

STATE LIABLE TO PAY AID FOR LIQUOR DEATHS: HC

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The State has complete control over liquor sale and is hence liable to pay compensation to the kin of those who lost their lives or vision after alcohol poisoning, the Allahabad High Court has said.

The court was on Wednesday hearing a petition filed by the families of those who died after consuming spurious liquor in Azamgarh in 2021.

Jai Prakash Mishra, counsel for the petitioners, told the court that all the consumers had bought liquor from licensed retail vend country liquor shops, which sold it as branded liquor. The police chargesheet said the licensed vendors and certain other persons were involved in the manufacture and sale of spurious liquor.

“Thus *prima facie*, the State government, having complete control and regulation to manufacture and sale of liquor under the U.P. Excise Act, 1910 and Rules framed thereunder; is also liable to pay specified amount to the sufferer or successors of the deceased,” it said. The court asked the State to pay the compensation under provisions of the Mukhya Mantri Kisan Evam Sarvhit Bima Yojna, which provides for compensation on account of death or permanent disability due to poison, etc.

11 petitioners

Among the 11 petitioners in the case, nine are the widows of the men who died after drinking the brew and one is the son of a victim. The last petitioner lost his vision after consuming alcohol.

The court observed that from the records of the writ petition, it appeared that most of the petitioners were unlettered and belonged to the weaker sections of society.

Rani Sonkar, wife of deceased Pappu Soknak, told *The Hindu* that she was struggling to earn after the death of her husband. She has three children, all under five years of age.

“Though my husband had brought the liquor from a government licensed shop, I was denied of any compensation for my loss,” she said.

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