Mumbai Stampede

Why in news?

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- A stampede in a narrow footbridge linking two railway stations in Mumbai has left at least 23 people dead and more than 30 injured.
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- People, to take shelter from unexpected heavy rains, crammed into the narrow bridge, eventually leading to the stampede.
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What is the policy flaw in this regard?

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- The recent tragedy is evidential of the failure of civic policy to factor in the need for pedestrian access.
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- It applies not just to stations but to the wider city of Mumbai and other cities in India as well.
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- Mumbai's geography produces a distinct north-south commuting pattern from the periphery, as the business district is located at the southern end.
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- As the financial capital, Mumbai depends mainly on the 300 km suburban railway system.
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- This has some of the highest passenger densities, and yet has no single accountable manager.
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- Also, over the past two decades, policy attention has been tilted towards road projects for wider roads and more flyovers.
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- On the other hand, mass mobility systems and also facilities for walkers and cycle-users have not received similar attention.
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- This skewed policy attention is one of the reasons for the recent disaster.

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What should be done?

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- **Mumbai** - A sound transport demands a management strategy that would consider mapping travel patterns.
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- Further, shifting some institutions to areas in the wider Mumbai Metropolitan Region could be an option to diversify the crowd.
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- Beyond Mumbai, the tragedy calls for a more focussed attention to the **urban public transport** in India.
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- Reforming the archaic **transport planning and management** for urban India on a comprehensive scale is the need of the hour.
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- Along with these, a range of measures should be undertaken with high priority. These include:
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1. Augmenting the creaking and broken infrastructure at suburban stations.
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2. Creating canopies to shield passengers, such as those crowding the staircase to escape the rain in Mumbai.
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3. Installing escalators and lifts.
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4. Providing exits on both sides of train coaches towards the street level wherever feasible.
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5. Creating multiple entry and exit points.
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6. Putting in place an organised feeder transport network to stations and bus termini.
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- The Railway Minister has called for a quick survey of the suburban stations

to identify areas of concern and this must now be extended to all cities.
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Source: The Hindu

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