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India's dismal road safety record: One death every four minutes

In fact, more than a tenth of the world's road deaths take place on India's roads, which carry less than 3% of the world's vehicles

Vijay C Roy | New Delhi
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With 142,000 deaths in road collisions and other mishaps in 2014, experts say India needs a collective effort to keep up with the UN plan commitment of a 50 per cent reduction in road fatalities by 2020. The plan was announced in 2011. According to roads ministry data, 134,000 people had died this way in 2010, a rise over the past five years.

The total number of road mishaps, though, was marginally less, from 500,000 in 2010 to 489,000 in 2014.

These figures translate to a death every four minutes and one collision every minute. Equivalent to one jumbo jet carrying 388 persons crashing every day.

In fact, more than a tenth of the world's road deaths take place on India's killer roads, which have less than three per cent of the world's vehicles.

The economic cost of fatalities alone is at least Rs 2 lakh crore yearly, according to K K Kapila, chairman, International Road Federation.

"With 80 per cent of all road deaths worldwide estimated in low income countries, India leads the world (in this)," he says.



Safer roads and mobility is one of the five pillars of the UN Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. It emphasises the need to raise inherent safety and protective quality of road networks.

The Union ministry of road transport and highways is currently engaged with IRF in

assessing the impact of initiatives taken in the past five years. A plan is in the works to address collisions and fatalities.

Piyush Tewari, founder and chief executive, SaveLIFE Foundation, said the Global Status Report on Road Safety, 2015, estimates that India actually has over 200,000 deaths on its roads, 46 per cent higher than estimated by the national agencies. While fatalities across the world have plateaued in the past three years because of legislative and executive interventions, in India there has been an increase, with no substantial interventions in sight.

Says Tewari, "The report should be an eye-opener for our law makers, as it categorically states that Indian road safety laws do not meet the best practice requirements for four of

five risk factors —enforcing speed limits, prevention of drunk driving, safety of children and use of helmets. Even for seat belts, where the [Motor Vehicles Act](#) is in line with World Health Organization standards, enforcement is poor and India has a score of four out of 10.”

With respect to vehicle safety, India meets only two out of the seven standards.”

He said the government should introduce a strong road safety legislation in Parliament, addressing all the risk factors.

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