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Q9

Case study. The Supreme Court has banned mining in the Aravalli Hills to stop degradation the forest cover and to maintain ecological balance. However, the stone mining to still prevalent in the border district of the affected State with connivance of certain corrupt forest officials and politicians. Young and dynamic SP who was recently posted in the affected district promised to himself to stop this menace. In one of his surprise checks with his team, he found loaded truck with stone trying to escape the mining area. He tried to stop the truck but the truck driver overrun the police officer, killing him on the spot and thereafter managed to flee. Police filed FIR but no breakthrough was achieved in the case for almost three months. Ashok who was the Investigative Journalist working with leading TV channel, suo moto started investigating the case. Within one month, Ashok got breakthrough by interacting with local people, stone mining masia and government officials. He prepared his investigative story and presented to the CMD of the TV channel. He exposed in his investigative report the complete nexus of stone mafia working with blessing of corrupt police and civil officials and politicians. The politician who was involved in the mafia was no one else but local MLA who was considered to be very close to the Chief Minister. After going through the investigative report, the CMD advised Ashok to drop the idea of making the story public through electronic media. He informed that the local MLA was not only the relative of the owner of the TV channel but also had unofficially 20 percent share in the channel. The CMD further informed Ashok that his further promotion and hike in pay will be taken care of in addition the soft loan of 10 lakhs which he has taken from the TV channel for his son's chronic disease will be suitably adjusted if he hands over the investigative report to him. (a) What are the options available with Ashok to cope up with the situation? (b) Critically evaluate/examine each of the options identified by Ashok. (c) What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by Ashok? (d) Which of the options, do you think, would be

the most appropriate for Ashok to adopt and why? (e) In the above scenario, what type of training would you suggest for police officers posted to such districts where stone mining illegal activities are rampant?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

Core demand of the question

- Ashok, an investigative journalist, has a story on the Aravalli stone-mafia nexus after an SP is killed by a truck. The CMD wants the story killed: the MLA is kin to the channel owner, holds an unofficial 20 per cent share, and offers promotion, a pay hike, and adjustment of a Rs 10 lakh loan taken for Ashok's son's illness
- (a) Options
- (b) Evaluate each
- (c) Dilemmas
- (d) Most appropriate and why
- (e) Training for police in such districts

Revision summary

Ashok's story names a stone mafia after an SP is killed in a banned Aravalli mining belt.

Selling the report for a loan adjustment is a bribe; a vague broadcast and empty resignation also fail.

The right path is preserved evidence, criminal and court channels, vetted publication outside the captured channel, and lawful medical help.

Dilemmas centre on a child's debt versus truth, not on whether illegal mining may continue.

Police training must cover law, convoy tactics, forensics, integrity and care for labourers who are not the shooters.

Introduction

The Supreme Court has banned mining in the Aravallis; a young SP is dead; Ashok's report names a mafia with police, civil and political cover. The CMD offers to buy the story with a child's medical loan. Illegal mining is not to be blessed. The child's illness is not to be mocked. The path is lawful publication and lawful care, not a silenced murder.

Body

Stakeholders

- Ashok, his son who needs treatment, and his family.
- The murdered Superintendent of Police, the investigating police, and officers still in the district.
- Villagers and forests of the **Aravalli range** under a Supreme Court mining ban.
- The local MLA, the Chief Minister's circle, and corrupt officials named in the report.
- The CMD, the channel owner, and the audience that trusts the news.
- Labourers in illegal pits, who need lawful work, not a mafia wage.

(a) Options

- **Option 1:** Hand the report to the CMD, take the loan adjustment and the hike, and drop the story.
- **Option 2:** Air a softened version that names "anti-social elements" and not the MLA.
- **Option 3:** Resign in anger, keep the files at home, and do nothing further.
- **Option 4:** Put an unverified full broadcast on air against the CMD's ban, including raw allegations still untested.
- **Option 5:** Refuse the bargain, preserve copies, move the evidence to a competent criminal and court channel, and publish through a medium that is not owned by the accused nexus, with legal vetting and care for the child's treatment by lawful means.

