



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

21st JUNE, 2024



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1.	MYANMAR REFUGEES TAKE SHELTER IN MANIPUR'S NAGA DISTRICT
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4.	T.N. HOOCH TRAGEDY

MYANMAR REFUGEES TAKE SHELTER IN MANIPUR'S NAGA DISTRICT

- ❖ The International Yoga Day in 2024 will be celebrated on its designated date of June 21st. The International Yoga Day 2024 theme is "Yoga for Self and Society."
- ❖ The day aims to raise awareness about the numerous benefits of yoga, right from physical, mental, and spiritual. The term "Yoga" comes from the Sanskrit root "yuj," which means "to join," "to yoke," or "to unite." Yoga reflects the union of mind and body, thoughts and actions, restraint and fulfillment, and harmony between humans and nature.

Question:

Q.1 Who is the profounder of yoga Philosophy?

- (a) Kapil
- (b) Gautam
- (c) Patanjali
- (d) Jaimini

Over 5,000 Myanmar refugees take shelter in Manipur's Naga district

Vijaita Singh
Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

Fearing "aerial bombardment and attacks", about 5,400 people from Myanmar have taken shelter in Kamjong district of Manipur, Assam Rifles Director-General Pradeep Chandran Nair told *The Hindu*.

Lt. Gen. Nair said the refugees have been staying in temporary settlements in the border district since November last year.

"There is every likelihood that they would return once the situation normalises in Myanmar; right now, there is a threat to their safety there. The



Myanmar refugees in Kamjong of Manipur. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

State government is aware of their presence," he said.

The issue of undocumented migrants in the Naga-dominated district has added another dimension to the ongoing ethnic conflict in the State between the tribal Kuki-Zo people and the majority Meitei

community.

Manipur's population includes people from 34 Scheduled Tribes, including the Kuki-Zo-Hmar people and the Nagas.

Kamjong district shares its eastern border with Myanmar. To its west are the Thoubal and Kangpok-

pi districts, dominated by Meiteis and Kuki-Zos respectively. Since the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, many people have crossed over to Mizoram and Manipur due to shared ethnic ties with the people of these States.

India and Myanmar share an unfenced border; earlier this year, however, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced the suspension of the Free Movement Regime (FMR) with the neighbouring country, and added that the 1,643-km border would be fenced.

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The Ethno-Demographic Landscape of Manipur

There are 16 districts in Manipur, but the state is commonly thought of as divided into 'valley' and 'hill' districts.



In these hill areas, which comprise the bulk of Manipur's geographical area, live 15 Naga tribes and the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi group.

Imphal (East and West)

Kukis and Nagas point out that tribal areas are 90% of state's geographical area, but the bulk of its budget and development work is focused on the Meitei-dominated Imphal valley.

The Manipur valley is encircled by skirts of low hills that spread into Nagaland and Mizoram.

While tribals can buy land in the valley, Meiteis are prohibited from buying land in the hills





Manipur Violence of 2023 was marked by intense protests and violent clashes in Manipur following a directive from the Manipur High Court for the State Government to consider granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the Meitei community. This decision was based on a decade-old recommendation. The unfolding events in Manipur have raised several significant issues such as reservations, ST status, and the implementation of shoot-at-sight orders.

On May 3, 2023, inter-ethnic conflict erupted in the northeastern state of Manipur, India, involving the Meitei majority residing in the Imphal Valley and the Kuki-Zo tribal community from the surrounding hills.

