FWD ▶

FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST

FORTUNE IAS ACADEMY

> Ganga River Pollution

> Food Regulation

> Manipur Issue

FWD
FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST

EDITOR'S NOTE

As UPSC aspirants, it is essential to stay updated on current affairs to excel in the examination. This **Fortune Weekly Digest (ForWarD)** brings you the latest news and developments from around the world, carefully curated and analyzed to help you prepare for the Civil Services (Main) Examination.

We understand that time is precious, and we have made sure to present the information in a concise and easy-to-understand manner.

The magazine is divided into different sections. Mains relevant topics have been covered in detail with a UPSC previous year question perspective. The jot downs are examples and interesting facts to enrich your answer writing. Cherrypicks has some key words from the week, helpful again in answer writing and essay. We have also included essay topics and sample questions to help you guage your preparation.

We have designed this magazine to best supplement the daily current affairs notes we have launched by the name of **FIND (Fortune IAS News Daily)** and **FINDER (Fortune IAS News Daily Explainer)** and the **Fortune Prelims Precise** monthly compilation. This magazine will be explained in detail and your queries addressed in a live class we conduct.

At a time when there is no dearth of current affairs materials, our hope is help you get a one-stop solution for all your current affairs needs.

This magazine is a work in progress and your feedback will be appreciated.

We hope that this magazine will serve as a valuable resource for your exam preparation and contribute to your success in the UPSC examination.

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INEQUALITY IN INDIA

> Syllabus: GS II - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *Capitalism has guided the world economy to unprecedented prosperity. However, it often encourages shortsightedness and contributes to wide disparities between the rich and the poor. In this light, would it be correct to believe and adopt capitalism driving inclusive growth in India? Discuss* **(2014)**

Q) *Comment on the challenges for inclusive growth which include careless and useless manpower in the Indian context. Suggest measures to be taken for facing these challenges* **(2016)**

Q) *Is inclusive growth possible under market economy? State the significance of financial inclusion in achieving economic growth in India.* **(2022)**

Q) *Can the vicious cycle of gender inequality, poverty and malnutrition be broken through microfinancing of women SHGs? Explain with examples.* **(2021)**

SHORT TAKES

Tools and Technique:

➢ **Lorenz Curve:** It plots the **cumulative percentage** of income against the cumulative percentage of the population.

- The **Lorenz curve** would coincide with the **45-degree line** if income were perfectly equal.

- The further the Lorenz curve **deviates from the line, the greater the inequality.**

➢ **Gini Coefficient:** The Gini coefficient is a **numerical measure of income inequality** based on the Lorenz curve.

It ranges from **0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality).** A higher Gini coefficient **indicates a higher level of income inequality.**

WHY IN NEWS?

The Congress's party's election manifesto, the **Nyay Patra**, has triggered a debate on inequality, concentration of wealth and the measures to address these.

INTRODUCTION

Rising inequality in India has reached concerning levels, with a significant share of national income in 2022-23 going to the **top 1%,** a situation that underscores the urgent need to address the consequences of unequal growth.

ISSUES

● **Wealth Inequality:**

» According to the **World Inequality Database**, in 2022-23, the t**op 1% in India earned 22.6% of the national income**, the highest since **1922**, and held **40.1% of the country's wealth.** This is worse than the colonial rule.

● **Taxation and Redistribution:**

» **Tax-GDP Ratio:** India has a **low tax-GDP ratio** compared to other middle-income countries (**17% in India vs. 25% in Brazil**). It is a measure of a country's ability to generate resources for development.

» **Regressive Tax Structure: Indirect taxes** make up nearly **two-thirds** of all tax revenue collection, contributing to regressiveness.

- **Tax Burden**: Approximately **64%** of the total goods and services tax (**GST**) in the country came from the **bottom 50%** of the population, while only **4% came from the top 10%**

» **Progressiveness of Direct Taxes: Direct taxes** in India are not very progressive. Companies with **over ₹500 crore profit** before taxes have an effective tax rate of **19.14%**, while those with **0-₹1 crore profit** have a rate of **24.82%.**

● **The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2023:** The FAO report says that around **74% of India's population could not afford a healthy diet**, and **39% fell short of a nutrient-adequate one.**

● **According to Global Hunger Index 2023:** India's 2023 **GHI** score is **28.7**, considered serious according to the GHI Severity of Hunger Scale.

» **India's child-wasting rate, at 18.7**, is the **highest** child-wasting rate in the report.

● **Gender Inequality:** India was ranked **127th out of 146 countries** in the **2023 Global Gender Gap Report**, indicating a significant

issue with "missing women" in the workforce.

- **Low Welfare Spending:**

  » **Low Public Spending:** India's public spending on welfare is low, with **health expenditure at 1.3% of GDP**, far from the **National Health Policy's 2.5% target by 2025.**

  » **Decline in Welfare Programs**: Major budgetary allocations for social programs like **MGNREGA, education, and children's welfare** have decreased as a proportion of total expenditure or GDP.

    - Example, FY24 budget for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (**MGNREGA**) scheme allocated ₹60,000 crore, which was **18% lower than the FY23 budget** estimates of ₹73,000 crore.

- **Jobless Growth:**

  » According to the **International Labour Organization's (ILO) India Employment Report 2024,** youth (15-29) **unemployment rate** has been rising over the past several decades: from **5.6 per cent in 2000 to 6.2 percent in 2012**, and then increasing threefold, to nearly **18 per cent in 2019**, and then dropping to around **15.1 per cent in 2020**

INHERITANCE TAX

🌀 Inheritance tax is a tax **paid for inheriting a property or asset from a deceased person.**

🌀 It is levied on the value of the inheritance received by the beneficiary, and it is **paid by the beneficiary.**

🌀 **Historical Context:**

» **Estate Duty Act, 1953**: India had an estate duty (a form of inheritance tax) that was introduced in 1953. This tax was levied on the total value of the estate left by a deceased person. However, the **Estate Duty Act was abolished** in 1985 due to administrative difficulties and concerns about its impact on wealth accumulation and investment.

🌀 Although India does not have a direct inheritance tax, inheriting assets can have other tax implications:

» **Capital Gains Tax:**

  - Inheritance itself is **not taxable**, but if the inherited asset is **later sold, capital gains tax may apply.**

  - The cost basis for calculating capital gains is typically the asset's value at the time of the original owner's death (step-up in basis), which can be beneficial for heirs.

» **Stamp Duty and Registration:**

  - If real estate or other properties are transferred due to inheritance, heirs may need to **pay stamp duty** and **registration fees.**

  - These are **state-specific charges** for registering the property in the new owner's name.

» **Income Tax:**

  - Any income generated from inherited assets, such as rental income or dividends, is subject to income tax as per the heir's tax bracket.

IMPACTS

IMPACT ON EDUCATION:

▼ **Access to Education:** The **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)** demonstrates unequal access to higher education, with **lower enrollment** rates among **marginalised groups and rural populations.**

HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES

▼ **Healthcare Access:** The **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)** reveals significant disparities in healthcare access, with rural and lower-income populations facing greater barriers.

  - These disparities **affect maternal and child health, nutrition, and life expectancy.**

▼ **Out-of-Pocket Expenditure:** Data from the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** indicates high out-of-pocket healthcare expenses, which disproportionately impact lower-income groups, leading to financial stress and reduced healthcare access.

