APPENDIX 5

IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY

a. Working with a partner, consider the problem of road safety in a large Indian city like Madras. Prepare a chart like this one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS</th>
<th>SOLUTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first column, list at least eight road-safety problems e.g. stray cattle, overloaded vehicles.

Next, decide on the best way to solve each of your problems. Put a tick under one or more of the SOLUTIONS columns.

b. The newspaper report which follows is about a road safety seminar held in 1987.

Scan the report and locate the paragraph, or paragraphs which

i. tell(s) readers that the seminar was organised by the IIPA.
ii. give(s) an overview of road safety problems and say(s) what action the Highways and Road Works Department has taken.
iii. explain(s) the involvement of the service agencies (telephones, electricity, etc).
iv. look(s) at the problems and solutions from a legal standpoint.
v. report(s) on the suggestion that the solution lies with politicians.
Effective Implementation of Laws Alone Will Ensure Road Safety

1. Madras: With just one per cent of the world's vehicle population, India accounts for six per cent of the accidents. It has been estimated that 17 per cent of the deaths in the country every year are in road accidents. There is a death every three minutes on the roads, taking a toll of some 30,000 lives per annum and injuring another 1.3 lakh persons. The total loss incurred from accidents has been calculated at a stunning Rs.350 crores per year.

2. This traffic situation, and reports that Tamil Nadu takes a rather high place among States in the number of accidents, especially the fatal ones, were the core of the discussions at a day long seminar on "Road Safety" organised here by the regional branch of the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) on Sunday.

3. Speakers at the seminar noted that lack of enforcement of the laws, a sudden spurt in vehicle population - particularly of two- or three-wheelers, scant regard for rules, inadequate and often poor quality of roads, liberal issue of driving licences and the quality of vehicles still on the roads were the main reasons for the high number of accidents in the country.

4. The Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, Mr. M.N. Chandurkar, set the tone for the discussions, by hitting the nail on the head. "How many people obey the rules? It is deliberate, not due to lack of education." He was equally concerned about the indifference of the traffic police in checking violations of the laws, and the public apathy to such important issues as road safety and pollution.
5. Mr. Chandurkar observed that public transport - "the green monsters" - was becoming a law unto itself. "It is their privilege to go by any lane and by all lanes and it is a common sight to see a bus parked far away - in the middle of the road - from the bus stand and another coming alongside, further to the centre of the road."

6. The former Director General of Police, Mr. C.V. Narasimhan, wanted deterrent punishment for offenders. It was a matter of routine for the accused to plead guilty before the court, pay up the meagre fines and get away with it. He suggested that documentary films on safe driving be circulated through licensed driving schools. He said medians had brought down the number of head-on collisions but bad lighting seemed to be causing other accidents because the dividers were not sighted in time by drivers.

7. Mr. R. Subramaniam, Chief Engineer, Highways and Rural Works, pointed out that a survey in Tamil Nadu had shown that 34 per cent of the accidents were due to rash driving. Again 10 per cent of the accidents involved pedestrians and 16 per cent the cyclists. Thirty per cent of accidents occurred at night, when 60 per cent of the fatal mishaps also took place.

8. He informed the seminar that 36 accident-prone intersections on the highways had been identified and plans to improve the design finalised. The Transport Corporations had come forward to fund the works.

9. The Transport Commissioner, Mr. S.T. Kasirajan, said an important recommendation of the Mishra Committee (1983) on the transport problem was the need to give a status to the driver and make him responsible.
10. As road cuts played a key role in the maintenance of roads or even causing accidents, Mr. R. Rangarajan, General Manager, Madras Telephones and Mr. V.M. Venkataswamy, Regional Chief Engineer, TNEB, were at hand to discuss the issue.

11. They said the formation of a high level coordination committee of service agencies, headed by the Madras Corporation Commissioner, had helped sort out many problems. But the committee was able to plan only major and programmed works, road by road. The unforeseen repair works had to be taken up without notice or coordination.

12. The PTC Chairman, Mr. K. Bhaskara and its former Managing Director, Mr. R. Thillainayagam, argued that while criticising the public transport, people must also understand the problems of the bus drivers and the transport corporations. "It requires skill and patience to handle such a massive vehicle on our roads", they said, pointing out that the Corporations had established their own driving schools to train better drivers.

13. Mr. R. Vijayaraghavan, President, Road Safety Association of Tamil Nadu, noted that Madras had registered a decline in the number of road accidents over the past three or four years, but the problem was that fatal mishaps were increasing every year - climbing up from 353 in 1982 to 410 in 1986.

14. The Senior Counsel in the High Court, Mr. N.T. Vanamali, expressed concern at the indifference of the public and the authorities to the laws. He spoke of the regulations making it mandatory for cycles to have front lights and red reflectors at the rear and the danger to two wheelers on the roads from missing or damaged manhole covers.
"Old buses emitting black smoke, passengers clinging precariously to the running boards, two-wheelers carrying an entire family of five, buses whizzing past red traffic lights with total unconcern, lorries carrying loads three-storeys high. Laws alone will not ensure road safety. There must be effective implementation," Mr. N. Natarajan, senior advocate, argued.

The Madras Road Traffic Code 1940, which provided for the control of traffic in public places in the Province of Madras (now Tamil Nadu) had strangely enough not been amended to the extent it should have been, contended Miss. Geetha Ramaseshan, another advocate. The stray cattle menace and the lack of equipment with the police to check overspeeding were other avenues she highlighted in the road safety issue.

While Mrs. Arunal Jagadesan wanted more traffic parks for children and their compulsory use by schools, Mrs. Jyothi Balasundaram was concerned with the pollution problem. She said a Bombay survey had revealed that pain in the chest, cough, burning eyes and other ailments are caused by pollutants such as sulphur-dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, carbon-monoxide and harmful elements emitted by vehicles on the roads.

Mr. P. Suryaprakasam, suggested an organised lane system for Madras, with the two extreme lanes reserved for stage carriages and the centre lanes for the straight-going, non-stop vehicles.

Mr. Alagappan, from the audience, said more than public concern and law enforcement, the answer to the traffic problems ploughing the country and State lay with the political leaders. It was up to them to realise the gravity of the situation and react in the public interest.
20. The Chairman IIPA, Mr. V. Karthikeyan, said it was time to assess the existing laws and regulations on road safety, pinpoint the loopholes to remedy the situation, and effectively implement them. (Source: The Hindu, February 1987)