- ❖ Manipur's geographical features and strategic location significantly influence the challenges the State encounters.
- ❖ With 16 districts, Manipur is typically divided into “valley” and “hill” regions.
- ❖ Imphal Valley, situated in the heart of the state, is encircled by hills.
- ❖ Four critical highways serve as access points to the valley, two of which are considered the “lifelines for the State”.
- ❖ The valley, which constitutes about 10% of Manipur’s landmass, is primarily inhabited by the non-tribal Meitei community.
- ❖ The Meitei community makes up over 64% of the State's population and holds 40 out of the 60 seats in the State's Legislative Assembly.
- ❖ In contrast, the hills, which make up nearly 90% of the State's geographical area, are home to about 35% recognised tribes but are represented by only 20 MLAs.
- ❖ The Meiteis are predominantly Hindus, followed by Muslims, while the 33 recognised tribes, grouped as “Any Naga tribes” and “Any Kuki tribes”, are mainly Christians.
- ❖ The valley districts of Thoubal, Bishnupur, Kakching, Imphal East and Imphal West were once part of the ancient kingdom of Kangleipak, ruled by the Ningthouja dynasty.
- ❖ Historians claim that the tribal areas outside the valley were also part of the kingdom. However, these claims are contested by the tribes, particularly the Naga tribes.
- ❖ The kingdom of Kangleipak, a British protectorate, was frequently attacked by the Naga tribes from the northern hills.
- ❖ To safeguard the valley, the British political agent in Manipur reportedly relocated the Kuki-Zomi from the Kuki-Chin hills of Burma to create a buffer territory between the Meiteis and the Nagas.
- ❖ The Kukis, like the Nagas, were fierce headhunting warriors, and the Maharaja allocated them land along the ridges, where they could act as a protective shield for the valley.

The Meitei Community’s Pursuit for ST Status:

- ❖ The Scheduled Tribes Demand Committee of Manipur (STDCM) has been advocating for the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for the Meitei community since 2012.
- ❖ The Meitei (Meitei) Tribe Union filed a petition before the Manipur High Court, arguing that the Meitei community was recognised as a “tribe” prior to the merger of the princely state of Manipur with the Union of India in 1949. They claimed that the community lost its tribal identity following the merger.
- ❖ The petitioners further contended that the ST status should be extended to the community to preserve their ancestral land, tradition, culture, and language. According to STDCM:



- ☛ The Meitei community has suffered victimisation without any constitutional protection.
- ☛ The community has been progressively marginalised in their ancestral land.
- ☛ The population of the Meitei community has decreased from 59% of the total population of Manipur in 1951 to 44% as per the 2011 Census data.

The Verdict of the Manipur High Court:

- ❖ On April 19, 2023, the Manipur High Court directed the Manipur government to submit a 10-year-old recommendation to the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry for the inclusion of the Meitei community in the ST list within four weeks.
- ❖ The High Court referenced a letter from the Union Tribal Ministry to the State government in May 2013, which had requested recommendations along with the latest socio-economic survey and ethnographic report.

Resistance by Other Tribal Groups:

- ❖ The proposal for ST status for the Meitei community has met with resistance from other tribal groups in the state.
- ❖ These tribal groups argue that the Meitei community already enjoys a demographic and political advantage.
- ❖ They maintain that the Meitei community is more advanced than the tribal groups in terms of academic achievement and other aspects.
- ❖ Various tribal organisations argue that granting ST status to the Meiteis would result in a loss of employment opportunities and would also enable Meiteis to acquire land in the hills, which would eventually displace the tribals.
- ❖ Groups like the All Tribal Students' Union of Manipur also argue that the Manipuri language of the Meiteis is included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and that various sections of the community are already enjoying various benefits associated with the Scheduled Castes (SC) or Other Backward Classes (OBC) status.

The Recent Turmoil in Manipur:

- ❖ Following the April 19th directives of the Manipur High Court, the All Tribal Students' Union of Manipur (ATSUM) organised a "Tribal Solidarity March".
- ❖ The March was held in protest against the demand for the inclusion of the Meitei community in the ST category. However, violent clashes broke out at various places during the march.
- ❖ The situation in Manipur became extremely volatile and violent, leading to the deployment of the Indian Army and other central police forces.
- ❖ In order to control the situation, the Manipur government also authorised all District Magistrates to issue "shoot at sight orders" in "extreme cases".

Additional Causes for the Recent Unrest:

- ❖ The divide between the Meiteis and tribals such as Kukis on various issues has intensified in recent years.



- ❖ The state government's notices declaring that the 38 villages in the ChurachandpurKhoum Protected Forest area are “illegal settlements” and its residents are “encroachers”, along with the subsequent eviction drive, led to serious clashes.
- ❖ The state's first delimitation process since 1973 has caused concerns and discontent.
- ❖ The state is grappling with a massive refugee crisis due to the military coup in Myanmar.
- ❖ Meitei leaders have alleged a sudden surge in the number of villages in the Churachandpur district.
- ❖ The Kuki-Zomi tribesmen of both countries share strong ties of ethnicity, customs, language, and dress.
- ❖ Pro-government groups in the State believe that a few tribal groups with vested interests are trying to disrupt the government’s battle against drugs.

