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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS



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STEERING ROAD SAFETY IN INDIA BACK ONTO THE RIGHT LANE

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

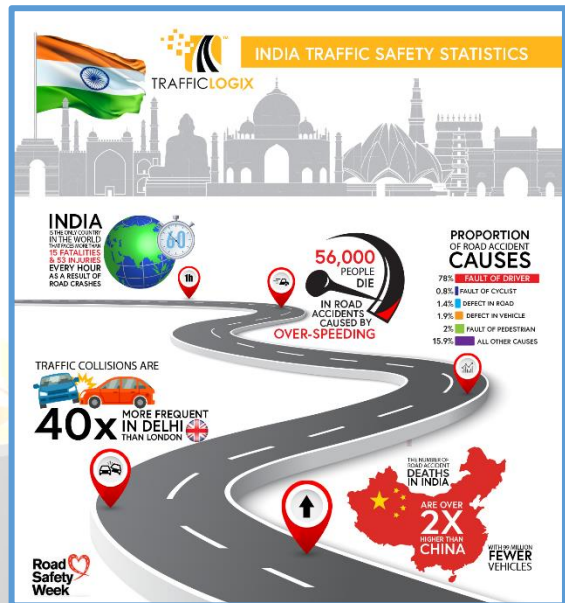
WHY IN NEWS?

India's roads symbolize both a vast opportunity for connectivity and a silent, deadly pandemic. Despite contributing to modernization and economic progress, road accidents remain a severe issue.

ROAD SAFETY OVERVIEW:

➤ Introduction:

- ✓ India witnesses a **high number of road accidents**, but recent years show improvements.
- ✓ **Growing vehicle numbers and pressure on traffic highlight road safety** as a significant public health concern.
- ✓ **Road safety impacts everyone**, from drivers to pedestrians and cyclists.
- ✓ India's road network, a symbol of **progress, connectivity, and economic growth**, paradoxically harbors a **silent but deadly pandemic - road accidents**.
- ✓ With an **estimated 300,000 annual fatalities**, road crashes pose a severe threat, causing **economic losses of 5-7% of the national GDP**.



➤ Understanding Road Safety:

- ✓ Road safety involves measures **to reduce accident risks and injuries for all road users**.
- ✓ Applicable to **pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, bus/truck drivers, emphasizing collective responsibility**.
- ✓ Encompasses **road design, traffic laws, safety systems, driver education, student education, mass awareness, traffic regulations, road signs, vehicle design, and maintenance**.

INDIA'S ROAD SAFETY CHALLENGE & CONCERNS:

➤ Global Road Safety Concerns:

- ✓ India, part of a global issue, **witnesses 1.3 million road crash deaths annually**, with nearly **25% occurring within its borders**.
- ✓ The alarming statistics underline the **urgency for immediate, coordinated interventions** on a global scale.

Table 1.2: Major Parameters of Road Accidents- 2022 vis-à-vis 2021

Parameter	2021	2022	% Change
Number of Accidents	4,12,432	4,61,312	11.9
Number of Persons killed	1,53,972	1,68,491	9.4
Number of Injury	3,84,448	4,43,366	15.3
Accident Severity (Persons killed per 100 accidents)	37.3	36.5	2.14

➤ Government Report on Fatalities:

- ✓ The **recent report highlighting 2022 as the deadliest year for traffic crashes** in India underscores the severity of the problem.

➤ Impacts on Economy:

- ✓ **World Bank Data:** Road crashes cost the **Indian economy 3 to 5 percent of GDP annually**.

➤ Social Impacts:



- ✓ **Burden on Households:**
 - **Financial Depletion:** Each road accident death depletes about seven months' household income in poor families.
 - **Cycle of Poverty:** Pushes victims' kin into a cycle of poverty and debt.

➤ **Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs):**

- ✓ **Disproportionate Burden:** VRUs, particularly poor, working-age males, bear a significant burden.
- ✓ **Major Contributors:** VRUs account for over half of all road crash deaths and serious injuries.

World Bank's Report "Traffic Crash Injuries and Disabilities: The Burden on Indian Society, 2021:"

➤ **Impact on Women:**

- ✓ **Financial Effects:** Nearly 50% of women experience a severe decline in household income after a crash.
- ✓ **Changes in Working Patterns:** About 40% of women alter their working patterns post-accident.
- ✓ **Additional Work:** Around 11% of women take up extra work to cope with financial crises.

➤ **Income Decline Across Households:**

- ✓ **Rural vs. Urban Disparity:** Severe income decline in low-income rural households (56%) compared to low-income urban (29.5%) and high-income rural households (39.5%).

