

**DAILY  
CURRENT  
AFFAIRS  
ANALYSIS**



LAKSHYA ACADEMY®

**09 JULY 2024**

# 1 - Disaster Management and Stampedes:

## GS III

### Disaster Management

- **Why in News?**

- Recently, India faced yet another tragic stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district, resulting in the loss of over 100 lives. This incident is part of a series of similar disasters that have plagued the nation during religious events and festivals over the past two decades. These recurring tragedies underscore the persistent challenges in managing large crowds and the pressing need for enhanced safety measures.

- **What is a Stampede?**

- **About:**

- A stampede is an uncontrolled mass movement of people, often leading to injuries and fatalities. It usually occurs in response to a perceived threat, lack of space, or a collective urge to reach something desirable.

- **Types:**

- **Unidirectional Stampedes:** These occur when a crowd moving in the same direction encounters a sudden obstruction or force, such as broken barriers or abrupt stops.
- **Turbulent Stampedes:** These happen in chaotic situations with uncontrolled crowds, induced panic, or when crowds merge from multiple directions.

- **Fatalities in Stampedes:**

- **Traumatic Asphyxia:** The most common cause, resulting from external compression of the chest or abdomen. It can occur even in moderately dense crowds.
- **Other Causes:** Include myocardial infarction (heart attack), direct crushing injuries to internal organs, head injuries, and neck compression.

- **Factors Contributing to Stampedes:**

- **Psychological Factors:** Panic is a major trigger, disrupting cooperative behavior and triggering survival instincts that lead to stampedes.
- **Environmental and Design Elements:** Inadequate lighting.

- Poor crowd flow management.
- Collapse of barriers or buildings.
- Blocked exits or evacuation routes.
- Fire hazards.
- High crowd density (3-4 persons per square meter).

- **Impact of Stampedes:**

- Psychological Trauma: Long-term effects on survivors and witnesses, including PTSD.
- Economic Consequences: Significant financial impact on economically disadvantaged individuals and their families due to loss of primary earners and medical expenses.
- Social Impact: Loss of trust in event organizers and authorities, social unrest, and a negative impact on community morale and cohesion.
- Impact on Infrastructure: Damage to physical infrastructure, leading to significant repair and upgrade costs.

- **Circumstances of Previous Deadly Stampedes in India:**

- Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine (2022): 12 fatalities during a Hindu pilgrimage in Kashmir.
- Mumbai Pedestrian Bridge (2017): 22 deaths during rush hour.
- Varanasi Bridge (2016): 24 fatalities during a religious ceremony.
- Godavari River (2015): 27 deaths during a Hindu bathing festival.
- Ratangarh Temple (2013): 115 fatalities due to a collapsing bridge.
- Allahabad Train Station (2013): 36 deaths during Kumbh Mela.
- Jodhpur Temple (2008): 168 fatalities during Navratra festival celebrations.
- Naina Devi Temple (2008): 145 deaths triggered by rumors of a landslide.
- Wai Temple (2005): 258 fatalities due to a stampede and subsequent fire.

- **Initiatives of India to Control Stampedes:**

- National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Guidelines: Traffic and Crowd Management: Regulating traffic, displaying route maps, and using barricades.
- Security Measures: Emphasizing CCTV surveillance, increased police presence, and effective management of unauthorized parking and stalls.
- Medical Preparedness: Ensuring ambulances and medical staff are on standby, with clear signage to nearby hospitals.
- Crowd Safety Tips: Educating attendees on exit routes and calm behavior during gatherings.
- Fire Safety: Precautions like safe electrical wiring, monitoring LPG cylinder usage, and caution with fireworks.
- Disaster Risk Reduction: Supporting government initiatives and conferences focusing on disaster resilience.

- **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA):**

- Leadership: Led by the Prime Minister of India.
- Establishment: Formed under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- Responsibilities: Setting policies, plans, and guidelines for disaster management, focusing on prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response.
- Mission: To create a safer and disaster-resilient India through proactive and sustainable development strategies.

