



Children riding sans helmets to be under police scanner

Vehicle Owners Will Be Culpable

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: It's been a year since the government made helmets compulsory for pillion riders in the city. However, parents who ferry kids without headgear have been getting away without fines or punishment. Not any more.

As a fresh drive to do away with poor-quality helmets begins on February 1, traffic police's hawk-eyed scrutiny will not spare riders accompanied by children without helmets.

While child rights activists and experts have urged parents to take the matter seriously, traders say not too many parents buy helmets for their children despite the 2016 rule mandating headgear for kids too.

Additional commissioner of police (traffic) R Hitendra said: "Our enforcement awareness drives are under way and all rule-breakers, including children, will be under our scanner."

Survey: 3 out of 4 kids ride helmetless in city

A recent dipstick survey con-

2,000 UNITS SOLD EVERY DAY

On an average, about 2,000 helmets – 50% of which are unbranded – are sold in the city every day, of which children's headgear constitute a small percentage.

Director of Child Rights Trust, Nagasimha G Rao, said: "The problem is staring at us and we seem to be doing little about it. The matter has also come up for discussion in schools where we run children's clubs, and kids themselves have argued in favour of helmets. When it comes to children below the age of 10 or 12, the onus of their safety lies on parents." ACP Hitendra said in case



SAFETY CONCERN: Traders say not too many parents buy helmets for their children

of minors caught without helmets – whether they are riding the two-wheeler or sitting pillion – vehicle owners will be held responsible for the offence.

ducted by Exide Life Insurance claims that three out of four children in Bengaluru ride helmetless. "...Alarmingly, three out of four children have been observed riding without helmets as compared to the national average of two out of four kids," said the survey, as part of which 1,118 two-wheeler riders were questioned.

While the survey's sample

size may be too small for a city that has 49 lakh two wheelers and is home to 26.81 lakh citizens aged between zero and 19 years, the assessment may not be too inaccurate.

Umesh Bahiti, partner, Ryder Auto Accessories, which supplies branded headgear to more than 120 retail shops in Bengaluru and controls 50% of the branded helmet market, said: "Companies didn't

TIMES VIEW

The prospect of wearing a helmet provokes fury and making it compulsory only stokes passions further. But in a toss-up between safety and ease of travel, safety must take precedence. While a life is a life, a child's life perhaps is more precious since she has so much to live for. Parents and guardians have expectations, dreams and, very often, so much riding on their offspring. Why take a chance of cutting it all short? While, traffic police are on the right path, helmet manufacturers too must keep pace with the demand and cater to children too.

manufacture helmets for children until about three years ago. But even since then, sales of such helmets are very low, although there has been an increase this year."

In 2016-17, Ryder sold 2.08 lakh helmets in Bengaluru, of which only 1,300 were meant for children, while in 2017-18 (up to January 18) the company has sold 1.95 lakh helmets, including 3,671 for kids.