FOCUS AREAS FOR IMPROVED SAFETY:

➤ **Seatbelt Enforcement:**

- ✓ **Emphasizes seatbelt use** for drivers and passengers.
- ✓ **Seatbelts reduce death risks by 45-50% for drivers/front-seat occupants and 25% for rear-seat occupants.**

➤ **Helmet Enforcement:**

- ✓ **Mandates helmet use for motorcyclists and pillion passengers.**
- ✓ **Correct helmet use results in a 42% reduction in fatal injuries.**

➤ **Vulnerable Road Users:**

- ✓ Pedestrians, cyclists, and two-wheeler riders **contribute to nearly three-quarters of road deaths.**
- ✓ Back seat passengers **pose risks to themselves and those in the front seat.**

➤ **Speeding and Drink-Driving:**

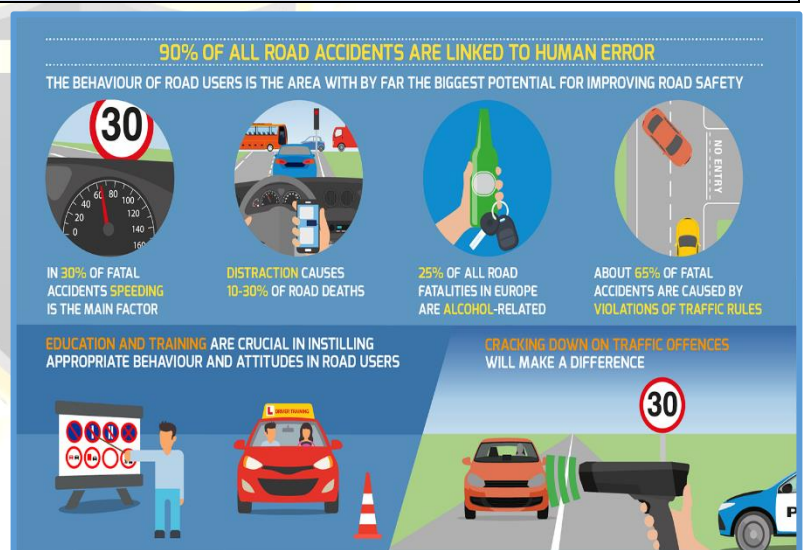
- ✓ Urges reduction in speeding; **70% of road crash deaths** attributed to speeding.
- ✓ **Zero tolerance for drink-driving.**

➤ **Infrastructure Enhancement:**

- ✓ Calls for **improvements in road infrastructure.**
- ✓ **Acknowledges recent government programs'** positive impact but highlights persisting unsafe roads.

➤ **Public Awareness Campaigns:**

- ✓ Emphasizes **large-scale campaigns for behavioural change.**
- ✓ **Cites the UN's global campaign #MakeASafetyStatement,** involving international celebrities.





GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR ROAD SAFETY:

Government of India Initiatives for Road Safety	Description
<i>Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Introduced stringent penalties for traffic violations. ✓ Aims to improve road safety and reduce accidents.
<i>National Road Safety Policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Encompasses various strategies and action plans for road safety at the national level.
<i>National Road Safety Council (NRSC)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Advisory body addressing road safety issues. ✓ Formulates policies and strategies for implementation.
<i>Integrated Road Accident Database (IRAD)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Database capturing detailed information on road accidents, aiding in analysis and policy formulation.
<i>Road Safety Advocacy and Public Awareness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Campaigns and programs to create awareness about road safety norms and responsible driving.
<i>Engineering Measures for Road Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Focus on improving road infrastructure for enhanced safety, including better design and signage.
<i>Safer Roads, Safer Vehicles, Safer People</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Holistic approach targeting roads, vehicles, and people to create a comprehensive road safety ecosystem.
<i>National Highways Accident Relief Service Scheme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Quick response system for providing relief and medical assistance to road accident victims on national highways.
<i>Road Safety Workshops and Training Programs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Educational initiatives for drivers, pedestrians, and school children to impart knowledge about safe road practices.
<i>Good Samaritan Guidelines</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Encourages citizens to help road accident victims without fear of legal hassles, promoting a culture of empathy and assistance.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Global Cooperation and Innovation:**
 - ✓ **United Nations collaboration with helmet producers** to create a low-cost ventilated helmet.
 - ✓ **Private sector companies actively seeking solutions**, emphasizing the importance of a collaborative societal effort.
- Advocates for a comprehensive **safe-system approach aligned with the UN’s Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030.**
- **Stresses the full implementation of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019** for effective road safety measures.
- **Recognizes road safety as a complex challenge but highlights the profound benefits of addressing it**, saving lives, strengthening the economy, and enhancing overall quality of life.



