Mains Practice Question

Case Study

The municipal corporation of a city approved felling of trees to develop public transport infrastructure. Amidst the concrete jungle of the district, area X is a treasured green patch. With increasing environmental awareness, people have come on the streets to spread the message of conservation and stand against the indiscriminate felling of trees. The Municipal Corporation is of the view that developing viable public transport infrastructure will dissuade people from using private vehicles and ultimately reducing the carbon footprint. Meanwhile, activists say it is the sole surviving natural floodplain of the area, whose reclamation through construction and felling of trees would lead to greater inundation during the monsoon. The state government alarmed by widespread public protest against the felling of trees has constituted a committee to look into the matter and suggest alternatives for this project. You are appointed as the chairperson of this committee, What course of action will you recommend to the government for assuaging public concern and limiting environmental impact? (250 Words)

06 May, 2022   GS Paper 4 Case Studies

Approach:

- Identify the stakeholders involved
- Describe the central issues present
- State the right course of action as chairperson of the committee
- Conclude optimistically

Answer:

Stakeholders:

- State Government
- Municipal Corporation of the city
- Environmental Activists
- Chairman of the committee
- General public at large

The central issue:

The central issue present here is how to ensure socio-economic development without compromising the environment. To maintain such a balance has always been a tough task for any government or any country in the world. The overall concern involved here is how to go on with the developmental plans for a public transport infrastructure which will dissuade people from using private vehicles and ultimately reduce the carbon footprint in the city while at the same time assuaging public concern regarding felling of trees and consequences arising out of the same in the form of loss of biodiversity.

Right course of action as chairperson of the committee:

- As a chairperson of the committee, first and foremost I will convene a meeting with all the stakeholders involved in this case and try to understand their view points.

- I will also constitute a task force to conduct the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) to find out the effects of the public transport infrastructure project on the flood plain area.
- If EIA supports the project, I will go ahead with it and also assure the population of that area that compensatory afforestation will be done at a large scale.
- However, if EIA in any way opposes the project, I will halt the felling of trees and try to find some other area where the project can be undertaken.

Also, apart from recommending the above immediate measures, I will suggest some other initiatives to deal with such an issue in the long run which are as follows-

- I will suggest the state government to promote growth and development of 'Green Economy' which will "result in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities."
- Some alternative measures in this regard can also be promoting solar energy, biofuel, Hydrogen powered vehicles, etc. which can help in reducing the carbon footprint. If the state government focuses on the sustainable growth model then such controversial developmental issues can be avoided in the future. In this regard, the **Sustainable Development Growth Model** of the United Nation can be included in the city development plans.

In our Constitution, Article 48A, imposes a responsibility on the State to protect and improve the environment and Article 51A(g) imposes a duty upon every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment. As there is an urgent need for sustainable development, therefore it is a collective duty and responsibility to protect and preserve the biodiversity and natural resources.

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