

Hearing impaired may soon get driving licences

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New Delhi : Persons with hearing impairment may soon be able to get driving licences after passing tests. The road transport ministry is planning to incorporate provisions including some sort of "prominent identification" of vehicles driven by such persons.

Recently, social justice and empowerment minister Thawar Chand Gehlot had written to road transport minister Nitin Gadkari to look into this aspect and take necessary steps to enable hearing-impaired persons to get driving licence.

"We are considering all aspects. This is a genuine demand from one segment of the society and they must not be deprived of their right," Gadkari told TOI.

Ministry sources said they are considering options like pasting stickers on vehicles driven by the hearing-impaired to alert other drivers, as it is done in the case of vehicles driven by someone with a learner's licence or a "child on board" stamp.

"In case of drivers with hearing impairment, we can think of pasting such stickers both in the front and rear windscreens so that they can be spotted quickly. Safety of such drivers largely depends on how other drive," said a government official.

The demand for amendment of the law to allow such persons to have a driving licence has been going on for over a decade and some of the cases have also been referred to courts.

In February 2011, the Delhi high court, on a PIL filed by the National Association of the Deaf, had observed that people with hearing impairment can also drive and if they meet the necessary criteria and pass the test, they would be given driving licences. In 2009, the Central government had even told the Delhi high court that they were considering issuing licence to the hearing impaired.

The constitutional validity of Section 8(4) of Motor Vehicles Act was also challenged in the Bombay high court. The section says that if a person who has applied for a learner's driving licence suffers from a disease or a disability which might put the public or other vehicles in danger, the regional transport office may reject such application and refuse to issue the licence.