REGIONAL INEQUALITIES

▼ **Urban-Rural Divide:** The **National Sample Survey** data illustrates the urban-rural divide, with **rural areas** often having **lower income levels, reduced access to basic services, and limited employment opportunities.**
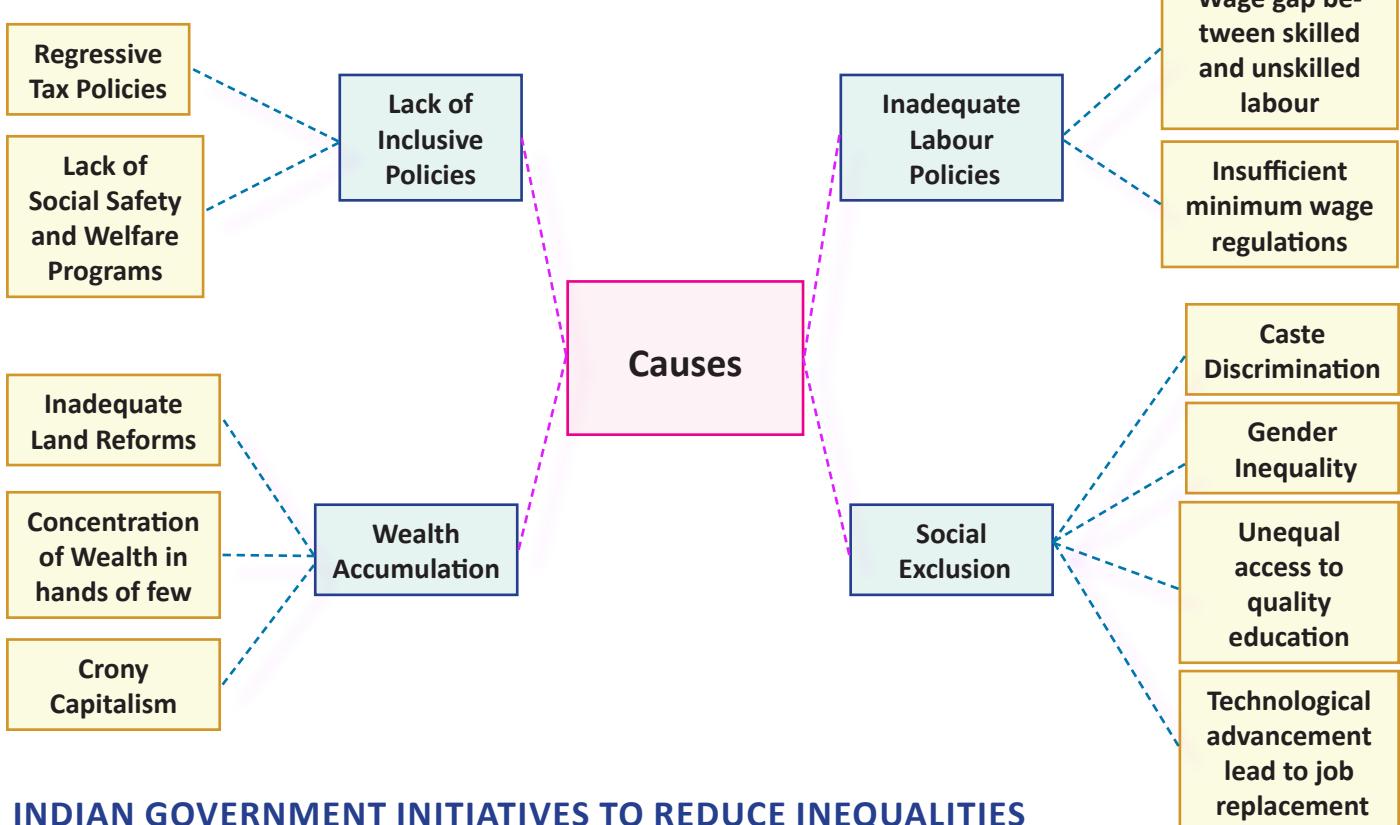
▼ **Interstate Disparities:** Government data shows significant economic disparities among Indian states, with some states experiencing higher growth and others lagging in terms of economic development and social indicators.

SOCIAL IMPACT:

▼ **Social unrest:** The rising inequality has contributed to **social tensions and unrest**, with increased protests and demands for social justice.

▼ **Political Participation:** Inequality affects **political participation**, with lower voter turnout among marginalised groups, impacting democratic representation and governance.

CAUSES

| Regressive Tax Policies | |
| Lack of Social Safety and Welfare Programs | → Lack of Inclusive Policies |

Wage gap between skilled and unskilled labour
Insufficient minimum wage regulations
→ Inadequate Labour Policies

Causes

Inadequate Land Reforms	
Concentration of Wealth in hands of few	→ Wealth Accumulation
Crony Capitalism	

Social Exclusion
- Caste Discrimination
- Gender Inequality
- Unequal access to quality education
- Technological advancement lead to job replacement

INDIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO REDUCE INEQUALITIES

Direct Redistribution measures
- Programs like the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi** (**PM-KISAN**) provide direct cash transfer to farmers.
- The **PDS** provides subsidized food grains to eligible households.

Progressive Tax Policies
- Tax reforms:introduction of **additional tax brackets for high-income earners**

Welfare Programmes
- Examples:**MGNREGA** and Social Security initiatives like **Atal Pension Yojana**

Educational and Skill Development
- **Right to Education Act (RTE)** ensures **free and compulsory education** for children **aged 6 to 14**
- **Skill India Mission** provide skill development and vocational training to millions of youth

Health Care initiatives
- **National Health Mission** and **Ayushman Bharath PM Jan Arogya Yojana**

Gender Equality Initiatives
- Programmes like **Beti Bachao Beti Padao**
- **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act** provides for **26 weeks** of paid maternity leave promoting women's participation in the workforce.

Regional Development Programme

- **Niti Aayog's Aspirational District Program** which focuses on the development of India's most backward districts
- **Special Category States** - They receive extra government funding to reduce regional disparities and promote **inclusive development.**

WAY FORWARD TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC FOUNDATION

✳ **Progressive Tax Policies**

» **Broaden the Tax Base:** Expanding the tax base to include more **high-income earners and corporations is crucial.**

- Data shows that **few Indians pay income tax** but improving compliance and closing loopholes can boost revenue.

» **Increase Direct Taxes:**

- **Direct taxes** like income tax and corporate tax are usually **more progressive than indirect taxes.**
- Focusing on **direct taxes can reduce inequality.**

✳ **Strengthen Social Welfare Programs**

» **Expand MGNREGA:** Increasing the scope of MGNREGA can provide more employment opportunities in rural areas.

» **Enhance Social Security:**

- Programs like the **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM)** and the **Atal Pension Yojana (APY)** should be expanded to cover more unorganised sector workers.

✳ **Invest in Education and Skill Development**

» **Strengthen Right to Education (RTE):**

- Improving the implementation of RTE can **increase school enrollment and quality of education.**
- According to the **Ministry of Education**, although enrollment has improved, there are **still gaps in learning outcomes.**

» **Expand Skill India Mission:**

- Continued investment in **skill development programs** is crucial for preparing youth for the job market.

✳ **Increase Public Health Spending**

» **Achieve National Health Policy Targets**: The **National Health Policy** aims to increase public health spending to **2.5% of GDP by 2025.**

» **Strengthen Ayushman Bharat**: Expanding this program's coverage and ensuring better access to healthcare facilities can reduce healthcare-related inequalities.

✳ **Promote Gender Equality**

» **Enhance Maternity Benefits**: Providing greater support for working mothers, including childcare facilities and extended maternity leave, can promote **gender equality in the workforce.**

- Data from the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** shows a positive impact from recent **maternity benefit amendments.**

✳ **Support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**

» **Provide Financial Support:** Expanding access to **credit and financial support** can drive SME growth and generate more jobs.

» **Promote Labor-Intensive Industries:**

- **Supporting industries** that are **labour-intensive** can create more employment opportunities. This shift can help **reduce unemployment** and income inequality.

✳ **Strengthen Regional Development Programs**

» **Focus on Infrastructure and Connectivity**: **Investing in infrastructure**, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas, can drive economic growth and reduce regional disparities.

✳ **Promote Inclusive Governance and Political Participation**

» **Enhance Democratic Participation:**

- Ensuring that all groups have a **voice in governance** can help address inequality.

- Encouraging **voter registration and participation** in elections is crucial.

- **Election Commission** data shows **lower voter turnout among marginalised groups**, indicating a need for increased engagement.

» **Ensure Policy Representation:** Involving marginalised groups in the policy-making process can lead to more equitable outcomes.

» **Private Sector Engagement:** Encourage **corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives** that focus on inclusive development.

- Encourage **private companies** to invest in social sectors and **support community development projects.**

✳ **Social and Financial Inclusion:**

» **Land Reforms:** Implement **land reforms** to address issues of **land ownership and tenancy**. Ensure fair and equitable distribution of land resources.

» **Promoting Civil Society:** Provide a greater voice to traditionally oppressed and suppressed groups, including by enabling **civil society groups like unions and associations** within these groups.

» **Technology and Innovation**: Embrace **technological advancements** to create new opportunities for all.

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

Global Best Practices

Educational & Skill Development

Germany's apprenticeship system which combines classroom learnign with on-th-job training

Affordable Housing

Vienna's social housing policy has successfully provided affordable housing to poor

Progressive Taxation

Scandinavian countries like **Sweden** and **Norway**

CONCLUSION

India can move toward a more equitable society by adopting **inclusive policies** that address the root causes of inequality. This shift reflects the goals of the United Nations' **Sustainable Development Goal 10**, which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Given the increasing levels of inequality in India, what inclusive policies should the government prioritise to address the root causes of this unequal growth? How might these policies align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals? Discuss **(15 marks) (250 words)**

FOOD REGULATION IN INDIA

Syllabus: GS II - : **Food processing and related industries in India**

PYQ MAPPING

Q) Elaborate the policy taken by the Government of India to meet the challenges of the food processing sector **(2019)**

SHORT TAKES

FSSAI: Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is a **statutory body** established in 2008 under the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.** It is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the **regulation and supervision of food safety.**

QCI: The Quality Council of India (QCI) is an **autonomous organisation** under the **Union Commerce and Industry Ministry.** It ensures independent **third-party assessment of products, services, and processe**s, promoting adherence to quality standards nationally across sectors like **education, healthcare, environment protection etc.**

MRL: A maximum residue level (MRL) is the **highest level of a pesticide residue** that is legally tolerated in or on food or feed when pesticides are applied correctly.

