



Mumbai Stampede - Urban Planning

What is the issue?

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- The recent stampede tragedy in Mumbai has drawn attention to the flaws in urban planning.

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- India's urban development and planning requires a course correction to prevent such incidents in future.

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What is the case with Mumbai?

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- The area around the railway station where stampede occurred was home to several of the city's mills a few decades ago.

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- Naturally, workers settled around the mills, in chawls and colonies.

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- As the textile and manufacturing industry declined, services and commercial activity and so the construction for offices and residences increased.

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- However, these went on without any adaptive response from the public authorities to address the transportation challenges.

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- Consequently, it led to the pressure on the existing transport infrastructure.

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- The footfalls in surrounding railway stations increased manifold irrespective of the inadequate carrying capacity of bridges and stairways.

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What are the drawbacks in urban planning?

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- \n• A major drawback is the absence of coordination among the many public organisations.
- \n• As a result, various civic and infrastructure-related functions remain dissociated.
- \n• Also, planning authorities prepare land use plans for a 20-year horizon.
- \n• On the other hand, transformation is happening in the land use pattern in relation to the ongoing changes in economic activity at a faster pace.
- \n• Resultantly, the planning process is not adaptive and flexible enough to respond to the changing land use and economic forces.
- \n• Further, overlapping of functions and the jurisdictional confusion among metropolitan bodies undermine responsibility and accountability.
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What are the possible solutions?

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- \n• The urban planning authorities have to be more responsive to the dynamics of the cities.
- \n• Coordination and cooperation among all public authorities must become a regular feature of the governance set-up.
- \n• The ultimate requirement thus is a **single coordinating agency**.
- \n• The Metropolitan Planning Committees (**MPCs**) as provided in 74th Constitutional Amendment Act is one such entity.
- \n• However, the functioning of MPCs has been disappointing because of lack of autonomy, executive power, finances and functionaries.
- \n• Another alternative is the metropolitan councils that are appointed democratically and entrusted with specific powers.
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- Some of its features could be -

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1. having a clear functional mandate.
2. having adequate autonomous power for planning and decision making.
3. defined comprehensive jurisdiction for the entire metropolitan region over certain functions such as transport.
4. taking up other functions that require provisioning at a regional level.
5. having representatives from other public organisations and domain experts from outside the public sphere.

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- In all, accountable public authorities who respond to the dynamics of cities can bring out the much needed reformed urban planning.

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Source: The Hindu

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