Road Safety – Focus Areas

What is the issue?

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A sense of urgency on road safety is still to pervade the collective consciousness.

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What is the present status?

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- India signed the 2015 Brasilia Declaration committing to halve the number of deaths in road accidents by 2020.
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- “Road Accidents in India - 2015”, released last year by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways shows that this will be a challenge.
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- The total number of road accidents increased by 2.5% from 2014 to 2015.
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- Number of people killed in such mishaps during the same period increased even more by 4.6%.
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- There were approximately 1.5 lakh road related deaths in 2015 alone.
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What measures could meet the objectives of Brasilia Declaration?

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- **Road safety agency -** Presently, safety certification is done in-house by implementing agencies like NHAI.
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- It gives rise to conflict of interests.
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- So there is a need for a separate independent body in order to certify whether a new/upgraded highway meets all safety requirements.
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- **Drafting a Mission -** A clear mission draft for road safety is required on the lines of the one prepared by the Kakodkar committee on Railways.
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- **Safe Drivers -** There is no mandatory safety training before appearing for a driving test.
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- Also, a substantial number of bogus licences exist.
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- A foolproof mechanism to issue and renew "genuine" licences by the many driving schools in India needs to be devised.
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- **Newer Technology -** The NHAI incorporated Indian Highways Management Company Limited (IHMCL) on December 2012.
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- Whilst electronic toll collection (ETC) is its major objective, the IHMCL can well be re-energised in its "ancillary projects" charter to focus on safety delivery through technology.
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- Beginnings could be made with regional control centres, emergency call boxes, variable message signage and integration of FastTag, mobile messages and in-cab radio broadcasts.
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- **Raising Resources –** While the government has announced a Rs 1-lakh crore "Rail safety fund", road safety too needs such magnitude of resources.
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- To meet this, a 25 paise out of the Rs.2 cess on every litre of petrol and diesel can be earmarked for a road safety fund.
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- **Updating codes -** Safety related provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, the Indian Roads Congress manual for highway design, and the Road Safety Manual should all be refreshed and aligned.
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- **New legislations –** Bills relating to vehicle safety and testing, registration, insurance, a Good Samaritan law are already under consideration.
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- A Motor Vehicle Accident Fund for cashless compensation for treatment during the Golden Hour is also on the cards.
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- The government should prioritise these and oversee their passing.
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Source: Indian Express

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