- **What Can be Done Better to Prevent Stampedes?**

- Real-time Density Monitoring: Use sensors (thermal, LiDAR) to monitor crowd density in real-time and feed data into AI models for early warnings.
- RFID Tags: Implement RFID tags in tickets or wristbands for real-time tracking of crowd movement and targeted communication.
- Drone Surveillance: Utilize drones with high-resolution cameras and thermal imaging for real-time monitoring and anomaly detection.
- Intelligent Lighting Systems: Install crowd-responsive lighting to guide movement or calm situations based on crowd density.
- Bioluminescent Pathways: Embed bioluminescent materials in pathways to guide movement during emergencies.
- Interactive Communication Displays: Use displays to show real-time wait times, evacuation routes, and essential information in multiple languages.
- Public Awareness Campaigns: Launch campaigns to educate people on crowd safety protocols and proper behavior during large gatherings.

- **Conclusion/Way Forward:**

- To address the recurring issue of stampedes, it is crucial to implement a multi-faceted approach that includes technological advancements, robust infrastructure, effective crowd management strategies, and widespread public awareness campaigns. By leveraging real-time monitoring systems, RFID technology, and intelligent lighting, authorities can significantly reduce the risk of stampedes. Additionally, ensuring proper training for event organizers and emergency responders, along with community engagement, can foster a culture of safety and cooperation during large gatherings. Through these measures, India can enhance its disaster resilience and safeguard its citizens during mass events.

- **Source** → *The Hindu*

## 2 - Social Security for Gig Workers:

### GS II

#### Government Policies and Interventions:

- **Why in News?**
- Recently, Karnataka introduced the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Bill, becoming the second state after Rajasthan to propose legislation for the welfare of gig workers. This draft law aims to regulate and ensure the social security and welfare of platform-based gig workers in Karnataka by establishing a welfare board, a welfare fund, and a grievance redressal mechanism.
- **Key Highlights of the Karnataka Bill:**
- **Creation of Welfare Board:** The board will include the Karnataka labour minister, two officials from aggregators, two gig workers, and one civil society member.
- **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** A two-level grievance redressal system will ensure transparency and address worker complaints regarding automated monitoring and decision-making systems used by platforms.
- **Timely Payment:** The bill mandates weekly payments by aggregators and requires them to inform workers about any deductions.
- **Unique ID:** Gig workers can apply for a Unique ID that will be valid across all platforms upon registration with the board.
- **Social Security and Grievance Redressal:** Workers will have access to social security schemes based on contributions, along with a grievance redressal mechanism.
- **Autonomy and Contractual Rights:** The bill provides gig workers with greater autonomy, allowing them to terminate contracts and resist being overworked. Aggregators cannot terminate a worker without a valid reason in writing and a prior notice of 14 days.
- **Work Environment and Safety:** Aggregators are mandated to maintain a safe working environment for gig workers.
- **Welfare Fund:** A proposed fund, financed by welfare fees from aggregators along with state and worker contributions, will support the workers.
- **Penalties:** Violations by aggregators will attract penalties starting from Rs 5,000 up to Rs 1 lakh.

- **Who are Gig Workers?**

- **Gig Workers:** According to the Code on Social Security 2020, gig workers are individuals who perform work or engage in a gig work arrangement and earn outside traditional employer-employee relationships.
- **Gig Economy:** This is a free market system where temporary positions are common, and organizations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements. A 2022 NITI Aayog report projects that India will have 23.5 million gig workers by 2029-30.
- **Need for Social Security Benefits for Gig Workers**
- **Frequent Termination:** The rise in instances of blacklisting and termination without hearing workers' sides necessitates social security.
- **Economic Security:** Job insecurity and income uncertainty due to demand-driven nature of the sector highlight the need for unemployment insurance, disability coverage, and retirement savings programs.
- **Health Insurance:** Lack of employer-sponsored health insurance leaves gig workers vulnerable to medical expenses.
- **Level Playing Field:** Providing social security benefits will mitigate disparities where gig workers face exploitative conditions.
- **Long-term Financial Security:** Without employer-sponsored retirement plans, gig workers may struggle to save for the future.

