

A concluding ceremony of the annual Dussehra festival was taking place in a small patch of land adjoining a busy railway line. When the effigy of Ravana was being burnt, unmindful of the approaching passenger train, the spectators pushed back on to the railway tracks as they feared that the burning effigy would fall on them. The celebrations turned tragic when the approaching train ran over those hundreds of spectators who pushed back to the railway track. Many people died on the spot and many of them were injured. The government immediately announced the compensation for the families of the victims.

On investigation, it was found that the organizer of the event did not take the requisite permission from the designated authority. Also, the security guards present in the event were majorly focused on securing the chief guest of the event. The train driver was also accused of handling the situation irresponsibly. Given the situation,

- a) Who is responsible for the tragedy? Analyse.
- b) Should the compensation be given by the government from tax payer's money considering the accident as a man-made disaster?
- c) What measures can be taken to avoid such accidents in future?

Approach:

- **Introduce the case.**
- **Identify the stakeholders.**
- **Identify ethical issues and dilemmas involved in the case.**
- **Analyse who is responsible for the accident.**
- **Suggest measures for avoiding such incidents in the future.**

Answer

The case involves challenges in dealing with man-made disasters. It also involves behavioral change in the general public.

Stakeholders

- The victims and their families.
- The organizers of the event.
- The chief guest.
- Train driver.
- The Government.

Ethical Issues Involved In The Case

- Breach of law by the organizer and the general public.
- Negligence of duty by the security guards.
- Administrative inefficiency.

Ethical Dilemmas Involved In The Case

- Rule of law Vs. Empathy towards the victims and their family.
- Justifiable use of tax payer's money Vs. the welfare of the public.

(A) Various stakeholders are responsible for this accident like:

- **Administration:** It failed to implement rule of law as the event was being organized without the permission. Also, the security guards should have equally focused on the safety of the general public. It also failed to create fear among the public against breaking the law (section 147 of the Indian Railways Act).
- **Organizer:** He is responsible for not taking permission from the designated authority and also he failed to arrange enough security, risking the life of many.
- **Public:** Section 147 of the Indian Railways Act prohibits trespassing on rail tracks and, if caught, carries a punishment. Yet, violation of this law has become a way of life for which 'Chalta hai' attitude of the public is responsible.

(B) As far as the question of compensation to be given by the government from tax payer's money is concerned, it is justified.

- Though some may argue that in such man-made disasters, the accountability should be fixed and the compensation be awarded by the accountable entity.
- Despite, India is a welfare state (Article 38 of the constitution) and hence it has to take care of its citizens in all circumstances.
- Also, many of those who died might be the bread earners of their families and as their family was not at fault, it is the responsibility of the state to take care of such citizens.
- However, accountability and responsibility for such man-made disasters must also be fixed and some punishment (either physical or financial) should be imposed.

(C) Measures to be taken to avoid such accidents in the future can be:

- Stricter implementation of the rules and regulations.
- Such events are annually organized. Hence, the administration should be on its toes during such occasions and stricter inspection of such organizations should be done.
- Adequate security trained with standard protocols for such events should be provided.
- Behavioral change is required in the general public to change their 'Chalta hai' attitude.
- Such attitudes can be changed by methods of operant conditioning (Rewards and Punishment).