The Kuki-Meitei Divide:

- ❖ The conflict between the hill communities and the Meiteis has persisted since the time of the kingdom of Kangleipak.
- ❖ These tensions escalated during the 1950s with the rise of the Naga national movement and the demands for an independent Naga nation.
- ❖ The Naga insurgency led to the emergence of insurgent groups among the Meiteis and Kuki-Zomi.
- ❖ In the 1990s, as the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN-IM), one of the largest Naga groups, pushed harder for self-determination, the Kuki-Zomi groups began to militarise.
- ❖ The Kukis later launched their own movement for “Kukiland”, demanding the creation of a separate state within India.
- ❖ Although the Kukis once protected the Meitei people, the “Kukiland movement” created a rift between the communities.

The Supreme Court’s Perspective:

- ❖ The Supreme Court has described the Manipur crisis as a “humanitarian problem” and expressed concerns about the loss of life and property.
- ❖ The apex court noted that it is the President who has the power to designate a community as Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, not the High Court.
- ❖ The Chief Justice of India (CJI) has urged the Centre and the Manipur government to make efforts to protect the people.

The Central Government's Position:

- ❖ The Union Home Minister stated that the order passed by the Manipur High Court will be studied and discussed with all stakeholders. Appropriate decisions will be taken after consultation.
- ❖ The Indian Army has deployed Heron Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and helicopters to increase surveillance on the situation in Manipur and along the Indo-Myanmar Border.

A Way Forward:

- ❖ Addressing the Meitei-Kuki conflict requires urgent, meaningful dialogue and confidence-building measures. Disarming militant groups and civilians engaged in violence is crucial.
- ❖ The state government's political will is central to achieving these goals. Prioritizing dialogue over hostility is essential, with academics and neutral individuals playing a role.



- ❖ Revisiting political representation and resource distribution can bridge ethnic disparities.
- ❖ Streamlining legislative assembly constituencies and focusing on decentralization and autonomy can address historical imbalances. Initiating discussions on land ownership and equitable development is vital for longterm stability.
- ❖ Infusing a sense of fraternity among ethnic groups is crucial. Policymaking should transcend short-term electoral interests, focusing on the broader nation-building endeavor. Resolving conflicts through social platforms, rather than solely relying on political mechanisms, can yield more sustainable outcomes.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The Meitei-Kuki conflict in Manipur is a complex interplay of historical grievances, resource disputes, and identity politics. To forge a path toward peace, a multifaceted approach involving political will, inclusive dialogue, and equitable policies is essential. Manipur's diverse communities must collectively address the root causes, fostering a spirit of unity and cooperation for a harmonious future.

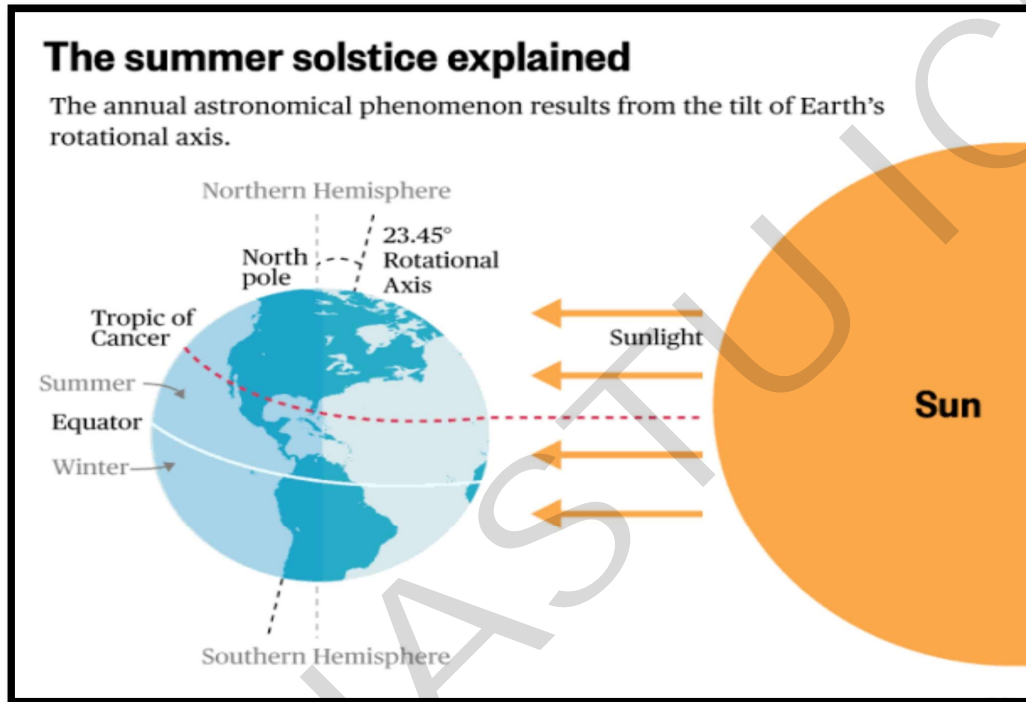
Probable Questions for UPSC mains Exam:

