

Mumbai Stampede - Urban Planning

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

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

\n

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

\n

\n\n

What is the case with Mumbai?

\n\n

\n

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

\n

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

\n

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

\n

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

\n

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

\n

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

\n

\n\n

What are the drawbacks in urban planning?

\n\n

- \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.
 - \n

\n\n

What are the possible solutions?

\n\n

- \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.
 - \n
 - Some of its features could be -
 - \n

\n\n

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

\n\n

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

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

