NTPC boiler blast

Why in news?

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A lethal boiler blast in state-run NTPC power plant in Raebareli, Uttar Pradesh occurred injuring many.

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What was the accident about?

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- NTPC’s Unchahar plant in Raebareli district is around 110km from the state capital.
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- It is a capacity of 1,550 MW coal-fuelled plant, supplies electricity to Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Chandigarh, Delhi and Uttarakhand.
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- The Unchahar plant is currently generating around 640 MW.
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- The blast occurred in the boiler area of a 500-megawatt (MW) recently commissioned unit.
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- There was an explosion in the boiler, gases and steam escaped from the flue affecting the people working around the area.
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What are the implications of the accident?

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- Incident involving a high pressure and high temperature area can have serious repercussions.
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- This appears to be a very unusual incident because NTPC has a high record of safety.

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- The boiler explosion underscores the importance of inspections and protocols for hazardous industrial operations.
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- High pressure boilers are hazardous pieces of equipment, which needs to be strictly regulated with special laws.
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- At the Unchahar plant, the blocking of an outlet for waste gases by ash, unusual in a fairly new boiler, calls for an inquiry into the quality of the equipment and the fuel used.
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What measures needs to be taken?

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- A rigorous approach to accident reporting must become part of the process if the weak spots in regulation are to be addressed.
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- The accident was entirely preventable because boilers are designed to provide warnings.
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- The plants should undergo periodic inspections to ensure that all these features are working and intact.
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- There needs a transparent regulatory mechanism for hazardous industrial activity.
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- Industrial regulation has, unfortunately, come to be viewed as a barrier to ease of doing business in India.
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- Self-certification and third-party certification of facilities are needed, policymakers needs to take care of it.
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Source: The Hindu

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