



Mains Practice Question

Hundreds of people have died in a district of Punjab after consuming spurious liquor. The police have conducted several raids to catch the culprits responsible for this mishap. The raiding teams seized large quantities of "lahan" - the raw material for making liquor - from various villages and dhabas in the region around the district border. The preliminary investigation has confirmed a long-established system of illicit liquor outlets in the whole state.

It is alleged by the media that the hooch tragedy is the direct and natural consequence of the patronage given by the leaders, including ministers and MLAs for turning a blind eye to the rampant illicit liquor trade in the state.

Meanwhile, the state government is under attack from opposition parties for not taking immediate and adequate action. The state government in a hasty response transferred district magistrate and suspended several police officials for negligence of duty.

You are the newly appointed district magistrate of the region.

- Identify the stakeholders and the ethical issues involved in the case.
- What best course of action will you adopt to resolve the issues in this case?
- What long term steps will you take to make sure such incidents do not occur in future.

21 Aug, 2020 GS Paper 4 Case Studies

Introduction

The given case of hooch tragedy involves multiple stakeholders and requires a number of issues to be resolved. In dealing with this case as an administrator I will have to maintain very high ethical standards and efficiency in management of the ongoing crisis to bring relief and justice to victims of hooch tragedy and dismantle the illegal liquor trade and their supporters to restore the public faith in the Government.

Body

a)

Stakeholders Involved	Ethical Issues
State and Central Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Implement the constitutional values by endeavouring for prohibition (Article 47).Maintaining impartiality in taking legal actions against the culprits.Be transparent and uphold rule of law in investigations.Maintain fairness in decision making and determining the accountability of mishap.

District Magistrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintaining non partisanship and probity in bringing perpetrators to justice no matter how powerful they might be. ▪ Show empathy towards the victims and their families.
Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Curbing the illegal liquor trade with an unbiased attitude ▪ To maintain non partisanship in discharge of their duty by not sidelining or exonerating the politicians. ▪ Maintaining integrity in delivering duty. ▪ Be accountable for its omissions and commissions. ▪ Rectitude of dereliction duties. ▪ Elimination of corruption, promoting honesty in discharge of duties.
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be responsible and liable for their reports. ▪ Being one of the pillars of democracy it is their duty to report the truth fearlessly but objectively.
Ministers/ MLAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uphold integrity by following the laws in letter and spirit. ▪ Pay allegiance to the oath of public service
Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inculcate moral restraint to abjure consumption of liquor, which also causes health hazards. ▪ Embracing the Gandhian ideals of prohibition. ▪ Perform the duty of being a good citizen by helping the administration and police to bring about justice.

b) Best course of action to resolve the issues in this case -

Short Term Course of Action			
	Course of Action	Merits	Demerits
1	Put all the onus of negligence of responsibility on your predecessor and the suspended police officers.	It shall absolve the rest of officials from being held accountable for letting the illegal liquor trade thrive for so long.	It shall exonerate the officials who should be held accountable for dereliction of duty.
2	To not take any action as the people involved in the illegal trade are patronised by the powerful ministers.	It shall bring me into the good books of ministers.	It will put a permanent blot on my reliability and trustworthiness hampering my career growth as an administrator.
3	Ensure the treatment of the victims and make provisions for adequate compensation to the family members of the deceased as soon as possible.	It shall save more lives and provide some relief to the families of the deceased.	
4	Facilitate doctors and medical help on an emergency basis.	It shall prevent further deaths with timely	It may incur additional cost to district

		medical assistance in case of recurrence of such tragedy.	administration.
5	Order raiding on all such illegal liquor shops across the district and confiscation and destruction of all the illegal hooch stockpiles.	This shall discourage illegal trade of liquor.	
6	Order immediate investigation into causes of the tragedy and transparent inquiry into the alleged role of public authorities in the illegal liquor trade in the district.	It shall bring to light all the entities responsible for the death of people and allowing the illegal trade to thrive.	It shall cause backlash from the highly positioned authorities who are responsible for the crime.

- The first two courses of actions would not be taken by me because the former is professionally inappropriate and latter is morally unsound.
- With the third and fourth course of action, I would be able to prevent further deaths in hooch tragedy and provide immediate relief to the people affected by the mishap.
- With the fifth and sixth course of action, I would be able to crack down on the illegal liquor trade and initiate judicial proceedings against the people responsible for the loss of lives to justice. These actions should restore the public faith in the government.
- There are few caveats in these courses of action but most of them are temporary and manageable in the line of duty.

c) To find permanent solution and in order and to address the other underlying issues the following long term measures will be taken-

Long Term Course of Action		
	Course of Action	Merits
1	Order constitution of a commission to look into causes of the tragedy and suggest on how to eliminate recurrence for such incidents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It shall bring to light the exact facts of the hooch tragedy ▪ It will suggest the reforms to be undertaken on the part of Government ▪ It shall provide an opportunity to reform the shortcomings in the administration.
2	Order the Police to adopt zero tolerance towards illicit liquor trade and commission thorough police investigation on allegation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It shall act as a deterrent against recurrence of such mishaps in future. ▪ It will help find the truth of allegations of political nexus in the case ▪ It shall expose and bring to justice the police officers guilty of sidelining with the illicit traders.
3	Start a public campaign by advertisements, street plays etc to appeal to people to avoid consumption of liquor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It may lessen the consumption of liquor and prevent alcoholism related health hazards. ▪ Prevent diversion of financial resources of people from liquor to other worthwhile activities like education of their children. ▪ Also, it can result in less accidents due to drink and drive incidents.
4	Facilitate rehabilitation process of people addicted to alcohol, for this I will request allocation of adequate funds from the Government to open deaddiction centres for the same.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enable the alcohol addicts to return to their normal life.

Conclusion

Thus, in this case my endeavour would be to not only curb the illegal liquor trade but also to minimise the

consumption of liquor as it is bad for health and also a constitutional obligation. The above plan would help me as a district collector to take decisions which are morally sound and rationally appropriate to restore the law and order situation at the earliest and bring maximum justice to most of the stakeholder.

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/mains-practice-question/question-720/pnt>

