Anaj Mandi Fire Tragedy - Delhi

Why in news?

At least 43 were dead and 16 were injured in a fire at an illegal factory in Anaj Mandi area, north Delhi.

What are the shortcomings identified?

- Multiple rules were broken, including -

i. running factories in residential areas
ii. lack of a no-objection certificate from the fire department
iii. workers living on the factory premises

- Most of the workers came from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and virtually slept at night next to the machines they worked on.
- Probe should reveal if the victims were locked in and obstructed by materials stacked on staircases.
- In that case, the culpability of those responsible would be enormously higher.

What are the larger concerns?

- The Anaj Mandi tragedy is the latest in a long list of fatality-causing fires in the national capital.
- All of such incidents were invariably the result of lax vigilance and rule-breaking by local authorities.
- The tragedy is yet another reminder for the dangerous conditions of the country's industrial units.
- Poorly paid labourers live and work in several residential buildings turned into unregistered factories.
- The factory and other such units are allowed to function illegally, without safety audits.
- Slums and crowded residential areas take up the bulk of the city's space.
- These spaces are all much prone to fire hazards.
- State and central governments, which divide the city's administration between them, blame each other.

What lies ahead?

- Neither the Delhi government nor the Centre, which has control of law and

order in the national capital, can escape responsibility.

- The building’s owner and the manager have been arrested to pacify public anger.
- Initial financial relief has also been announced for the victims in the Anaj Mandi fire.
- But, it is to be seen whether any punitive action will be taken against complicit local municipal officials.
- Political parties, civil society and government must chart a new course, with a plan to make the older, built-up areas safe.
- Also, rules under the new occupational safety code must be strong enough to protect workers.

Source: The Hindu, Business Standard

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