

"You are the head of the police department of an important city. Soon there will be a high-octane election campaign going live in your city. The elections are primarily posed between the party in power in Union government (your executive superiors as well) and the party in power in your city. In the past, the elections have drawn bitter rivalries between the supporters of both the parties. You are anticipating use of hate speech and communally charged up material to foment the supporters, which can even become violent. Minor incidents of violence have already been started to appear here and there in the city, all having a pattern of being communal in nature. The passion continues to run high and a significant number of media personnel is covering the election. You know the stakes of police are high in ensuring law and order. You want to ensure a smooth and violence free elections without any loss of life and property.

The Union government has sought a report requiring you to answer the following

- a. What measures will you take to ensure that no physical confrontation occurs between the rivalling supporters?
- b. What exigency preparedness will you keep ready in case things start going out of hand?
- c. How will you ensure that irregularities and illegalities like hate and communally charged words are not resorted to?

General framework

1. Give a small Introduction.
2. Identify stakeholders and their interests in the given scenario.
3. Mention the steps you will take to ensure violence is prevented.
4. Mention the measures you will take in an exigency situation.
5. Also list how such irregularities can be prevented.
6. Provide your closing remarks.

Facts of the case study: (no need to write in the exam)

1. I am the head of police department of a city.
2. An election campaign to begin in the city.
3. Main contenders are party in power in the Union government and party in power in your city.
4. Possibility of violence and communally charged environment.
5. Minor incidents of violence already taking place.
6. Large number of media personnel already covering the event.

Solution

Introduction

The case study deals with the elections business which many times are fought on the fault lines within the society.

It also highlights the federal nature of the polity and the need for an official responsible for maintaining law and order to act in a nonpartisan manner.

Stakeholders involved and their interests

1. The police department who has the responsibility of maintaining law and order.
2. Me, the head of police department of the city who wants to ensure smooth and violence free elections.
3. The residents of the city who are impacted by incidents of violence.
4. The political parties and their followers who are engaged in violence.
5. The media personnel covering the election.

Measures to ensure that no physical confrontation occurs between the rivalling supporters

- Strict implementation of law including CrPC, IPC and Representation of People's Act, 1951 by taking swift action against people and politicians engaging in hate speech and other communal activities.
- Public gatherings of both the parties would be separated by a considerable distance to avoid any direct confrontation
- Holding meeting with local media time-to time, to ensure that correct news and facts are represented without charging up the atmosphere further.
- Ensuring presence of adequate police force at sensitive places which will act as a deterrent for perpetrators of violence.
- Creating awareness among the citizens with the cooperation of election commission about importance of free and fair election.
- Deploying local election monitoring personnel to polling stations on Election Day to reduce both the likelihood of electoral violence and rates of electoral fraud.

Exigency preparedness measures: In case a violence breaks out at some place, I will keep the following exigency plan ready

1. Keeping a reserve of police personnel trained to handle violent mob.
2. Ensuring that they are adequately equipped with water cannons, shields lathis etc. to deal with the crowd.
3. Giving prior instructions that no common citizen should be hurt in such a scenario of violence.
4. Also keeping medical facilities ready at the time of elections to provide first aid in case any of my personnel get hurt.
5. Addressing media to keep in mind the sensitivity of the situation.

Steps to ensure that irregularities and illegalities like hate and communally charged words are not resorted to

1. Security personnel should be asked to not allow any poster or banner depicting any hate message.
2. The guilty should be brought to book to set an example for those trying to engage in such activities and trying to take law into their own hands.
3. Youth programmes that provide alternative activities for the youth who are often engaged as agents of violence can be a key to prevent electoral violence.
4. Activities such as 'peace messaging,' that are designed to alter perceptions of the utility and viability of violence as an election strategy need to be undertaken.

Elections are the bedrock of democracy. Peaceful and transparent elections increase the trust of citizens in the governance and administration of the nation.

As the head of police department of the city I need to ensure that the values of democracy, secularism and fraternity are upheld.

Along with this I need to ensure that law and order are maintained and innocent citizens do not face the brunt of communal elements of the society.