

## Industrial Accidents in India

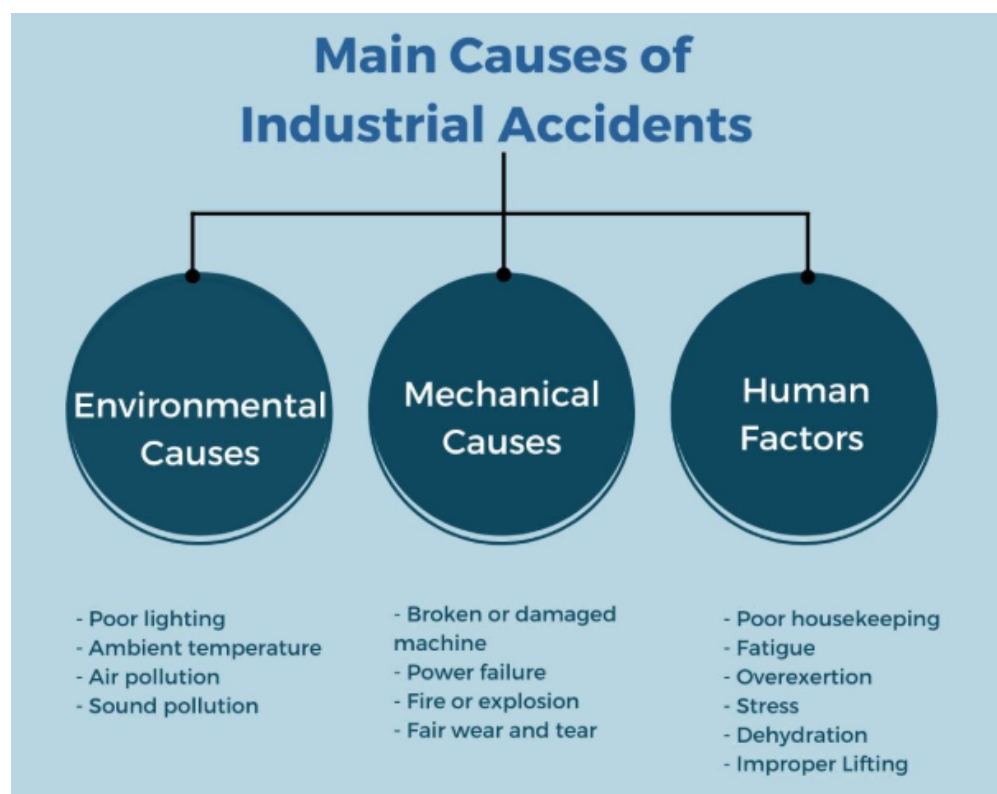
**Mains:** *GS III - Disaster and Disaster Management*

### Why in news?

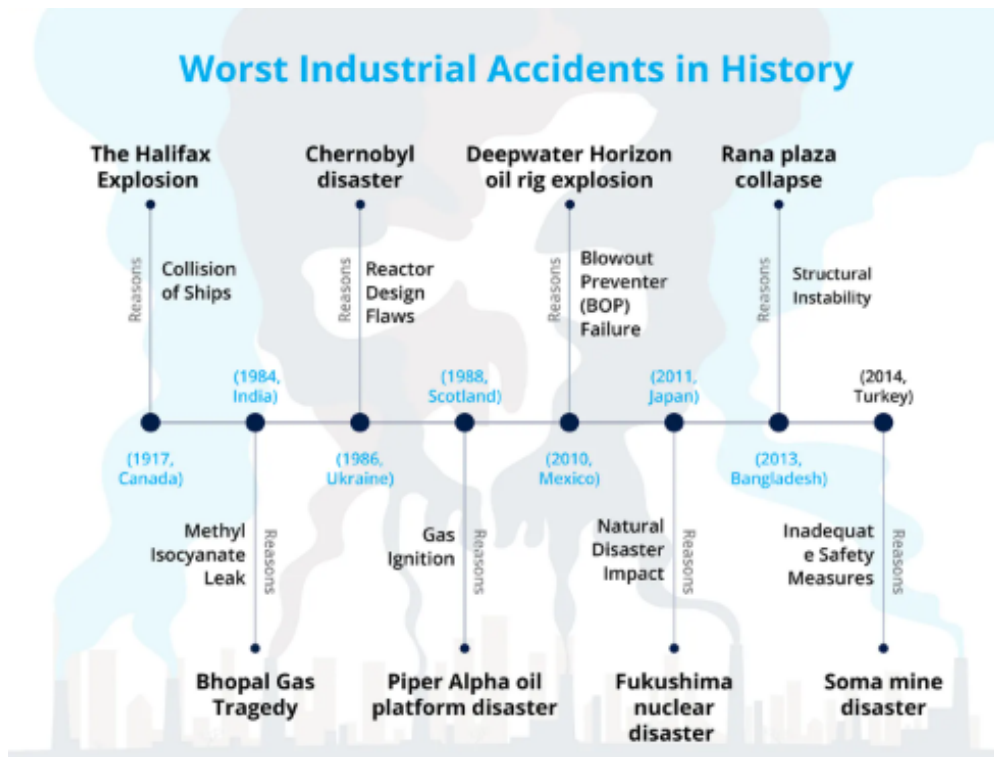
Recently, the explosions at Sigachi Industries in Telangana, and a firecracker unit disaster in Tamil Nadu raised deeper insights on ongoing national crisis of industrial accidents.