INTRODUCTION

In today's **fast-paced world**, where processed and convenience foods dominate the market, the need for unadulterated and safe food has become increasingly imperative. This calls for enhanced food safety standards to protect consumers from the health risks associated with **adulterated and unsafe food products.**

WHY IN NEWS

India's food safety regime faces scrutiny amid allegations against various products, including infant food, **"health drinks,"** and spices. FSSAI is investigating Nestle's baby food for unhealthy sugar content and collecting spice samples from brands like MDH and Everest, after regulatory authorities in Singapore and Hong Kong raised concerns over **carcinogenic additives** like **ethylene oxide**.

HOW IS FOOD REGULATED IN INDIA

Established in 2008, two years after the enactment of the Food Safety and Standards Act, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India **(FSSAI)** is responsible for educating businesses and consumers on food safety in India. It is also mandated to **collect and collate data on food consumption**, biological risks, contaminants, and residues, identifying potential risks.

Initiatives by FSSAI for better food

1 **Eat Right India Movement:** The program has a variety of initiatives that promote the demand and supply of safe food in a sustainable way.

Trans-fat Free India@75 By 2022: Trans fats can **raise** your **bad (LDL) cholesterol levels** and **lower your good (HDL)** cholesterol levels. Eating trans fats increases your risk of developing heart disease and stroke. **2**

3 **Food Safety on Wheels (FSW):** An initiative that provides **mobile food testing laboratories** to conduct quick tests for adulterants in commonly consumed foods at public gatherings, schools, remote areas, and consumer organisations.
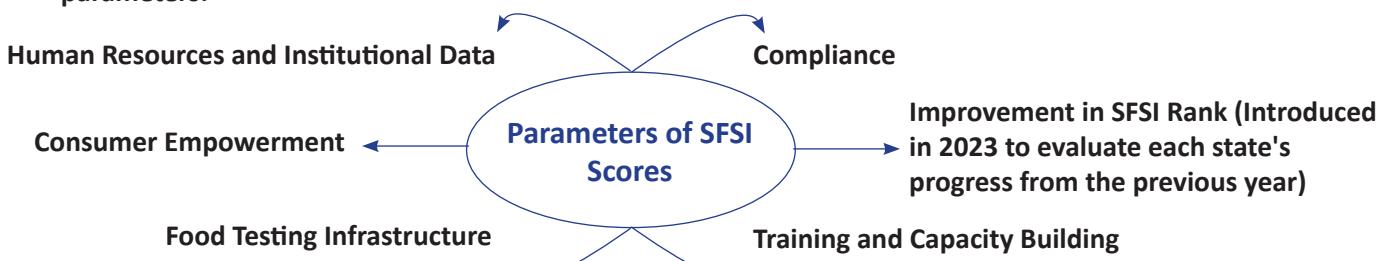
Bhog: An initiative to improve the **hygiene and sanitation standards of street food hubs**, and to build consumer trust in local eating experiences **4**

5 **Food Safety Magic Box:** A **food safety testing kit for school children**

CURRENT ISSUES IN FOOD REGULATION

FSSAI

▼ **Staff and Infrastructural Issues:** Reports in 2023 cite shortage of **district level Designated Officers (DO)** vary from **5 to 80% in 12 state**s. Nearly **40% of Food Safety Officer (FSO)** posts are vacant.

  o By 2022, FSSAI has recognised **only 224 labs for food testing** while there exists **more than 1500 labs in the private sector.** Thus, most of the food samples sent by FSSAI get **tested in non-accredited labs.**

▼ **Oversight failures:** The agency's handling of food-related controversies suggests it has often fallen short of fulfilling its responsibilities.

  o Example, in **2017 CAG flagged FSSAI** over **lapses in enforcing food safety measures** especially in documentation, withdrawing NOCs etc.

▼ **Decline in SFSI Scores:** Since 2019, **FSSAI** has **annually released the State Food Safety Index (SFSI)** on June 7, coinciding with World Food Safety Day. However, in 2023, 19 out of 20 large states, including Maharashtra, Bihar, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh, saw a decline in their scores compared to 2019. **SFSI scores on 100 are based on six parameters:**

Human Resources and Institutional Data

Compliance

Consumer Empowerment

Parameters of SFSI Scores

Improvement in SFSI Rank (Introduced in 2023 to evaluate each state's progress from the previous year)

Food Testing Infrastructure

Training and Capacity Building

OTHER ISSUES

Issues with Food Security

- Unorganised Sector — Small rural enterprises lacking infrastructure
- Street Food Culture — Unregulated and frequented by poor
- Inadequate Inspection — Due to limited resources and manpower
- Adulteration — Artificial colours, chemicals, and low-quality ingredients
- Mislabeling — False information about ingredients, nutritional content or origin
- Lack of Consumer Awareness — About proper storage, handling, and cooking methods
- Counterfeit Products — Imitation brands and counterfeit packaging

RECENT INCIDENTS

◉ **Nestle:** Global food and beverage giant **Nestle sells baby products** with **higher sugar content** in poorer south Asian (including India), African and Latin American countries as compared to markets in Europe, claims a report by a Swiss NGO, **Public Eye** and **International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN).**

◉ **Paneer:** Authorities are tackling the infiltration of "fake paneer" products into the food market, which may contain **inferior ingredients and pose health risks.** In Noida, April 2024 reports revealed that **47 out of 168 paneer and khoya products tested by FSSAI were contaminated.**

◉ **Health drink issue:** Hindustan Unilever Ltd., with brands like **Horlicks and Boost**, rebranded its **'health drinks' to 'functional nutritional drinks' (FND)**. This change follows the **Minister of Commerce and Industry's** directive to e-commerce platforms to reclassify drinks and beverages from the **'healthy drinks' category.**

◉ **Issues with Exports**: Over the past six months, **US customs declined entry to 31% spice**-related shipments of MDH brand over **salmonella contamination**. Data obtained from the US FDA shows that the refusal rate has doubled in the past one year. The EU too has, reportedly, placed food items originating from India under the scanner.

◉ **Colouring agents:** On March 11, 2024, the **Karnataka government banned** the use of **Rhodamine-B**, a f**ood colouring additive**, in **gobi manchurian and cotton candy.**

- **Fruits:** Food safety Officials in **Tamil Nadu** revealed that the chemical **erythrosine** is added to the **watermelons** available in the market. FSSAI has published a cotton ball test to test the presence of the chemical.

IMPACT ON INDIAN HEALTH

- **Food Poisoning: Diarrhoea and food poisoning** are prevalent to the extent that many cases go unreported due to their widespread occurrence and the perception of them as routine ailments.
  - » **National Centre for Disease Control data** reveals frequent outbreaks in India, with over **1,100 acute diarrheal disease outbreaks** and nearly **550 food poisoning outbreaks** recorded in the **last four years.**

- **Health Impacts of Adulterated Items:** Adulterated food consumption can lead to stomach upset, diarrhoea, vomiting, and nausea, with potential long-term liver, kidney, and heart issues due to **harmful chemicals.**
  - » **Example: Fake ORS with excessive sugar** causes dehydration by drawing water into the intestines, increasing fluid loss. Lacking sodium disrupts electrolyte balance and can even cause **brain swelling.**

- **Added sugars:** They are deemed more harmful than naturally occurring sugars in fruits and milk. **WHO** recommends **avoiding added sugars before age two** to prevent addictive eating habits, which can lead to weight gain, obesity, and a higher risk of chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers later in life.

HOW GLOBAL FOOD REGULATION HAPPEN

- **CODEX standards**
  - » The **Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)**, formed in 1963, comprises 188 member countries and 1 member organisation which is EU, under the **Joint Food Standards Programme of FAO and WHO.**
  - » Its mission is to safeguard consumer health, ensure fairness in food trade, and coordinate global food standards efforts by governmental and non-governmental organisations.
  - » **India became the member** of Codex Alimentarius in 1964

- **The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA)**
  - » Established in 1956, it assesses the safety of food additives, contaminants, natural toxins, veterinary drug residues and provides **international scientific expertise in food safety evaluation.**

- **The Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR)**
  - » Established in 1963 and jointly administered by FAO and WHO, it harmonises pesticide residue requirements and conducts **annual scientific evaluations of pesticide residues in food.**

WAY FORWARD

- **Proactive regulator:** India, with a burgeoning food market and ambitions for global market expansion, necessitates a proactive regulator .**FSSAI's proactive approach** is vital to ensure food safety, regulatory compliance, and fair trade practices, crucial for bolstering consumer confidence, enhancing market access, and fostering industry growth.

- **Regular testing: Regular testing of spice** mixes from all brands is imperative to uphold food safety standards and protect consumer health. It ensures compliance with regulations and helps **detect any potential contaminants** that may **compromise the quality of products.**

- **Transparency:** This can involve measures such as **clearer labelling**, providing **accurate product information**, and ensuring that **marketing claims are truthful and not misleading consumers.** Thus enabling consumers to confidently select products that align with their preferences and dietary needs.

