



Road Accidents in India

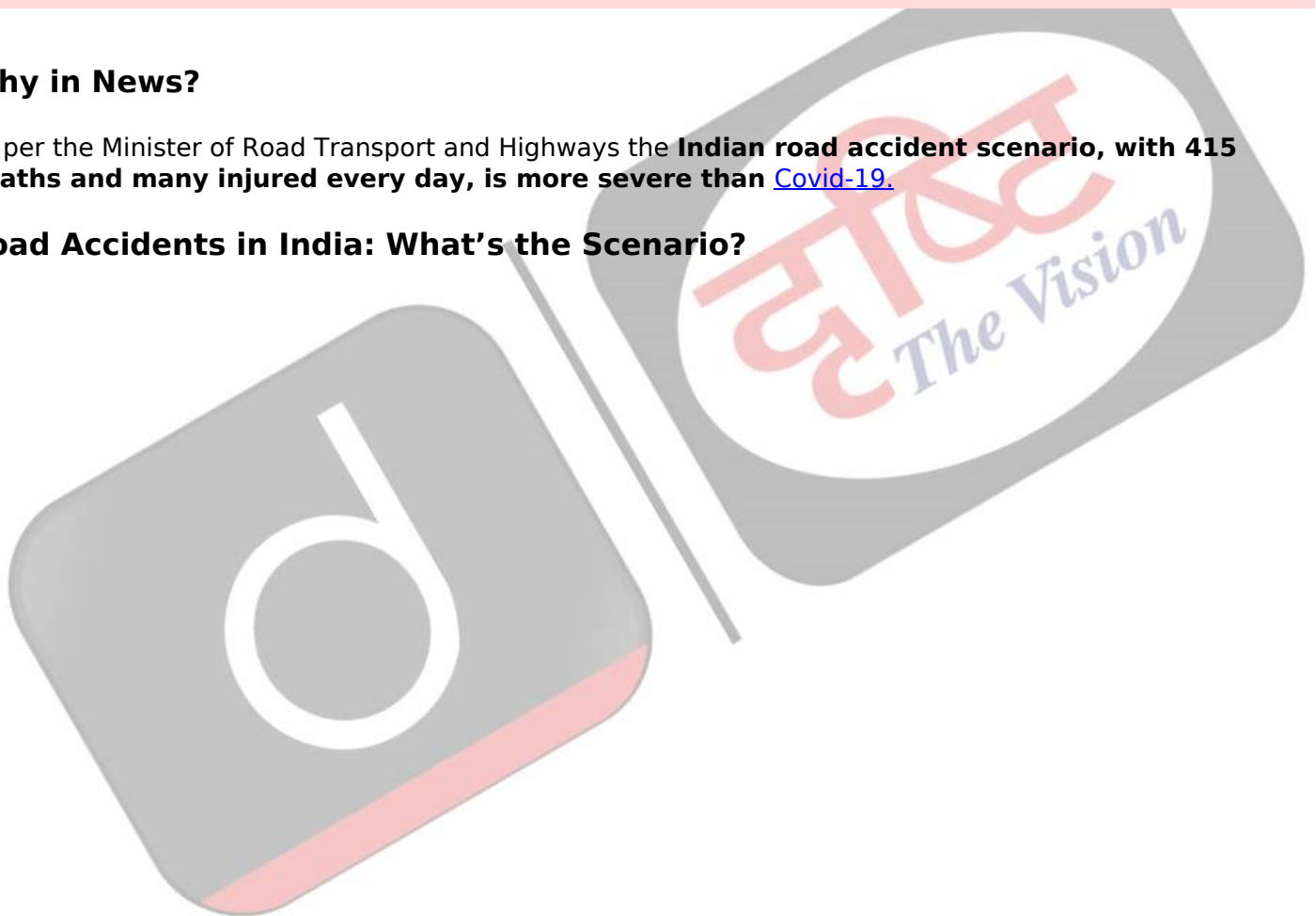
For Prelims: Road Safety, Anti-lock braking system, Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety, National Highways Authority of India Act, Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019.

For Mains: Road Safety: Reasons, Impacts, Steps that can be taken.

