# Road Safety Bill

## What is the issue?

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- Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill (2o17) - seeks to better the quality of roads and improve safety standards.
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- It has been languishing in the Rajya Sabha since last year, and needs to be furthered for the greater good of the nation.
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## What are the challenges in ensuring road safety in India?

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- Potholes are a major cause for accidental deaths and between 2013 and 2016, official statistics says that 11,836 deaths due to it in India.
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- Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have the dubious distinction for consistently causing potholes related accidents.
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- Significantly, pothole related deaths peak during monsoons and ironically.
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- While cases are to be booked against contractors (or officials) for poor roads, police reports often blame the victim for ‘negligence driving’.
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- The Indian Road Congress has prescribed over 100 sets of guidelines to ensure standardised road construction, maintenance and management.
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- The challenge lies in ensuring that these guidelines are implemented and no complying contractors and officials are brought to book.
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- The absence of a unified law on road construction, engineering and maintenance is making it hard to implement these guidelines.
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## What does the Motor Vehicles (amendment) Act intend to do?

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- "Motor Vehicles Act" is the presently existing act for road safety.
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- This act has no provisions to ensure accountability of road authorities for defects in the engineering, design and maintenance of roads.
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- The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which has been tabled in the parliament, has attempted to address this drawback.
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- It has provisions for rectify several systemic issues by providing a uniform driver licensing system, protecting children and vulnerable road users.
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- Rationalising penalties and creating a system of accountability in the construction of roads is another important aspect of the bill.
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- The bill envisions a monetary fine of up to 1 lakh on the authority responsible, for any road crash caused by defective road design/ maintenance.
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- While the fine is only a small amount, this is a step in the right direction.
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- Nonetheless, road contractors and engineers will still not be held criminally liable for causing deaths and injuries due to their sloppy work.
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## What are the technical aspects of the problem?

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- Potholes are caused by the presence of heavy traffic and water on roads and improper drainage is found to have direct implications for roads.
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- Therefore, it becomes necessary to ensure the use of standardised methodology and good quality material when constructing roads.
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- There also needs to be regular maintenance and an effective system to ensure accountability in other aspects of town planning too.
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- Incorporating "Safe System Approach" in all aspects of road design, engineering and construction is another point to be considered.

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- This accounts for the possibility of human error and ensures that the surrounding environment and infrastructure are designed to save lives.
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- At a policy level, we need to create an enabling environment that weaves in different progressive aspects across all sectors that influence road quality.
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**Source: The Hindu**

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