(b) Evaluation

- **Option 1 merit:** the son's loan pressure eases; Ashok keeps a desk.
- **Option 1 demerit:** concealment of a murder-linked mafia; the Supreme Court ban is mocked; you are paid in a child's illness. Rejected.
- **Option 2 merit:** something airs.
- **Option 2 demerit:** the public is misled; the MLA remains unnamed; it is still a sale of the core facts.
- **Option 3 merit:** personal exit.
- **Option 3 demerit:** the SP's death stays unsolved in the public square; the files can be stolen from a house.
- **Option 4 merit:** speed.
- **Option 4 demerit:** defamation of anyone wrongly named, contempt risk, and a channel war that can bury the facts in noise.
- **Option 5 merit:** the ban, the murder and the nexus reach a forum that can act; the journalist is not the MLA's employee on this story.
- **Option 5 demerit:** job loss and threat; those are reasons for protection, not for killing the story.

(c) Ethical dilemmas

- Truth-telling versus a child's medical debt held by the same employer.
- Loyalty to the newsroom versus loyalty to the dead officer and to the forest.
- Personal safety versus publication.
- Confidential sources in the mafia and in government versus the duty to a court.
- A complete on-air naming versus the legal duty not to defame on a guess.
- The dilemma is not "mining versus journalism". Illegal mining is already forbidden. The dilemma is whether a child's hospital bill can buy a silence.

(d) Most appropriate course

- Do not sell the report for a hike, a promotion, or adjustment of the Rs 10 lakh loan. That is a bribe in the shape of mercy.
- Keep original notes, footage and a hash-dated copy outside the office.
- File the material with the police investigating the SP's murder, and with a competent court or a commission if the local station is captured; the **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988** is the frame for the official nexus.

- Seek legal vetting and publish in a forum not owned by the MLA's kin - another publisher, a sworn affidavit, a petition - rather than a reckless live show that the CMD can twist.
- **For the son:** lawful hospital charity, insurance, public health schemes, and a loan that is not the price of silence. Ask a court for protection if the channel weaponises the debt.
- Do not take money from the stone mafia to "balance" the story. That is the other face of the same vice.
- Accept that the desk may be lost. A journalist who buries a murdered SP has already lost the profession.

(e) Training for police in such districts

- **Legal core:** the Supreme Court's Aravalli mining restriction, forest and environment statutes, and that illegal extraction is not a "local livelihood custom" when a court has banned it.
- **Tactics:** never stand in front of a moving truck as a lone hero; use road design, drones, GPS on suspected fleets, and coordinated nakas.
- **Integrity:** rotation, asset checks, and the cost of a nexus under the **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988**.
- **Forensics of a hit-and-run:** preserve the scene, CCTV, weighbridge data, and quarry receipts in the first hours, so a three-month blank does not become the norm.
- **Human rights:** distinguish pit labourers from shooters; do not collectively punish a village.
- Mental health and family security for officers who have seen a colleague killed.
- Joint work with forest and revenue so a seized truck is not released by another desk the same night.
- **Media protocol:** facts to the control room, not a leak that gets a journalist killed, and not a gag that protects the MLA.

Flow diagram

Aravalli nexus and dead SP -> Refuse loan-for-silence
 Refuse loan-for-silence -> Police court other publisher
 Refuse loan-for-silence -> Lawful care for child
 Hand report to CMD -> Silence over murder
 Stand in front of truck -> Repeat of SP killing

Conclusion

The child's illness is a claim on lawful help. It is not a claim on the SP's truth. Refuse the CMD's bargain, move evidence to a competent forum, publish without the owner's muzzle, and train police to survive trucks and to refuse the quarry's envelope.

Facts & figures

Supreme Court ban on Aravalli mining

The Court has restricted mining in the **Aravalli range** to stop forest loss and ecological harm; illegal stone movement is contempt of that legal order, not a policy debate.

Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988

The statute for the alleged police-civil-political nexus that blesses the mafia.

Conflict of interest

The MLA's kinship and unofficial share in the channel, and the CMD's control of Ashok's medical loan, are stacked private stakes against a public story.

Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014

Protects public-interest disclosures inside public bodies; a journalist still needs press-law care and criminal forums when the employer is captured.

Hit-and-run of a public servant

Killing an SP with a loaded truck is murder in the course of duty; the file cannot wait three months without a forensic first hour.

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