

5. The Brunt of Labour Laws

Prelims Level: Rights Issues

Mains Level: GS-II Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable Sections

Context:

- The tweaking of labour laws on safety and minimum wage has left a large section of workers in India without rights.

What is the Issue?

- The huge fire that engulfed a residential-cum-production unit in a congested part of Delhi recently, killing over 40 people, has exposed the precarity of the every-day life of workers in this country.
- Their unfortunate deaths have merely caused the authorities responsible to indulge in a blame game, without shame, while conveniently sidestepping the larger question of systemic labour rights violation.
- It is evident that numerous industrial clusters have mushroomed in the by lanes of residential localities and slums in our big cities experience non-existent regulation of labour conditions in micro-, small- and medium-sized industrial and commercial establishments.
- In these scores of smaller establishments, the workers are mostly migrants, and tend to work long hours for meagre wages.
- Often, they are crowded into living quarters inside the production unit itself.

Why Labour Protection is ignored?

- Like it or not, promotion of the self-certification system, the continuous weakening of the labour inspectorate by successive governments and persistent dilution of labour laws pose uncomfortable questions, especially when we recognize the intense exploitation of labour by employers, who to stay competitive, consistently push down labour costs by circumventing labour rights.

Constitutional Provisions:

- The Article 43 of the Constitution of India states that the state shall endeavour to secure by suitable legislation or economic organization or in any other way to all workers a living

wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of pleasure and social and cultural opportunities.

- Under the Constitution of India, Labour is a subject in the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule where both the Central & State Governments are competent to enact legislation.

