

THE HINDU EDITORIAL

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Deadly brew: on illicit liquor deaths

A multi-pronged plan is needed to prevent the sale and consumption of toxic alcohol

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The [death](#) of more than 100 people to toxic alcohol in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand has exposed the thriving sale of illicit liquor in the region. India remains among the countries with a high number of alcohol-related deaths, with poor governance, corruption and distorted policies contributing to such periodic tragedies. The governments in U.P. and Uttarakhand cannot evade responsibility for the death of so many people, the majority of them in Saharanpur district of U.P. Preliminary investigation has confirmed the well-entrenched system of illicit liquor vends that are known to exist in the region;

several factories producing hooch in U.P. were unearthed within a couple of days of the episode. Moreover, although several liquor-related deaths have been taking place, it took this staggering number of casualties for the authorities to acknowledge the presence of free-flowing illicit liquor. The Yogi Adityanath government prides itself on its law and order measures but its failure to crack down on these dens exposes the hollow claims. It has tried to put the blame for previous incidents on political opponents hatching conspiracies.

Several instances of toxic alcohol poisoning in India, including the Malvani hooch tragedy in Mumbai in 2015 that killed 106 people, have been attributed to the lack of affordable liquor for the poor.

High taxes and excise raise prices, and cheap brews are peddled by criminal organisations, often in collusion with law enforcement personnel. In U.P., many communities have

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protested the sale of cheap liquor in pouches that are freely distributed during social events. What seems to have happened in Saharanpur follows the trend, with toxic alcohol originating in Haridwar in [Uttarakhand](#) being supplied at a family ritual. While it is no one's case that consumption of cheap liquor needs to be encouraged or promoted, severe bottlenecks are proving counterproductive. An enlightened policy is needed to strike a balance, curbing illicit flows with zero tolerance, discouraging consumption through social campaigns and reviewing levies on less harmful beverages.

At the moment, it is essential to make an example of those who participated in the sale of the lethal brew, and investigate any nexus with the authorities. If it is true that the suspects had a history of dealing in hooch, the Special Investigation Team constituted by the U.P. government should find out how they continued to operate their trade. In parallel, it is vital that the capacities of the health system be upgraded to handle victims of toxic alcohol. Toxicity often comes from drinking methanol, which results in blindness, tissue damage or death. Timely treatment through haemodialysis, infusion of sodium bicarbonate and ethyl alcohol can save lives.

THE HINDU VOCABULARY

- Deadly(adj.)- lethal , fatal घातक
- Illicit(adj.)- अवैध illegal E.g. illicit brew
- Elicit(v.) sth (from sb)- to get information or a reaction from sb often with difficulty जानकारी हासिल करना(मुश्किल से)
- E.g. I could elicit no response from him.
- Multi-pronged(adj.)- बहुआयामी having several distinct aspects or elements.
- Thriving(adj.)- continuing to be successful, strong, healthy etc.
- E.g. This place is the centre of a thriving agricultural district and has a considerable trade in wool, grain, cattle and horses.
- Evade sth- बचना, to escape from sb/sth or avoid sth
- E.g. She is trying to evade all responsibility for her behaviour.
- Unearth(v.)- to find or discover sth खुलासा करना
- E.g. The newspaper has unearthed some disturbing facts.

- Den(n.)- a place where people meet in secret, especially for some illegal or immoral activity.
- Collusion- secret agreement in order to do sth dishonest or to trick people. साँठगाँठ
- E.g. The police were corrupt and were operating in collusion with the drug dealers.
- Counterproductive(adj.)- having the opposite effect to the one you want. विपरीत प्रभावकारी
- Enlightened(adj.)- having an understanding of people's needs, a situation, etc. that shows a modern attitude to life. प्रबुद्ध, लोगों की आवश्यकताओं, स्थितियों को समझने वाला
- Strike a balance- तालमेल बैठाना to manage to find a way of being fair to two opposite things.
- Make an example of sb- to punish sb as a warning to others not to do the same thing.
- Nexus- complicated series of connections between different things.

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