

INDIA TO HAVE OWN SAFETY STANDARDS, RATING FOR VEHICLES

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The Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP) will look at the safety of new vehicles and assign star ratings on their safety and sturdiness, in line with Global NCAP and European NCAP car safety programmes, road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari said

NEW DELHI : India plans to roll out its vehicle safety standards, mirroring similar programmes globally, in a renewed push towards improving road and vehicle safety in the country that has one of the world's worst road safety records.

The Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP) will look at the safety of new vehicles and assign star ratings on their safety and sturdiness, in line with Global NCAP and European NCAP car safety programmes, road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari told reporters on Thursday.

He did not give a timeframe for launching the new vehicle safety standards. Gadkari said consumer safety and public awareness about the safety norms are his ministry's prime focus.

He also said the government would make it mandatory for all new vehicles that can carry up to eight passengers to have at least six airbags. This will comprise side curtain airbags in addition to the current two front airbags. Other features such as a three-point seat belt and automatic emergency braking system (AEBS) will also be made mandatory for new passenger vehicles, he said.

To be sure, talks of an Indian NCAP for testing the safety of new vehicles have been doing the rounds for the past couple of years, but they are still to be formally introduced.

Gadkari said steps such as production linked incentive (PLI) schemes have led to an increase in domestic production of airbags, resulting in a drop in prices. He said fitting two airbags earlier used to cost automakers about 12,000, which has now declined to about 3,000 for airbags.

Gadkari said lower airbag costs would make it feasible for car manufacturers to include an additional safety feature. The minister also said that manufacturing of airbag inflators has now been included in the items qualifying for PLI benefits, making this import-dependent product locally available.

Stressing on the need to reduce road accidents in the country, Gadkari said around 150,000 road accidents occur every year, causing a 3.1% loss to the country's GDP. He said the government aims to halve the number of road accidents by 2025.

Gadkari also said the government has come up with regulations based on global standards to induce noise in electric vehicles and warn road users such as pedestrians and cyclists of the presence of EVs. This comes amid concerns that EVs generate less noise, which might make pedestrians and cyclists vulnerable to accidents or collisions with such vehicles.

During a media briefing, the minister laid down several measures and technological changes that the government plans to introduce. Gadkari said standards are being developed for making wheelchair accommodation provisions and guidelines for change of controls for the physically

challenged people or those with locomotion disabilities. Driver drowsiness attention driving system will also be promoted to prevent accidents, he said.

The minister also spoke about introducing a blind-spot system to inform the driver about a possible collision with a smaller vehicle such as a bicycle. This is aimed at warning a driver riding in mixed traffic conditions where there is a combination of two-wheelers and heavy vehicles.

Further, the government is also contemplating making a lane departure warning system mandatory, which would warn the driver when the vehicle begins to move out of its lane on freeways and arterial roads. The system is designed to reduce accidents by addressing the main causes of collisions, driver error, distractions and drowsiness, Gadkari said.

The transport ministry has also proposed to introduce norms for transportation of "dangerous" goods, including limiting the transportable quantity of such goods in line with European regulations.

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