The Road Accidents in India - Report

Why in news?

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Ministry of Road Transport and Highways recently released “The Road Accidents in India report”for 2017.

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What does the report say?

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- A total of 4.64 lakh road accidents took place in 2017, of which 1.34 lakh were fatal accidents.
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- The number of people who died in these mishaps stood at 1.47 lakh.
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- The number of road accidents and fatalities in 2017 came down by 3.3% and 1.9%, respectively, from the previous year.
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- The number of road accidents and injuries has declined in 2017 for the second consecutive year.
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- **Location** - National highways accounted for 30.4% of accidents and 36% of fatalities while state highways accounted for 25% of the accidents and 26.9% of the deaths.
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- Nearly 45% of mishaps and 37% of deaths took place on other roads.
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- **Type of Vehicle** - Two-wheelers were involved in 33.9% of the total mishaps and almost 30% of the fatalities.
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- Light motor vehicles like cars and jeeps involved in 24.5% of the accidents and 21.1% of the fatalities.
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- Pedestrians amounted to 13.5% of the total fatalities, a rise of 3%from 2016.
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What are the concerns?

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- The report has failed to signal the quantum shift necessary to reduce death and disability on the roads.
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- The remedies it highlights are weak, incremental and unlikely to bring about a transformation.
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- **Responsibility** - Although enforcement of rules is a State issue, the Centre promises that it will work with the States to improve safety as a joint responsibility.
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- But nothing much has changed in the ground which is reflected by the death of 1,47,913 people in accidents in 2017.
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- **Rate** - The government claimed a 1.9% reduction in the number of accidents over the previous year but the data on the rate of people who die per 100 accidents show no decline.
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- Also, green commuters (cyclists/pedestrians) now face greater danger on India's roads, with a rise in fatalities for these categories of users.
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- **Estimation** - The Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Programme at IIT Delhi estimates that road traffic injuries recorded by the police are underestimated by a factor of 20, and those that need hospitalisation by a factor of four.
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- By that measure, the number of people who suffered injuries in 2017 could far exceed the numbers reported by the Ministry.
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- **Focus** - Greater attention is being paid to the design and safety standards of vehicles in recent times.
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- But such professionalism should extend to public infrastructure in the design of roads, their quality and maintenance, and the safety of public transport, among others.
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- **Implementation** - Though the Supreme Court has been issuing periodic directions in a public interest petition with the assistance of the Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan Committee constituted by the Centre, there is a lack of progress in reducing traffic injuries.
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- The Centre has watered down the national bus body standards code in spite of a commitment given to the Supreme Court, by requiring only self-certification by the builders.
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- Relaxing this long-delayed safety feature endangers thousands of passengers.
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- **Institutions** - The Road Safety Councils at the all-India and State levels have simply not been able to change the dismal record.
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- The police forces too lack the training and motivation for professional enforcement.
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- Hence there is an urgent need to fix accountability in the government.
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Source: The Hindu

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