- **Main Challenges in Providing Social Security Benefits:**

- **Classification and Flexibility:** Designing benefits that accommodate the flexibility of gig work is complex.
- **Funding and Cost Distribution:** Identifying funding mechanisms is challenging as traditional systems rely on employer and employee contributions.
- **Coordination and Data Sharing:** Efficient data sharing among platforms, government agencies, and financial institutions is necessary but challenging.
- **Education and Awareness:** Raising awareness about social security benefits among gig workers is difficult.

- **Government's Initiatives:**

- **Code on Social Security 2020:** Includes provisions for a Social Security Fund for gig workers.
- **Code on Wages 2019:** Provides for universal minimum wage across sectors, including gig workers.
- **Rajasthan Legislation:** Recently, Rajasthan passed a bill to extend social security benefits to gig workers.

- **Way Forward:**
- **To ensure the social security of gig workers:**
- Implementing the Code on Social Security, 2020: States should expedite framing rules and instituting the board.
- Expanding Employer Responsibilities: Gig companies should support gig workers similarly to regular employees.
- Education and Training: Government should invest in skill improvement programs for gig workers.
- Government Support: Collaboration between governments, gig platforms, and labour organizations to establish fair mechanisms for social security.
- Adopting International Examples: Learning from countries like the UK and Indonesia to provide benefits like minimum wage, health insurance, and retirement plans.
- Linking Women Empowerment: Building infrastructure to support women's engagement in the gig workforce.
- **Conclusion:**
- With the growing gig economy, it is imperative to ensure the welfare and social security of gig workers. Effective implementation of proposed laws, expanding employer responsibilities, and international best practices can significantly improve the working conditions and financial security of gig workers in India.
- *Source → The Hindu*

### **3 - Appointment to Cabinet Committees:**

#### **GS II**

#### **Government Policies and Interventions/Executive:**

- **Context:**
- Recently, the Union government restructured eight Cabinet committees, introducing new members to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) while keeping the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) and Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) unchanged. Additionally, the Lok Sabha Speaker has revised the oath-taking rules for Members of Parliament, restricting them from adding any remarks during their oath.

- **What are Cabinet Committees?**

- **About:**

- **Definition:** Cabinet Committees are subsets of the Union Cabinet, comprising selected Union Ministers.
- **Purpose:** They streamline decision-making by distributing responsibilities across various areas like economic affairs, security, parliamentary affairs, and political matters. They ensure detailed consideration of complex issues, which are then presented to the full Cabinet for final approval.
- **Principles:** They operate on the principles of division of labour and effective delegation.

- **Types:**

- **Standing Committees:** Permanent in nature.
- **Ad hoc Committees:** Temporary, created to address specific issues.

- **Features:**

- **Extra-Constitutional:** They are not mentioned in the Constitution but are established as per the Rules of Business.
- **Legal Basis:** Operate under the Government of India Transaction of Business Rules, 1961, derived from Article 77(3) of the Constitution. This article allows the President to make rules for government operations and assign tasks among Ministers.

- **Membership:**

- **Formation:** Set up by the Prime Minister based on current needs and situations.
- **Composition:** Usually include three to eight members, primarily Cabinet Ministers, though non-Cabinet Ministers can also be included.
- **Leadership:** If the Prime Minister is a member, he presides over the committee.
- **Function:** They resolve issues and formulate proposals for the Cabinet's consideration and can make decisions subject to Cabinet review.

- **List of 8 Cabinet Committees:**

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)
- Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)
- Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)
- Cabinet Committee on Accommodation
- Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (Super-Cabinet)
- Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs
- Cabinet Committee on Investment and Growth



