



ROAD SAFETY - GS II MAINS

Q. Examine the complex challenges associated with increasing road accidents in India and suggest strategies to address the issue of road accidents. (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *Pune porsche car crash: Accused teen issued notice, asked to appear before Juvenile Justice Board*

What's in the news?

- The recent BMW crash in Mohali and the Porsche crash in Pune serve as stark reminders of the alarming number of fatalities on Indian roads each year.

Key takeaways:

- Road accidents claim the lives of more than a lakh people annually and leave an even larger number injured.
- Pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, and unprotected children are among the most vulnerable to road crashes.

Statistics on Road Accidents:

- In India, about eighty thousand people are killed in road crashes every year which is thirteen percent of the total fatality all over the world.
- Road traffic crashes result in the deaths of approximately 1.19 million people around the world each year and leave between 20 and 50 million people with non-fatal injuries.

Causes for Road Accidents:

1. Lack of Road Safety Awareness:

- Most road accident cases occur due to carelessness or lack of awareness, making road safety education essential for survival.

2. Non-compliance with Traffic Rules and Regulations:

(i) Violation of Road Signs and Safety Rules:

- Violation of any traffic rule constitutes human error or driver's fault.

(ii) Over-speeding:

- According to the Road Accidents in India Report 2022, speeding accounted for 72.3 percent of the total road accidents, 71.2 percent of total deaths, and 72.8 percent of total injuries.

(iii) Lane Indiscipline:

- According to the Road Accidents in India report 2022, driving on the wrong side was the second highest cause of total road accidents in 2022, accounting for 4.9 percent of all accidents.

(iv) Non-use of Safety Devices:

- Avoiding Safety Gears like seat belts and helmets. More than 80% of road accident deaths are due to head injuries

(v) Drunken Driving:



- According to Road Accidents in India Report 2022, drunken driving/consumption of alcohol & drugs, jumping of red light and use of mobile phones taken together accounted for 7.4 percent of total accidents and 8.3 percent of total deaths.

(vi) Driving without Licences:

- Easy access to driving licenses without a thorough assessment of skills and driving without them is a major contributing factor to the increase in road accidents.

3. Road Infrastructure:

- The poor condition of roads along with low visibility and subpar road design and engineering, including the quality of materials and construction, are contributing factors to the increasing number of road accidents and fatalities.
- This includes issues such as single-lane roads with sharp curves.

4. Vehicular Condition:

- Old vehicles are more likely to experience frequent breakdowns, malfunctions, and lack safety features.
- In 2022, a total of 1,38,171 road accidents happened involving vehicles less than 5 years and the highest number of death i.e. 50,762 reported involving vehicles less than 5 years.

5. Overloading of Vehicles:

- Overloaded vehicles pose a hazard to road traffic, increasing the risk of accidents for both themselves and other road users.
- Overloaded vehicles accounted for a share of 6.1 percent of total accidents, 7.2 percent of total killed and 6.5 percent of the injured in 2022.

6. Inadequate Law Enforcement:

- Although laws and regulations for ensuring road safety are in place but enforcement is often lacking, allowing offenders to escape accountability for their actions.

Global Initiatives on Road Safety:

1. Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety, 2015:

- The declaration was signed at the second Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety, which was held in Brazil.
- Under the declaration, the countries plan to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3.6, which is to **halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030**.
- India is a signatory to the declaration and is committed to a reduction in fatalities.

2. Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030:

- The **UN General Assembly** adopted resolution “Improving global road safety” with the ambitious target of **preventing at least 50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030**.
- The Global Plan aligns with the Stockholm Declaration, by emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to road safety.

3. Bloomberg Initiative for Global Road Safety (BIGRS) 2020-2025:

- It aims to reduce road crash fatalities and injuries in **low and middle-income countries** and cities by implementing a comprehensive set of actions that are proven to save lives.



Indian Initiatives on Road Safety:

1. Motor Vehicle Amendment (MVA) Act 2019:

- The Motor Vehicles Act of 1988 is the principal instrument through which road transport is regulated in our country.
- In 2019 the act was amended comprehensively and amendments includes inter-alia, provisions like stiff hikes in penalties for traffic violations, electronic monitoring of the same, enhanced penalties for juvenile driving, etc.
- It provides for the constitution of the National Road Safety Board to advise the Central Government or State Government, as the case may be, on all aspects pertaining to road safety and traffic management.

2. Vehicle Scrapping Policy:

- The MoRTH has formulated the Vehicle Scrapping Policy based on incentives/dis-incentives and for creating an ecosystem to phase out older, unfit polluting vehicles.

3. National Road Safety Policy:

- The Government constituted a Committee under the **Chairmanship of Shri S. Sundar** to finalise a draft National Road Safety Policy.
- The National Road Safety Policy outlines the policy initiatives to be framed/taken by the Government at all levels to improve road safety activities in the country.

4. Public Awareness Programmes:

- To create effective public awareness about road safety, the MoRTH undertakes various awareness campaigns through electronic media, print media, and social media.
- It includes observance of 'National Road Safety Month/Week' every year to spread awareness and strengthen road safety.

5. Road Safety Audit (RSA):

- RSAs for all National Highways (NHs) have been made mandatory through third-party auditors at all stages, including design, construction, operation, and maintenance.

6. Electronic Detailed Accident Report (e-DAR):

- e-DAR project has been initiated to establish a central repository for reporting, management, and analysis of road accident data across the nation.

7. Mandatory Fitments of Safety Technologies in the Vehicle:

MoRTH has notified the mandatory fitment of following listed safety technologies from 01st July 2019.

- Seat Belt Reminder (SBR) for driver and co-driver
- Manual Override for central locking system
- Over-speed warning system
- Reverse Parking Alert System

8. Good Samaritan Law:

- MoRTH has published rules for the protection of Good Samaritan.

9. India State Support Programme for Road Safety by World Bank:



- The World Bank has approved a USD 250 million loan for seven states under which a single accident reporting number will be set up to better manage post-crash events.

Way Forward:

1. Raise Awareness about Road Safety Issues:

- There is a need to invest more efforts in promoting awareness about road safety, the implications of road accidents, and what needs to be done to reduce the increasing number of road accidents.
- This will empower different stakeholders to play a meaningful role in promoting road safety.

2. Strict Enforcement of Law:

- Investing solely in road safety awareness campaigns or education is insufficient for behavioural change. Enforcement of road safety laws is necessary and imperative.
- It is crucial to establish a proper driving licensing system to ensure standardised driving skills.

3. Engineering of Vehicles and Road Infrastructure:

- The engineering of vehicles and road infrastructure along with emergency care can play an important role in road safety.
- The curved road, potholes and ongoing road works under construction, etc., need to be the focus of attention for the engineers maintaining these roads with the installation of safety signages at appropriate spots.