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Death at work

(The Hindu, 23-08-24)

What recent industrial accidents have occurred in Andhra Pradesh?

- Blast at Escientia's pharma plant in Atchutapuram SEZ, killing 17 workers
- Fire accident at a chemical factory in the same SEZ, injuring 10 workers
- Explosion at a pharma plant in the SEZ in June 2022
- Styrene monomer vapour leak in Visakhapatnam in May 2020, killing 12 people

What are the main safety concerns highlighted by these accidents?

- Lack of proper handling of hazardous chemicals (e.g., MTBE)
- Inadequate safety measures and equipment in industrial units
- Insufficient familiarity with safety protocols among operating personnel
- Possible non-compliance with safety norms and regulations

What are the current regulatory practices for industrial safety in Andhra Pradesh?

- Exemption from government inspection for units in SEZs and Export Processing Zones (since 2016)
- Self-certification system based on third-party audits for medium-risk industries
- Online inspection system implemented to facilitate ease-of-doing business
- Concerns about the effectiveness of these practices in ensuring safety

What measures are being proposed to improve industrial safety?

- Immediate and thorough safety audit of all units in SEZs and elsewhere in Andhra Pradesh
- Calls for stringent punishment for management negligence
- Demand for a broader probe into safety practices, including in SEZs
- Swift delivery of justice and punitive damages for non-compliance with safety norms

Can you answer the following question?

In light of recent industrial accidents in Andhra Pradesh, critically examine the effectiveness of current industrial safety regulations and practices in India.

Do we need a Central law for protection of healthcare professionals?

(The Hindu, 23-08-24)

Following the brutal rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata, the issue of violence against healthcare workers has come to the forefront, with medical professionals across India demanding the enactment of a Central law to protect healthcare workers. In 2019, a Bill on this issue was drafted by the Central government, but it never saw the light of day.

What are the main factors contributing to violence against healthcare workers in India?

- High patient expectations
- High out-of-pocket expenditure for healthcare

- Lack of proper communication between doctors and patients
- Insufficient GDP spending on healthcare (less than 2% in India, compared to WHO's recommendation of 6%)
- Overworked and stressed healthcare workers, especially in government hospitals and medical colleges

What measures have been taken or proposed to address this issue?

- 25 States have enacted laws to protect medical professionals
- The Centre drafted a Bill in 2019 (The Healthcare Service Personnel and Clinical Establishments Bill)
- National Medical Commission (NMC) issued an advisory for medical colleges on safety measures
- Supreme Court has set up a national task force to look into the safety of healthcare workers
- Some states, like Kerala, have strengthened their laws and implemented protocols like the Code of Grey Protocol

Why is there a demand for a Central law to protect healthcare workers?

- Existing state laws have resulted in very few convictions
- A central law could provide uniform protection across the country
- It could act as a stronger deterrent against violence
- The government had previously committed to exploring the possibility of a Central Act

What are the challenges and considerations in implementing such a law?

- Balancing the rights of states and patients with the need for healthcare worker protection
- Ensuring proper implementation and awareness among law enforcement agencies
- Addressing the root causes of violence, such as improving the public health system and reducing out-of-pocket expenditure
- Striking a balance between deterrence and addressing systemic issues in healthcare

Can you answer the following question?

In light of increasing incidents of violence against healthcare workers in India, critically examine the need for a Central law to protect medical professionals.