

Dozens dead in stampede in India rally

CHENNAI/NEW DELHI — At least 39 people were killed on Saturday in a stampede at a rally held by Tamil actor Vijay, who is campaigning for election, the chief minister of Tamil Nadu said.

“So far, 39 people have died, including 13 men, 17 women, 4 boys, and 5 girls — while 51 people, including 26 men and 25 women, are receiving intensive treatment,” Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin told reporters in Karur, the district where the incident occurred during a political rally held by Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, Vijay’s party.

Vijay, one of Tamil cinema’s most bankable actors for three decades, has drawn massive crowds to his public meetings since launching his political party in 2024. He is campaigning ahead of state elections that are to be held in early 2026.

Videos from local media show thousands of people surrounding a large campaign vehicle on top of which Vijay is seen standing and speaking.

During the rally, visuals showed Vijay throwing water bottles from the top of the vehicle to fainting supporters and calling for police help when the crowd became uncontrollable.

“My heart is broken; I am in unbearable, indescribable pain and sorrow,” Vijay wrote on X.

“I express my deepest sympathies and condolences to the families of my dear brothers and sisters who lost their lives in Karur. I pray for a speedy recovery for those who are undergoing treatment in the hospital.”

Doctors from the nearby districts of Tiruchirappalli and Salem were sent to Karur, media reports said.

When asked about the cause of

the stampede during a press briefing early on Sunday, Stalin said, “Tamil Nadu has appointed a commission headed by retired judge Aruna Jagadeesan to investigate the incident and submit a report to the government, after which further action will be taken.”

He earlier announced 1 million Indian rupees (\$11,280) each to the families of the victims who died in the incident.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed condolences over the loss of lives, calling the incident “deeply saddening” in a post on X.

“My thoughts are with the families who have lost their loved ones. Wishing strength to them in this difficult time. Praying for a swift recovery to all those injured,” he said.