Syllabus subtopic: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Prelims and Mains focus: about the contamination in drinking water; about BIS; about ISO standards

News: None of the drinking water samples randomly collected from across Delhi conforms to the ISO standards of purity in one or more requirements, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) informed the Supreme Court.

Background

- On January 13, the court ordered the pollution control board and the BIS to conduct a random check of water quality in Delhi and submit a report in a month. The BIS report said it drew samples from various locations across Delhi and 20 other State capitals under an integrated scheme.

- The Delhi government has maintained that potable water in the national capital is safe. The re-inspection has been ordered for further clarity.

About the report and its findings

- In its report, ‘Report of Testing of Piped Drinking Water Samples Drawn from Delhi’, filed on February 19 in the court, the BIS said it had focused on water supplied by city municipalities, corporations, water boards, local bodies. It said the samples were sent for testing against 47 out of 48 parameters (excluding radiological test). These covered organoleptic and physical test, chemical test, toxic substance, bacteriological, virological and biological test.

- It was found that all the drinking water samples drawn from Delhi were non-conforming in one or more requirements as per IS 10500:2012 [specification for drinking water], concluded a 64-page report filed by the Department of Laboratory Policy and Planning Department of the BIS.
Reasons for water contamination

- One of the main reasons for contamination in Delhi was leaking pipes.

- Coliform contamination occurs when faecal matter gets mixed with treated water supplied to consumers. Ultimately, consumers face dangerous gastrointestinal diseases, like dysentery, as a result of this contamination.

About Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)

1. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the national Standards Body of India working under the aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.

2. It is established by the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986.

3. The Minister in charge of the Ministry or Department having administrative control of the BIS is the ex-officio President of the BIS.

4. Composition: As a corporate body, it has 25 members drawn from Central or State Governments, industry, scientific and research institutions, and consumer organisations.

5. It also works as WTO-TBT (Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement) enquiry point for India.

About International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

- ISO is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 164 national standards bodies.

- Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges.
Its Central Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, coordinates the system and runs day-to-day operations, overseen by the Secretary General.

**Governance Structure**

- The **General Assembly** is the overarching organ and ultimate authority of the Organization. It is an annual meeting attended by our members and our Principal Officers.

- The **ISO Council** is the core governance body of the Organization and reports to the General Assembly. It meets three times a year.

- The management of the technical work is taken care of by the **Technical Management Board**, which reports to Council. This body is also responsible for the technical committees that lead standard development and any strategic advisory boards created on technical matters.

**What are standards?**

- International Standards make things work. They give world-class specifications for products, services and systems, to ensure quality, safety and efficiency. They are instrumental in facilitating international trade.

- ISO has published 23056 International Standards and related documents, covering almost every industry, from technology, to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare. ISO International Standards impact everyone, everywhere.

- Regulators and governments count on ISO standards to help develop better regulation, knowing they have a sound basis thanks to the involvement of globally-established experts.