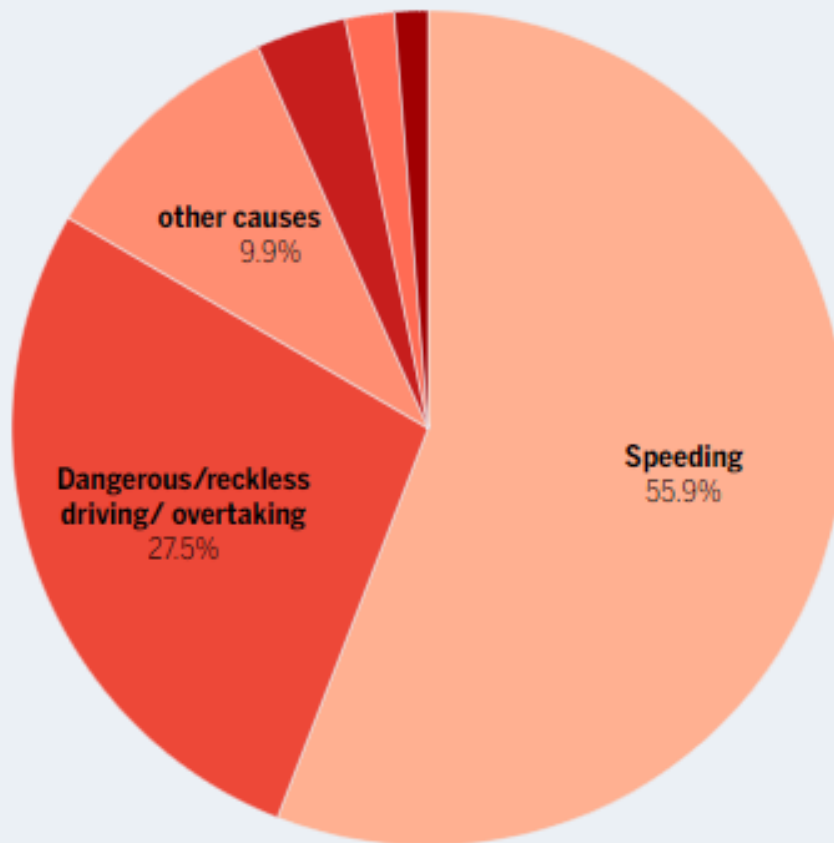
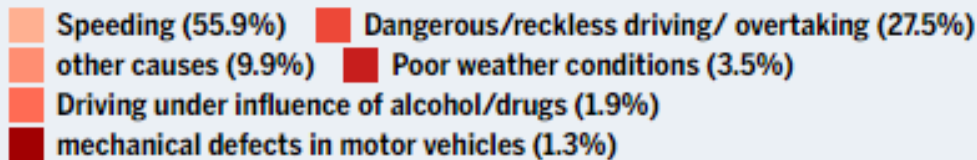
Why in News?

As per the Minister of Road Transport and Highways the **Indian road accident scenario, with 415 deaths and many injured every day, is more severe than [Covid-19](#).**

Road Accidents in India: What's the Scenario?



Major causes of road accident deaths in 2021



▪ Present Situation:

- **Over 1.5 lakh people died from road accidents in 2021**, and this has been the trend for several years.
- According to [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#) data from 2021, driving under the influence of drugs/alcohol **contributed to 1.9% of deaths from accidents**.
- Further, nearly **90% of deaths on the road were due to speeding, overtaking, and dangerous driving**.
- According to the [World Bank's](#) data from 2019, **India ranked first among the top 20 countries for road accidents**.

▪ Causes:

- **Infrastructural Deficits:** Pathetic conditions of roads and vehicles, poor visibility and poor road design and engineering – including quality of material and construction, especially a single-lane with a sharp curve.
- **Negligence and Risks:** Over speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, tiredness or riding without a helmet, driving without seatbelts.
- **Distraction:** Talking over mobile phones while driving has become a major cause of road accidents.
- **Overloading:** To save on the cost of transportation.
- **Weak Vehicle Safety Standards in India:** In 2014, crash tests carried out by the [Global New Car Assessment Programme \(NCAP\)](#) revealed that some of India's top-selling car models have failed the UN (United Nations)'s frontal impact crash test.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Regarding the importance of safety features like airbags, [Anti lock](#)

[Braking system](#) etc.

▪ **Impacts:**

◦ **Economy:**

- As per the World Bank, **road crashes cost the Indian economy 3 to 5 percent of GDP each year.**

◦ **Social:**

• **The Burden on Households:**

- Every road accident death causes the depletion of nearly seven months' household income in poor families and pushes the kin of victims into a cycle of poverty and debt.

