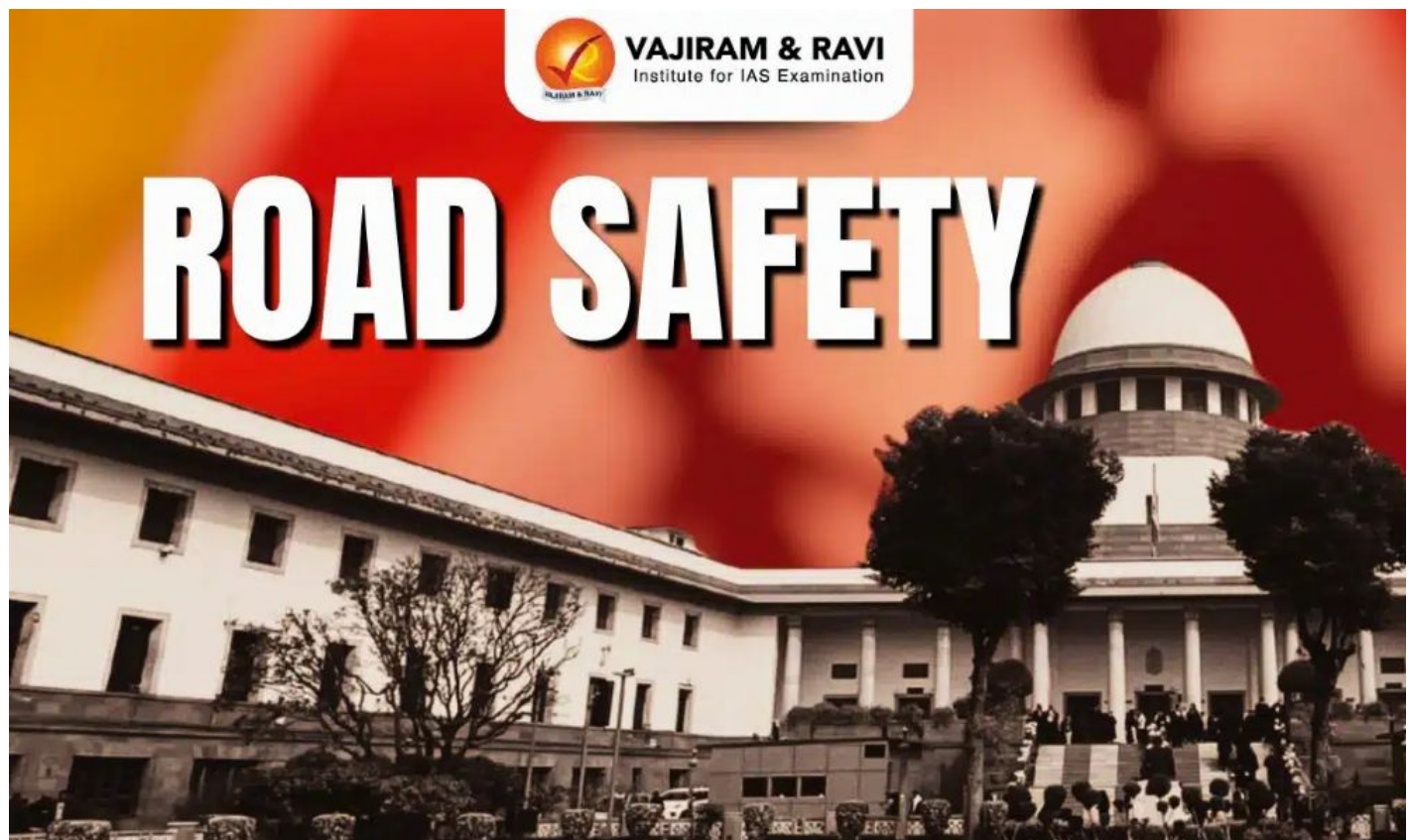


Supreme Court Issues Landmark Order to Protect Pedestrians and Enforce Road Safety

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Road Safety Latest News

- In a major step to address India's rising road fatalities, the Supreme Court has issued comprehensive directions to improve **pedestrian safety** and regulate **road discipline**.
- Pedestrians remain the **most vulnerable road users**, accounting for **20.4% of total fatalities in 2023**, with **35,221 deaths**—double the share in 2016.
- Additionally, over **54,000 two-wheeler riders** died last year due to **non-compliance with helmet norms**, highlighting the urgent need for stronger enforcement and safer infrastructure.

Supreme Court Issues Comprehensive Blueprint for Pedestrian and Road Safety

- A Supreme Court bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan issued the directives while hearing a PIL on road safety highlighting rising pedestrian deaths.

- The Court observed that the lack of specific laws and the poor enforcement of existing rules to remove encroachments from footpaths compel pedestrians to walk on roads, increasing their vulnerability to accidents.