- **Establishing food testing facilities**: Ensures safety by detecting pathogens and contaminants, preventing foodborne illnesses.
  - » The **FSSAI is establishing 34 microbiology labs nationwide** to test food products for pathogens like E. coli and Salmonella, aiming to prevent foodborne illnesses and ensure safety.

- **Expanding Certification:** Expanding can include broader dissemination of hygiene rating information to consumers through **digital platforms and mobile applications**. Moreover, periodic reviews, updates and extending this to all food businesses is required.
  - » FSSAI's **'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme'** certifies food businesses based on hygiene and safety conditions observed during audits.The **hygiene rating will be in the form of smileys (1 up to 5)** and the **certificate should be displayed prominently in the consumer facing area.**

Patanjali Issue

▼ **Petition:** The **Indian Medical Association (IMA)** petitioned the apex court in August 2022 following **Patanjali's advertisement labelling allopathy as a "stupid and bankrupt science."**

» **Unproven curative claims:** Patanjali is alleged to have violated the **Drugs & Other Magical Remedies Act, 1954.** The Schedule of this Act lists 54 ailments which no drug can claim to cure or prevent since there is no scientific possibility. Patanjali claims its **Amla juice can cure diabetes** and its **eye-drops can cure glaucoma**, both elements listed in the schedule.

» **Misleading advertisement:** Patanjali is also alleged to have **run foul of Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, due to its misleading claims.

▼ **SC Judgment:** The court in February 2024 imposed a **blanket ban** on any further advertising or branding of Patanjali medicinal products until further orders. In the recent May 7 order the SC said that the **celebrities that endorse such products will also be liable for action.**

▼ **Apology:** Patanjali initially issued an "**unconditional and unqualified apology**" to the Supreme Court for exaggerated claims in their company's ads. However, the court was not happy with the apology and is continuing to look into the case.

Food Pharmer

➡ **Revant Himatsingka,** via his social media alias **Foodpharmer**, exposes FMCG (**Fast-Moving Consumer Goods**) giants for misrepresenting their products as nutritious

➡ His videos have been linked to **Bournvita reducing its sugar content in their "health drinks".**

CONCLUSION

To address the challenges, it is crucial to adopt **proactive measures** aimed at strengthening food safety standards and regulatory compliance. **Collaborative efforts** between regulatory authorities, industry stakeholders, and civil society are essential to build consumer trust, safeguard public health, and **foster a culture of food safety in the country.**

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Discuss the challenges and recent controversies surrounding India's food safety regime and the impact of these issues on public health and consumer confidence. Suggest measures to enhance food safety standards and regulatory compliance in the country. **(10 marks)(150 words)**

EVM - VVPAT CASE JUDGEMENT

Syllabus: GS III -   Constitutional Bodies; Transparency & Accountability

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *In the light of recent controversy regarding the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), what are the challenges before the Election Commission of India to ensure the trustworthiness of elections in India.* **(2018)**

WHY IN NEWS

Recently, the Supreme Court rejected the pleas seeking **100% cross-verification of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)** data **with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) records.**

INTRODUCTION

In the 2024 case of **Association of Democratic Reforms v. Election Commission of India**, the Supreme Court endorsed the use of Electronic voting machines (EVMs), ruling against a return to paper ballots. Additionally, the Court dismissed the proposal for 100% cross-verification of EVM votes with Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slips, supporting the existing practice of **randomly verifying 5% of VVPAT slips in Assembly constituencies.**

SHORT TAKES

Symbol Loading Unit (SLU):

➤ It is a device or system used to **load the symbols** of political parties and candidates onto the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM).

➤ This process occurs before the elections begin, ensuring that each candidate's symbol is correctly displayed on the EVM's Ballot Unit, which is what voters see when casting their vote.

➤ Once the symbols are loaded, the **SLU is sealed** in a secure container or compartment to prevent unauthorised access.

➤ This sealing process typically involves **tamper-proof seals and signatures** from relevant authorities or candidate representatives

➤ The sealed SLU is stored in a secure location, often in the same strongroom where EVMs are kept during and after elections.

Burnt memory semi-controller:

➤ It refers to a **memory module or semiconductor chip where crucial data is stored.**

➤ This data can include information about the votes cast, the symbol loading process, and other operational aspects of the EVM.

➤ The **"burning"** part of the term refers to permanently storing this data in the memory, making it **resistant to alterations or erasure.**

Summary of SC verdict

🌀 **Rejection of Pleas for 100% EVM-VVPAT Cross-Verification:**

» The Supreme Court **rejected the pleas for complete cross-verification of EVM data with VVPAT records**, including reverting to paper ballot voting, providing VVPAT slips to voters for direct deposit into ballot boxes, and other related demands.

🌀 **Reasons for the denial of 100% cross-verification:**

» It will increase the time for counting and **delay declaration of results.**

» The **manpower required** for counting would have to be doubled.

» Manual counting is **prone to human errors** and may lead to deliberate mischief.

» Manual intervention in counting could **create multiple charges of manipulation of results.**

» The data and the results **did not indicate any need to increase the number of VVPAT** units subjected to manual counting.

🌀 **Two Directions Issued:**

» The Court issued two directions for post-election handling of **Symbol Loading Units (SLUs)** and checking of **Burnt memory semi-controller in EVMs:**

» **Symbol Loading Unit (SLU) Sealing:** After completing the symbol loading process, SLUs should be sealed, signed and kept in strong rooms along with the EVMs for **at least 45 days** post-election results.

HISTORY

➤ **1977-1979**

• Electronic voting idea was conceived in 1977 and a prototype developed **Electronic Corporation of India Ltd, Hyderabad**, in 1979

➤ **1980**

• EC demonstrated an **EVM in 1980**, after consensus on its use, issued directives under **Article 324 for the use of EVM**

➤ **1982**

• Machine used in **50 polling stations in North Parur seat of Kerala.** The SC ruled against the legality of EVMs' use since there was **no legal amendments** done to Representation of Peoples Act.

➤ **1988**

• A section of **RPA was amended** to empower EC to use EVM

➤ **1990**

• An electoral reform committee under **Dinesh Goswami** was set to recommends a technical examination for EVMs'

➤ **1998**

• EVM were used by assembly election of **Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, New Delhi**

➤ **2001**

• State assembly elections in **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry and West Bengal** were completely conducted using EVMs

➤ **2004**

• EVMs used in **all 543 Lok Sabha constituencies**

➤ **2013**

• Amendment to The Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 introduced the use of V**VPAT machines**. Used in by-election for **Nagaland**

➤ **2019**:

• **1st Lok Sabha election in which EVM was fully backed by VVPAT EVM.**

> » **Burnt Memory Semi-Controller Checking:** The burnt memory **semi-controller in 5% of EVMs** per assembly constituency or assembly segment can be checked and verified by a team of engineers from the EVM manufacturers upon a written request from candidates.
>   ◦ The verification process, including the expenses for it, should be completed **within 7 days** of declaration of results.
>   ◦ **If tampering is found, the candidate's expenses for the verification will be refunded.**
>
> 🌀 **Suggestion for ECI:**
> » The bench suggested that the Election Commission of India (ECI) explore the use of an electronic machine for counting VVPAT paper slips and consider **including barcodes for each party symbol.**
>
> 🌀 **Additional Remarks by Justice Datta:**
> » Justice Datta noted that while scepticism is essential, it should not be blind, suggesting a balanced approach focused on evidence and reason to **maintain the system's credibility and effectiveness.**

ARGUMENTS AGAINST VVPAT

🔴 **Arbitrary Sample Size:**

» The Supreme Court's directive for a uniform sample size of "**5 EVMs per Assembly Constituency**" for auditing with VVPATs is criticised for not aligning with fundamental principles of statistical sampling theory.

🔴 **Limitation of Lot Acceptance Sampling:**

» The VVPAT audit involves a "**lot acceptance sampling**" approach, where a random sample is drawn from a defined "**population**" of EVMs. The entire population is either accepted or rejected based on the number of "d**efective EVMs,**" which are those where the EVM and VVPAT counts don't match.

» **Lot acceptance sampling** is a quality control process where a sample is taken from a batch or "lot" of products. The batch is then accepted or rejected based on whether the sample meets predefined quality standards.

🔴 **Lack of Clarity:** The Supreme Court's order lacks explicit instructions in case of a mismatch between EVM and VVPAT counts.

» Additionally, the Court did not require the Election Commission of India (ECI) to clarify these aspects or seek expert opinion for further guidance.

🔴 **Statistical Analysis of Court-Mandated Sample Size:**

» The Court-mandated sample size has a high probability of failing to detect defective EVMs.

» Specifically, there's a **95% chance of missing a defective EVM** if the sample size is based on an Assembly Constituency "population," and a **70% chance if based on a Parliamentary Constituency** "population."

