Transport Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari Launches Zero Fatality Districts Programme to Achieve 50% Reduction in Road Crash Fatalities by 2030

Science-based solutions designed by SaveLIFE Foundation target 100 high-risk districts across India; complements national road safety efforts

New Delhi, 12 January 2026 – Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari today formally launched the Zero Fatality Districts (ZFD) Programme, a national initiative encompassing several scientific interventions that are designed to achieve India's commitment under the Stockholm Declaration 2020 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals of halving road crashes and road crash fatalities and injuries by 2030.

The Programme, developed by SaveLIFE Foundation (SLF) in collaboration with the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), will be implemented across 100 districts identified through data-driven analysis as witnessing the highest burden of road crash fatalities in the country.

Speaking at the Annual Meeting of Transport Ministers from all States and Union Territories at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, Shri Gadkari emphasised the gravity of the road crashes crisis in India. "We witness 5 lakh road crashes annually, resulting in 1.8 lakh fatalities, with 67% of the fatalities involving people between 15-49 years—our most productive age group," he stated. "We analysed the data, looked at the evidence, and identified 100 districts where road crashes are most concentrated. Through road engineering, proper enforcement of traffic rules, and support from civil society, we can bring down these numbers significantly."

Evidence-Based District Selection and Strategy

The ZFD Programme represents a fundamental shift in India's approach to road safety—moving from enforcement-focused interventions at blackspots or specific locations witnessing a higher incidence of road crashes, to a comprehensive, year-round, district-based enforcement strategy grounded in crash data forensics and Safe System design principles.

"The first question that comes to mind is where do we start from," said Piyush Tewari, Founder-CEO of SaveLIFE Foundation. "To answer this, we pulled crash data collected by the Government of India for 650 districts across the country for which data was available. We gave every district an index value and ranked them accordingly."

The selection of districts as the target geography is strategically significant: 65% of road crashes and fatalities occur outside national highways and expressways—on state highways and expressways, major district roads (MDRs), and other district roads (ODRs)—all of which fall under the administrative purview of district-level authorities.

Five-Factor Forensic Analysis

The ZFD methodology applies rigorous crash data analysis examining five critical parameters: place of occurrence, time of occurrence, collision partners, crash configuration, and causal factors. This temporal and spatial analysis has revealed actionable patterns, including that one-fourth of all road crashes are attributed to rear-end collisions, speeding, rash-driving and overtaking from the left are the most common traffic violations, and that specific months and time periods witness concentrated crash occurrence.

In Nashik Rural 1, a district where the Programme has been piloted, this analysis demonstrated that out of 39 police stations, just 19 were witnessing 75% of all road crashes; such data points can help district-level authorities make important decisions vis-a-vis optimal deployment of resources. Head-on, rear-end, and pedestrian-related crashes emerged as the most common crash types, while recurring engineering deficiencies—such as lack of intersection treatment—were identified as primary causal factors.

Three-Tier Implementation Architecture

The programme operates through a three-tier structure: district units led by nodal officers who conduct site audits, develop action plans and budgets, and conduct monthly reviews of the Programme's interventions; state units are responsible for quarterly reviews, budgetary allocations and approvals; and a Ministry-level unit at MoRTH will provide technical support for complex interventions such as intersection redesign and national-level data analysis. To anchor these efforts, SLF has prepared a guidebook to the ZFD Programme for district magistrates (DMs) and superintendents of police (SPs), with options to access detailed information and tools for data analysis, geospatial analysis, and other implementation-related guidance, for specific interventions.

Agency-specific action plans have been developed for NHAI, Public Works Departments, and urban local bodies to address 20 repetitive road engineering issues, such as gap in median, missing crash barriers, exposed objects, etc. More guidebooks covering enforcement strategies—physical, electronic, or mixed—trauma care protocols, and solutions for repetitive engineering issues have been provided to implementing agencies.

Trauma Care Integration

Analysis of crash victim transport patterns in Nashik Rural 1 revealed a critical gap: most road crash victims reach hospitals through private means, with government ambulance services (108) catering to only 18-19% of victims. The ZFD programme integrates trauma care

improvements as a core component, addressing the broken chain of survival that currently results in 30% of patients requiring emergency and injury care in India dying due to delays in medical attention.

No Additional Budgetary Burden

Significantly, the programme has been designed to work within existing resource allocations. Many identified interventions fall under the contractual obligations of road contractors, while many districts can utilise existing road safety improvement funds allocated under the district development funds, for this purpose.

Early Results and National Scaling

Pilot implementations have demonstrated significant fatality reductions, motivating the national rollout. During National Road Safety Month (January 2026), MoRTH has issued directives to all states and union territories to implement ZFD solutions, with district-led action plans prioritising data-driven risk identification.

The programme marks a critical milestone in India's road safety trajectory, aligning district-level administrative capacity with scientific methodologies proven to save lives in pilot deployments. With state governments, district administrations, and civil society organizations working in coordination, the ZFD Programme aims to deliver measurable, sustained reductions in preventable road crash fatalities across India's highest-risk geographies.

About SaveLIFE Foundation: SaveLIFE Foundation is a scientific, specialist not-for-profit organization working on road safety and trauma care in India since 2008. SLF's evidence-based interventions blend forensic crash investigations, international best practices in Safe System design, and clinical evidence foregrounding the public health implications of road crashes. The organization's Zero-Fatality solutions have delivered 30-60% reductions in road crash fatalities on target corridors nationwide.

Notes to Editors:

1. The Zero Fatality Districts Programme complements existing national initiatives including the Zero Fatality Corridor Programme targeting 100 high-risk highways and expressways.
2. India accounts for a significant proportion of the global road crash fatality burden, with lower-middle-income countries bearing 92% of global annual road crash fatalities.
3. Road crashes are recognized as the 12th leading cause of death globally and represent a critical public health challenge.

SaveLIFE Foundation: SaveLIFE Foundation is a leading nonprofit dedicated to improving road safety and emergency medical response in India. Through its Zero Fatality Corridor initiative, public policy advocacy, and community engagement programs, SaveLIFE Foundation works to prevent road crash deaths and build a safer future for all.

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