

WEEKLY DIGEST

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WEEK - 4

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L-1 VISA

CONTEXT

- The U.S. administration under Donald Trump announced a \$100,000 increase in fees for new H 1B visa applications, prompting discussions on whether the L-1 visa could serve as a viable alternative for Indian professionals.

ABOUT H-1B VISA:

- A non-immigrant visa that allows U.S. companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations. Typically used in fields such as IT, engineering, finance, healthcare, and science.
- Eligibility Requirements:
 - Applicant must have at least a bachelor's degree (or equivalent) in the relevant field.
 - The job must qualify as a specialty occupation requiring specialized knowledge.
 - The employer must sponsor the visa and submit a Labor Condition Application (LCA).
- Visa Duration:
 - Initially granted for 3 years, extendable up to a maximum of 6 years.
 - Extensions beyond 6 years are possible in limited situations (e.g. pending Green Card application).
- Annual Cap:
 - 65,000 regular cap visas issued annually.
 - Additional 20,000 visas available for those with a U.S. master's degree or higher.
 - Exemptions apply to jobs at universities, non-profits, and government research organizations.
- Lottery System : Due to high demand, USCIS uses a random lottery system to select applications each year. Registration usually opens in March.



- Work and Employer Conditions :
 - H-1B holders can only work for the sponsoring employer.
 - A new petition is required for job changes or employer transfers.
- Dependents (H-4 Visa) ☒ Spouses and unmarried children under 21 can apply for H-4 dependent visas.
- H-4 spouses may be eligible for work authorization (EAD) if the H-1B holder is on the path to a Green Card.
- Path to Permanent Residency
 - Often used as a stepping stone to a Green Card (employment-based permanent residency).
 - Employers can sponsor H-1B workers for a Green Card through the PERM labor certification process.
- Portability H-1B workers can switch employers if the new employer files a valid H-1B petition.
- The worker can start at the new job as soon as USCIS receives the new petition.

ABOUT L-1 VISA:

- The L-1 visa is a non-immigrant work visa for intra-company transfers.
- It comes in two categories:
 - L-1A: For executives and managers.
 - L-1B: For employees with specialized knowledge.
- It enables multinational companies to transfer employees from their overseas offices to a U.S. branch, subsidiary, or affiliate.
- Origin:
 - Established under the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.
 - Intended to support the global operations of multinational corporations by easing cross border movement of personnel.
- Purpose:
 - To facilitate the internal transfer of skilled employees within the same company across international borders.
 - Helps strengthen U.S. operations of global firms without relying on local labor markets.



Key Features:

- No Annual Cap or Lottery: Unlike the H-1B, the L-1 is not subject to numerical limits or random selection.
- Dual Intent Permitted: L-1 holders can apply for a green card without jeopardizing their visa status.
- Spousal Work Rights: L-2 dependents (spouses) can work in the U.S. without restrictions.
- Stay Duration:
 - L-1A: Up to 7 years
 - L-1B: Up to 5 years.
- Blanket Petitions: Eligible companies can use blanket approvals for quicker processing of multiple employees.

Limitations:

- Strict Eligibility: The employee must have worked for the overseas entity of the same company for at least 1 continuous year within the past 3 years.
- Increased Scrutiny: Especially for Indian applicants, due to the vague definition of "specialized knowledge," L-1B applications often face high rejection rates.
- Fixed Duration: The visa has a maximum stay limit and cannot be extended indefinitely, even if the green card process is pending.
- No Portability: L-1 visa holders cannot switch employers in the U.S.; the visa is tied to the sponsoring company.

STAMPEDE IN INDIA

CONTEXT

- The recent stampede in Karur, Tamil Nadu, during a political rally led by actor-turned-politician Vijay, resulting in multiple tragic deaths, has once again exposed India's persistent vulnerability to stampede-related disasters.



