



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 31-01-2025**

### **GS-1**

- 1. Belarus**
- 2. Cauvery-South Vellar Link Project**

### **GS-2**

- 3. Unified Pension Scheme**
- 4. Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)**

### **GS-3**

- 5. Rhodamine B**

## **Belarus**

### **Syllabus: GS-1; Geography- Mapping**

#### **Context**

- Belarus's Lukashenko set to win 7th term

#### **Basic Information**

- **Official Name:** Republic of Belarus
- **Capital:** Minsk
- **Official Language:** Belarusian, Russian
- **Currency:** Belarusian Ruble (BYN)

#### **Geographical Location**



- **Continent:** Eastern Europe

- **Borders:**
  - **Russia** (northeast)
  - **Ukraine** (south)
  - **Poland** (west)
  - **Lithuania & Latvia** (northwest)
- **Major Rivers:** Dnieper, Pripyat, Neman
- **Climate:** Continental (cold winters, mild summers)

### Historical Background

- **Part of Soviet Union:** 1922–1991
- **Independence:** 1991 (after USSR collapse)
- **First President:** Alexander Lukashenko (has been in power since 1994)

### Economy

- **Key Sectors:**
  - Heavy industries (machinery, chemical, petrochemical)
  - Agriculture (potatoes, flax, dairy products)
  - IT and services
- **Trade Partners:**
  - **Major Importers:** Russia, China, Germany
  - **Major Exporters:** Russia, Poland, Ukraine
- **Economic Model:**
  - **State-controlled** economy
  - Close economic ties with **Russia**
  - Member of **Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)**

### Political System

- **Presidential Republic:**
  - President holds strong powers
  - Limited political opposition
  - Controlled media and government institutions
- **Recent Developments:**
  - 2020 **Protests** against election fraud
  - Alleged **human rights violations**
  - EU and US **sanctions**

## Belarus-Russia Relations

- **Strong Political & Economic Ties:**
  - **Union State Agreement** (closer integration between the two)
  - Russia supports Belarus **economically & militarily**
  - Belarus allows **Russian troops** to operate on its soil

## Belarus & Ukraine Conflict (Russia-Ukraine War)

- **Alleged Russian Ally:**
  - **Allowed** Russian troops to use Belarusian territory in **2022 invasion of Ukraine**
  - Faced **sanctions** from the West
  - **Not directly involved** in the war

## International Relations

- **With India:**
  - **Strategic partnership** in trade, pharmaceuticals, and defense
  - Belarus supports India's **UNSC permanent seat bid**
- **With China:**
  - **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Partner**
  - Significant **Chinese investments** in infrastructure

