



Concept Note



Two Days Conference on Crowd Management

Date: 11th & 12th July 2017

Venue: Hotel Samudra, Kovalam, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

Organized by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) & Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA)

Introduction

India's population is equivalent to 17.86% of the total world population. The population density in India is 452 per KM². India is well known all over the world as a country of cultural, religious and traditional festivals, characterized by numerous events of mass gathering, across the nation, such as Kumbh Mela at Allahabad.

The crowd disasters, in general, are man-made disasters. Recurring stampedes at places of mass gatherings, which include religious places, railway stations, and venues of Sports/Social/Political events, are of serious concern to the nation. The contemporary security environment coupled with rapid urbanization, improved transportation facilities and relatively easy access to important shrines like Badrinath and Kedarnath Dham, our vulnerability to crowd related disasters stands significantly enhanced. The need for improving preparedness and capacity building to manage such disasters has, therefore, increased manifold.

The Rationale

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued a guideline for integrated approach to Crowd Management in 2014 titled 'Managing Crowd at Events and Venues of Mass Gathering - A Guide for State governments, Local Authorities, Administrators and Organizers'. The document although available on NDMA website (ndma.gov.in) was circulated to all the States in order to enable them to prepare appropriate guidelines and plans for effective and efficient crowd management. The Guide classifies the reasons for crowd disaster process as a) Structural Failure, b) Human errors, c) Natural causes. The Guide also observes that a mere glance through the list of causes of crowd disasters suggests that such disasters can be completely prevented with proactive and holistic planning and flawless execution. A thorough assessment of arrangements made at places of mass gathering against the above list of potential causes, should dramatically reduce the chances of a disaster. Another interesting observation is that, majority of the crowd disasters in India and developing countries have occurred at religious places while stadia, venues of music concerts, night clubs, & shopping malls have been the typical places of disasters in the developed countries. With population explosion and rapid urbanization, Indian cities are also becoming susceptible to crowd disasters at such venues.

It may be appreciated that Religious gatherings and pilgrimages have been venues for majority of the stampede incidences in India. Festivals or events attracting mass gatherings experience unexpected temporary surge in number of people at the event locations. Agencies responsible for organizing and management of such places would need to include 'crowd as one of the hazards while formulating strategic plan for public safety and implement special arrangement necessary for managing crowd. It is important for the authorities responsible for granting license / registration / permission for events / venues of mass gathering to comply with the guidelines and relevant laws. Besides there is a need for enhancing awareness on "causes and triggers" for crowd disasters among all the stakeholders.

Since the conference is being co hosted by the KSDMA, the conference will cover certain State specific issues too :-

- Most of the temples, churches and mosques in Kerala organize annual prayers as festivals. These festivals attract huge crowds even at the village level and thus have a potential for occurrence of stampedes. Sabarimala pilgrimage, Attukal Ponkala and Thrissur Pooram are a few among the major religious gatherings in Kerala. Apart from the religious worships, many of the festivals organize entertainment programmes, free food distribution and pyrotechnic works. Thus the venues of religious festivals become the loci for worship, entertainment and business attracting people from various religious backgrounds. The Temple festivals in Kerala also engage elephants for colorful processions and other rituals.
- Two major stampedes have occurred in the state in the past, they being human stampede at hilltop near Pampa at Sabarimala in 1999 which killed 52 pilgrims and stampede on Makarajyothi day at Sabarimala in 2011 which killed 102 pilgrims. The stampede at the Makarajyothi view point took the lives of pilgrims from Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The most recent crowd disaster which shook the entire state was Fire Cracker Accident at Puttingal Temple, Kollam District which claimed 109 lives.
- Kerala has constituted a state level Crisis Management Group (CMG) to address anthropogenic hazards including festivities related accidents (stampedes). The state has also prepared standard operating procedures for festival disasters; 2015.

A Snapshot of a few major Crowd Management related disasters is as under :-

- 1995, 23rd December - Dabwali, Haryana, Fire at a School Function held in a Shamiyana (tent) - Casualties 446
- 1997, 24 February - Baripada, Odisha, Fire at religious congregation, Casualties 206
- 2005, 25 January - Wai, Satara, Shri Kalubai Yatra Mandhardev, Maharashtra -, Casualties 293
- 2008, 30th September - Chamunda Devi Temple, Jodhpur, Rajasthan - Casualties 249
- 2011, 14th January - Sabarimala Stampede, Kerala- Casualties 102
- 2013, 14th June - Kedarnath, Uttarakhand

- 2016, 10th April - Puttingal Fire cracker incident, Kollam, Kerala - Casualties 109

The list above includes incidents where the casualties have gone beyond 100, and there are many other crowd disaster incidents across India where people have lost lives, severely injured and incurred huge damage & losses. This calls for serious interventions, deliberations and planning at the National, State and District levels. Hence this two days conference has been planned.

Objectives

The conference has been structured to attain the following objectives

- To learn from the past crowd disasters and understand the causes and triggers.
- To share the best practices in crowd management among different stakeholders.
- To understand crowd disaster preparedness & mitigation efforts to enhance safety in mass gatherings.
- To discuss cross cutting issues such as legal framework, use of ICT and role of media
- To discuss essentials of planning and coordination for events of mass gathering
- To discuss issues related to safety in festivals using animals and safety in fireworks at mass congregations
- To Discuss challenges & gaps in the existing practices of crowd management

Expected Participants

- Representatives of the State Governments / Union Territories
- Representatives of SDMA's
- Representatives of Shrine Boards / Religious Trusts / Event organizers etc.
- Representatives of Response Agencies – NDRF, SDRF, Armed Forces and Fire Services etc.

Expected Outcome

The conference is expected to

- (i) Enhance capacity of organizers and other stakeholders to meticulously plan and efficiently manage conduct of mass gatherings.
- (ii) Reinforce the ongoing capacity building measures and enhance preparedness of various stakeholders of mass gathering, resulting in a tangible risk reduction in crowd related disasters.
- (iii) The conference will also set the stage for further deliberations on adopting safe practices and leveraging technology for risk reduction at such events.
- (iv) Collation of inputs for revision of NDMA Guidelines.
- (v) Preparation of a handbook on best practices in Crowd Management.