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Govt ropes in IIT to audit traffic calming measures, suggest changes

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Bhubaneswar: The state government has decided to engage IIT-Bhubaneswar to conduct an audit of existing 'traffic calming' initiatives on accident-prone roads in the state and suggest remedial measures.

Traffic calming refers to measures taken to reduce the speed of fast-moving vehicles and prevent accidents. Recently, the state and national highways authorities adopted several traffic calming measures such as building speed-breakers at vulnerable stretches and traffic islands at crossroads and extending pedestrian area at junctions.

IIT-Bhubaneswar will also prepare a detailed report on designs of wayside amenities and traffic aid posts along the state's highways.

The transport department said 8,102 accident-prone junctions were identified in the recent past for adoption of traffic calming measures. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has completed traffic calming measu-

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res on 1,452 of them. The state works department, which owns the other junctions, has been asked to complete implementing traffic calming measures by April 30, the department added.

"Our objective is to find out whether traffic calming measures are foolproof or not. The proposed third-party audit involving IIT-Bhubaneswar will focus on corrective steps to check accidents. In 2018, 68 per cent of the accident deaths in the state were caused by over-speeding, so we

are focusing a lot on traffic calming steps," transport commissioner Sanjeeb Panda said.

Sources said the Supreme Court committee on road safety, which has been expressing concern on the rise in road accident deaths in Odisha, recently directed the state government to take effective traffic calming measures to check accidents. To check over-speeding, interceptor vehicles and dedicated staff (private security guards) have been given to the regional transport offices (RTOs). "But the enforcement is not satisfactory. If the target of detecting speed-drivers is not achieved, the wages of the staffs should not be released," the meetings of a recent meeting on road safety revealed.

The transport department said a total of 37 interceptor vehicles equipped with speed detection radars operate on highways across the state. Sources said 26,502 over-speeding cases were detected by these interceptors between January and September 2019. However, only 5,300 of the violators were caught and had their DL cancelled.