## Cauvery-South Vellar Link Project

### Syllabus: GS-1; Water Resource Management

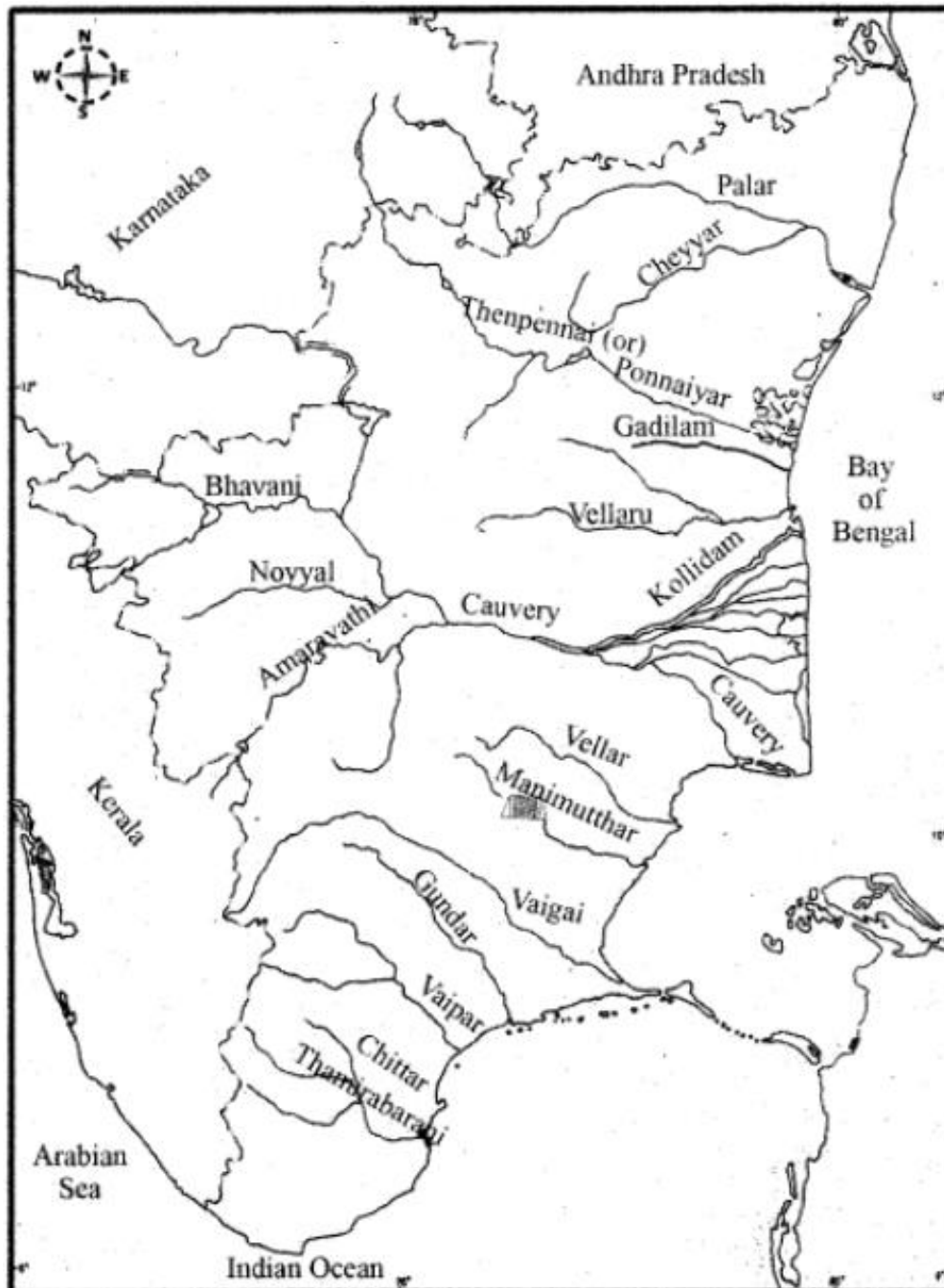
#### Context

- The Supreme Court has found that the Union government is yet to grant 'in-principle approval' to the Cauvery-South Vellar Link project four years after Tamil Nadu sought clearance from the Jal Shakti Ministry in January 2021.

#### What is the Project?

- The **Cauvery-South Vellar Link Project** is a proposed initiative by the state of **Tamil Nadu** aimed at addressing water scarcity in the drought-prone regions of the state, particularly in the **Sarabanga Basin** of **Salem district**.

- The project proposes to divert **surplus floodwater** from the **Mettur Dam** in the **Cauvery River** to dry tanks in the **South Vellar Basin**.
- This water diversion would replenish water bodies and ensure **efficient water use for agriculture**.
- The project seeks to improve irrigation and drinking water availability in areas facing chronic water shortages, thereby benefiting the agricultural economy.



### States Involved

- **Tamil Nadu:** The state seeks to implement this project to meet agricultural irrigation and drinking water needs in its dry regions, especially in districts like **Salem, Perambalur, and Cuddalore**.
- **Karnataka:** The state of Karnataka opposes the project, claiming that it diverts excess water from the Cauvery River, which is already under a contentious water-sharing agreement between the two states. Karnataka argues that this diversion infringes upon its allocated share of water.

### Significance

- **Agricultural Support:** The project aims to address irrigation needs in Tamil Nadu's dry regions, providing a consistent water supply for agriculture.
- **Water Management:** It aims to reduce water wastage by utilizing surplus water during the flood season, improving overall water resource management in the region.
- **Dispute Implications:** The project has raised concerns over interstate water-sharing agreements, particularly between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. It underscores the importance of **federal cooperation** and peaceful resolution of water disputes.

### About the Cauvery River:

- **Origin:** The Cauvery River originates from **Talakaveri** in the **Brahmagiri Hills** of the **Western Ghats**, located in **Karnataka**.
- **Mouth:** The river flows into the **Bay of Bengal** at **Poompuhar**, Tamil Nadu.
- **States Flow Through:** The river flows through **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry**.
- **Significance:** Revered as the **Dakshina Ganga** (Ganges of the South) in Tamil Nadu, the river is known as **Ponni** in the state. It is not only a vital source of water for agriculture but also holds cultural and religious significance.
- **Tributaries:**
  - **Left Bank:** Arkavathi, Hemavathi, Shimsa, Harangi.
  - **Right Bank:** Lakshman Tirtha, Kabini, Suvarnavathi, Noyil, Bhavani, Amaravathi.
- **Protected Areas in the Basin:** The river basin is home to several protected areas, including **Nagarhole National Park, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary**, and the **Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve**.

