Godavari boat capsize

What is the issue?

A boat capsizes in the Godavari leaving many dead and missing. Andhra Pradesh is experiencing a familiar ring of boat tragedies in the recent past.

What really happened?

- In the latest boat tragedy on the Godavari in which some tourists drowned and others still missing.
- The private operator took on board over 70 tourists who were hoping to see the scenic beauty of Papikondalu.
- The operator ventured into the river that has been in spate for days, without any permission.
- The inexperienced crew could not cope with a sudden current of water at Kachuluru, one of the most dangerous spots enroute.
- The boat tilted and capsized within minutes and only those wearing life jackets could save themselves.
- The Andhra Pradesh government announces a hefty ex-gratia, promises deterrent action against all those responsible and initiates steps to prevent such tragedies.

What are some facts about the past tragedies?

- Police records show over 100 people perishing in boat mishaps during the last three years.
- The major one being on the Krishna in November 2017 when 22 tourists lost their lives.
- These tragedies were avoidable if simple precautions were in place like,
    1. Having only experienced crew with valid licences,
    2. Provision of life jackets for all,
    3. Not setting out when the river is in full flow.

Were any lessons learnt from these recurring mishaps?

- The accident on the Krishna jolted the N. Chandrababu Naidu government into action and a **committee was formed** to formulate preventive steps.
- The committee **highlighted the multiplicity of the departments** concerned ranging from irrigation to director of ports with permitting rides

and monitoring and checking illegal ones.

- It pointed to **lack of coordination**. Eg: When the river touches the danger mark, the irrigation department should send out a warning to all concerned not to allow any rides.
- Without a **single regulatory body**, the result was this typical bureaucratic phenomenon of passing the buck.
- The committee **suggested making the directorate of ports as a nodal agency** and the AP Inland Vessel Rules were brought into effect.
- Nobody knows what happened to these rules and other decisions.
- To prevent such man-made tragedies, the government must pin responsibility on officials instead of resorting to mere palliative steps.

Source: The Hindu

