

International Workshop: Ideal Highway Patrol System for Developing countries

January 7, 2005

Developing and emerging countries are witnessing a revolution in the growth and development of their highways, which have opened gates to the latest generation high technology automobiles. With the growth in the number of vehicles on roads in these countries, there is an enhanced necessity to have more effective mechanisms in place to avoid road collisions. While in the developed countries of North America, Western Europe and Japan, road deaths have fallen by approximately 10 per cent between 1990 and 2000, developing countries have witnessed a 30 to 100 per cent increase in the same and the problem of road safety continues to worsen.

As per the statistics of the Govt. of India, at least 80,000 people are killed in road accidents every year and about 4, 00,000 are seriously injured, amounting to a social loss of approximately 55,000 crores annually. This annual loss is equivalent to the investment in the Golden Quadrilateral National Highways by the Govt. of India. The whole effort of the Govt. of India in developing state-of-the-art highways is being nullified by the ever growing rate of accidents and indiscipline on these highways, which account for almost 50% of the total road accidents in the country.

An effective patrol system needs to be implemented to supplement the highway development programme. This patrol system should play a multidimensional role in bringing awareness, education, and enforcement leading to reduction in death, injury, crime and encroachment resulting in enhanced confidence of safety amongst road users, and will catalyze a process for growth of business, industry, tourism, and social integration. While some countries have implemented demonstratively successful programmes, other developing countries have a long way to go to develop similar systems.

To dwell upon these important aspects of ideal highway patrol systems through best practices and practical administrative control systems, a one-day international workshop was held on 7 January 2005 at the Assocham House in New Delhi. Organized by the Institute of Road Traffic Education in conjunction and with the support of the Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways, the Workshop was presented by Castrol India Ltd.

Divided into five sessions, the Workshop was inaugurated by Mr. S. Regunathan, IAS, Chief Secretary to the Government of Delhi. Mr. Dhanendra Kumar, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways, Govt. of India, was the Chief Guest at the concluding session of the Workshop. Mr. Kumar interacted with the delegates over a wide range of issues concerning road safety and traffic management in India.

Seventy-five participants from the Police, Transport, Highway Departments, Research Institutions, Banks, Non-Government Organisations attended the Workshop. Presentations included the case studies of the successes achieved by Haryana Highway Patrol and Pakistan Motorway Police.

Recommendations

The important recommendations of the workshop are:

1. There exists an immediate need to effectively manage the National Highways in the areas of
 - traffic control
 - Enforcement, especially high-speeding, dangerous driving and overloading
 - Encroachment control
 - Post-accident management
2. An effective communication system is crucial to enable immediate rescue support.
3. Participation and training of the Non-government sector in rescue, trauma care, ambulance service, etc. is uncompromisable.
4. A dedicated force which is well trained in all areas of highway traffic management and emergency response would be desired
5. Highway Patrol System should not only promote road safety but also catalyze the areas of
 - Improvement of traffic flow
 - Improvement of road environment
 - Reduction in traffic violations
 - Reduction of congestion
 - Reduction in roadside crime and road-rage
 - Quick rescue facilities -Golden Hour Concept
 - Accident Investigation Control of Encroachments

- Encourage tension-free travel and promotion of tourism.

6 It was recommended that the Highway Patrol should be a distinct force. Ideally, nationwide singular force under NHAI, or under the State Transport Departments, as in Haryana, or with the State Police. However, such force should be properly trained and equipped with latest technology supports like Interceptors, etc.