### About the Vellar River:

- **Origin:** The **Vellar River** originates from the **Servarayan Hills** in the **Eastern Ghats**.
- **Mouth:** The river flows into the **Bay of Bengal**.
- **States Flow Through:** The Vellar River primarily flows through **Tamil Nadu**, passing through districts such as **Salem, Perambalur, and Cuddalore**.
- **Tributaries:** Key tributaries include the **Manimuktha River, Chinnar River, and Vasishta Nadi**.

### Challenges and Controversies:

- **Inter-State Water Disputes:** The Cauvery River has been at the center of water-sharing disputes between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka for decades.
  - The proposed diversion of water for the South Vellar Basin project raises concerns that it could worsen these disputes, as Karnataka perceives it as an infringement on its allocated share.
- **Environmental Concerns:** The diversion of water could have ecological impacts on both the Cauvery and South Vellar river systems, potentially affecting local biodiversity and agricultural practices.
- **Technical and Financial Feasibility:** Constructing the necessary infrastructure, such as reservoirs, canals, and diversion mechanisms, in challenging terrains poses

## Unified Pension Scheme

### Syllabus: GS-2: Social Security Measures.

#### Context:

- The finance ministry has notified the operationalization of the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) as an option under the National Pension System (NPS) for central government employees, effective from April 1 of 2025.

#### What is UPS?

- A contributory pension scheme offering central government employees guaranteed retirement benefits, including **50% of their last drawn basic pay** as a monthly pension.

- **Ministry:** Introduced by the **Ministry of Finance**, regulated by the **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**.
- **Launch Timeline:**
  - Approved by the Cabinet: **August 24, 2024**.
  - Operational Date: **April 1, 2025**.
- **Aim:**

To address grievances with market-linked returns under the National Pension System (NPS) and ensure **financial security post-retirement**.

### Key Features

- **Guaranteed Pension:** 50% of the **average basic pay** during the last 12 months before retirement.
- **Dearness Relief (DR):** Regular pension adjustments based on **inflation trends**.
- **Family Pension:** In case of the employee's death, family members receive **60% of the pension**.
- **Superannuation Benefits:** Includes a **lump sum payout and gratuity** upon retirement.
- **Minimum Pension Guarantee:** A minimum of **₹10,000 per month** for employees with at least **10 years of service**.

### Contributions Under UPS

- **Employee Contribution:** 10% of basic pay.
- **Government Contribution:** 5% of basic pay, subject to actuarial review for sustainability.

### Coverage

- Applicable to **Central Government employees** previously covered under NPS.
- Employees hired on or after **January 1, 2004**, including retirees, can choose to **switch from NPS to UPS**.

### Transition from NPS to UPS

- **Concerns with NPS:**
  - Linked pensions to **market-driven returns** based on contributions.
  - Led to uncertainty over post-retirement income.



➤ **Benefits of UPS:**

- Guarantees **lifelong monthly pensions**.
- Aimed at benefiting **99% of NPS members**.

## **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)**

### **Syllabus: GS-2; Governance**

#### **Context**

- Cab aggregators Ola and Uber told the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) that they follow a uniform pricing policy and don't differentiate between consumers using iPhone or Android phones.

#### **About**

- The **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** is a key regulatory body established under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** to promote, protect, and enforce the rights of consumers.
- It is a part of the Government of India and is responsible for ensuring consumer welfare through the implementation of consumer protection laws and policies.

#### **Establishment and Purpose**

- **Formed:** Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- **Primary Objective:** To protect, promote, and enforce the rights of consumers, prevent unfair trade practices, and protect consumers from deceptive advertisements and products.

#### **Powers and Functions**

- **Investigate and Take Action:** CCPA has the authority to investigate matters related to unfair trade practices, misleading advertisements, and violation of consumer rights. It can impose penalties and take action against erring businesses.
- **Consumer Advocacy:** The authority promotes consumer education and awareness through advocacy, campaigns, and providing a platform for consumer grievances.
- **Issue Guidelines:** CCPA can issue directions and guidelines on consumer protection matters.

- **Preventive Measures:** It is authorized to take preventive measures in matters related to counterfeit goods, product recalls, and ensuring quality standards in the market.
- **Regulation of Advertisements:** CCPA plays a vital role in regulating misleading and deceptive advertisements, which may mislead consumers and violate their rights.

