

Ensuring Renewed Focus of Government of Karnataka on Road Safety in 2021 *Opportunities and Challenges*

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03:00 - 04:15 (IST)



1. Welcome and Introduction

CUTS, in collaboration with Institute of Public Health (IPH), Bengaluru, organised a half-day webinar on ‘Ensuring Renewed Focus of Government of Karnataka on Road Safety in 2021: Opportunities and Challenges ’on March 03, 2021 on zoom platform.

George Cheriyan, Director CUTS International, gave a brief background and context of the webinar. He introduced CUTS and its road safety initiatives in last more than two decades. He mentioned that in the series of webinars under Road Safety Network, this is the 4th webinar and the first one was in September 2020 in which Hon’ble Nitin Gadkari, Transport Minister, was present and reiterated the goal of reducing road accidents and deaths by fifty percent by 2025 and guided the network. He welcomed all the participants and talked about various data points related to road safety, accidents, injuries and crashes in Karnataka and India. He said that India is having the dubious distinction of holding the first position globally in terms of road fatalities and accidents. Though the number of accidents and deaths has reduced in last few years, including 2019 in which 151113 people killed in 449,00 accidents, but the severity of accidents has gone up. With less than one percent of vehicle population, India accounts for around 11 percent of the global burden of road accidents as per the recent World Bank Report February 2021.

In the state of Karnataka, in 2019, total 44,658 accidents were reported. Karnataka is at 5th rank with regard to road accidents in India and has a total share of 9 percent in the country in 2019, 10,958 people killed in 2019 with 4th rank with 7.3 percent share in the country. In the city of Bengaluru, total 4684 road accidents happened, which makes it at the 3rd place in India in 2019,, and 768 people died which puts the Bengaluru city at the 4th rank in the million plus population cities in the country. But, there is positive sign that in 2020, as per MoRTH report, in Karnatka city of Bengaluru the rate of accident and

fatalities came down. George also presented city-level key risk factors accident and fatalities data as well. He also briefly talked about the history of passage of the MVA Act, 2019, and mentioned that Karnataka notified the MVA Act, 2019, on September 01, 2019, but on September 15, 2019 itself reduced the penalty amount. He asked to Panelists about the strategies and road safety-policy-related experiences from Shri Bhaskar Rao, IPS and ADG Police, Railways, Government of Karnataka.

2. Inaugural Address

In the inaugural address, Shri Bhaskar Rao, I.P.S., ADG- Police, Railways, Government of Karnataka, talked about the importance of implementing road safety in the state and said that the Government of Karnataka is trying its level best to bring in new policies and ensuring effective implementation of the same. He underlines the importance of public discipline on the road. He mentioned that road safety is no more a traffic problem but it's a transportation-related issue and more related to policy-related issues. He said that the state transportation system needs to be privatized to solve several problems. Secondly, he mentioned that road safety is more related to road engineering. He said that if road engineering is corrected than number of accidents and fatalities can be reduced. He also underlined the importance of segregation of the traffic, lane driving and transport departments 'priority needs to be changed from revenue generation to ensuring road safety. The Government of Karnataka shall change its policy to promote public transport which is affordable, safer and modern so that more and more congestion is avoided. While addressing the public transport and pandemic situation, he said that motor vehicle lobby is promoting more and more vehicles on roads. In the pandemic more and more people are working from home, so public transport needs to be promoted. The Government must reduce tax on public transport and diesel tax should be zero on public transport as well. On the highways as well, strong implementation mechanism should be ensured in highways because more accidents are happening on highways. Therefore, a convergent approach of all the transport planners, engineering aspects and policy commitments shall be implemented and all the related industries like industry, hospital industry and construction industry shall be taken seriously for road safety. He also raised the concern of transport department being overburdened. Therefore, all the key stakeholders should come forward and work towards road safety in a much more committed way.

3. Panel Discussions

Shri J. Gnanendra Kumar, Director, Road Safety Authority, Government of Karnataka, has a long experience in road safety. He talked about the role of the Karnataka Road Safety Authority and MVA Act, 2019. He talked about the key provisions related to revoking the licenses of habitual offenders of road safety rules and provisions. He mentioned that in Karnataka several good provisions of road safety were there. He said the Karnataka Road Safety Authority has written to MoRTH about clarifying helmet safety standards. He further explained that the Government of Karnataka had good provisions related to good Samaritan guidelines even before the new act came and was enforcing the guidelines effectively. State Authorities are doing good work on electronic monitoring of vehicles and the Authority has written to MoRTH regarding defining the guidelines for community service of traffic rule violators. He touched upon the provisions and implementation of golden hour free treatment scheme at NHAI in which MoRTH will provide all expenses up to Rs 2 lakh. He also said that in Karnataka, the Government is working strongly for section 198 A to control the road-owning agencies which are not following the standards and norms of road construction and punishing them hard. He said that Karnataka state is implementing the Tamil Nadu model of IRADE, accident data collection and post-accident trauma care facilities.

As the key achievement of the Road Safety Authority developing automated driving tracks, automated fitness testing facilities, developing facility of simulators for objective licensing processes and creating road safety centers at all the RTOs level were the key achievements. The Authority is working hard to meet the target of reducing the traffic accidents and fatalities by 50 percent by 2025.

