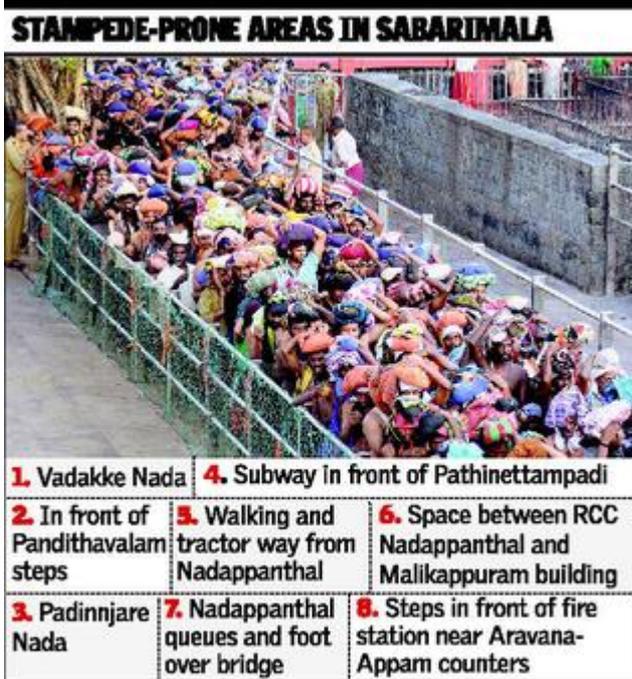


Eight possible stampede points identified in Sabarimala

Risk assessment carried out as part of Crisis Management Plan



Crowd surge may lead to stampedes at eight emergency points in Sabarimala Ayyappa temple and its premises.

These hazard points were identified during a risk assessment process carried out as part of the preparation of Crisis Management Plan (CMP) for Sabarimala. The plan was prepared by the Institute of Land and Disaster Management.

Stampede could occur at Vadakke Nada, in front of Pandithavalam steps, Padinjare Nada, subway in front of Pathinettampadi, walking and tractor way from Nadappanthal, space between RCC Nadappanthal and Malikappuram building, Nadappanthal queues and foot overbridge and steps in front of Fire

Station near aravana-appam counters when the crowd density goes beyond the accommodating capacity of the area, pointed out the CMP.

The disaster management experts have identified the heavy egress after Makarajyothi Darshan as the most vulnerable time for stampedes.

After the darshan, pilgrims leave Sannidanam in a short span of time.

Overcrowding

The overcrowding of devotees at Sannidanam should be regulated at particular check points downstream to avoid such emergencies, they suggested.

Several pilgrims had lost their lives in earlier incidents of stampede in Sabarimala. The pilgrimage, warned the CMP, is “highly prone to human stampedes during the Mandala-Makara Vilakku seasons.

The availability of limited open space, uneven topography and high density of pilgrims together make Sabarimala a stampede hotspot.”

The rush and surge of people to occupy a place for a better view of Makarajyothi may result in jostling, suffocation, failure of confining walls, barriers and gates.

The collapse of temporary or permanent structures, accidents on bridges, vehicle accidents at Pamba or Sannidanam, heavy rain and slippery surfaces, fire and other intentional acts too could trigger a stampede, pointed out the CMP, jointly drafted by Keshav Mohan, director of the Institute, and Faisel T. Illiyas, Assistant Professor of the Institute.

Rumours of accidents, man-animal conflict, terror attack, stampede or a calamity near the venue and discomfort responses from pilgrims who have to stand in queue for long could leave disastrous results in the hill shrine complex, it said.

Experts have suggested close monitoring of crowd behaviour and movements through CCTVs at suitable vantage points, and effective crowd control interventions in time to avoid harm from crowd surges.