- Q.1 Examine the socio-political roots of the Meitei-Kuki conflict in Manipur, highlighting the historical factors, territorial integrity concerns, and issues related to uneven development. Discuss the role of ethnic disparities, land ownership restrictions, and the Hill-Valley divide in perpetuating the conflict. Propose comprehensive measures for fostering peace and unity among diverse ethnic communities in the region. (10 marks, 150 words)**
- Q.2 Evaluate the impact of governance deficits and demands for autonomy in exacerbating the Meitei-Kuki conflict in Manipur. Analyze the challenges associated with decentralization, ineffective Hill Areas Committee, and the role of autonomous district councils. Discuss the significance of revisiting political representation, resource distribution, and measures to address historical imbalances as potential solutions for long-term stability in the region.(15 marks, 250 words)**

SUMMER SOLSTICE — 21ST JUNE

Summer Solstice:

- ❖ During Summer solstice, the days are longer than the nights. It occurs on the 21st of June in the northern hemisphere. On 21st June, the tropic of cancer is tilted towards the sun i.e the sun is always above the horizon and does not set below the horizon at the Arctic circle.



Question:

- Q. 21st June marks the 'Summer Solstice'. Which of the following is correct with regards to summer solstice?
- The longest day and the shortest night in Southern Hemisphere.
 - The shortest day and the longest night in Northern Hemisphere.
 - The longest day and the shortest night in Northern Hemisphere.
 - Equal days and equal nights in both the Hemispheres.



T.N. HOCH TRAGEDY

T.N. hooch tragedy toll mounts to 39; many in serious condition

Of the 120 persons admitted to government hospitals, as many as 82 are currently undergoing treatment; 16 people in JIPMER critical; Stalin constitutes one-man commission to conduct inquiry into the deaths; Crime Branch CID begins probe

S. Prasad
KALLAKURICHI

The death toll in one of the worst-ever hooch tragedies reported in Tamil Nadu climbed to 39 on Thursday, with five more persons losing their lives at Karunapuram in Kallakurichi district.

While 34 victims had died by late Wednesday night, the remaining died on Thursday. The victims included four women and one transperson. In one house, three teenage siblings were orphaned by the tragedy. The toll is likely to go up with many victims undergoing treatment in serious condition. Of the total 120 people admitted to government hospitals in Kallakurichi, Salem and Villupuram and at JIPMER



Pyres being readied for cremation of victims of the hooch tragedy in Kallakurichi on Thursday. S.S. KUMAR

in Paducherry, as many as 82 are currently undergoing treatment. Of them, 16 people in JIPMER are critical.

On Thursday, bodies were seen piled up next to

one another on the Gokuldas riverbed ready to be cremated or buried, even as relatives prepared for the last rites.

The district administration had made the arrange-

ments for the same. Amid calls from the Opposition for his resignation on moral grounds, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin constituted a one-man commission headed by Justice B.