• **[Vulnerable Road Users \(VRUs\)](#):**

- VRUs bear a disproportionately large burden of road crashes and **account for more than half of all road crash deaths** and serious injuries in the country.
 - It is often the poor, especially male road-users of working age, that constitute the category of VRUs.

◦ **Gender-Specific Impact:**

- Women in the families of victims bore the burden across poor and rich households, often taking up extra work, assuming greater responsibilities, and performing caregiving activities.
- According to World Bank's report **"Traffic Crash Injuries and Disabilities: The Burden on Indian Society, 2021,**
 - About 50% of women were **severely affected** by the decline in their household income after a crash.
 - About 40% of women **reported a change in their working patterns post-accident**, while around 11% reported taking up extra work to deal with the financial crisis.
 - The **income decline for low-income rural households** (56%) was the most severe compared to low-income urban (29.5%) and high-income rural households (39.5%).

What Steps can be Taken in this Regard?

- **Issues with Motor Vehicles (MV) (Amendment) Act, 2019:** The [MV \(Amendment\) Act, 2019](#) increased the existing fines for violating traffic rules which were criticised on the pretext that the (fine) paying capacity of an average Indian was still limited.
 - Also, **only a few cases of traffic violations are contested by the accused in a court of law.**
 - Therefore, the expected impact of the deterrent provisions of the amended law could not be realised on ground.
- **Road Safety Zones:** It is proposed to set up smaller areas, parts of major roads and highways, as **"ideal" road safety zones.** These zones will incubate locally suitable, comprehensive safe road practices.
- **A New Administrative Structure:** The administrative structure for the implementation of road safety can be set up in three tiers:
 - **Tier 1:** It would be the **Managing Group (MG)**, which would look after day-to-day operations and would be autonomous and financially empowered.
 - **Tier 2:** It would have **district-level monitoring.** This is where urgent solutions would be sought, budgetary allocations made, and review modes fixed. It would also ensure adherence to targets.
 - **Tier 3:** It would have **top management and control**, represented at the level of the Union or state government.
- **Speed-Detection Devices:** Installation of proven speed detection devices such as Radar and speed detection camera systems can be introduced.
 - **Chandigarh and New Delhi have already implemented the service of speed detection devices** such as digital still cameras (Chandigarh), speed cameras (New Delhi), and Radar gun (New Delhi) in traffic control.
 - **Radar Gun is a handheld device used by traffic police** to estimate the speed of a passing vehicle.

- **Improved Safety Measures:** Speed humps, raised platforms, Roundabouts, and optical markings can reduce road accidents to a great extent.
- **Better Centre-State Coordination:** It is a high time that we realise that lives cannot be lost at the cost of poor enforcement of traffic laws.
 - It is **important for the States and the Centre to be on the same page** in improving and strengthening the infrastructure of States by enabling more funds.
 - Merely and only fixing targets is not a pragmatic approach to reducing road accident fatalities. **Putting dedicated efforts into achieving those targets is also required.**

What are the Initiatives Related to Road Safety?

- **Global:**
 - **Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety (2015):**
 - The declaration was signed at the second Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety held in Brazil. India is a signatory to the Declaration.
 - The countries plan to achieve [Sustainable Development Goal 3.6](#) i.e., to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030.
 - [Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030:](#)
 - The [UN General Assembly](#) adopted resolution "Improving global road safety " with the ambitious target of preventing at least **50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030.**
 - The Global Plan aligns with the [Stockholm Declaration](#), by emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to road safety.
 - **The International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) :**
 - It is a registered charity dedicated to saving lives through safer roads.
- **India:**
 - [Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019:](#)
 - The Act **hikes the penalties for traffic violations, defective vehicles, juvenile driving**, etc.
 - It provides for a **Motor Vehicle Accident Fund**, which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.
 - It also **provides for a National Road Safety Board**, to be created by the Central Government.
 - [The Carriage by Road Act, 2007:](#)
 - The Act provides for the **regulation of common carriers, limiting their liability and declaration of the value of goods** delivered to them to determine their liability for loss of, or damage to, such goods occasioned by the negligence or criminal acts of themselves, their servants or agents and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
 - **The Control of [National Highways \(Land and Traffic\) Act, 2000:](#)**
 - [National Highways Authority of India Act, 1998:](#)
 - The Act provides for the constitution of an authority for the development, maintenance and management of NHs and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Source: IE