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# Jagannath Rath Yatra stampede and related concerns

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## *GS III - Disaster and disaster management.*

### Tragedy at the Rath Yatra: A Recurring Pattern

- In the past 12 months, nine stampede occurred in India, out of nine, six stampede occurred in religious gatherings.
- Now the recent stampede occurred in Jagannath temple's annual chariot procession in Puri, Odisha. 3 person died and more 50 persons injured.
- The centuries old chariot procession is an annual and month long event between June and July.
- The heart of the festival is the nine-day chariot procession, or Rath Yatra, when Lord Jagannath travels with his two siblings, Balabhadra and Subhadra, to their aunt Gundicha's home.
- About half a million devotees visit the three-kilometre radius around the temple.
- With exhausted pilgrims, merged traffic flows and no exit access, the stage was set for a tragedy.

### Negligence and Lapses in Crowd Management

- Due to mismanagement and delayed in the movement of chariot procession, large number of devotees suffered due to heat, dehydration, and crowd stress.

### Human Cost of Mismanagement

- In the Jagannath temple's annual chariot procession this year 3 person died.

### VIP Culture vs. Public Safety

- Every temple has entrance gate and exit gate. In most of the temple,

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during religious gathering, most public devotes enter and exit through entrance gate. Exit gate allotted for “VIP entry”.
- A single corridor that was being used for the flow in both directions resulted in more congestion, amplifying crowd pressure.

## Need for Ethical Governance and Planning

- Number of tragedy reveals India’s tawdry record in crowd management, at religious gatherings, celebrity-studded events, political rallies or post sporting festivities.
- As for VIPs, one way is to restrict any privileged entry and to provide access at the beginning or at the end of festivities, allowing other visitors predictable and barrier-free access.

## A Call for Reform in Public Event Management

- Improved crowd management strategies need.
- Better infrastructure and entry/exit planning.
- Use of technology like CCTV and crowd monitoring systems.
- Public awareness campaigns necessary.

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