- Cabinet Committee on Skill, Employment and Livelihood
- **Recent Changes:**
  - Home Minister: The only Cabinet member present in all panels.
  - Prime Minister: Heads six committees, except the Committee on Accommodation and the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs.
  - Appointments Committee: Remains unchanged, led by the Prime Minister with the Home Minister as the sole member.
- **Parliamentary Committees:**
  - Definition: Specialised committees created to handle detailed work of the Parliament, which is too complex for full House sittings.
  - Types: Include Standing Committees and Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs).
  - Purpose: Ensure thorough scrutiny, discussion, and investigation of specific matters.
- **Groups of Ministers (GoMs):**
  - Nature: Ad hoc bodies formed to advise the Cabinet on urgent issues and critical problem areas.
  - Function: Some are empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Cabinet, while others provide recommendations.
  - Composition: Include relevant Ministers, disbanded after their advice is finalised.
  - Lok Sabha Speaker Amends Oath-Taking Rules for MPs:
    - New Clause: Added to 'Direction 1' within the 'Directions by the Speaker' to manage specific matters not covered by existing rules.
    - Clause 3: Members must take and subscribe to the oath or affirmation without using any words or expressions as prefixes or suffixes to the prescribed form.
- **Challenges for Cabinet Committees:**
  - Overlapping Mandates: Leads to delays, inefficiency, and conflicts, causing proposals to get stuck and slow decisions.
  - Lack of Expertise: Committees may lack subject-specific experts, leading to poorly informed decisions with potential long-term negative impacts.
  - Information Silos & Poor Communication: Committees might not share information or collaborate, creating blind spots and hindering a holistic approach.
  - Political Pressure & Short-termism: Political considerations can prioritize short-term gains over long-term planning, resulting in reactive rather than proactive measures.
  - Lack of Accountability & Transparency: Decisions made in secrecy erode trust and hinder legislative accountability.

- **Concentration of Power:** When decision-making rests with a few committees or individuals, it can exclude valuable perspectives, leading to unbalanced decisions.
- **Way Forward:**
- **Clear Mandate:** Define committee mandates clearly to avoid ambiguity and establish a central body for conflict resolution.
- **Expert Appointment:** Include subject matter experts as advisors or temporary members and collaborate with external think tanks.
- **Better Information Sharing:** Implement a centralized information-sharing platform and establish regular inter-committee briefings.
- **Long-Term Goals:** Mandate committees to develop long-term strategic plans alongside short-term action items, integrating independent impact assessments.
- **Accountability:** Regularly release meeting minutes and summaries to ensure accountability.
- **Broad-Based Consultation:** Include a wider range of voices by inviting other Cabinet members as special invitees.
- *Source → The Hindu*

## 4 - Air Pollution and Mortality in Indian Cities:

### GS III

#### **Environmental Conservation:**

- **Why in News:**
- Recently, a significant study published in *The Lancet* has shed light on the detrimental effects of air pollution on mortality rates across major Indian cities. This study, the first of its kind, examines the relationship between short-term exposure to particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) and mortality in ten major Indian cities over an 11-year period, from 2008 to 2019.
- **Key Findings of the Study:**
- **Air Pollution Causing Death:**
- The study uncovered that over 33,000 deaths annually across the ten cities can be attributed to air pollution, accounting for approximately 7.2% of total mortalities.

- **Highest Mortality Burden:**

- Delhi was identified as having the most severe air pollution, with 12,000 deaths (11.5% of annual deaths) linked to air pollution.

- **Shimla Lowest Mortality:**

- Shimla recorded the lowest mortality burden attributable to air pollution, with 59 deaths annually, constituting 3.7% of total deaths.

- **Chronic Exceedance of Safe Air Quality Standards:**

- There has been a persistent violation of established air quality standards. PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations consistently exceeded the World Health Organization's (WHO) safe limit (15 µg/m<sup>3</sup>) on 99.8% of the days analyzed.

- **Deteriorating Health with Increasing Pollution Levels:**

- Every 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> increase in PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration resulted in a 1.42% rise in mortality across the ten cities.

- **Heightened Susceptibility in Less Polluted Cities:**

- Cities with comparatively lower pollution levels, such as Bengaluru and Shimla, exhibited a higher susceptibility to mortality increases with even incremental rises in PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations.

- **Conclusion/Way Forward:**

- The findings from The Lancet's study underscore the urgent need for robust air quality management strategies in Indian cities. The persistent violation of air quality standards and the significant mortality burden associated with PM<sub>2.5</sub> exposure call for immediate action. Effective measures could include stricter enforcement of emission regulations, promotion of cleaner technologies, and increased public awareness about the health risks of air pollution. Addressing air pollution is not only crucial for public health but also for the overall well-being and sustainable development of urban areas in India.

- **Source** → *The Hindu*