Mumbai Stampede - Multiplicity of Agencies and Accountability

What is the issue?

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- Mumbai’s Elphinstone Road railway bridge recently witnessed a horrific stampede killing and injuring many.
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- Notably, the Government Railway Police (GRP) and the Mumbai city police argued over each other's jurisdiction, instead of coordinating.
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What is the larger governance concern?

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- This jurisdictional confusion is indicative of the larger governance flaw in relation with Mumbai’s infrastructure.
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- There are too many agencies and no one is willing to take responsibility when a tragedy takes place.
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- This accountability and jurisdictional anomaly is plaguing much of Mumbai's development discourse.
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- Ex: There are at least five agencies that handle roads in Mumbai.
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1. BMC.
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2. State Public Works Department.
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3. Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority.
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4. Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation.

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5. In some cases even the Slum Rehabilitation Authority.
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- In most cities around the world, the city's ultimate control is with the mayor.
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- But in Mumbai, the mayor has been reduced to a figurehead.
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- The real powers lie with the municipal commissioner, who is appointed by the State government.
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- The powerful standing committee, comprising elected representatives, can frame policies, draft bye-laws, and sanction the city’s budget.
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- But the person to oversee and implement everything is the commissioner.
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- Besides, a large majority of the State’s elected legislators have no stake in the city’s progress.
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What is to be done?

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- Notably this is not the case only with Mumbai but is an issue hampering development in many cities in India.
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- There is thus a dire need for ruling out the jurisdictional ambiguity as a result of multiplicity of agencies.
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- Mumbai and other cities of India need a **single coordinating agency with adequate autonomy and power** to make decisions.
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- This is essential to ensure accountability as well as to take forward the implementation of many drafted developmental plans.
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- Political will is also very important to materialise all these.
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Source: The Hindu

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