Society & Social Justice · GS - II

Examine the public health risks associated with toxic chemicals in cosmetic products. Discuss the regulatory and institutional measures required to protect consumers, particularly children and adolescents, from unsafe products.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 23/11/2026	GS - II	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Mercury contamination, dermal absorption, kidney and neurological damage, consumer protection, Drugs and Cosmetics Act, CDSCO, product testing, influencer marketing, child safety, regulatory enforcement

Model Answer

Introduction

Cosmetic products are widely used for personal care and appearance enhancement. However, contamination with toxic substances such as mercury can create serious public health risks. The reported case of a teenager developing kidney complications after prolonged use of a mercury-containing fairness cream highlights concerns regarding product safety and regulatory oversight.

Public Health Risks

1. **Organ damage:** Mercury exposure can affect the kidneys and nervous system, potentially causing serious long-term health complications.

2. **Dermal exposure:** Toxic substances in creams can enter the body through the skin, particularly with repeated and prolonged application.

3. **Vulnerable populations:** Children and adolescents require special protection because exposure during developmental stages can have serious consequences.

4. **Misleading marketing:** Influencer promotions and unverified cosmetic claims may encourage consumers to use unsafe products without understanding their ingredients.

Regulatory and Institutional Measures

1. **Stronger enforcement:** CDSCO and state drug-control authorities should strengthen inspections, sampling and action against non-compliant cosmetic manufacturers.

2. **Product testing:** Regular laboratory testing and strict limits on hazardous substances are essential to prevent toxic contamination.

3. **Transparent labelling:** Manufacturers must disclose ingredients, warnings and relevant safety information clearly.

4. **Digital accountability:** Influencers and online marketplaces should exercise due diligence while promoting or selling cosmetic products, with action against misleading advertisements.

5. **Consumer awareness:** Public health campaigns should educate consumers about unsafe skin-lightening products and the risks of unregulated cosmetics.

6. **Child protection:** Child rights institutions and health authorities should ensure timely intervention, medical support and accountability where minors are exposed to hazardous products.

Conclusion

Cosmetic safety is an important component of consumer protection and preventive healthcare. Stronger regulation, scientific testing, responsible digital advertising and public awareness are necessary to ensure that personal-care products do not become sources of avoidable toxic exposure.