

Supreme Court of India Issues Pan-India Road Safety Directions; Mandates Strict Measures to Prevent Highway Fatalities

The Supreme Court of India has issued Pan India guidelines to improve road safety, emphasizing that expressways must not become “corridors of peril” due to negligence or infrastructure gaps. The Court noted that National Highways form only 2% of India’s road network but account for nearly 30% of road fatalities, highlighting the urgency of intervention.

A Bench comprising Justice J.K. Maheshwari and Justice A.S. Chandurkar stressed that the Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India includes the State’s duty to ensure safe roads. The order followed fatal accidents in Rajasthan and Telangana and was issued under Article 142 to address systemic failures.

Key directions include:

- **Ban on parking** of heavy/commercial vehicles on Highways except in designated areas.
- **Strict enforcement** using Advanced Traffic Management Systems (ATMS), GPS evidence, and e-challans.
- **No new dhabas or commercial structures** within Highway Right of Way; removal of unauthorized structures within 60 days.
- **No licences or approvals** in Highway safety zones without prior clearance from authorities like National Highways Authority of India.
- **Formation of District Highway Safety Task Forces** in every district within a fixed timeline.
- **Improved surveillance and infrastructure**, including patrolling, cameras, speed monitoring, lighting, and truck lay byes.
- **Time-bound compliance**, with most directives to be implemented within 60 days.

The Court underscored that no administrative or financial constraint can outweigh the value of human life and called for coordinated action among authorities to prevent avoidable road accidents.