ROAD SAFETY INITIATIVES IN INDIA: ARE WE WAY AHEAD?

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Abstract:

The new Motor Vehicle Act, 2019, which is formed to overlook the road safety and standards in India, but it, is facing many implementation challenges with a diversity of terrain, people and traffic rules in various states. There are many initiatives started after that to ensure Road Safety in India , some are :

- **National Road Safety Policy:** The National Road Safety Policy outlined by the Central .

 Government, guides the various policy measures such as:

o   Promoting awareness,

o   Encouraging safer road infrastructure

o   Application of intelligent transport,

o   Enforcement of safety laws etc.

- **The National Road Safety Council:** It is an apex body, taking policy decisions in matters of road safety.

- **Swachh Safar and Surakshit Yatra:** The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has released comic books like Swachha Safar and Surakshit Yatra, aiming to create awareness among children about road safety.

- **National Green Highways Mission:** It is a Central Government's plantation drive around 1500 km of National Highways.

Way ahead

- **Need of transition to a professional road environment:** It requires the implementation of first-tier reforms that deal with the **quality of road infrastructure, facilities for vulnerable users and zero-tolerance enforcement of rules** by a trained, professional and empowered machinery.

- **District committees must hold open meetings on road safety while ensuring accountability**:

  o A key mechanism of change is District Road Safety Committees, which were enabled even by the 1988 Act, but remain obscure.

  o A mandatory monthly public hearing of such committees **involving local communities** can highlight safety concerns, and their follow-up action can then be supervised by the Members of Parliaments' Road Safety Committees.

  o It is essential to **make the Collector, local body and police accountable.**

- **Other measures needed:**

  o **Making dashboard cameras mandatory,** with the video evidence accepted in the investigation, would protect rule-abiding motorists and aid enforcement.

  o To save lives on highways, **quality trauma care at the district level** holds the key.

  o **The need for good hospitals**: In the absence of good hospitals and cashless free treatment, no significant improvement is possible in the quest to save life and limb.

Keywords: Road Safety, Policy, Laws & Highways.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world road and transport has become an integral part of every human being. Everybody is a road user in one shape or the other. The present transport system has minimized the distances but it has on the other hand increased the life risk. Every year road crashes result in loss of lakhs of lives and serious injuries to crores of people.

The Government of India is deeply concerned about the growth in the number of road accidents, injuries and fatalities in recent years. It recognizes that road accidents have now become a major public health issue, and the victims are mainly the poor and vulnerable road users. The Government of India further recognizes that as road accidents involve roads, motor vehicles as also the human beings, road safety needs to be addressed on a holistic basis. It also recognizes that regardless of jurisdictions, the Central and State Governments have a joint responsibility in reducing the incidence of road accidents, injuries and fatalities.

In the light of this, the Government of India, through his National Road Safety Policy, states its commitment to bring about a significant reduction in mortality and morbidity resulting from road accidents.

Every year India loses more than 1.4 lakh people due to road-crashes with more than 60% of them being in the age-group 15-34 years as per Indian Central Govt. As of 2018- WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety, Road crashes are the leading cause of death among the youth (5-29 years of age) in the world with India being the table-topper across the globe with more than 3 lakh road crash fatalities. Indian Road Safety Campaign, Solve in India works with a vision to make Indian roads safer via youth-led community driven multi-sectorial initiative.

Different Initiatives are being taken by Central Government, State Governments and different NGO's to curb road accidents in India. Some of which we have listed here, but still there is a huge scope to be done in this regard:

1. The road safety programme is initiated at 15 km stretch of Chalakudi- Thrissur highway of Perambra location. It focuses on two aspects – installation of road safety signboards for road users and engaging with school

students for awareness generation. The main aim of this initiative is to sensitize the road users and school students regarding road safety and traffic rules. This will help in reducing road accidents. In the reporting year 35 signboards were installed and 1,314 people were outreached out of which 689 were students.

Maruti Suzuki

2. closely works with Ministry of Tribal Development in Gujarat to train young people in driving.

Michelin

3. , co-founder of the Global Road Safety Initiatives (GRSI), has established, in India, an innovative partnership with the foundation of PVR Cinemas, PVR Nest as part of its CineArt "Steer to Safety" program to educate and empower children about road safety. Through this platform, children learn how to prevent and/or manage in emergency situations on Indian roads.

Henkel

4. has launched a road safety initiative in an effort to address the topical issue of safety standards on the road in India.

5. The Campaign Against Drunken Driving (CADD) is an organization founded by Prince Singhal which is campaigning against driving under the influence. But this campaign has been ineffective. The IRF asserts that people in India's political sphere do not have the will to curb traffic collisions.

6. Harman Singh Siddhu of ArriveSafe, an organization working for improvement in road traffic safety, asserted that a general lack of respect for traffic rules in India is a contributing factor for road collisions. He also has pointed out that although the 2010s was declared by the United Nations as "Decade of Action for Road Safety", no celebration was held in India.[14] CSIR - Central Road

Research Institute has developed an online accident recording portal. The main purpose of this portal is to encourage people to report the collisions they see. A group of Indian Researchers have developed a low-cost device which prevents automobile drivers from receiving or making cellphone calls when at wheel, but allows calls to other passengers in the vehicle.

Conclusion:

Measures Taken to Reduce Road Accidents

The figures of road accidents are bound to scare anyone using roadways for frequent travel. However, the officials were able to pull these figures down by a whopping 4% in the year 2017 as compared to the previous year. Here are few reasons which helped to reduce the number of Road Accidents in the country:

#1 Strict Rules

Various amendments have been made to The Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 in order to improve the on-road safety of commuters. Obtaining documents like learning and driving license have been automated. Emphasis has been put on buying insurance for a vehicle. If a person fails to abide by these rules, he/she has to face heavy fines and/or imprisonment.

#2 Heavy Fines

In order to reduce violations of traffic rules, the officials are now imposing heavy motor vehicle fines on the violators. As compared to the past, violators now have to pay more than double the fine amount for an offense. Some cases like repeated drunk driving can attract strict penalties like confiscation of driving license, fine of Rs. 10000 and 3 years of imprisonment.

#3 Use of Speed Detection Devices

As said earlier, over speeding is one of the major reasons for road accidents in India. Vehicles colliding with other vehicles or objects prove to be fatal for the driver as well as passengers. To reduce this possibility, police officers have started using speed detection devices in some Indian states.

The device accurately measures the speed at which a vehicle is traveling. If the speed is over and above the prescribed limit, the driver is booked for

over speeding. According to the new traffic rules, one has to pay a fine ranging from Rs. 1000 to 2000 depending on the type of vehicle for over speeding.

#4 Safety Measures

This is the basic thing a person can do to reduce the chances of a road accident. Wearing seat belts in a car or a helmet while commuting on a bike can prove to be life-saving. Officials have taken to social media to educate people about important safety measures and do's and don'ts to avoid road accidents. As an impact, many commuters have started taking small steps towards following rules and taking safety measures.

#5 Reducing Corruption

Another reason for increasing traffic violations was that the rules and regulations were not imposed in a proper manner. The rules only existed on paper. Due to some corrupt officials, it was difficult to reduce violations.

With the introduction of E-Challan and almost no use of cash for the payment of traffic violation fines, combined with increased penalties, corruption has started reducing.

With a population of 1 Billion people in our country and a police force of less than 200 per lakh persons, it will take time for the officials to curb the number of road accidents. But, the ray of hope lies in following rules, taking safety measures and in not paying a bribe to avoid challan.

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