Gokuldas, former judge of the Madras High Court, to conduct a thorough inquiry into the deaths in Kallakurichi. The committee has been mandated to submit its report to the government within three months.

The Crime Branch CID has commenced its probe into the man-made tragedy. The government also moved out Additional Director-General of Police (Enforcement Bureau CID) Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal. On Friday, the Madras High Court will take up for hearing a plea seeking a CBI investigation into the incident.

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How dangerous is methanol poisoning?

What happened in the Kallakurichi district of Tamil Nadu? How is spurious liquor made and why does it have deadly effects? Why is methanol added to liquor and how is it processed by the body if ingested? Is treatment effective?

EXPLAINER

Yasudevan Mukundh

The story so far:

At least 38 people had died after consuming spurious liquor in the Kallakurichi district of Tamil Nadu while as many as 82 others were receiving treatment in hospitals. Immediately after news of the deaths broke, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had the Collector transferred and the district superintendent of police suspended. The State has also deployed 2,000 police personnel around the district. The tragedy echoes a similar incident a year ago in the State's Chengalpattu and Villupuram districts, in which more than 20 people died after consuming spurious liquor. Liquor sales in Tamil Nadu are controlled by the State, through around 5,000 outlets.

What is the alcohol in liquor?

Liquor is differentiated by its alcohol content — from the 5% or so of beer to the 12% or so of wine to the 40% or so of distilled spirits (all by volume). In the beverages consumed for recreational purposes, the alcohol in question is almost always ethanol. In this context, ethanol is technically a psychoactive drug that, in low doses, reduces the level of neurotransmission in the body, leading to its typical intoxicating effects.

Contrary to popular belief, the World Health Organisation has found "no level of [its] consumption is safe for our health". Long-term use leads to dependence, heightens the risk of some cancers and heart disease, and may eventually cause death.

Ethanol (C₂H₅OH) is one carbon atom bonded to three hydrogen atoms and one more carbon atom; the second carbon atom is also bonded to two hydrogen atoms and the hydroxyl group, also known as the ion OH⁻. Inside the body, ethanol is metabolised in the liver and the stomach by alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH) enzymes to acetaldehyde. Then, acetaldehyde is transformed into acetate by aldehyde dehydrogenase (ALDH) enzymes. The adverse effects of alcohol consumption, from the hangover to a cancer, are due to acetaldehyde.

What is spurious liquor?

Spurious liquor is characterised by the liquid mixture containing methanol as well. The police were able to determine last year that the spurious liquor in both the Chengalpattu and Villupuram incidents arose from the same source, and that arrack sellers had purchased methanol from factories and sold it to the victims (Arrack is distilled from the fermented sap of the palm). Following the Kallakurichi incident, Mr. Stalin constituted a one-man commission headed by former High Court Judge B. Gokuldas to inquire into the tragedy.

In many older cases, spurious liquor has typically been a homemade liquor to which methanol was added to strengthen the intoxicating effects (in colloquial parlance, its 'kick') and/or to increase its bulk volume. The Food Safety and Standards (Alcoholic Beverages) Regulations 2018 stipulate the maximum permissible quantity of methanol in different liquors. These values span a wide range, including "absent" in coconut liquor, 50 grams per 100 litres of country liquor, and 300 grams per 100 litres of pot-distilled spirits.

What is methanol?

The methanol molecule (CH₃OH) consists

of one carbon atom bonded with three hydrogen atoms and one hydroxyl group. Schedule 1 of the Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemical Rules, 1989 includes methanol. The Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) defines the quality of methanol to be ascertained and, together with the Tamil Nadu Denatured Spirit, Methyl Alcohol, and Varnish (French Polish) Rules 1959, what signage methanol packaging should carry.

The most common way to produce methanol is to combine carbon monoxide and hydrogen in the presence of copper and zinc oxides as catalysts at 50-100 atm of pressure and 250° C. In the pre-industrial era, going back to ancient Egypt, people made methanol (together with several other byproducts) by heating wood to a very high temperature.

Methanol has several industrial applications, including as a precursor to acetic acid, formaldehyde, and aromatic hydrocarbons. It is also used as a solvent and as antifreeze. In Tamil Nadu, the manufacture, trade, storage, and sale of methanol requires licences under the 1959 rules.

