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Article Content:

Union road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday announced the reward for good Samaritans who help save road crash victims will be increased to ₹25,000.

The ministry launched the Good Samaritan Scheme in October 2021, which will continue till March 2026. The ministry pays ₹5,000 to states that implement the scheme, with states receiving ₹500,000 upfront.

Speaking at a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) road safety event, Gadkari also outlined the ministry's insurance scheme for crash victims being rolled out across states. "If you go to the hospital after an accident, based on a simple formality on our website, we will give seven-day expense or maximum ₹1.5 lakh immediately," he said, adding the scheme covers accidents on all roads, not just national highways.

At a presser on January 7, Gadkari had said so far 6,840 people have benefitted from this insurance scheme active in states such as Assam, Chandigarh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Puducherry and Haryana. The pilot started in March 2024 and will be expanded to all states by March 2025.

The Good Samaritan award money was given to 80 people by December 2022, according to government data tabled in the Parliament.

Gadkari expressed concern over India's high accident rate, with 500,000 crashes leading to 172,000 deaths. He attributed this to poor driving behaviour and disregard for rules.

While acknowledging improvements in automobile engineering, he admitted to road quality issues. "Black spots have been identified. We are rectifying them by spending ₹40,000 crore. Our detailed project reports are defective too, but we will improve that," he said.

The minister urged industry and academia to conduct independent post-accident road safety audits. "Study accidents, do safety audits and sponsor them. Expose those responsible, including NHAI officials. Put pressure on road contractors and engineers so they face non-bailable offences," he said.

A report released on Wednesday at a separate event attended by the minister said the proposed satellite-based tolling system would improve national highway conditions.

The Primus Partners and Think Infra study also noted Advanced Driver Assistance Systems in the GNSS ecosystem could enhance safe vehicle operation and enable features like driver credit ratings. It cited Bulgaria's implementation of average speed control and technical inspection enforcement.