

Road Safety Bill

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill (2017) - seeks to better the quality of roads and improve safety standards.

\n

- It has been languishing in the Rajya Sabha since last year, and needs to be furthered for the greater good of the nation.

\n

\n\n

What are the challenges in ensuring road safety in India?

\n\n

\n

- 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.

\n

- Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have the dubious distinction for consistently causing potholes related accidents.

\n

- Significantly, pothole related deaths peak during monsoons and ironically.

\n

- While cases are to be booked against contractors (or officials) for poor roads, police reports often blame the victim for 'negligence driving'.

\n

- The Indian Road Congress has prescribed over 100 sets of guidelines to ensure standardised road construction, maintenance and management.

\n

- The challenge lies in ensuring that these guidelines are implemented and no complying contractors and officials are brought to book.

\n

- The absence of a unified law on road construction, engineering and maintenance is making it hard to implement these guidelines.

\n

\n\n

What does the Motor Vehicles (amendment) Act intend to do?

\n\n

- \n
- “Motor Vehicles Act” is the presently existing act for road safety.
- \n
- This act has no provisions to ensure accountability of road authorities for defects in the engineering, design and maintenance of roads.
- \n
- The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which has been tabled in the parliament, has attempted to address this drawback.
- \n
- It has provisions for rectify several systemic issues by providing a uniform driver licensing system, protecting children and vulnerable road users.
- \n
- Rationalising penalties and creating a system of accountability in the construction of roads is another important aspect of the bill.
- \n
- 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.
- \n
- While the fine is only a small amount, this is a step in the right direction.
- \n
- Nonetheless, road contractors and engineers will still not be held criminally liable for causing deaths and injuries due to their sloppy work.
- \n

\n\n

What are the technical aspects of the problem?

\n\n

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

\n

- This accounts for the possibility of human error and ensures that the surrounding environment and infrastructure are designed to save lives.

\n

\n\n

\n

- At a policy level, we need to create an enabling environment that weaves in different progressive aspects across all sectors that influence road quality.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n\n

\n\n

\n\n

\n

