

## Recurring Fireworks Unit Accidents

### Why in News?

In Tamil Nadu, 11 workers died in an explosion at an unlicensed fireworks unit, which may be triggered by mishandling of chemicals.

### What are the causes for such accidents?

- Usage of makeshift unlicensed units for manufacturing firecrackers.
- Rough handling of chemicals by untrained and unskilled workers.
- Spillage or overloading of chemicals during the filling process.
- Working outside permitted areas.
- Unsafe working conditions and improper handling of inflammable raw materials continue to endanger lives in the fireworks industry.

### How these accidents could be prevented?

- Occasional accidents in an industry dealing in explosive materials may seem inevitable.
- But the probability of such mishaps can certainly be reduced by adopting **safe work practices** that comply with rules.
- They can also be reduced through cohesive **monitoring** by Central and State licensing and enforcement authorities.
- Despite illegal sub-leasing of works to unlicensed units is a widely acknowledged practice in the industry, **crackdowns against violators** have been few and far between.

### What did the Chaitanya Prasad Committee report?

- It examined the statutory and administrative shortcomings that led to the death of 40 workers at Om Shakti Fireworks Industries in 2012.
- It reported that there is a conspicuous **absence of proper inspection mechanisms** at various government departments.
- It also found a **lack of coordination** between Central and State authorities dealing with the regulation of fireworks industries.

### What did the Committee recommend?

- It recommended making sub-leasing of works by licensed units a cognisable

penal **offence**.

- It mandated **inter-safety distances** between sheds covered with earthen mounds; and provision of a **smoothened pathway** with a width of 1.5 metres, as part of industrial safety measures.
- Ground reports suggest these recommendations continue to be ignored, with sub-leasing of works still rampant.

### **What could be done?**

- Regulators complain of a lack of manpower in checking violations.
- As safety is non-negotiable. the governments must walk the extra mile to enforce rules in a hazardous industry and prosecute violators.
- The industry too must self-regulate in its own interest.

**Source: The Hindu**