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE ROBUST VVPAT BASED EVM AUDIT SYSTEM
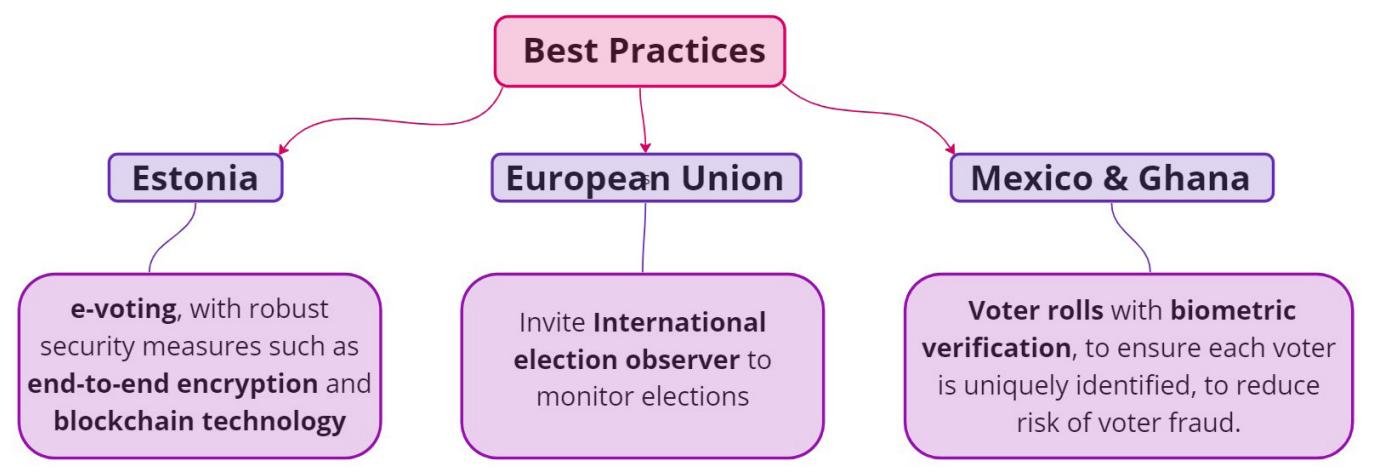
☀ **A robust audit system is crucial:**

» Rather than focusing on the various ways Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) could fail or be tampered with, the emphasis should be on developing a **statistically robust audit system** based on Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) that can **detect discrepancies with 99% to 99.9% accuracy.**

» Implementing such a reliable system would ensure the integrity of the electoral process without the need for drastic measures like reverting to paper ballots or conducting 100% VVPAT verification.

☀ **Need to achieve Golden Mean:**

» The VVPAT-EVM count matching should be done at the beginning of the counting day, not at the end. This statistical sampling-based, '**management by exception**' approach represents the golden mean as follows:

• **Where there is a perfect match, the results should be declared based on the EVM count.**

• **Only where there is a mismatch, manual counting of VVPAT slips for the entire 'population' of EVMs should be done, and the results declared based on the VVPAT count.**

SUGGESTIONS TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY IN ELECTION PROCESS

✸ **Blockchain-Based Voting Systems**

» **Blockchain technology** offers a decentralised and immutable ledger for recording votes, which can provide **enhanced security and transparency** while allowing voters to verify their votes within a secure system.

» It helps ensure **tamper-proof records** and promote trust in election outcomes.

✸ **Digital Receipts with QR Codes:**

» Instead of paper-based VVPATs, **digital receipts** with **QR codes** could be used.

» After casting a vote, the voter would receive a digital receipt with a unique QR code that contains a record of their vote.

» This QR code could be scanned to verify the vote's accuracy, while still maintaining the voter's anonymity.

✸ **End-to-End Verifiable Voting Systems:**

» It provides voters with a way to confirm their vote has been counted correctly while **preserving secrecy.**

» These systems use **cryptographic techniques** to allow voters to verify their votes after leaving the polling booth, often through a secure website or app.

✸ **Open-Source Software for EVMs:**

» **Transparency** in elections can be enhanced by using open-source software for EVMs.

» **Open-source code** allows for **public scrutiny**, enabling experts to audit the software for potential vulnerabilities or inconsistencies. **Increased Voter Education and Awareness.**

✸ **Multi-Level Audits:**

» Rather than relying solely on VVPAT audits, multi-level audits can be introduced.

» This approach involves random audits at various stages of the electoral process, from EVM manufacturing to post-election counting, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of election integrity.

✸ **Biometric Authentication:**

» Incorporating **biometric authentication**, like fingerprint or facial recognition, at polling stations could ensure that each voter votes only once and **reduce the risk of impersonation.**

» This measure would not directly enhance transparency but could improve the overall integrity of the election process.

Best Practices
- **Estonia** → **e-voting**, with robust security measures such as **end-to-end encryption** and **blockchain technology**
- **European Union** → Invite **International election observer** to monitor elections
- **Mexico & Ghana** → **Voter rolls** with **biometric verification**, to ensure each voter is uniquely identified, to reduce risk of voter fraud.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, for India's vast democracy, a robust and transparent election process is indispensable, and while alternative approaches to VVPAT can boost transparency and security, they must be carefully balanced against challenges such as technological demands, privacy implications, scalability, and public acceptance. A **successful framework for implementation** must be rooted in a commitment to fostering trust, maintaining integrity, and ensuring broad accessibility in the electoral process.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) *Given the Supreme Court's recent rejection of pleas for 100% cross-verification of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) data with Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) records, what factors should India's election authorities consider when examining alternative approaches or supplementary measures to VVPAT? Discuss.* **(10 marks)(150 words)**

GANGA RIVER POLLUTION

Syllabus: GS III - Environmental pollution and degradation

PYQ MAPPING

Q) Enumerate the National Water Policy of India. Taking river Ganges as an example, discuss the strategies which may be adopted for river water pollution control and management. What are the legal provisions for management and handling of hazardous wastes in India? **(2013)**

Q) The Namami Gange and National mission for clean Ganga (NMCG) programmes and causes of mixed results from the previous schemes. What quantum leaps can help preserve the river Ganga better than incremental inputs?**(2015)**

SHORT TAKES

➤ <u>NGT:</u> The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**, established in October 2010 under the **National Green Tribunal Act 2010**, aims for the swift resolution of environmental protection cases and conservation matters, including the enforcement of legal rights related to the environment.It is **not bound by** the **Code of Civil Procedure, 1908,** but follows principles of natural justice.

➤ <u>CPCB:</u> Established in September 1974 under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974,** the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is mandated to regulate and mitigate **water and air pollution**. It is also entrusted with the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.** Tasked with promoting cleanliness of water bodies and enhancing air quality, the CPCB provides technical support to the **Ministry of Environment and Forests.**

WHY IN NEWS?

The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** observed illegal encroachment and pollution of the **Ganga's floodplain** at Kanpur, in violation of its 2017 order. Garbage, polythene, and sewage are still being dumped into the river, as noted by the **NGT Chairman Justice Prakash Srivastava.**

INTRODUCTION

The Ganga, spanning 2,500 kilometres, sustains ecosystems, agriculture, and spiritual practices across Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal before converging into the Bay of Bengal. Its basin supports **10% of the world's population**, providing vital water resources for irrigation, drinking, and industry. Despite its cultural reverence, the Ganga faces **pollution and degradation**, highlighting the urgent need for conservation efforts.

CURRENT STATUS

➡ **Microplastic Pollution:** India will release **391,879 tonnes of microplastics** and will be the second leading polluter of the water bodies after China (787,069 tonnes) in the world, the analysis by **Swiss non-profit EA Earth Action** showed.

➡ **Untapped drains:** A report submitted to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2023 revealed that **out of 301 drains** flowing into the river Ganga in Uttar Pradesh, **147 or 48.83% are still untapped.**

➡ **Contamination:** In 2023, an NGO, **Sankat Mochan Foundation** found f**aecal coliform bacteria levels in the Ganga River exceeding permissible limits** by one million times, with a **limit of 500 per 100 millilitres.**

➡ **CAG Audit Report:** The latest audit report of the **Namami Gange project** by India's **Comptroller and Auditor General in 2017** highlighted deficiencies in financial management, planning, implementation, and monitoring, resulting in delays in achieving program milestones.

➡ **Amount spent:** Between 1986 and 2014, approximately **20000 crore** was allocated for cleaning the Ganga, with an additional **25000 crore allocated since 2014.** By October 2022, over 13000 crore had already been spent on these efforts.

➡ **Sewage Treatment Plant(STP)**: Between 2015 and 2021, **815 new STPs were built** or proposed for the Ganga alone and most utilise **Sequence Batch Reactors (SBRs)**, considered the best available technology for wastewater treatment.

Year	Sewage Generation (MLD) from Class 1 & 2 cities	Sewage Treated (MLD) from Class 1 & 2 cities	% Sewage Treated	STP Count (incl. proposed STPs)
1999 - 2000	18,311	4,098	22%	-
2008 - 2009	38,254	11,787	30%	-
2014 - 2015	62,000	23,277	37%	816
2020 - 2021	72,368[1]	36,668[1]	50%	1,631

[1] in urban centres only. Source: Central Pollution Control Board, 2021

CHALLENGES

● **Frontline Workers:** Frontline workers at treatment plants often endure **poor working conditions** despite their critical role in managing hazardous waste.

