

## **General Studies – 2; Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.**

### **Alcohol Prohibition**

#### **1) Introduction**

- India has a long history of various states experimenting with various laws on liquor, ranging from total prohibition to restricted sale of alcohol to phased closure of liquor shops.
- As liquor contributes sizeable revenue to the exchequer, it has never been an easy decision for any state government to impose the prohibition.
- Presently, there are four states – Bihar, Gujarat, Nagaland and Mizoram – and the Union Territory of Lakshadweep, where total prohibition is in place.

#### **2) Arguments for prohibition**

- Alcohol addiction has both adverse health and social consequences
- High alcohol intake increases blood pressure and enhances the risk of stroke and liver cirrhosis.
- Diverting the resource away from basic necessities such as food and shelter affects the welfare of other members of the household, especially children and women.
- Prohibition helps money to get directed towards health and education in family. It paves way for development.
- Money savings can provide for productive investments.
- People will now use the money invested in liquor to add nutrition to their plates, avoid disease and economic ruination. That offsets all revenue concerns
- Drunk driving is a leading cause of road accidents and binge drinking (consumption of an excessive amount of alcohol in a short period of time) is a problem.

#### **3) Arguments against prohibition**

- Banning food and beverages is neither desirable nor feasible. It puts unnecessary fetters on freedoms
- The U.S., which experimented with prohibition for 13 years from 1920, finally lifted it finding it to be impractical and interfering.
- It has worst effected tourism industry in states like Kerala.
- Adverse impact on the State's finances and employment opportunities
- Fall in revenue will have a negative impact on deficits and borrowing costs.
- Leads to unprecedented increase in crimes relating to drug abuse and bootlegging.
- As against 974 cases registered in Kerala in 2013, the State police registered 1,836 drug cases in the first six months of 2016 after the introduction of partial liquor ban.
- With the closure of bars, a lot of homes turned into bars, disturbing domestic peace and amity.
- Prohibition has criminalized certain societies where drinking is a social norm.
- Prohibition may lead to widespread smuggling and illegal sale of liquors, thus defeating the very purpose.
- The massive profits from the illicit liquor trade would act as the launchpad for a parallel economy with tentacles in everything from prostitution to gambling and terror.
- Prohibition will increase the sale of spurious liquor which has adverse health impacts.

#### 4) Challenges

- To enforce prohibition in a State like Bihar is a Herculean task, with issues like porous borders with neighbouring States and the proactive agenda of liquor traders.

#### 5) Way Forward

- Vigorous campaign against alcoholism and to set up de-addiction centres in every district. Kerala experiments on similar lines are highly effective.
- At present, alcohol policy is a state subject. India must have a national policy/regulatory framework.
- The government must draft suitable guidelines and treatment protocols and strengthen the scale-up for screening of alcohol consumption.
- Ultimately, every state will have to “balance fiscal targets and constraints with social goals,”