How does spurious liquor kill?

The deadliness of spurious liquor arises from methanol. James Manor, emeritus professor of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London, wrote in December 2022, "In every hooch tragedy in the history of India — and of the world since 1945 — the poison has been methanol." The human body contains infinitesimal quantities of methanol (4.5 ppm in the breath of healthy individuals, per a 2006 study) as a result of eating some fruits. But even for an adult, more than 0.1 ml of pure methanol per kilogram of body-weight can be devastating.

Once ingested, ADH enzymes metabolise methanol in the liver to form formaldehyde (H-CHO). Then ALDH enzymes convert formaldehyde to formic acid (HCOOH). The accumulation of formic acid over time leads to a condition called metabolic acidosis, which can lead to acidemia: when the blood's pH drops below its normal value of 7.35, becoming increasingly acidic. The blood's pH is normally maintained by a balance between an acid, like carbon dioxide (CO₂), and a base, like the bicarbonate ion (HCO₃⁻). The 'metabolic' in 'metabolic acidosis' means the concentration of the bicarbonate ion is dropping, leading to the acid gaining the upper hand. Formic acid also interferes with an enzyme called cytochrome oxidase, disrupting cells' ability to use oxygen and leading to the build-up of lactic acid and contributing to acidosis.

According to a paper published by the journal Archives of Toxicology in January 2022, consuming methanol also leads to "methanol-induced optic neuropathy ..., a serious condition that may result in long-term or irreversible visual impairment or even blindness [due to] damage and loss of function of the optic nerve and retina". This consequence "shows a tendency to occur as mass poisonings around the world with a clear predilection for poor societies in developing countries," it added. Methanol-poisoning can also cause cerebral edema, haemorrhage, and death.

How can methanol-poisoning be treated?

Once methanol is ingested, the body takes some time to completely eliminate it. One estimate suggests as much as 33% is still left behind after 48 hours. It is completely absorbed via the gastrointestinal tract.

And blood methanol level can reach its maximum value within 90 minutes.

There are two immediate ways to treat methanol poisoning. One is to administer pharmaceutical-grade ethanol. This may sound counter-intuitive but ethanol competes very well with methanol for the ADH enzymes, which metabolise ethanol around 10x faster. As a result, the methanol is kept from being metabolised to formaldehyde.

The other option is to administer an antidote called fomepizole, which has a similar mechanism: it slows the action of the ADH enzymes, causing the body to produce formaldehyde at a rate the body can quickly excrete, preventing the deadlier effects from kicking in.

Both courses of action are limited by availability; fomepizole is expensive whereas pharmaceutical-grade ethanol needs to be administered under expert supervision. Healthcare workers may also have the individual undergo a dialysis to remove methanol and formic acid salts from the blood, and mitigate damage to the kidneys and the retina.

They may also administer folic acid, which encourages the formic acid to break up into carbon dioxide and water. Both fomepizole and folic acid are in the WHO's list of essential medicines.

The formic acid would have begun accumulating in dangerous amounts around 18-24 hours after ingestion, affecting the optic nerve, kidneys, the heart, and the brain. Ophthalmic effects have been observed in 50% of those who have consumed methanol, and they become apparent within 24 hours.

If the individual consumed ethanol along with the methanol, the damage may not be evident until after a few days, further delaying treatment and increasing mortality.

THE GIST

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More than 0.1 ml of pure methanol per kilogram of body weight can be devastating. Methanol poisoning can also cause cerebral edema, haemorrhage, and death.

Tragic event: The bodies of victims who died after consuming spurious liquor being cremated at Karunapuram in Kallakurichi on June 20. KUMAR S.S.



What are the effects of spurious liquor?

- ❖ Methanol or methyl alcohol can cause impaired vision, high toxicity and metabolic acidosis, a condition in which the body produces excessive acid that cannot be flushed out by kidneys.
- ❖ The treatment for this is to intravenously administer Fomepizole and ethanol. However, fomepizole can be expensive and unavailable in many parts of India.
- ❖ In such cases, doctors administer a mixture of ethanol and water (1:1 ratio).
- ❖ Ethanol inhibits methanol's conversion into toxins and helps in flushing it out of the body either naturally or through dialysis.