Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Rakesh was working as Joint Commissioner in Transport Department of a city. As a part of his job profile, among others, he was entrusted with the task of overseeing the control and functioning of City Transport Department. A case of strike by the drivers' union of City Transport Department over the issue of compensation to a driver who died on duty while driving the bus came up before him for decision in the matter.

He gathered that the driver (deceased) was plying Bus No. 528 which passed through busy and congested roads of the city. It so happened that near an intersection on the way, there was an accident involving the bus and a car driven by a middle-aged man. It was found that there was altercation between the driver and the car driver. Heated arguments between them led to fight and the driver gave him a blow. Lot of passerbys had gathered and tried to intervene but without success. Eventually, both of them were badly injured and profusely bleeding and were taken to the nearby hospital. The driver succumbed to the injuries and could not be saved. The middle-aged driver's condition was also critical but after a day, he recovered and was discharged. Police had immediately come at the spot of accident and FIR was registered. Police investigation revealed that the quarrel in question was started by the bus driver and he had resorted to physical violence. There was exchange of blows between them.

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The management initially denied extra compensation, leaving the 52-year-old deceased driver's grieving family—his wife and two daughters dependent on his sole income—distressed, while the workers' union went on a 10-day paralyzing strike demanding full compensation and a family member's employment. Rakesh faces the following questions and requirements in the case study.

(a) What are the options available to Rakesh to meet the above situation?

(b) Critically examine each of the options identified by Rakesh.

(c) What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by Rakesh?

(d) What course of action would Rakesh adopt to diffuse the above situation?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2022	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

(a) Options Available: Uphold the management’s denial, grant full compensation and employment, provide legally admissible compensation with humanitarian assistance, or negotiate a settlement with the union.

(b) Critical Evaluation: Denial may uphold disciplinary principles but neglect the family’s hardship and aggravate industrial unrest. Unconditional full benefits may overlook the driver’s misconduct and applicable rules. A lawful, compassionate, and evidence-based settlement balances justice and welfare.

(c) Ethical Dilemmas: Compassion versus accountability; employee welfare versus public interest; impartiality versus union pressure; rule-based decision-making versus humanitarian considerations; continuity of public transport versus workers' rights.

(d) Best Course of Action: Ensure statutory benefits, examine service rules and insurance provisions, provide compassionate support to the family, consider employment assistance under applicable policy, and negotiate a time-bound settlement to restore transport services.

Model Answer

Introduction

Rakesh must balance compassion for the deceased driver's dependent family with accountability for misconduct, applicable service rules, and the public's need for uninterrupted transport services.

(a) Options Available

Rakesh may support the management's denial of additional compensation, grant the union's demands in full, or adopt a balanced approach by providing all legally admissible benefits, assessing compassionate assistance, and negotiating with the union.

(b) Critical Evaluation

Deny Additional Compensation: This may recognise the driver's responsibility for initiating violence, but could disregard statutory entitlements and deepen the family's distress.

Grant All Demands: This may end the strike and support the family, but could disregard service rules, create an inconsistent precedent, and weaken accountability.

Balanced Settlement: A fact-based decision respecting legal provisions, insurance, and departmental policies while extending permissible humanitarian assistance is fairer and more sustainable. It also addresses the union's concerns without condoning violence.

(c) Ethical Dilemmas

Rakesh faces compassion versus accountability, employee welfare versus public interest, impartiality versus union pressure, and legal compliance versus humanitarian concerns. He must also balance the right to protest with the public's dependence on transport services.

(d) Appropriate Course of Action

Rakesh should verify the investigation and applicable service rules, ensure payment of statutory dues and insurance benefits, and examine whether additional compensation is permissible. He should offer counselling and financial guidance to the bereaved family and consider employment for an eligible dependent only under the applicable compassionate-appointment policy.

Simultaneously, he should initiate dialogue with union representatives, communicate the decision transparently, and seek an immediate resumption of essential transport services. Any misconduct proceedings should follow due process.

Conclusion

A just resolution must combine legality, compassion, accountability, and public welfare. Rakesh should protect the family's legitimate rights while resolving the strike through transparent negotiation.

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