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MAINSTORMING

Though good Samaritans plan can help reduce accident deaths but more work have to be done for road safety. - Elaborate (200 words)

Recently, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, announced Good Samaritans plan. Under this plan, Good Samaritans who rescue victims of serious road accidents and rush them to a hospital within the golden hour will now be rewarded with ₹5000. They will also be eligible for a cash prize of ₹1 lakh which will be given to ten such Samaritans in a year. This scheme come into effect from October 15, 2021 and continues till March 31, 2026.

India ranks third among the 20 nations that have the highest number of accidents. India fares far worse on an important metric - cases to fatalities ratio - compared to the U-S and Japan which have more recorded crashes but fewer deaths. During 2020, National Crime Records Bureau data show 1,33,715 lives were lost in 1,20,716 cases attributed to negligence relating to road accidents. According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, 1,51,113 persons were ~~to~~ killed and 4,51,361 injured in road accidents across the country in 2019. NHs and State Highways, which account for about 5% of the total road length, claimed 61% of the deaths related to accidents. Around 35,606 under the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI). speaking at a webinar organised by the International Road Federation on February 9, Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said India topped the fatality figures in road accidents in the world, with 415 deaths each day.

So Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 was passed with the well-intentioned motive of bringing

down the death rate due to road accidents by 50% by 2020. This was agreed to by all participating nations in the United Nations Brasilia Declaration of which India was a signatory.

Under the Motor Vehicles Law, a Good Samaritan voluntarily helps an accident victim with no expectation of payment or reward, and has no legal obligation to record his involvement or aid the investigation in the case. In spite of an entire chapter being added to the Motor Vehicles Act last year to sensitise police forces and hospitals on this, altruism is affected by the perception of harassment and legal complications. The Ministry's latest move called Good Samaritan plan ~~to~~ seeks to overcome reticence by offering recognition to socially minded individuals who rescue the accident victims. It is a welcome attempt to reduce India's staggering annual death toll from mishaps.

But Good Samaritans plan alone can't bring a radical reduction in the numbers and to prevent the accidents we need road safety. Achieving a reduction in mortality on India's largely lawless roads warrants determined action on several factors, beginning with scientific road design and standards and zero tolerance enforcement. It was only on September 3 that the Centre notified the long-pending National Road Safety Board, with a mandate to formulate standards on, among other things, safety and trauma management, to build capacity among traffic police, and put crash investigation on a scientific footing.

The Accident Research Cell of the Delhi Traffic Police carried out an analysis of accidents and created a database that facilitates the formulation of policies to prevent accidents. While probing an accident that led to the death of former Union Rural Development Minister Gopinath Munde in New Delhi, the cell concluded that hedges along a road obstructed the visibility of drivers coming from the other direction. After the hedges were

pruned, the stretch became free from accidents.

While the strict enforcement of traffic safety laws would go a long way, educating citizens about the impact of accidents on the kin of the victims through public discourse could help in reducing accidents.

Improving road infrastructure with coordinated efforts by the police and civic authorities, identification of black spots that are prone to accidents and deploying an adequate number of police personnel, particularly during peak hours, could bring down accident rates. Highway patrols with police personnel trained in first aid and ambulances every 10 km could also help save precious lives.

Along with these procedures, if Good Samaritans plan works well, it can reduce the accidents and the ratio of deaths and injuries to cases. The Good Samaritans plan can work well if District committees tasked with awarding these individuals readily recognise their contribution, aided by the police, hospitals and RTOs. Thus, good Samaritans plan can help reduce accident deaths but to prevent accidents road safety is inevitable.