EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

GENERAL STUDIES 3: DISASTER MANAGEMENT   **DATE:** 27.02.2025

TOPIC: STAMPEDE

The bigger tragedy is the Railways and its systemic inertia

Stampede at New Delhi Railway Station – A Safety Concern

Incident Overview

- Stampede occurred at **New Delhi Railway Station on February 15** due to mismanagement.

- **Negligence, not lack of resources**, caused the tragedy.

- **Crowd control measures** like proper movement planning, barricading, and security were ignored

Major Problems in Indian Railways' Crowd Management

1. Poor Planning for Peak Rush

- Festivals and special occasions bring **predictable passenger surges**, but Railways **fails to plan ahead**.

2. Ineffective Information System

- Passengers are **not informed properly** about **platform changes, train delays, and crowd flow management**.

3. Weak Crowd Management Measures

- No **separate entry and exit routes** or **controlled access points**.

- **Lack of real-time monitoring** to regulate large crowds.

4. Insufficient Security & Staff

- **Too few Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel** at high-risk stations.

- Poor **coordination between railway staff** leads to confusion.

- **Overburdened staff** suffer from fatigue, reducing their efficiency.

5. Unregulated Passenger Rush in General Coaches

- **Unreserved travel demand** is extremely high but lacks structured ticketing limits, leading to overcrowding.

6. Lack of Accountability in Safety Investigations

- **Railway officials investigate accidents themselves**, leading to **minimal corrective actions**.

- No **independent safety body** to ensure unbiased investigation.

7. Outdated Railway Infrastructure

- **Narrow platforms, congested staircases**, and poorly designed **escalators without emergency stop buttons** create dangerous bottlenecks.

Necessary Reforms to Prevent Future Stampedes

1. Better Crowd Planning for Festivals

- **Special crowd control zones** and **staggered train schedules** should be planned in advance.

2. Effective Passenger Communication

- Use **public address systems, digital displays, and mobile alerts** to provide real-time updates.

3. Stronger Crowd Management Strategies

- Implement **separate entry and exit points** to regulate flow.

- Introduce **unidirectional movement policies** to avoid congestion.

- Set up **holding areas** to manage excessive crowds.

4. More Security and Staff Deployment

- Increase **RPF personnel** and place **trained railway staff** at crowded stations.

5. Regulated Ticketing for General Coaches

- Introduce **pre-booking options for unreserved coaches** to control passenger numbers.

6. Independent Safety Audits

- **External agencies** should conduct **safety reviews** before major events.

7. Urgent Infrastructure Upgrades

- **Widen platforms** to accommodate large crowds.

- Install **emergency stop buttons on escalators** for quick response.

- Improve **signage and guidance systems** for smooth passenger movement.

Final Thoughts

- **Passenger safety must be prioritized** through **better planning, modern infrastructure, and independent oversight**.

- Without **systemic reforms**, railway stampedes will continue, risking thousands of lives.

Source: https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-bigger-tragedy-is-the-railways-and-its-systemic-inertia/article69267343.ece