India-Maldives Relations

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

Mohamed Muizzu, the newly elected President of Maldives, “formally requested” the Indian government to “withdraw its military personnel” from the country, according to a statement from his office issued on November 18.

INDIA-MALDIVES RELATIONS:

- **Enduring Cultural and Historical Affinity:**
 - ✓ The historical tapestry between India and the Maldives, woven since the 12th century, forms the foundation of their enduring relationship.
 - ✓ During the British protectorate (1887-1965), India's pivotal role in supplying essential goods and facilitating communication underscored the depth of their connections.
- **Geographical Destiny and Climate Imperatives:**
 - ✓ The geographical proximity between India and the Maldives takes on heightened significance as both nations grapple with the impending challenges of climate change.
 - ✓ With predictions indicating the potential loss of 80% of the Maldives by 2050, India's support becomes crucial in addressing environmental crises.
- **Strategic Partnership for Security:**
 - ✓ The alliance extends beyond rhetoric, encompassing joint exercises, training initiatives, and India's pivotal role in the Maldivian National Defence Force's development.
 - ✓ Operation Cactus in 1988 exemplifies India's commitment to upholding the stability of the Maldivian government.
- **Guardians of Maritime Frontiers:**
 - ✓ India's role as the Maldives' first line of defense against maritime threats is pivotal, fostering collaboration in counterterrorism, anti-piracy endeavors, and combating drug trafficking.
 - ✓ Collaborative efforts extend to critical infrastructure projects, including the establishment of a rehabilitation center in Addu.
- **Economic Synergy and Collaborative Ventures:**
 - ✓ The economic landscape sees India and the Maldives engaged in vibrant sectors such as tourism, trade, and transformative infrastructure endeavors.
 - ✓ Emerging as the third-largest trade partner in 2021, India's contributions span diverse sectors, from healthcare to fisheries and tourism.
- **Architects of Infrastructure Development:**
 - ✓ Infrastructure projects, such as the Hanimaadhoo International Airport Development and the National College for Policing and Law Enforcement, exemplify India's commitment to enhancing the Maldives' capabilities.
 - ✓ The landmark Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP), financed by India, signifies a paradigm shift in Maldives' infrastructure development.
- **Responsive Aid in Times of Crisis:**





- ✓ India's proactive stance during crises, **exemplified by Operation Neer (2014)** addressing a drinking water crisis and Operation Sanjeevani providing essential medicines during the Covid-19 pandemic, highlights the resilience of their collaboration.
- **Negotiating Challenges and Setbacks:**
 - ✓ Despite the resilience of the relationship, **challenges emerged, notably with the Maldives entering into a Free-Trade Agreement (FTA) with China in 2017.**

IMPACT OF THE REQUEST:

- **Geopolitical Significance:**
 - ✓ The move **reflects the evolving geopolitical dynamics in the Indian Ocean region**, with Maldives being a key player.
 - ✓ It highlights the **shifting alliances and foreign policy priorities of small island nations**, influenced by major powers.
- **Historical Alignment:**
 - ✓ Maldives has a **history of aligning with either India or China**, and Muizzu's victory on an **"India Out" campaign signals a potential policy shift.**
- **India-Maldives Relations:**
 - ✓ The request impacts India-Maldives relations, **which historically considered Maldives as part of its regional sphere of influence.**
 - ✓ Cooperation in areas **like medical evacuation and counter-drug trafficking is crucial for regional stability.**
- **Democratic Mandate:**
 - ✓ President Muizzu's assertion that the request is based on **the democratic mandate received in the September elections adds a democratic legitimacy dimension** to the issue.
- **Cooperative Solutions:**
 - ✓ The agreement between the two governments **to discuss workable solutions for continued cooperation indicates a diplomatic effort** to address the concerns.
- **Strategic Concerns:**
 - ✓ The presence of Indian military personnel in the Maldives has strategic implications, **especially in the context of counter-drug operations and medical emergencies.**
- **Regional Competition:**
 - ✓ The **development is part of the larger regional competition**, where major powers vie for influence in strategically important regions.
- **Global Attention:**
 - ✓ The **request has attracted global attention**, given the importance of the Indian Ocean in international geopolitics.



WHAT IS 'INDIA OUT' CAMPAIGN AND THE 'INDIA FIRST' POLICY?

- **India Out Campaign:**
 - ✓ Political movement **against Indian military presence in Maldives.**
 - ✓ **Intensified during key events like the UTF harbor deal** and India's consulate announcement.
 - ✓ Supported by **ex-President Yameen**, aligning with pro-China policies.
- **Challenges and Ultimatums by Yameen:**



- ✓ Yameen's presidency **marked a pro-China shift**, signing an FTA and demanding Indian military withdrawal.
- ✓ **Actively endorsed the 'India Out' campaign**, diverging from the historical India-Maldives partnership.
- **India First Policy:**
 - ✓ **Initiated by President Solih in 2018** to reverse **anti-India sentiments**.
 - ✓ Prioritizes India in security, **socio-development, and COVID response**.
- **Dr. Mohamed Muizzu's Stance:**
 - ✓ **Continues to rally 'India Out' support**, reflecting sustained anti-India sentiments.
 - ✓ Believes democratic mandate supports the withdrawal of Indian military personnel.
- **Dynamic Geopolitical Shifts:**
 - ✓ **'India Out' aligns with China's increasing influence** in the Indian Ocean.
 - ✓ **Maldives faces the challenge of balancing historical ties with India** and new collaborations with China.



INDIA'S STANCE IN RECENT REQUEST:

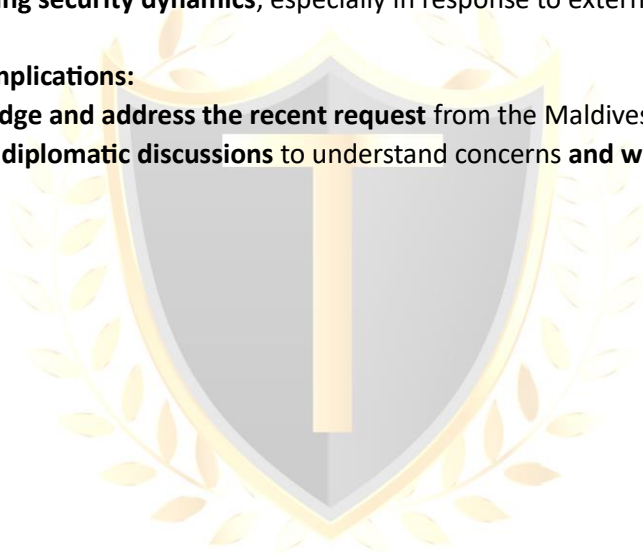
- **Indian Response:**
 - ✓ **Both governments agree to discuss workable solutions** for continued cooperation.
 - ✓ Focus on **cooperation through platforms like aircraft for medical evacuation** and counter-drug trafficking.
- **Commitment to Strong Relations:**
 - ✓ India **maintains a consistent commitment to building robust ties** with the Maldives.
 - ✓ Focus on comprehensive cooperation, **security, and infrastructure development underscores dedication**.
- **Resilience Amid Challenges:**
 - ✓ Despite challenges like the **'India Out' campaign and pro-China policies**, India **remains steadfast**.
 - ✓ Demonstrates resilience in **upholding the historical partnership**.
- **Strategic Importance in SAGAR Policy:**
 - ✓ India views Maldives as **integral to its 'Security and Growth for All in the Region' (SAGAR) policy**.
 - ✓ Recognizes Maldives as a crucial component for regional security and prosperity.
- **First Line of Defense:**
 - ✓ **Maldives holds a pivotal role as India's first line of defence** against various threats.
 - ✓ Collaboration includes **countering terrorism, piracy, drug trafficking, and maritime crimes**.
- **Contrast with China's Agenda:**
 - ✓ India's engagement in **Maldives is based on mutual interests and regional stability**.
 - ✓ Unlike China, **India's involvement aims at fostering shared security and growth rather than advancing individual interests**.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Development-Oriented Approach:**
 - ✓ India should **adopt a strategic and development-oriented approach** in light of changes in the **Maldives' political landscape**.
 - ✓ Emphasis on **national interests and addressing issues like high youth unemployment** can strengthen bilateral ties.

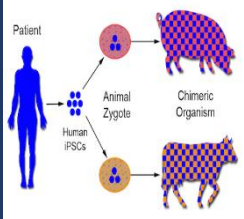


- **Youth Employability Projects:**
 - ✓ Given the **Maldives' challenge of high youth unemployment, India's High Impact Community Development Project (HICDP)** should prioritize initiatives enhancing youth employability.
 - ✓ Focusing on job creation aligns with the Maldives' developmental needs.
- **Accelerated Infrastructure Development:**
 - ✓ Prioritizing the **timely completion of the Greater Male Connectivity Project** is essential for India's influence in the region.
 - ✓ The project, **supported by grants and a substantial Line of Credit, surpasses China's initiatives** and bolsters India's presence.
- **Balanced Relations and Governance:**
 - ✓ Post-election, the **Maldives is likely to seek balanced relations with India and China.**
 - ✓ Practical governance **considerations and understanding the repercussions** of undermining ties with India should guide diplomatic efforts.
- **Indo-Pacific Security Role:**
 - ✓ **India must actively contribute to the Indo-Pacific security space**, ensuring regional stability in South Asia.
 - ✓ The **evolving security dynamics**, especially in response to external influences, require India to play a key role.
- **Recent Request Implications:**
 - ✓ **Acknowledge and address the recent request** from the Maldives to withdraw military personnel.
 - ✓ **Engage in diplomatic discussions** to understand concerns **and work towards mutually agreeable solutions.**





PRELIMS POINTERS:

Topic	Details
Chimaeras in Medical Science 	<p>What is Chimaeras?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A chimaera refers to a single organism composed of cells with distinct genetic makeups. <p>Natural Occurrence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Found in nature, examples include the anglerfish, budgerigar, and marine sponges.▪ Human chimaeras documented through genetic changes, fused zygotes, or multiple pregnancies. <p><u>Brief Overview:</u></p> <p>Organ Shortage Crisis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 3 lakh+ people await organ transplants in India, creating a global crisis.▪ Limited organ donors contribute to the widening gap between supply and demand. <p>Animal Contributions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Animal-derived insulin and heart valves save human lives.▪ iPSCs technology explores growing human organs in animals. <p>Natural Chimaeras:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Natural chimaeras observed across species due to genetic variations.▪ Chimerism results from twin pregnancies, fused zygotes, or genetic changes. <p>Medical Chimaeras:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Individuals with two blood types detected during routine blood tests.▪ Chimerism in patients undergoing bone marrow or solid organ transplants. <p>Chimaeras in Primates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Breakthrough in creating live chimaeric monkeys, close to humans.▪ Genome-sequencing reveals high chimerism in various tissues. <p>Biomedical Applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Non-human primate chimaeras potential as models for biomedical research.▪ Ethical considerations acknowledge, thorough evaluations needed. <p>Future Prospects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Opportunities for research in developing chimaeric models for medical advancements.▪ Continued collaboration to address challenges and ethical concerns.
GI Tag Expansion for 'Onattukara	<p>Geographical Indication (GI) Tag:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A sign indicating that a product possesses unique qualities due to its specific geographical origin.▪ Protected under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 to prevent imitation.



Sesame' in Kerala



- **Qualities, characteristics, or reputation of the product** must be linked to its geographical origin.
- Preserves traditional practices, craftsmanship, and cultural heritage associated with specific regions.

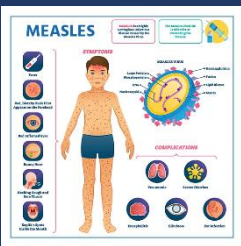
Onattukara Ellu (Sesame):

- **Onattukara Ellu, commonly known as Onattukara Sesame**, is renowned for its distinct health advantages.
- Its **oil is particularly acclaimed for its unique properties**.
- With a relatively elevated **antioxidant content**, Onattukara Ellu aids in combating free radicals that can **cause damage to body cells**.
- Moreover, its **high concentration of unsaturated fat adds** to its health benefits, making it advantageous for individuals with heart conditions.

Current Status of Onattukara Sesame:

- Currently grown on **approximately 600 hectares across Alappuzha, Kollam, and Pathanamthitta districts**.
- Kerala Agricultural University analysis shows **high Vitamin E and antioxidant levels in locally grown sesame**.

Measles



Why in News?

- The government has **clarified that the recent WHO report**, which asserts that **1.1 million children in India have not received measles vaccinations**, is not grounded in factual information.

About Measles:

- Measles is a **viral disease known for its high contagion** and significant mortality rates in young children worldwide.

Causes:

- The disease is **attributed to a single-stranded RNA virus** enclosed in an envelope, characterized **by a singular serotype**.
- It falls under the **Morbillivirus genus within the Paramyxoviridae** family.
- Children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds face heightened risks, especially those who are **malnourished or have weakened immune systems**.

Symptoms:

- Measles can lead to severe complications such as **blindness, encephalitis, intense diarrhoea, ear infections, and pneumonia**.