

Recurring Fireworks Unit Accidents

Why in News?

In Tamil Nadu, 11 workers died in an explosion at an unlicensed fireworks unit, which may be triggered by mishandling of chemicals.

What are the causes for such accidents?

- Usage of makeshift unlicensed units for manufacturing firecrackers.
- Rough handling of chemicals by untrained and unskilled workers.
- Spillage or overloading of chemicals during the filling process.
- Working outside permitted areas.
- Unsafe working conditions and improper handling of inflammable raw materials continue to endanger lives in the fireworks industry.

How these accidents could be prevented?

- Occasional accidents in an industry dealing in explosive materials may seem inevitable.
- But the probability of such mishaps can certainly be reduced by adopting **safe work practices** that comply with rules.
- They can also be reduced through cohesive **monitoring** by Central and State licensing and enforcement authorities.
- Despite illegal sub-leasing of works to unlicensed units is a widely acknowledged practice in the industry, **crackdowns against violators** have been few and far between.

What did the Chaitanya Prasad Committee report?

- It examined the statutory and administrative shortcomings that led to the death of 40 workers at Om Shakti Fireworks Industries in 2012.
- It reported that there is a conspicuous **absence of proper inspection mechanisms** at various government departments.
- It also found a **lack of coordination** between Central and State authorities dealing with the regulation of fireworks industries.

What did the Committee recommend?

- It recommended making sub-leasing of works by licensed units a cognisable

penal **offence**.

- It mandated **inter-safety distances** between sheds covered with earthen mounds; and provision of a **smoothened pathway** with a width of 1.5 metres, as part of industrial safety measures.
- Ground reports suggest these recommendations continue to be ignored, with sub-leasing of works still rampant.

What could be done?

- Regulators complain of a lack of manpower in checking violations.
- As safety is non-negotiable. the governments must walk the extra mile to enforce rules in a hazardous industry and prosecute violators.
- The industry too must self-regulate in its own interest.

Source: The Hindu