Nationwide Footpath Audit in Top 50 Cities

- It directed NHAI and other road-owning agencies to audit existing footpaths across India's top 50 cities with populations exceeding one million — including Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Lucknow, and Kolkata — where 4,604 pedestrians were killed in 2023.
- The audit must prioritise crowded areas such as markets, railway stations, bus stands, religious and educational institutions, and accident-prone stretches (15–20 spots per city).
- Authorities must identify deficiencies in width, height, and surface quality of footpaths and propose remedial measures to ensure safety and accessibility.

Adoption of Indian Roads Congress (IRC) Pedestrian Safety Standards

- The Court endorsed the IRC 103-2022 guidelines on pedestrian infrastructure, mandating:
 - Footpath width: 4 m (residential) to 6.5 m (high-street areas)
 - Footpath height: 150 mm
 - Anti-skid surfaces and tactile paving for the visually impaired
 - Wheelchair ramps and bollards to deter illegal parking
- The NHAI, State Governments, and Municipal Authorities must also set up an **online grievance redressal system** for public complaints and suggestions regarding encroachments and maintenance of footpaths.

Strict Enforcement of Helmet Rules

- The Court ordered stringent implementation of helmet laws for two-wheeler riders and passengers.
- Authorities must use electronic surveillance systems (such as traffic cameras) to detect violations and submit reports on:
 - Number of offenders penalised
 - Amounts collected through challans
 - Licenses suspended
- These details are to be regularly reported to the Supreme Court.

Curbing Wrong-Lane Driving

- To address lane discipline violations, the Court recommended:
 - Automated cameras and graduated fines
 - Coloured or textured lane markings (for bus/cycle lanes)
 - Dynamic lighting, rumble strips, and tyre killers at conflict points
 - Real-time dashboards displaying lane violation data to raise public awareness and improve compliance.

Regulation of Headlights and Banning Illegal Flashers

- The MoRTH, State Transport Departments, and traffic police must:
 - Prescribe limits for maximum luminance and beam angles in headlights.
 - Conduct vehicle fitness checks and penalise non-compliance.
 - Launch targeted drives against modified or excessively bright headlights.
- A complete ban on unauthorised red-blue strobe lights and illegal hooters must be enforced through seizures, market crackdowns, and penalties.
- Additionally, nationwide awareness campaigns will be conducted to educate drivers and pedestrians about the dangers of dazzling headlights, flashing lights, and illegal hooters, promoting safer and more disciplined road use across India.

States Directed to Frame Rules for Pedestrian Safety and Road Design Standards

- Following the Supreme Court's order, all states and union territories (UTs) must formulate and notify rules within six months under two key provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act (MV Act):
 - **Section 138(1A):** To regulate the activities and access of non-mechanically propelled vehicles and pedestrians on public roads and highways.
 - **Section 210-D:** To establish standards for the design, construction, and maintenance of roads other than national highways.
- Together, these rules aim to create a legal and infrastructural framework to enhance pedestrian safety and improve road design standards across India.

A Decade of Judicial Intervention: Timeline of the Supreme Court's Road Safety Case

- **2012 - The Petition is Filed**
 - Orthopaedic surgeon Dr. S. Rajasekaran filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) highlighting India's rising road fatalities despite multiple laws and court orders. He compared the scale of deaths and injuries to "national genocides."
- **2014 - Road Safety Recognised as a Public Health Issue**
 - In April 2014, the Supreme Court acknowledged road safety as a matter of public health and governance, not just traffic control.
 - It established the **Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety (SCCoRS)** headed by Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan, focusing on the "**four Es**" — **E**nforcement, **E**ngineering, **E**ducation, and **E**mergency Care.
 - States were directed to report within three months on vehicle fitness, licensing, enforcement, and emergency care facilities.
- **2017 - Mandatory State-Level Road Safety Mechanisms**
 - By November 30, 2017, with fatalities still rising, the Court issued binding directions to all States and Union Territories to:

- Adopt Road Safety Policies
- Establish State Road Safety Councils and District Road Safety Committees (DRSCs) under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988
- Create dedicated Road Safety Funds
- Set up trauma care centres in every district
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) later launched a Road Safety Committee Portal to track state compliance.
- **2024 - Victim Compensation Strengthened**
 - In January 2024, the Court reviewed the Hit-and-Run Compensation Scheme (2022) and raised compensation to ₹2 lakh for deaths and ₹50,000 for grievous injuries.
 - It directed police to inform victims or families about these entitlements immediately after accidents.
- **2025 - “Golden Hour” Cashless Treatment Mandated**
 - In January 2025, the Supreme Court ordered the nationwide rollout of a cashless “Golden Hour” scheme.
 - This was to ensure immediate medical treatment for accident victims within the first critical hour, when timely care can significantly improve survival rates.

Source: IE | HT | SCCO

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/supreme-court-issues-landmark-order-to-protect-pedestrians-and-enforce-road-safety/>

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