Ban on Crackers

Why in news?

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has prohibited the sale and use of firecrackers during Deepavali in certain places.

In what places there would a ban?

- The ban will be in effect in the National Capital Region of Delhi and in urban centres that recorded poor or worse air quality in November 2019.
- It provides concessions to cities and towns that have moderate air quality, by allowing them to burst green crackers at specified hours.
- These stipulations are to extend to Christmas and New Year if the ban continues beyond November, 2020.

What reason did it give?

- The NGT noted that Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Chandigarh, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee and the Calcutta High Court had already banned firecrackers this year.
- The NGT's reasoning gave primacy to the precautionary principle in **sustainable development** over employment and revenue losses.

Why the ban is essential during this time?

- There were fears of a COVID-19 case surge during the winter, so it was incumbent on the Centre to work with States and prevent the burning of farm stubble ahead of Deepavali.
- This annual phenomenon unfailingly pollutes the air across northern and eastern India, and imposes heavy health and productivity costs.
- In the absence of pollution from agricultural residue, there might have been some room for a limited quantity of firecrackers.
- But, climatic conditions of low temperature and atmospheric circulation at this time of year would still leave many in distress.
- Only damage control is possible now, including steps to address the concerns of the fireworks industry.

What should the government do?

- It should be evident to policymakers that their measures under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) must be demonstrably effective.
- [NCAP seeks to reduce particulate matter pollution by 20% to 30% by 2024.]
- With 40% of all pollution-linked deaths attributed to bad air quality, the governments should show a sense of accountability on the right to breathe clean air.

What is the long term solution?

- Tamil Nadu, where 90% of firecrackers are produced, has legitimate concerns on the fate of the industry this year.
- A transparent compensation scheme for workers and suitable relief for producers may be necessary.
- But the longer-term solution might lie in broad basing economic activity in the Sivakasi region, reducing reliance on firecrackers.

Source: The Hindu

Quick Fact

National Green Tribunal

- The National Green Tribunal has been established in 2010 under the **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010**.
- It is a specialized body equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues.
- Its dedicated jurisdiction in environmental matters shall provide speedy environmental justice.
- It is mandated to endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.
- It is guided by principles of natural justice.
- **New Delhi** is the Principal Place of Sitting of the Tribunal.
- Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai are the other four place of sitting.

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