

## India's Road Safety Record

### Why in News?

Union Transport Minister said that the amendments made to the [Motor Vehicles Act](#) have begun reducing the death toll due to road accidents.

### What is the reality?

- Any reduction in road safety incidents in a rapidly motorising country is encouraging.
- But the cold reality is that the data on those who lose their lives or are incapacitated do not reflect a marked decline.
- Small reductions in this infamous tally have little meaning, since they don't represent a trend of targeted reductions.
- The rise in fatalities from 80,888 (2001) to 1.5 lakh lives each year since 2015 explains that the policymakers are just tolerating the loss of lives.

### Did the amended law have an impact?

- The new Motor Vehicles law does have more muscle in being able to levy stringent penalties for road rule violations.
- But this doesn't mean that India has moved to a scientific road system marked by good engineering, sound enforcement, appropriate technology use and respect for all road users.
- The World Bank's 'Delivering Road Safety in India' report says that rapid motorisation and more high-speed road infrastructure have raised the risks for road users.
- The transition to a professional road environment requires implementation of **first-tier reforms**.

### How the reforms should be?

- These reforms should deal with **quality** of road infrastructure and **facilities** for vulnerable users.
- There should be **zero-tolerance enforcement** of rules by trained professional and empowered machinery.
- A key mechanism of change is the District Road Safety Committees.

### How these committees should work?

- A mandatory **monthly public hearing** of such committees involving local communities can highlight safety concerns.
- Their follow-up action can be supervised by the Members of Parliaments' Road Safety Committees.
- It is essential to make the Collector, local body and police accountable.

### **What could be done?**

- Making **dashboard cameras mandatory** (with the video evidence accepted in investigation) would aid enforcement.
- To save lives on highways, **quality trauma care at the district** level holds the key.
- In the absence of good hospitals and cashless free treatment, no significant improvement is possible in the quest to save life and limb.

**Source: The Hindu**