  » Workers at Kanpur's **Common effluent treatment plants(CETP)** in Jajmau demand better pay, health benefits, and regularised work conditions, despite their role in treating **toxic tannery waste containing chromium**.

● **Delays and Non Compliance:** Delays in drain tapping, along with the slow progress in expanding **sewage treatment plants (STPs)** and non compliance of **common effluent treatment plants (CETPs)**, are impeding efforts to improve the water quality of the Ganga.

  » **Out of 113 operational STPs** in Uttar Pradesh, **only 87 met the prescribed norms**, indicating a serious issue of non-compliance with standards.

● **Lack of Personnel:** Projects faced significant delays due to the inadequate capacity of personnel to manage and implement them. Insufficiently prepared **detailed project reports (DPRs)** and slow execution further contributed to the delays.

● **Ambiguity:**Non-compliance with new **NGT standards**, yet to be notified by the **MoEFCC**, poses a challenge. Although the CPCB cites non-compliance, actual figures often align with existing standards, leading to regulatory ambiguity.

● **Criticism of projects: Rajendra Singh**, renowned as the **'Waterman of India'**, criticised the central government for failing to address pollution in the Ganga, **branding the Namami Gange program** as mere beautification without effectively cleansing the river.

● **Political influence:**Allegations of awarding contracts to unqualified firms due to political influence can undermine transparency and fairness in decision-making processes.

  » **Example:**In 2017, **Essel Infrastructures secured a 150 crore** contract for an STP despite lacking sewage treatment experience, prompting concerns due to its Chairman's affiliation as a Rajya Sabha MP of the ruling party.

INTERVENTIONS

NGT

◉ **Uttar Pradesh:**

  » The **NGT formed a panel in 2024** to investigate a petition alleging polluted water discharge into the **Ganga River at Prayagraj during the Magh Mela festival.**

  » In 2023, the NGT noted the lack of notification of Ganga floodplain and the absence of sewage treatment in drains leading to ghats, prompting a request for details from the Kanpur Municipal Corporation. Additionally, **construction permissions were granted in the regulatory zones.**

  » The NGT in 2019 had imposed a **penalty** of **Rs 10 crore on the UP government** for failing to check sewage discharge containing **toxic chromium into the Ganga.**

Government

◉ **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG):**

  » NMCG, under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, Government of India, is tasked with preventing, controlling, and reducing environmental pollution in the Ganga River.

  » The NMCG gained authority to allow discharge of treated sewage meeting norms into the Ganga and its tributaries, as per an amendment to the **2016 River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management)** Authorities Order. This amendment aims to augment river water levels, by releasing treated sewage to boost river flow.

◉ **Namami Gange Project:**

  » The government launched the **'Namami Gange' mission in 2014** to revive and clean the Ganga River, allocating **Rs 20,000 Crores till 2019-2020, with 100% central funding.**

  » This initiative aims to enhance **inter-ministerial and centre-state coordination** for improved action plan preparation and monitoring.

  » Its vision for Ganga Rejuvenation focuses on 4 verticals of **Aviral Ganga,Nirmal Ganga, Gyan Ganga and Jan Ganga. Arth Ganga**, a recent fifth vertical, was added in 2019 which aims to establish a sustainable economic model fostering stronger ties between communities and the river.

  » Recognized as one of the **top 10 World Restoration Flagships** to revive the natural world at the **United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Montreal, Canada.**

🌀 **Ganga River Basin Management Plan (GRBMP)**:

» Prepared by a **consortium of 7 IITs in 2010.**

» The plan is being implemented by **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** under Namami Gange Programme.

» NMCG has sanctioned a total of **254 projects worth Rs.24,672 crore** under this plan

🌀 **Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA)**

» Led by **NMCG** ,the Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA) was inaugurated at **COP28 in Dubai**, UAE. With countries like India, Egypt, Netherlands, and others, along with international funding agencies and knowledge partners, GRCA covers **275+ global river-cities in 11 nations.** This marks a significant stride in global river conservation and sustainable water management efforts.

SOLUTIONS

☀ **Novel methods:** Researchers at **Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University** have developed a new method to assess pollution levels in the Ganga River in Uttarakhand. They found **microplastics, thermocol, and clothing fibres in fish stomachs, highlighting ongoing pollution.**

☀ **C-Ganga:** Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (C-Ganga), established at IIT Kanpur, serves as a centre of excellence for the development of the Ganga River Basin, leveraging scientific inputs from international experts and organisations.

☀ **Bhuvan Ganga Geoportal and Mobile Application:** Developed by **NMCG** and **National Remote Sensing Centre** by utilisation of geospatial technology.

☀ **Sewage Treatment Plant(STP):**

» Asia's largest **Sewage Treatment Plant (STP)** has been successfully established in Okhla, boasting an impressive capacity of **564 Million Litres Per Day (MLD).**

» The newly inaugurated **14 MLD Sewage Treatment Plant (STP)** in Baghpat, UP is designed to harness sewage effluent through a **2.345 km interception line.**

☀ **International Collaboration:**

» Through an MoU signed in 2019 , **NMCG** collaborated with the **Republic of Slovenia** to enhance flood mapping and technical efforts in the Ganga basin to harness expertise from both nations to tackle intricate river management challenges.

FRESH REVELATIONS

THE SIDE-EFFECTS OF EATING THESE FISH BY HUMANS WILL BE REVEALED IN THE SECOND PHASE OF RESEARCH

Study divides the Ganges region into two zones — **DEV PRAYAG TO RISHIKESH** AND **RISHIKESH TO HARIDWAR**

| Total length of Ganga is about **2,525 km;** Study focused on a specific stretch, extending **120 km** from Devprayag to Haridwar | Samples taken from Devprayag to Haridwar have found plastic in the stomachs of fish, including cloth fibres and plastics like thermocol | MOST OF THE MICROPLASTICS DETECTED WERE FIBRES UP TO **1 MM** IN SIZE | Polyethylene, polypropylene and polystyrene are abundant in fish samples |

WAY FORWARD

❋ **Holistic approach:** It is imperative to shift focus from mere regulatory compliance to **holistic river health** which entails prioritising worker safety, environmental sustainability, and the efficacy of treatment processes at sewage treatment plants.

❋ **Innovative model:** Introduced in 2018, the **Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM)** is a performance-based contract where **only 40% of the capital cost is paid upfront**, with the **remaining 60% paid over 15 years**. This approach addresses issues like time and cost overruns, ensuring better quality in projects.

❋ **Regulating polluting sources:** Government's focus solely on cleaning the river without addressing industries polluting its tributaries should change by involving stricter regulation of polluting industries.

❋ **Water Harvesting:** Restoring ponds, lakes, and wetlands as permanent solutions to floods and droughts is crucial, with **only 10% of monsoon rainfall** currently being harvested. This initiative should be integrated into river restoration and conservation strategies.

❋ **Preserve River Corridors:** Designate and safeguard river corridors as zones free from cement-concrete structures to preserve the natural integrity of rivers. **Halt infrastructure development** and riverfront projects in the name of **smart city development** to conserve and safeguard surface water sources.

✦ **Verification of STPs:** Existing and planned STPs must undergo **independent verification** for efficiency, reliability, and technology parameters to ensure value for money and sustainability.

» A survey conducted by **CPCB in 2016** found that most **STPs in Kanpur fail to comply** with environmental regulations.

✦ **Monetization of Sludge**: Implementing projects for the monetization of sludge can provide additional revenue streams for municipalities. This incentivizes effective management and

✦ **Community participation:** Instituting **District Ganga C ommittee** meetings fosters decentralised monitoring,by encouraging locals to identify sources of pollution such as drain outlets and solid waste facilitates grassroots involvement in Ganga conservation efforts.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Ganga faces multifaceted challenges ranging from pollution to inadequate infrastructure. While initiatives like Namami Gange show progress, holistic approaches, community engagement, and innovative solutions are vital for sustainable restoration. With ongoing efforts and collective commitment, **India can safeguard the Ganga's ecological balance and ensure water security for millions depending on the river's health.**

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q)Evaluate the role of public awareness campaigns and community participation in fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the conservation of the Ganga River, and recommend grassroots approaches for sustainable behaviour change **(10 M)(150 W)**

A YEAR OF MANIPUR

Syllabus: GS III -   Internal Security

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *The north-eastern region of India has been infested with insurgency for a very long time. Analyse the major reasons for the survival of armed insurgency in this region* **(2017)**

Q) *Cross-border movement of insurgents is only one of the several security challenges facing the policing of the border in North-East India. Examine the various challenges currently emanating across the India-Myanmar border. Also, discuss the steps to counter the challenges* **(2019)**

SHORT TAKES

➤ **Autonomous Hill Council** - Autonomous Hill/ District Councils **(ADCs)** serve as decentralised governing bodies within India, tasked with safeguarding the rights and autonomy of tribal communities in specific regions. Enshrined in the **Sixth Schedule** of the Indian Constitution, this provision establishes **10 ADCs** across **four states.**

➤ **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** - Legislation enacted by the Indian government in **1958**. This law grants special powers to the armed forces deployed in **"disturbed areas,"** allowing them to take extraordinary measures to maintain public order.

