Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

A big corporate house is engaged in manufacturing industrial chemicals on a large scale. It proposes to set upon the additional unit. Many states rejected its proposal due to the detrimental effect on the environment. But one state government acceded to the request and permitted the unit close to a city, brushing aside all opposition.

The unit was set up 10 years ago and was in full swing till recently. The pollution caused by the industrial effluents was affecting the land, water and crops in the area. It was also causing serious health problems to human beings and animals. This gave rise to a series of agitation thousands of people took part, creating a law and order problem necessitating stern police action. Following the public outcry, the State government ordered the closure of the factory.

The closure of the factory resulted in the unemployment of not only those workers who were engaged in the factory but also those who were working in the ancillary units. It also very badly affected those industry which depended on the chemicals manufactured by it.

As a senior officer entrusted with the responsibility of handling this issues, how are you going to address it?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2018	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Environmental justice; public health and safety; sustainable development; polluter pays principle; precautionary principle; workers' welfare; stakeholder consultation; corporate accountability; rehabilitation; alternative employment; lawful and transparent administration

Model Answer

Introduction

This case presents a conflict between environmental protection, public health, industrial development, employment, and economic stability. As the responsible senior officer, I would pursue a balanced, lawful, and participatory solution that protects citizens while minimising economic hardship.

Course of Action

1. Protect Public Health and the Environment

Ensure that the closure order is implemented. Direct pollution-control authorities to assess contamination of land, water, and crops. Arrange medical examinations, safe drinking water, and treatment for affected residents and animals.

2. Fix Corporate Accountability

Conduct an independent environmental audit to establish the extent of damage. Apply the polluter pays principle and require the company to finance remediation, compensation, and appropriate rehabilitation, in accordance with law.

3. Support Displaced Workers

Prepare a register of affected factory and ancillary-unit workers. Facilitate temporary financial assistance, skill development, job placement, and access to eligible welfare schemes. Coordinate with industries to identify alternative employment.

4. Consult Stakeholders

Establish a committee involving residents, workers' representatives, the company, industry associations, local authorities, and environmental experts. Address grievances transparently and prevent further escalation through dialogue.

5. Examine Sustainable Alternatives

An independent expert assessment may determine whether the facility can operate safely after substantial technological improvements and strict pollution controls. Reopening should be considered only if legally permissible and independently demonstrated to be safe; otherwise, closure must continue.

6. Promote Economic Recovery

Encourage cleaner industries and environmentally sustainable enterprises in the affected region to reduce dependence on the polluting unit.

7. Ensure Accountability

Investigate possible regulatory failures, enforce applicable environmental laws, and establish continuous monitoring and public disclosure of pollution data.

Conclusion

The solution must not sacrifice human health for profits or abandon workers in the name of environmental protection. Responsible governance requires ecological restoration, corporate accountability, livelihood protection, and sustainable economic development.

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