



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**ROAD TO SAFETY:
NAVIGATING INDIA'S MOBILITY
TRANSFORMATION**

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ROAD TO SAFETY: NAVIGATING INDIA'S MOBILITY TRANSFORMATION

Context

- India is at a crucial juncture in mobility transformation, where economic growth and urbanisation bring both opportunities and challenges to road safety.

About the Road Network in India

- India has the **second largest road network** and its National Highways span a total length of 146,195 km, forming the **primary arterial network** of the country.
- National Highway Network:**
 - It has grown by 60%, rising from 91,287 km in 2014 to 146,195 km currently.
 - Length of **National High-Speed Corridors (HSC)** has increased from 93 km in 2014 to 2,474 km at present.
 - Length of **4-lane and above National Highways (excluding HSCs)** has more than doubled, expanding from 18,278 km in 2014 to 45,947 km at present.

Need For Road Safety in India

- Death Toll:** India recorded **1.68 lakh road accident deaths**, translating to approximately **12.2 fatalities per 1 lakh population** in 2022 alone.
 - Road traffic death rates of **Japan and the UK** 2.57 and 2.61 **fatalities per 1 lakh population**, respectively.
- Loss of Economy:** The estimated **3% loss of India's GDP** due to accidents reflects the strain on healthcare systems, insurance sectors, and national productivity.
- For Safe Urban Mobility:** Nearly 50% of the population will reside in cities, accompanied by a significant surge in vehicle ownership, by 2047.
 - As mobility expands, so do the risks for vulnerable road users—pedestrians, cyclists, the elderly, and public transport commuters.
 - People-centric interventions must be prioritized to ensure that streets remain safe and accessible for all, to accommodate this rapid urbanization.

Key Efforts For Road Safety in India

- Road Safety as a Fundamental Right:** The right to safe road travel is an essential component of the **right to life under Article 21** of the Indian Constitution.
- Safe System Approach:** It acknowledges that **humans are bound to make mistakes** — but those mistakes should not result in fatalities or serious injuries.
 - It prioritizes pedestrian safety and acknowledges human error in road design.
- Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (Bharat NCAP):** It provides safety ratings for passenger cars, empowering consumers to make informed decisions.
- Vehicle Scrapping Policy:** The government has implemented a vehicle scrapping policy, with 44 Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities operational across 15 states, to remove unsafe vehicles from roads.
- Electronic Enforcement Mechanisms:** Speed cameras, CCTV surveillance, and automated traffic enforcement systems have been deployed to improve compliance with road safety regulations.
- Emergency Care Initiatives:** The **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019** introduced a cashless treatment scheme for accident victims during the golden hour, ensuring timely medical intervention.
- Targeted Interventions of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH):**
 - Rectification of over 5,000 black spots on highways
 - Mandatory road safety audits to assess risk areas
 - Stricter vehicle safety norms, including airbags and anti-lock braking systems

- ♦ Electronic enforcement mechanisms such as speed cameras and CCTV surveillance to improve compliance
- ♦ District-wide driving training and vehicle fitness centers to reduce accidents caused by unskilled driving

Global Efforts

- **Brasilia Declaration (2015):** It defined the urgent measures needed to achieve the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's** ambitious target (**Target 3.6**) to halve road traffic deaths by the end of this decade.
- **United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety (2021–2030):** It aims **to halve deaths** related to road accidents by 2030.
 - ♦ It aligns with the **Stockholm Declaration (2020)**.
- **World Bank Report (2020):** It estimates that an additional \$109 billion are required over the next decade to achieve a 50% reduction in road crash fatalities.

Key Committees & Policy Frameworks

- **Sundar Committee on Road Safety and Traffic Management (2005):**
 - ♦ It recommended the creation of a **National Road Safety Policy**, approved by the Union Cabinet in 2010.
 - ♦ It also proposed the establishment of a **National Road Safety Board** to oversee safety regulations and enforcement.
- **National Road Safety Council (NRSC):** As an **advisory body under MoRTH**, to provide recommendations on policy measures, enforcement strategies, and infrastructure improvements.
- **Working Group on Road Safety Education:**
 - ♦ It focuses on driver training, public awareness campaigns, and school-level road safety education.
 - ♦ It advocates for stronger enforcement of traffic laws and integration of road safety into school curricula.
- **Supreme Court's Committee on Road Safety: District Road Safety Committees** for each district in the State, in accordance with The **Motor Vehicle Act, 1988**.
 - ♦ It also focuses on **4Es** viz **Engineering, Education, Enforcement & Emergency**.

Key Recommendations for Road Safety Improvement

- Mandatory Road Safety Audits for highways and urban roads.
- Stricter vehicle safety norms, including airbags and anti-lock braking systems.
- Electronic enforcement mechanisms such as speed cameras and CCTV surveillance.
- Dedicated highway police for better traffic management and accident response.
- National Road Safety Fund to finance safety initiatives and infrastructure upgrades.

Source: TH

Mains Practice Question

[Q] How can the Safe System Approach be effectively implemented in India's road safety policies to ensure both pedestrian safety and urban mobility? What challenges might arise, and how can they be addressed?

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