### Structure

- **Composition:** The CCPA is headed by a Chief Commissioner and has a team of officials with expertise in consumer protection, law, economics, and public policy.
- **Functions Division:** The body is divided into various wings for handling complaints, investigations, and policy implementation.

### Key Rights of Consumers Under CCPA

- **Right to Safety:** Protection from hazardous goods and services.
- **Right to be Informed:** Consumers have the right to receive accurate and sufficient information.
- **Right to Choose:** Availability of a variety of goods and services.
- **Right to be Heard:** Right to file complaints and grievances.
- **Right to Seek Redress:** Right to seek compensation for grievances.

### Enforcement and Penalties

- CCPA has the authority to take action against companies and service providers for **unfair trade practices, false advertising, and violations of consumer rights.**
- It can impose penalties, including fines and compensation to consumers who are harmed.
- It can also issue directions to withdraw misleading advertisements or products from the market.

### Complaints and Redressal Mechanism

- CCPA provides an online platform for consumers to register complaints, report grievances, and seek redressal.
- It is involved in setting up mechanisms that allow quick and accessible dispute resolution for consumers.

### Significance in Consumer Protection

- The establishment of the CCPA marked a significant step forward in empowering consumers, improving transparency, and promoting ethical business practices.
- It helps in reducing the number of consumer complaints and ensures swift resolution of disputes.

## **Rhodamine B**

### **Syllabus: GS-3; General Science**

#### **Context**

- The article discusses about-The hidden dangers of Rhodamine B: a global and local perspective

#### **What is Rhodamine B?**

- Rhodamine B is a synthetic dye known for its bright pink hue, commonly used in industries such as **textiles, paper, and leather**.
- Its application also extends to scientific research due to its fluorescent properties. However, its use in consumable products poses serious health risks.
- Studies have shown that Rhodamine B can **cause DNA damage, leading to mutations and potentially triggering cancerous growths**.
- Animal research has demonstrated tumor development in organs like the liver and bladder following prolonged exposure to the dye.

#### **Global Health Regulations and Bans**

Many countries have implemented strict regulations to control the use of Rhodamine B due to its carcinogenic potential:

- **United States:** The FDA has long prohibited Rhodamine B in food products, classifying it as unsafe for human consumption. A ban issued in January 2025 reinforces this stance due to growing evidence of its carcinogenic properties, especially regarding its exposure in candies and baked goods.
- **European Union:** Rhodamine B is classified as a substance of very high concern, with restricted use in cosmetics and other consumer goods.

## Rhodamine B in India: A Growing Concern

### The Indian Government's Response

In India, the illegal use of Rhodamine B in food items has raised major health concerns. Several states have taken action to curb its use:

- **Tamil Nadu:** In February 2024, Tamil Nadu banned the production and sale of cotton candy after Rhodamine B was detected in local samples. Health Minister Ma Subramanian emphasized that such products violate the Food Safety and Standards Act of 2006.
- **Karnataka:** Following Tamil Nadu's lead, Karnataka also prohibited the use of Rhodamine B in street foods like Gobi Manchurian and cotton candy in March 2024. Violators face severe penalties, including imprisonment and fines.
- **Puducherry:** The sale of cotton candy containing Rhodamine B was banned, with food safety officers instructed to conduct inspections and enforce strict actions.
- **Himachal Pradesh:** In May 2024, the state imposed a one-year ban on cotton candy after detecting the dye in local samples.

## India's Food Safety Ecosystem: A Call for Action

### The Need for Stronger Regulations

- There is a pressing need for proactive funding and independent research by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to study the impact of food additives, especially synthetic dyes, on public health.

### Public Education and Policy Implementation

- FSSAI should take a more visible role in educating the public about unsafe food practices and play an active part in enforcing food safety standards.
- The case of Rhodamine B is a wake-up call, underscoring the need for better scientific reviews and policy implementation in line with international food safety norms.

## Conclusion: Prioritizing Health Over Aesthetics

- The case of Rhodamine B serves as an important reminder of the hidden dangers lurking in seemingly harmless products.
- Governments, industries, and consumers must prioritize health over aesthetics.
- By staying informed and vigilant, we can ensure that the foods we enjoy are not only appealing but also safe.

31 January 2024

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- As medical professionals advise, “The health of a nation begins with the safety of its food. It’s time we prioritize long-term well-being over short-term convenience.”