ABOUT STAMPEDE IN INDIA:

- **CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL DIMENSIONS**
 - Article 21 – Right to Life: The Indian Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to life, placing a clear responsibility on the State to ensure safety during large public gatherings.
 - Disaster Management Act, 2005: Categorizes stampedes as “man-made disasters,” mandating proactive planning, prevention, and mitigation.
 - Supreme Court Ruling (2009) – Destruction of Public & Private Properties v. State of A.P.: The Court emphasized the accountability of authorities in managing mass events and preventing public harm.

ROOT CAUSES OF STAMPEDES IN INDIA

1. Overcrowding Beyond Safe Limits

- Poor crowd estimates and inadequate planning for large turnouts at religious, political, or sports events often lead to unsafe densities.
- Example: Kumbh Mela, Prayagraj (2013), RCB IPL win stampede (2024)

2. Trigger Events and Panic

- Small incidents like a fall, rumor, or structural collapse can rapidly escalate panic and lead to fatal surges.
- Example: Karur rally (2025) – people falling from trees triggered chaos, Kumbh direct train incident

3. Inadequate Infrastructure and Bottlenecks

- Narrow entry/exit points, poor barricading, and lack of escape routes often trap crowds.
- Example: New Delhi Railway Station FOB stampede (Feb 2025)

4. Administrative Failures

- Absence of early warning systems, poor inter-agency coordination, and lack of risk assessments compromise crowd safety.
- Example: RCB IPL victory parade, Bengaluru (2025)

5. Sociocultural Factors

- Emotionally charged gatherings like pilgrimages, yatras, and rallies are deeply rooted in tradition, making regulation more difficult.

• **Consequences of Stampedes**

- Human Tragedy: Stampedes result in devastating loss of life, severe injuries, and long-term psychological trauma.
- Governance Failures: Repeated incidents point to administrative inefficiency and erode public trust in the State's capacity to ensure safety.
- Economic Costs: Relief, medical treatment, and compensation create financial strain on public resources.
- Global Perception: Frequent crowd disasters damage India's image as a capable and responsible emerging power.

• **Key Challenges in Prevention**

- Unpredictable Crowd Sizes: Massive turnouts at religious or political events often overwhelm planning efforts.
- Poor Safety Compliance: NDMA's 2014 guidelines on crowd control are seldom enforced rigorously.
- Coordination Gaps: Fragmented roles among police, civic bodies, and organisers result in mismanagement.
- Underutilisation of Technology: Tools like AI-based crowd analytics, real-time surveillance, and drones remain largely untapped.
- Risky Crowd Behaviour: Ignoring advisories, panic responses, and rushing towards exits often turn dense crowds deadly.

WAY FORWARD:

1. Scientific Crowd Management

- Deploy AI tools, density sensors, and drones for real-time monitoring.
- Create specialised Crowd Management Units within state police forces.

2. Infrastructure Improvements

- Design wider entry/exit points, install crash barriers, and ensure clear evacuation routes.
- Implement overhead crowd monitoring systems.

3. Strengthened Accountability

- Enforce penal action under the Disaster Management Act for negligence.
- Mandate real-time preparedness audits for high-risk events.

4. Public Awareness

- Conduct nationwide campaigns on crowd safety.
- Train local volunteers in first aid, emergency response, and evacuation protocols.

5. Technology Integration

- Use mobile apps for crowd density alerts, geo-fencing, and SMS advisories.
- Example: Kumbh Mela (2019) effectively employed GIS mapping for crowd dispersal.

6. Adopting Global Best Practices

- Implement “one-way flow” crowd design, inspired by Hajj pilgrimage safety protocols.
- Introduce real-time digital ticketing to avoid oversubscription at major events.

Stampedes are not inevitable — they are the tragic outcome of poor planning, inadequate infrastructure, and unregulated crowd behavior. As mass gatherings remain central to India’s cultural and political life, a shift towards proactive, tech-enabled, and accountable crowd management is essential.

In India’s journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047, ensuring public safety must be treated as a core component of the right to life and a benchmark of effective governance..