### What are industrial accidents?

- **Definition** – They are unforeseen, work-related incidents that result in harm, injury, or even death to workers, visitors, or the public.
- **Places of occurrence** – These events typically occur in industrial settings like factories, construction sites, and warehouses.
- **Potential causes** – It is caused by a variety of factors including equipment malfunctions, human error, unsafe conditions, or a failure to follow safety protocols.



- **Notable industrial accidents**



## What is the status of India in industrial accidents?

- **Death toll** -According to labour ministry data and Right to information applications, *at least 6,500 workers have lost their lives.*
- This means that nearly *three fatalities occur every day* in Indian industries, construction sites, and mines.
- **Recent case surge** - In Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu alone, over 200 fatalities have occurred in major industrial mishaps over the past decade.
- **Most affected states** - Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Uttar Pradesh have their own grim records.
  - **For example**, Gujarat witnessed over 60 major industrial fires and gas leaks in just a single year (2021), according to media and State records.
- **The hidden toll** — Data from unregistered or informal sector units may be much higher and rarely makes news.
  - A study in 2022 by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) found that India had had over *130 major chemical accidents in just a 30-month window post-2020, with 218 fatalities and 300-plus injuries.*
- Most of these occurred in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often operate under regulatory radar.
- According to the Directorate General Factory Advice Service and Labour Institutes (DGFASLI), *India records one serious industrial accident every two days in registered factories.*

## What are the reasons for increasing industrial accidents?

- **The silence of the public** - There is a large muteness among the general public on the industrial unsafety.
- **Less penalty and conviction** - Convictions for safety lapses are rare, and penalties are often small or even absent.

- **The inactivity of regulators** - The regulators are largely inoperative which decreases the accountability of the industrial management.
  - ***For example**, in no permit-to-work system, high-risk jobs are undertaken casually, with no formal hazard identification or job safety analysis.*
- **Negligence of factories** - Many Factories running without even the basic No-Objection Certificate from the Fire Department.
  - ***For example**, many industries work with no firefighting systems, alarms, sensors, extinguishers, and fire exists.*
- A National Geographic documentary explored how industrial accidents across the world stem from negligence and failed systems.
- **Lack of training** - There is no training, especially for migrant and contract workers who often speak different languages and oblivious to the signage or safety protocols.
- **Cost-cutting compulsion** - Many companies are reducing their expenditure on proper infrastructure and workers safety.
- **Class bias** - The safety lapse in largely occur in the establishment where the migrant workers, contract labourers, and the economically voiceless are employed.

### What are the existing laws and provisions regarding industrial safety in India?

- **Factories act, 1948** - It provides safety provisions for hazardous processes.
- **Plantations labour act, 1951** - It focuses on the safety and welfare of workers in plantations.
- **Mines Act, 1952** - It Governs safety and health in mines, including regulations for mining operations and worker welfare.
- **Contract labour (Regulation and Abolition) act, 1970** - It addresses the working conditions and welfare of contract labours, including safety aspects.
- **Environment protection act, 1986** - This act governs usage of chemicals in industries and other establishments.
- **Explosives rules, 2008** - It regulates the storage and handling of fireworks and chemicals.
- **NDMA guidelines on chemical accidents, 2015** - It Provide risk mitigation framework in chemical related disasters.

### What needs to be done?

- **Make companies accountable** - Every industrial management should be held responsible for the safety and security arrangements.
  - ***For example**, countries such as South Korea and Singapore now have corporate manslaughter laws, holding senior executives criminally accountable for gross safety failures.*
- **Strengthening labour safety boards** - The regulatory bodies on labour safety should be strengthened to take legal and act without any political influences.
- **Digitise risk reporting** - The reports are to be digitized and periodically reviewed.
- **Embed safety as essential value** - Globally, countries such as Germany and Japan have embedded safety deeply into industrial design and workplace culture.
- **Ensure whistle-blower protection** - The people who expose the safety and other regulatory lapses must be protected.

- **Making industrial safety a right** - Industrial safety should be explicitly made as a fundamental right.

### What lies ahead?

- There could be regulatory and better safety audit mechanism in every industrial establishments irrespective of their location, size and ownership.
- There is a need for collective conscience which could solve the crisis in the future.
- As citizens, as industry leaders, as media, as policymakers we need to care.

### Reference

[The Hindu| Industrial Accidents](#)

