are effected by existing mines. A careful study of this area will convince anyone about the importance of health of the hills is wealth of the plains as the hills of Yercad are the catchment of the plains and the flow of hill streams is towards the plains where there is abundant agriculture and the city of Salem has many lakes.

A visit to kanjamalia and goodamali also reinforce the same as the villages are situated as a garland around the hills and each hill has many perennial stream that act as source of water for agriculture and human consumption and when one travels on the road connecting the villages around the hills - large wells that are used to pump water for drinking can be found.

It is similar to the bauxite hills of Eastern ghats.

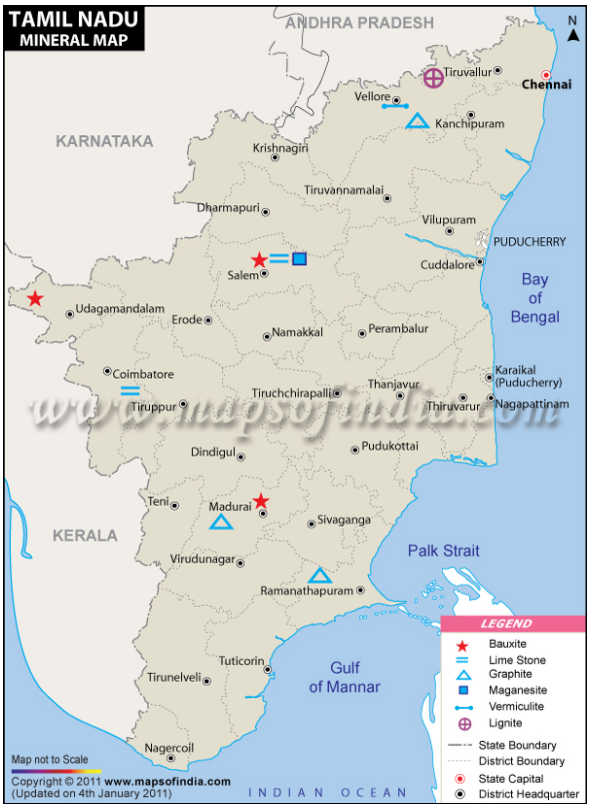
Some of the main sites are as follows:-

The bauxite mines of Malco / Vedanta in the hills of yerkad
The abounded magnesite mines of TANMAG
The proposed iron ore mines in kanjamalia, goodamali

More About Salem and Mining in Salem

Salem is a part of Western Tamil Nadu and is located at the base of the popular tourist destination of the Yercaud hills. The city of Salem is surrounded by hills on all sides viz. Nagaramalai to the north, Jarugumalai to the south, Kanjamalai to the west, Godumalai to the east and the Shevaroy Hills to the north east. The Kariyaperumal Hill is situated within the city to the southwest. The Thirumanimuthar river flows through the city, dividing it into 2 parts.

Salem is one of the major producers of traditional silver anklets, which are popular among women. It boasts large textile, steel, automotive, poultry and sago industries. Salem also has one of the largest magnesite deposits in India. Companies like Dalmia and TANMAG have mines here. It has also got rich bauxite & mineral reserves. The Leigh Bazaar market is a large regional market for agro products. It also has rich industrial base with the Salem steel plant, SISCOL, MALCO, CHEMPLAST and the Thermal & Hydel power plant at Mettur contribute towards power supply to the state. The Salem Steel Plant exports stainless steel to other countries.



As per the Department of Geology and Mining, a major part of the mineral wealth of Tamil Nadu is confined to Salem District, where a variety of important minerals like Magnesite, Dunite, Bauxite, Limestone, Iron ore, Quartz, Feldspar and Soapstone, Granites etc, are found. There are 83 Major Mineral mines, 108 Black & Colour granite quarries and 35 Roughstone quarries in Salem District.

MAGNESITE:

The most prominent deposit of Magnesite is located in Chalk hills of Salem over an area of 17 Sq. Kms and estimated to be 44 million tonnes. This is used by Burn & Co, TANMAG, TATA Refractories, Dalmia and Ramakrishna Magnesite for the manufacture of dead burnt Magnesite and calcined Magnesite.

BAUXITE:

In Shevaroy Hills of Yercaud taluk,sSix Bauxite occurrence are known in Semmaduvu, Manjakuttai and Puliyur villages. The Bauxite is being exploited by MALCO for their aluminium plant at Mettur Dam.

LIMESTONE:

The crystalline limestone or Precambrian age are main occurrence in Sankari Taluk which are exploited for the production of Cement by India Cements Limited, Sankari west.

IRON ORE:

Iron ore deposits in Salem District are very extensive though of low grade. The deposits lie in Kanjamalai and Goodamalai area.

QUARTZ AND FELDSPAR:

Quartz and Feldspar deposits are reported in various places in Sankari, Omalur, Mettur and Edppady taluk.

SOAPSTONE:

Soapstone occurs as an alternative product of ultramafic rocks at a number of places from Periyasoragai, Aranganur, Tholasampatty, Marakottai and Kongupatty of Omalur Taluk.

DIMENSIONAL STONES:

Dolerite dyke rocks (Black granite) are occurred in various parts of the district. Paithur, Seeliampatty manjini, Umayalpuram in Attur Taluk, Yellikaradu, Sampalli Kannamoochi and Anthiyur in Mettur Taluk. The Colour granites are occurred in Edappadi which are extensively quarried for building ornamental purposes.

BUILDING STONE:

Charnockite is locally used as building stones and road matals.

As per Mines and Minerals (Development and regulation) Act 1957 and Mineral Concession rules, 1960, mining leases are being granted for Major Minerals in Patta land, Poramboke lands by the Government and by the Commissioner of Geology and Mining, Chennai. As per Tamil Nadu Minor Mineral Concession Rules, 1959 quarry leases for minor minerals are being granted by Government and Collector, in Patta and Poramboke lands.

The Primary function of the Geology and Mining Department is the Mineral Administration such as collection of Mineral Revenue from both Major and Minor Minerals, curtailing the illicit mining / quarrying and illegal transportation of mineral.