



Road Safety

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Why In News

- The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Govt. of India has announced the observance of 30th Road Safety Week Campaign from **4th to 10th February 2019**. The theme for this year campaign was **Sadak Suraksha – Jeevan Raksha**”
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways released ‘The Road Accidents in India report’ for 2017. The year 2017 saw 4.65 lakh road accidents that killed 1.48 lakh and injured 4.71 lakh people.

Significance of Road Safety

- Road transport is the dominant mode of transport in India, in terms of traffic share and in terms of contribution to the national economy.
- To meet the demand for road transport, the number of vehicles and the length of road network have increased over the years.
- A negative externality of expansion in road network, motorization and urbanization in the country is the increase in road accidents and road crash fatalities.
- Road traffic injuries are one of the leading causes of death, disabilities and hospitalization in the country imposing huge socio-economic costs.

Impact of lack of Road Safety

- Road accident injuries are the leading causes of deaths and disabilities.
- The age profile of road accidents victims in year 2016 reveals that the productive age group of 18 to 35 years accounts for the high share of 46.3 percent and the age group of 18-45 accounted for a share of 68.6% in the total road accident fatalities.
- India loses 3% of its GDP due to road accidents, most of which are preventable.

Causes of Road Accident

- Many road accidents are the result of faulty road-design especially a single-lane one with a sharp curve.
- **Infrastructural deficits:** Pathetic conditions of roads and vehicles, poor visibility and poor road design and engineering – including quality of material and construction.

- **Negligence and risks:** Over speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, tiredness or riding without a helmet, driving without seatbelts.
- **Distraction while driving** like talking over mobile phones while driving has become a major cause of road accidents.
- **Overloading** to save cost of transportation.
- **Weak Vehicle Safety Standards in India:** In 2014, crash tests carried out by the Global New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP) revealed that some of India's top-selling car models have failed the UN's frontal impact crash test.
- **Lack of awareness** among people regarding importance of safety features like airbags, Anti lock Braking system etc. Moreover, Vehicle manufacturers do not provide them as standard fitment but only in higher class of vehicles reducing their reach.

Government action

- In 2015 the Indian government announced the application of new regulations consistent with the UN standards for front and side impact and also pedestrian protection.
- For new car models, the use of front and side crash tests came into force from October 2017 and will apply to all new cars from October 2019.
- The **pedestrian protection regulation** for new models came into force from October 2018 and will apply to all new cars from October 2020.
- In addition, new cars are required to have airbags fitted as standard and to have a speed warning device above 80 km/h.
- India signed the **Brasilia declaration** and committed to reduction in fatalities.

Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety

- The declaration was signed at the Second Global High-Level conference on Road Safety held in Brazil.
- Through the Brasilia Declaration Countries plan to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goal 3.6:** By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.
- United Nations has also declared 2010-2020 as the decade of action for Road Safety.
- The main points of the Brasilia Declaration are:
 - Countries should form transport policies in order to favor more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and using public transport.
 - It highlights strategies to ensure the safety of all road users,
 - by improving laws and enforcement;
 - making roads safer through infrastructural modifications;
 - ensuring that vehicles are equipped with life-saving technologies;
 - and enhancing emergency trauma care systems.

- **Supreme Court** had set up the three-member **KS Radhakrishnan panel on road safety** in April 2014. The main recommendation of the committee was
 - Ban on the sale of alcohol on highways (both state and national) to restrain drunk driving.
 - The states were directed to implement laws on wearing helmets.
 - Audit of road safety to be implemented by states to ensure the safety standards in the design, construction, and maintenance of roads.
 - The committee stressed the importance of creating awareness among people on road safety rules.
- **3 Year Action Agenda NITI Aayog** also highlighted need for Road Safety and set the following agenda:
- Strengthen rules governing road safety by passing the **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2016.**
 - Create Road Safety Boards to reduce accidents. Use data to monitor accidents. We can do this by use of data to monitor accidents in real time and use this input to direct efforts towards correction on specific points.
 - Standardize reporting of accidents and enhance preparedness through better logistics.
 - Provisions to ensure that whenever an emergency situation occurs, the victims are rushed to a nearby medical centre within 10 minutes of the accident.
 - Create supporting infrastructure and economic models to support better safety and efficiency.
- **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2017**
- **Driving License:** Tests for driving licenses will be automated, and learner's licenses will be issued online. A driving license issued to a person under the age of 30 is valid till the person turns 40. For those who receive licenses between the ages of 30 and 50, the license will remain valid for 10 years.
- **Higher Fines:** The existing fines for violating traffic rules have been increased in this bill e.g. Drunk driving - from Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000, rash driving from Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000, driving without a license - from Rs 500 to Rs 5,000.
- **Traffic violations by juveniles:** The guardians or owner of the vehicle would be held responsible. It proposes three-year jail for parents of minors drivers causing fatal accidents
- **Third-party insurance:** The 2016 version of the Bill had capped the payments to be made under third-party insurance. The 2017 Bill has removed that cap.
- **Vehicle recall:** The new Bill provides for the recall of vehicles if the defective vehicle is a danger to the environment, the driver or other road users. The manufacturer will then have to reimburse all buyers with the full cost of the vehicle, replace the defective vehicle.
- **Solatium Fund:** The act provided Solatium Fund for **victims of hit-and-run accidents.**
- **Good Samaritans:** People coming forward to help accident victims will be protected from civil or criminal liability.
- **Accountability:** Contractors, consultants and civic agencies will be accountable for faulty design, construction or poor maintenance of roads leading to accidents.

Way Forward

- **Behavioral Changes:** Increasing motorcycle helmet use, increasing seat-belt uses and increasing child restraint use. Awareness regarding influence of alcohol on driving.

- **Post Crash response and Effective Trauma care:** Simple and affordable post-crash care interventions can save lives. Effective care for the injured requires timely care at the scene, prompt transport to appropriate emergency and surgical care at the hospital, and early access to rehabilitation services.
- **Role of bystanders:** Bystanders play a major role in post-crash care. They contribute by activating the emergency care system and taking simple, potentially life-saving actions until professional help is available.
- **Safe Roads:** Safety consideration during the planning, design, and operation of roads, can contribute to reducing road traffic deaths and injuries.
- **Vehicular Safety Standards:** Vehicle safety features such as electronic stability control, effective Car Crash Standards and advanced braking should be made mandatory.
- **Awareness and Publicity:** Mass media and social media should be used effectively for spreading awareness about road safety.
- **Training and capacity building:** Training courses and training workshops have been organized for building capacity in road safety audits and road safety engineering.
- **Motor Vehicle Accident Fund** is proposed to be created. It will provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.