WHY IN NEWS?

Kuki-Zo and **Meitei groups** gathered in Manipur and Delhi's Jantar Mantar to mark one year of the ongoing ethnic conflict, urging peace and appealing to the central government.

INTRODUCTION

♣Ethnic tensions have pushed **Manipur into a civil war**, as the dominant Meitei and minority Kuki groups engage in **conflicts over land and power.**

♣The **Meitei** people, mostly Hindus and some following Sanamahi religion, make up about **53% of Manipur's 33 lakh population.** The remaining population is made up of **Naga tribes (20%)** and **Kuki-Zo tribes (16%)**, mostly christians. The Meitei people primarily live in the Imphal Valley, while the tribals live in the hill districts.

♣In the last one year, over **221 people have been killed**, including more than a dozen security personnel, and thousands have been injured. At least 50,000 people have been internally displaced and around 45 people from both communities remain missing.

REASON FOR TENSION

➡ **Immediate Causes:** The **Manipur High Court** ruled in late March 2023 in f**avour of the Meitei** community's long-standing **request for Scheduled Tribe status**, which would give them access to benefits and reserved government seats.

» The **Kukis** and other tribal communities protested that the Meitei will acquire land in the hills, where they have had exclusive rights until now.

» The **Kuki-Naga protest rally turned violent** based on a rumour of desecration of a Kuki war memorial by Meiteis which led to retaliatory attack on Meitei villages.

» **Fake reports of Meitei women raped by Kuki militia** led to the **parading naked of two Kuki women by a Meitei mob** that spiraled into deadly cycle of reprisal violence.

➡ **Historical Division:** British colonial policies divided Manipur into 'Hills' and 'Valley,' fostering separation between Meiteis in the valley and hill-dwelling tribes like Nagas and Kukis.

» Post-independence, granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to hill tribes deepened this divide, sparking contention over government jobs and education access for Meiteis.

➡ **Migration Influx: Myanmar's military coup of 2021** led to **refugee influx into Manipur.**

» Tensions arose as the Meitei community opposed settlement of refugees, mainly Kuki and Naga, due to cultural ties and concerns over resources.

➡ **Structural Issues** - In Manipur, the Imphal valley, **home to Meiteis, covers 10% of the land** but **hosts 67%** of the **population** and **half of the cultivated land**. Conversely, the forested hills, inhabited by **Kukis and Nagas, make up over 75%** of the state's territory, where **shifting cultivation predominates.** This stark contrast worsens existing disparities in Manipur.

» The state operates separate judicial and governance systems for tribal hill regions, overseen by **Autonomous Hill Councils** which have authority to administer and transfer property rights within their jurisdictions.

➡ **Economic Issues:** In the Imphal valley, **population growth and economic constraints** prompted Meitei groups to pursue Scheduled Tribe status.

» The 2021-22 employment report by Government of India revealed this tension, with **agriculture dominating the economy (42% of households)** and a scarcity of opportunities evident in **high self-employment rates (60%).**

➡ **Sectarianism:** Manipur, harbours diverse ethnicities fiercely guarding their cultural heritage and territorial rights. Meiteis, mainly Hindu, contrast with the Christian Kukis and Nagas, with religious differences often exacerbating ethnic tensions. Recent **attacks on religious sites** highlight the sectarian aspect of this conflict.

➡ **Drug angle:** Manipur sits close to the "**golden triangle**" of **drug trade** and has seen large drug hauls in the state. The **Meities claim the hill tribes** to be the "**Narco terrorists**". The state has responded by burning poppy cultivation in the hills.

» **Kukis claim** that this is a **one-sided attack** by the state without taking on the drug cartels that finance the drug trade.

» It is claimed that funding of underground armed groups in the region is linked to the drug trade and is one of the reasons for the brutal nature of the conflict.

Government Responses

🔆 **Intervention:** Since May 3, the central government has started engaging with Manipur authorities and deploying **additional CAPF companies.**

🔆 **Home Minister's Visit:** Home Minister Amit Shah stayed in Manipur from May 29 to June 1 and visited violence-affected areas and relief camps.

🔆 **Security Measures:** The central government established a centralised command structure to coordinate security activities. **Helicopters and drones** were deployed. In extreme cases, **shoot-on-sight orders** were issued.

🔆 **Buffer Zone:** Central security forces are establishing a "**buffer zone**" between Kuki hills and the Meitei-populated

Imphal Valley to contain escalating violence and prevent conflict spillage into neighbouring areas, aiming for **regional stability and security.**

🇮🇳 **Media blockade**: Manipur's story received limited coverage from India's mainstream media, especially television. The **internet shutdown in Manipur**, totaling over **5,000 hours in 2023**, was the **world's longest cyber blackout** according to a **report by Top10VPN.**

» Imposed from May to December, the ban was deemed unconstitutional by the Manipur High Court in December, citing violations of the right to free speech under Article 21.

CRITICISM

🔴 **Delayed Reaction:** Prime Minister reacted only after a video emerged dated May 4, showing **Meitei mob humiliating two Kuki women.** He called it a "**disgrace for the entire country**." Chief Minister N. Biren Singh announced arrests, justifying the delayed police complaint in May citing similar incidents and the internet shutdown rationale.

🔴 **Police Inaction:** Accusations against the police mount for neglecting to aid Kuki community members during attacks and for ignoring reports of rape and violence against them. **Four Meitei men were arrested over 70 days after a video depicting Kuki women being assaulted and allegedly gang-raped went viral.**

🔴 **Failed Mediation:** Home Minister Amit Shah's late-May visit to Manipur proved futile in facilitating negotiations between groups. The "**peace committee**" he established was rejected by Kuki groups, alleging Meitei dominance, including by the Chief Minister.

🔴 **Accusations:** State government is accused by civil society of worsening divisions in Manipur by backing violent factions linked to the Hindu-majority Meitei community. Government, in turn, accuses the Christian-majority Kuki tribe of involvement in drug trafficking and sheltering Myanmar refugees.

🔴 **Criticism by SC**- The Supreme Court criticised the government for failing to manage the situation in Manipur. **CJI Chandrachud urged immediate action for the situation in Manipur**, **deeming it unacceptable.**

🔴 **Resolution of EU:** The European Union adopted a resolution addressing the crisis in Manipur and expressing strong condemnation for the violence. The **EU has urged the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)** and voiced apprehensions regarding the **internet shutdown.**

SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions
- Indigenous Initiatives
  - Peacemaking initiatives
  - Foregiveness Ceremonies
- Efficient decision making
  - Truth telling Processes
  - Women Participation
  - Citizen Centric Approach
- Mutual Accommadation of Communities
  - Greater Autonomy to the hill tribes
  - Re-evaluation of Kuki Community's Territorial Demands

WAY FORWARD

✳ **Multifaceted Approach**- To reorient India's counter-insurgency strategy in this complex scenario, a comprehensive and **multifaceted approach** is essential. This entails incorporating nuanced strategies tailored to the specific challenges posed by the situation.

✳ **Addressing Root Cause**- A paramount focus must be placed on comprehensively tackling the underlying causes of these conflicts, which encompass a spectrum of issues such as historical animosities, socio-economic disparities, and political disenfranchisement.

✳ **Extra-Military Intervention**- This endeavour entails **engaging in negotiation processes and implementing**

peacebuilding initiatives that extend beyond mere military interventions. By addressing these challenges through dialogue and reconciliation, sustainable peace and stability can be fostered in the region

✳ **Economic Development**:The state government needs to **prioritise the promotion of industry and service sectors** as drivers of development in Manipur. By creating more **non-agricultural economic opportunities**, this approach has the potential to decrease people's reliance on agriculture and their attachment to the land.

✳ **Inclusive Government:**State government must establish **efficient, accountable, participatory governance, ensuring transparency, service accessibility, and citizen engagement** to address diverse needs and foster trust, civic participation, and socio-economic development in Manipur

CONCLUSION

Stakeholders should adopt a multifaceted approach that addresses the root causes of the Manipur conflict while prioritising **inclusive governance and economic development.** By fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and sustainable peacebuilding initiatives, the region can aspire to achieve lasting stability and prosperity, ensuring the **well-being and security of all its diverse communities.**

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Assess the historical and contemporary facets of the Manipur conflict,emphasising its implications for national security. Consider the socio-political dynamics and propose measures to address the region's security challenges **(10 M)(150 W)**

ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) You are posted in a district as a public servant with the responsibility of overseeing issues related to Women and Child Development. Recently a sensational news story was reported in your district involving a poor farmer who had beaten his daughter for not attending her seventh-grade annual exams and then forcibly took her to the examination hall.

