

Analyzing Large Scale Gatherings at Religious Places in India

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Abstract

Religious functions in India are considered as one of the biggest and most unique mass gatherings in the world and are strongly linked with belief, traditions and culture. Festivals such as the 'Kumbh Mela' and 'Ratha Yatra' are acts of worship and examples of temporary urbanism, thus creating urban spaces that can host several million pilgrims at once. Thus, they need special attention to spatial planning, mobility, infrastructure and amenities issues to manage this large crowd at scale. This study focuses on large scale religious gatherings taking place on plains, hilly terrains and riverside locations and explores issues related to spatial planning, carrying capacity and crowd behaviour at these locations. This current study looks at recorded cases of stampedes and high crowd density events and finds recurring patterns in risk factors and locational behaviour of the crowd. It shows the limitations of the process by which large events are currently organised. The research examined accessibility, circulation, layout and emergencies during peak-crowd times. The study will be carried out using a secondary data collection method through analysing government documents, scholarly material and media documents. The results show that the main causes of these risks are due to a lack of proper spatial planning and poor intra-agency coordination. The study will highlight the importance of a comprehensive approach to planning to ensure safety and efficiency at major religious events in India. The study will put insight into the need to adopt an integrated and proactive approach in the management of such situations.

Keywords

Large-scale gatherings, Spatial planning, carrying capacity, stampede, temporary urbanism.