



Actor-turned-politician Vijay addresses supporters from an open-top bus during a campaign rally in Karur, Tamil Nadu, India. Photos: TNS, AFP

Dozens killed in stampede at India rally

Footage shows candidate calling for help amid uncontrollable crowd

Reuters

At least 39 people were killed and more than 50 injured 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, four boys and five 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.

Earlier, state lawmaker Senthil Balaji told reporters that 58 people were hospitalised.

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, which has targeted both the state ruling party DMK and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party.

He is campaigning ahead of a state election due 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 social media.

“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 hospital.”

At least 44 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 yesterday, 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 rupees (HK\$87,700) each to the families of the victims who died in the incident.

State police chief G. Venkataraman said crowds had been waiting for hours under hot sun without sufficient food and water after the public was informed that Vijay would arrive at the venue by noon.

“The crowds started coming in from 11am. He came at 7.40pm. The people lacked sufficient food and water under the hot sun,” he told reporters. He added that 10,000 people were expected but some 27,000 turned up.

“I was pushed down by the crowd all of a sudden. There was absolutely no space to move,” B. Kanishka told The Hindu newspaper. “I subsequently fainted.”

This is not the first time Vijay’s rallies have faced safety concerns. At least six deaths were reported by media following the first meeting of his political party when it was launched in October last year.

Despite police-imposed restrictions, including limits on convoy size and venue changes, the sheer scale of public turnout has repeatedly overwhelmed local infrastructure.

“The unfortunate incident during a political rally in Karur, Tamil Nadu, is deeply saddening,” Modi said on social media.

Additional reporting by
Agence France-Presse



Relatives mourn over the body of one of those killed in the stampede that broke out during the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam party rally.