India's Road Safety Crisis

Why in News?

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways declared January 2025 as Road Safety Month, calling on all stakeholders to collaborate to make roads safer.

- **Road Safety Crisis** – With approximately 11.9 lakh global road fatalities annually and road traffic crashes being the 13th largest contributor to India's health burden "between" 2009-2019.
- **Public health concern** – Road safety has emerged as a critical public health concern requiring immediate attention.
- **Key risk factors** – One of the ways to reduce road traffic injuries is to focus on key risk factors, such as *speeding, not wearing helmet and seat belt, and drink driving*.
- **Economic impact** – According to a World Bank report, 75% of lower-income households and 57% of higher-income households reported *income decline following a crash.*
- **Measures taken** – The United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 *aims to halve road deaths globally by 2030*.
- India has aligned with this framework through various state-level initiatives.
- **Karnataka** – Alone accounted for 8.6% of India's road fatalities in 2022, with crash incidents increasing by 9%, fatal crashes by 7%, and grievous injuries by 18% in 2023 compared to the previous year.
- **Karnataka's Multi-Pronged Approach** – Karnataka has implemented a comprehensive strategy combining mass media campaigns with enhanced enforcement:
    - **December 2023** – Campaign addressing speeding through crash survivor stories, reaching an estimated 2.3 crore adult.
    - **January 2024** – Campaign focused on correct helmet usage.
    - **December 2024-January 2025** – Instructional campaign explaining crash science and speed impacts.
- The Karnataka model demonstrates *effective policy integration between public awareness and enforcement*. *Police* conducted targeted enforcement drives while disseminating key messages at checkpoints and through social media.
- This approach echoes successful international models like Bogotá, Colombia, where similar strategies reduced speeding.
- **Measures needed** – Sustainable road safety improvement requires shifting cultural perceptions from viewing crashes as "unavoidable accidents" to "unacceptable tragedies."
- *Communication campaigns along with sound legislation and law* enforcement have the most influence.
- Studies suggest that even a *single, well-designed, evidence-based road safety*

campaign can reduce crashes by 0.5%.

Reference

The Hindu | Road Safety Crises