Corporal punishment to the children by parents or teachers is legally punishable. Immediately, the State Children's commission took up the incident and asked you to investigate the matter. The farmer justified his actions by stating that he acted to secure a better future for his daughter, as he did not want her to endure the same poverty he faced. He further explained that his financial situation is dire, and if he is sent to jail, his children would suffer extreme hardships. However, various rights groups want strict action against the parent and are pressuring you.

a.   What are the options available to you?

b.   Evaluate each of these options and choose the option you would adopt, giving reasons.

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

1. **Ethics in Public Life:** U.S. police are known to give sedatives to people detained as a precaution and **rapid treatment** of drug related crimes. It has now caught attention since reportedly, nearly **10% of over 1,000 deaths from 2012 to 2021** involved sedative administration and restraint by police, with about **half of the victims being Black.**

2. **Public Service: IFoS officer Vikas Nayak** transformed barren land near the **Yamuna into Rapdi Ecotourism Centre**, aiming to conserve biodiversity and promote conscious tourism. Within 11 months, the centre attracted 1,100 visitors, signalling its success.

3. **Integrity in Politics: AI-generated deepfakes** are being increasingly utilised **in Lok Sabha elections**, generating real-time calls to voters, this technology was deployed on a **pilot basis in Rajasthan by Polymath Solution**

4. **Gender Rights: Iraq's parliament** passed a law criminalising **same-sex relationships**, imposing up to **15 years in prison**, ostensibly to uphold religious values.

5. **Political Apathy:** Residents of **Khokhanaha village in Bihar** have strategically **boycotted the previous Lok Sabha polls and Assembly polls** due to neglect towards their plight after the **Kosi River cut through their village**, leaving them isolated and without basic necessities.

6. **Cyber Ethics:** More than **150 Delhi-NCR schools face bomb threat emails**, originating from a **Russian IP address**, sparking fears and investigations into potential organised involvement.

7. **Gender Parity:** The Supreme Court mandates **one-third of seats for women in the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA)'s executive committee**, including rotational reservation for office-bearer roles like Treasurer.

MODEL ESSAY

"War is what happens when language fails"

Introduction

- Quote by Margaret Thatcher
- Highlight importance of dialogue, negotiation and diplomacy

Significance of dialogue

- **Transparency in governance:** Dialogue gives a platform for parties to express their concerns, interests, and grievances.Nations can clarify their intentions and explore peaceful solutions to disputes.

- **Diplomacy:** Diplomatic channels facilitate dialogue, mediation, and arbitration among nations, promoting mutual cooperation and ending wars.

- **Conflict Resolution:** Dialogues can address the grievances and differences of all communities, thus reducing conflicts in the state.

- **Building Trust and Relationships:**Respectful communication- parties can establish empathy, and goodwill.

- **Empowering Stakeholders:** Giving them a voice in decision-making processes-involving diverse perspectives-dialogue promotes democratic values

Challenges

- **Power Imbalances:** Conflicts generally arise due to the subjugation of a marginalised or less powerful nation or group, which cannot be solved through dialogue. Eg: Freedom struggle of colonised nations, apartheid movement

- **Cultural barriers:** Cultural diversities may force people to believe that they would be undermined by the majority group.

  Eg: Demand of Indian Muslims to create Pakistan, Dravidian movement.

- **Non state factors:** while the government may try its level best to increase transparency and dialogue to reduce conflicts, terrorists, separationists etc are a hindrance to the same.

  Eg: Naxal Maoist uprising in West Bengal, Khalistan Movement in Punjab.

- **Nationalism and populism:**The rise of nationalism and populism in many countries has led to an inward-looking and protectionist approach to foreign policy which creates unilateral actions that undermine international norms.

  Eg: International policies of North Korea

Way Forward

- Promotion of **international organisations** Eg: Strengthening UN Security Council .

- **Utilising Technology** for Diplomacy Eg:"Digital Diplomacy" initiative by the European Union

- **Conflict Resolution Training** Eg:United States Institute of Peace (USIP) provides training programs for diplomats, peacebuilders, and civil society leaders

- Encouraging **People-to-People Dialogue** Eg.Seeds of Peace program brings together youth from Israel and Palestine

Conclusion

- Diplomacy and dialogue are the cornerstone of peace and cooperation.

- Every state should prioritise dialogue & negotiation over coercion & confrontation

Sample Quotes

- The greatest deception men suffer is from their own opinions- Da Vinci

- Power doesn't corrupt people; people corrupt power-William Gaddis

- Lead from the back and let others believe they are in front- Nelson Mandela

MAINS JOT DOWN

GS- II - *INDIA & NEIGHBORHOOD*

➡ The **Sri Lankan Cabinet** has approved the renovation of the **Kankesanthurai Port** (KKS Port) in the **Northern Province**, with India agreeing to grant the entire estimated cost of the project, amounting to **USD 61.5 million.**

➡ The decision highlights **India's commitment** to enhancing regional cooperation and supporting **Sri Lanka's infrastructure development.**
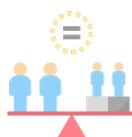
GS- III - *ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION*

➡ Researchers at the **Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)** reported widespread bleaching of coral reefs in the **Lakshadweep Sea** due to marine **heatwaves**.

➡ Extensive surveys across Lakshadweep islands revealed a significant percentage of **hard coral species** undergoing serious bleaching due to **prolonged marine heatwaves** since late October 2023.

GS- II - *FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS*

➡ **World Press Freedom Index (WPFI) 2024**
- **India** ranked **159 among 180** countries in annual WPFI 2024.
- **Top 3 rankers are Norway, Denmark and Sweden.**

GS-I - *ISSUES RELATED TO CHILDREN*

➡ **Rajasthan High Court** issued directives to State Government to **prevent child marriages**

➡ Directives were issued ahead of the **Akshay Tritiya festival** which sees a significant number of **child marriages in the State.**

➡ The court said that village heads and panchayat members will be held accountable if child marriages are solemnised.

➡ Under **Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Rules 1996**, **sarpanch** is duty bound to **restrict child marriages.**

GS- I - *POPULATION AND ISSUES*

➡ A recent report by the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** stated that climate change is significantly affecting **occupational safety and health (OSH)** worldwide, with workers facing increasing hazards but often having to work in **dangerous conditions.**

GS- I - *WOMEN ISSUES*

➡ The **European Union** formally adopted groundbreaking legislation designed to combat **violence against women** across its **27 member states.**

➡ This legislation includes measures against forced marriages, female genital mutilation, and cyber violence, marking a significant step in enhancing **women's rights and safety within the EU.**

GS- I - *GEOGRAPHY*

→ **El nino**
- Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa declared the **drought a national disaster.**
- A dry spell induced by **El Nino** is wreaking havoc across southern Africa.

→ Satellite monitoring data by the Indian Space Research Organisation **(ISRO)** has shown a **large expansion in glacial lakes** between 1984 and 2023 in the Himalayan region, which has posed an alarming situation for the downstream areas.

→ Of the 2,431 lakes larger than 10 hectares identified during 2016-17, **676 glacial lakes have notably expanded since 1984.**

→ **130 of these lakes are situated within India,** with 65, 7, and 58 lakes located in the Indus, Ganga, and Brahmaputra River basins, respectively.

GS- I - *WOMEN EMPOWERMNET*

→ **Dr. Naima Khatoon** recently made history by becoming the **first woman Vice Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).**

→ Her appointment was approved by President Droupadi Murmu and the Election Commission of India, with a **term of five years.**

→ Interestingly, the **first chancellor of AMU** was also a **woman - Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal.**

→ **Only 235 candidates of the total 2,823 candidates** in the first two phases of the Lok Sabha (LS) elections were **women**, with political activists saying it reflects a deeper issue of gender bias and that talk of women's empowerment rings hollow.

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

MEME COINS

- Also known as '**memetic tokens**' or '**community coins**', meme coins are digital currencies created as a form of satire or humorous tribute to the internet culture.

- They are subject to extreme changes in value over short periods, driven by the current buzz surrounding the token, making them risky investments.

- They typically have a massive or uncapped supply, leading to **very low values per token**.

- These coins **leverage blockchain technology**, creating a meme coin is relatively easy compared to traditional cryptocurrencies.

BEAR MARKET

- It is a financial market experiencing **prolonged price declines**, generally of **20%** or more.

- It usually occurs along with widespread investor pessimism, **large-scale liquidation of securities** and other assets, and a weakening economy.

HURDLE RATE

- It is the lowest rate of return a project or investment must achieve before a manager or investor deems it acceptable.

- It's important when companies or investors make important decisions like pursuing a specific project.

- **Riskier projects generally have higher hurdle rates** than those with less risk.

JUNK BOND

- It is **debt that has been given a low credit rating by a ratings agency**, below investment grade.

- As a result, these bonds are riskier since chances that the issuer will default are higher.

- Because of the higher risk, potential investors are compensated with higher interest rates, which is why junk bonds are also called **high-yield bonds.**

TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

- The concept behind the triple bottom line is that companies should focus as much on **social and environmental issues** as they do on profits.

- The TBL consists of three elements: **profit, people, and the planet.**