



## Making Roads Safer

### What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- There was a series of road accidents in different parts of the country in recent days.

\n

- It calls for fixing road design and enforcing safety protocols in India.

\n

\n\n

### What are the concerns?

\n\n

\n

- **Accidents** - Nationally around 1,50,000 are dying and several hundred thousand are injured annually.

\n

- The data on Indians killed or injured in road accidents put out annually by the Centre do not reflect the picture.

\n

- It obscures the human impact of the loss on national and State highways, as well as urban and rural roads.

\n

\n\n

\n

- **Investigative mechanism** - There is lack of expert help to conduct a technical investigation into an accident.

\n

- The executive agencies such as the Police and Public Works Departments thus fall short in this regard.

\n

\n\n

- \n
- The present investigative machinery does not have the capability to determine faults.
- \n
- Thus the officials responsible for bad road design and construction and lax traffic managers often escape liability.
- \n
- **Victims** - For accident victims, there is the heavy burden of out-of-pocket expenditure on medical treatment.
- \n
- The government had promised to address this issue through a cashless facility.
- \n
- But it has not been able to do so.
- \n
- As, the requisite amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act have not yet been passed.
- \n

\n\n

## How is the response?

\n\n

- \n
- **Supreme Court** - SC has been trying to shake governments out of their apathy.
- \n
- It constituted the Committee on Road Safety in 2014 at this end.
- \n
- It has also made several specific and time-bound directions.
- \n
- However, the response of the Centre and the States has been far from responsible.
- \n
- **Black spots** - Safety black spots on roads were identified on the basis of fatal accidents between 2011 and 2014.
- \n
- But only around 190 out of the around 790 such spots had been rectified.
- \n
- Funds had been sanctioned for another 256.
- \n
- The rest are either under State jurisdiction or awaiting sanction.
- \n
- Mere incremental approaches such as these result in worrying national

record on road fatalities.

\n

\n\n

## What should be done?

\n\n

\n

- **Investigation** - The accidents should be probed by qualified transport safety experts.

\n

- This is crucial to determine the systemic shortfalls.

\n

- Only a scientific investigation system can stop the routine criminalising of all accidents.

\n

- There needs to be a report on the mishaps, to identify lapses, if any.

\n

- And the remedial road engineering measures should be taken up accordingly.

\n

- **District Committees** - The SC has directed that the performance of district committees should be reviewed periodically.

\n

- This should ideally follow mandatory public hearings every month.

\n

- This is for the citizens to record road risk complaints.

\n

- **Mechanism** - The much-delayed National Road Safety and Traffic Management Board should be formed.

\n

- The provision for State governments to participate in this has to be materialised.

\n

- Ultimately, road safety depends on enforcement of rules with zero tolerance to violations.

\n

- More importantly, officials should be made accountable for safety.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n



**IAS PARLIAMENT**

*Information is Empowering*

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative