

Public transport services are hit across the nation on April 30 due to the nationwide strike called by the employees of road transport undertakings. Both state-owned bus transport corporations will be off the road. Auto rickshaw drivers have also extended support.

The day-long nationwide strike has been called jointly by national level road transport organizations representing both public and private sector workers which are affiliated to central trade unions like All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), BMS, INTUC, HMS, AICCTU, LPF and state-level outfits.

The strike is in opposition to the Road Transport and Safety Bill 2014, which transport employees believe will curtail the powers of state-owned transport firms while giving an "unfair advantage"

### **What is Road Transport and Safety Bill 2014 & its proposals:**

It envisions providing a framework for safer, faster, cost-effective and inclusive movement of passengers and freight in India, thus enabling the mission of 'Make in India'. It is currently in draft stage and is prepared by Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Government of India, which will extend to the whole of India if enacted.

According to Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, the Bill aims to ensure transparency, reduce road accidents and fatalities, boost economic growth and create 10 lakh jobs.

### **Proposals:**

- The bill proposes to set up the **Motor Vehicle Regulation & Road Safety Authority of India**, an independent agency for vehicle regulation and road safety which would be legally empowered and accountable to Parliament.
- The authority will have to maintain a **National Unified Information System**, thereby centralizing details on vehicle registrations, driving licenses, insurance, permits, penalties, accidents, etc.
- The Bill also introduces Unified Driving Licensing System as well as Automated Driving License tests.
- For an integrated road safety plan, a common Road Accident Emergency Access Telephone Number will be introduced. Additionally, there will be a Uniform Road Accident Investigation System, making it a specialised body to look into each case rather than being mechanical on the subject due to staff shortage and workload.
- Hefty fines have been proposed for minor traffic violations under the provisions of the new bill
- The bill proposes a points-based system for recording traffic violations for each license holder.
- Penalty points for a driver will be displayed on his/her record for three years. A total of 12 points would lead to the suspension of licence for one year.

### **Why is it required & proposed:**

- India with just 1% of the vehicular population accounts for 10% of the Road Fatalities.
- 1 road accident death every 4 minutes
- 16 deaths every hour due to road accidents
- 377 deaths every day, equivalent to a jumbo jet crashing every day
- 12.02 lakh people killed in road accidents in India in the past decade

Government introduced the bill following the death of Union Minister Gopinath Munde, who died during a road accident in Delhi in 2014. The bill is proposed to end the erratic behavior of transporters and decrease the fatal accidents.

### **Why Unions are against it and out on strike:**

KK Divakaran, general secretary, All India Road Transport Workers Federation, said the Bill will lead to “dismantling” of the 54 state road transport corporations in India, jeopardizing the jobs of 7.5 lakh workers.

However, unions fear that the Bill will pave the way for “corporatization” of both passenger and good transport segment. They are also opposing the hefty fines proposed that may end up sending “all drivers to jail. The proposals for hefty fines in the Bill, lifted from western models, do not “take into consideration the road condition, infrastructure and awareness of the people of India on traffic rules and road safety.

To unions it seems an NDA dispensation's plan aimed at helping it take over the transport sector from the state governments. The move smacks of a kind of "authoritarianism" and is an "attack" on federalism.

### **Read further:**

[http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/transport-operators-go-on-nationwide-strike-against-new-road-safety-bill-normal-life-hit\\_1587395.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/transport-operators-go-on-nationwide-strike-against-new-road-safety-bill-normal-life-hit_1587395.html)

<http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-pros-and-cons-of-draft-road-transport-and-safety-bill-2014-2038532>

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/road-safety-bill-states-power-not-diluted-in-final-transport-draft/articleshow/47104025.cms>