Shri M. Narayana, Deputy Commissioner of Police – Traffic East Division, Government of Karnataka, talked about the implementation and challenges of MVA Act 2019 in Bengaluru city. He touched upon the day-to-day challenges in effective implementation and enforcement of the road safety provisions. He highlighted some statistics of vehicle population, road user rate, violation rate, etc. He mentioned that in Bengaluru city vehicles are increasing (94 lakh vehicles were there in 2020) without increasing road length and width, which is causing accidents. In Bengaluru city, in 2001, the overall accidents were 9026, 668 were fatal accidents in which around 703 people died. In 2020, total accidents were 3436 in which fatal accidents were 622, in which 647 people lost their lives. Therefore, overall around 100 accidents were avoided in Bengaluru due to effective enforcement of traffic rules and electronic monitoring.

In the Bengaluru City, constant reduction of non-fatal accidents is also one of the positive pattern in the city. In the city, in the age group of 19-30 years, most of the people, around 40 percent, who are factory workers, daily wagers and other laborers are traveling for their livelihoods are becoming accident victims and dying. So, mostly the poorer sections of the society are becoming road crash victims and they are killed because of poverty and lack of insurance facility. He further underlined effective enforcement of city police even during lockdown and contactless enforcement was the key in traffic management. He also touched upon the effective enforcement of the new MVA Act, 2019, provisions, including higher penalties, and even the traffic officials were of the opinion that these fines are very hefty and they were a bit hesitant in levying high fines on poor commuters. He also highlighted the road engineering flaws, NHAI's contribution in rectification of black spots, role of traffic management boards of Bengaluru city which includes all the stakeholder departments of the city, taking online awareness classes of college students, improving road junctions, initiatives under smart city program, signaling traffic junctions and other issues.

Dr. G. Gururaj, Director, NIMHANS, Bengaluru, talked in detail about accident and trauma care-related aspects of Road Safety in Karnataka. He underlined the importance of effective trauma care at district and sub-district-levels and integration of ambulances. He said that trauma care is one of the key pillars of road safety in addition to effective implementation, safe roads which are people-friendly, safe vehicles and safe people which means people are aware about road safety norms and following them. The fifth pillar which is post-crash care is very crucial and essential. It's the absence of good quality of data related to road accidents and crashes which are one of the main challenges in effective management and planning in this sector. He said that in road accidents mostly youth are losing their lives as found in one of the studies that nearly 35 percent of the road accidents result in on-the-spot death which is unpreventable. Around 10 percent accident victims die on the way to hospital in the ambulance itself but nearly 50 percent of the post-crash victims can be saved from death. Out of total crash victims, mostly die because of post-crash traumatic complications as well. In crashes around 60 injuries are normal in nature which require normal trauma care, next 20 percent are medium risk injuries and remaining 20 percent are very serious in nature which need advance-level testing and investigations. It is observed that most of the victims required moderate care and can survive.

He said that being a good trauma care expert, one needs to know the traffic scenario outside so that he can connect in an effective way with the patients. He further explained about various levels of trauma

care and said that there are three phases of trauma care which are pre-hospital care or first aid, hospital-level care and post-discharge level care. He underlined the importance of first responders in trauma care and said that they need all type of cooperation and support. He also talked about the type of people and vehicles (40 percent are brought by ambulance) that bring the accident victims. He said that pre-hospital complications are sometime created by first responders and good Samaritans since they are not properly trained. In hospital, triage component is very important, the type of injury identification and the right type of treatment started as soon as possible, and plays a key role in trauma care. In trauma care, ICU facility, ventilators and scanning facility are very important. Rehabilitation facility is very crucial so that accident victims can live post-crash life comfortably. It is observed that globally the rate of saving lives due to good trauma care is increasing including in India as well which will definitely be helpful in achieving the target of reducing fifty percent by 2025 by the Government of India but it requires more and more trained emergency medicine professionals, putting in more resources in trauma care and creating a fleet of first responders and network of ambulances in the state. Finally, he recommended having a trauma-care policy and trauma-care action plan for the State of Karnataka.

4. Summing up and Vote of Thanks

Madhu Sudan Sharma, Senior Program Officer, CUTS International, summed up the proceedings and talked about issues related to road-safety policy, engineering aspects, vulnerable road users-related issues, various initiatives and programs of the Government of Karnataka, the science behind road safety, road safety pillar, importance of scientific evidences, visions zero, Bengaluru city level road safety issues, challenges, innovations in road safety, vulnerability of poorer sections of the society in road safety and convergence of all the stakeholders in road safety. He gave a heartfelt thanks to all the distinguished panelists and speakers, road-safety network members, the Government of Karnataka officials, the media and NGO representatives, entire IPH family and CUTS team members for organising a successful webinar in which all the discussion were quite relevant and enriching.

5. Highlights

- The webinar was well-attended by more than 80 participants who all were directly related to the topic of the webinar.
- Presence of the high-level policymakers and state-level road safety stalwarts was very useful.

6. Low Lights

- Some technical glitches created hindrance in effective communication of some panelists.
- Due to time constraints, more questions from participants could not be taken.