Doctor in SC on car fires

OUR LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 5: A paediatric surgeon today moved a petition in the Supreme Court seeking a probe into what he says are growing instances of cars catching fires simultaneously, often killing the occupants.

Dr Sanjay Kulshrestha, an Agra resident, has demanded criminal action against the car manufacturers and dealers if the probe finds prima facie evidence of gross negligence in some of the fatal accidents.

His petition says that in several such car fires, the occupants were burnt alive as the doors and windows jammed, cutting off escape. So, until the inquiry is over, he has demanded a ban on power windows (those operated by switches or buttons) and central locking systems in all cars in the country.

The apex court will within a few days decide whether to hear the public interest litigation.

The petitioner says he moved the top court after failing to “get any satisfactory answer or explanation from (the) ministry of surface transport and (the) Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers... about whether any official inquiry or forensic study for such incidents had been done”.

Quoting Delhi police, the petition says that at least 35-40 such fires have been occurring every year in the national capital alone. It adds that several manufacturing defects can be responsible for such fires.

The petition says that “the lobby” of car manufacturing companies is very strong and dominating and responsible for the present lax attitude of the government.

It contrasts the situation with that “prevalent in countries such as (the) United States, Japan and South Korea, which have strict regulations on (product) recalls and specialised bodies looking into them”.

In his petition, the surgeon has cited two incidents reported in Delhi last month:

- On May 24, a car caught fire near the Defence Colony but the two occupants managed to get out.
- On May 9, a 38-year-old businessman was charred to death inside his car when it suddenly burst into flames. Witnesses said they could see a man desperately trying to get out but the doors seemed to have jammed.
Delhi 5th in India, way behind world
Survey ranks it low for lack of politically representative civic system and transparency

PMI turns focus on manufacturers for fires in new cars

Govt colony revamp likely to gather pace

Civic bodies lawless, reckless, IC

Luxury gets a new address.
Limited edition lake facing villas with institutional parks

A new opportunity to own the finest designed villas in Noida with an outstanding location in a luxurious and exclusive community that marks the pinnacle of every elite.

Unveiled by artist
Construction in progress
Special price only for PDP.

Chopra Partner
BRAND REALTY 9999-000-333

Mithas
PIL turns focus on manufacturers for fires in new cars

A series of fatal car fires has made a Delhi doctor move the Supreme Court seeking answers to a series of questions—from manufacturing defects to lax enforcement of norms—from the Centre.

Sanjay Kulshreshtha, a pediatric surgeon, said in a PIL that fatal car fires were never investigated beyond telling the public about an electrical short circuit or a fuel tank leak. But the police never probed whether the vehicle had manufacturing defects resulting in the fire, he said.

Should manufacturers be not investigated for car fires, he asked. “Why have these incidents, which were rare a decade back, become common and that too in new generation cars,” he asked and said occupants of cars on fire were charred to death mainly because the auto-lock doors got jammed, preventing their escape.

Seeking an inquiry by experts to go into the causes of fire and fixing accountability on the manufacturer or the authorities, the petitioner said, “These days, more and more features are added to cars for comfort, requiring more electrical wiring. But there is no word as to whether these cars have been tested rigorously in the hot climatic condition of India before being pushed into the market.” Apart from cars catching fire, many fatal accidents have occurred in the recent past because of defects in the steering wheel or brake failure, Kulshreshtha said. He attached newspaper reports about such incidents in the last two years along with the petition.
He has also meticulously recorded various car manufacturers recalling a large number of cars to replace defective parts. He wanted to know how these parts got fitted in the first place without being tested.

He said in April, Maruti recalled over one lakh Swift Dzire cars to replace a faulty fuel tank. In June last year, Honda Cars India Ltd recalled 42,672 units of Honda City cars to replace power window switches and in October 2012, Toyota had recalled a large number of cars for similar faulty power window switches.

Kulshreshtha said, “Car makers are supposed to work on the principle of ‘self-regulation’ as they are free to make voluntary guidelines and it is left to companies to voluntarily declare generic defects. This is in contrast to regimes in the US, Japan and South Korea, where manufacturers are governed by strict regulations on recalls with specialized bodies looking into such issues.”
Our Legal Correspondent

New Delhi, June 5: A paediatric surgeon today moved a petition in the Supreme Court seeking a probe into what he says are growing instances of cars catching fires spontaneously, often killing the occupants.

Dr Sanjay Kulshrestha, an Agra resident, has demanded criminal action against the car manufacturers and dealers if the probe finds prima facie evidence of gross negligence in some of the fatal accidents.

His petition says that in several such car fires, the occupants were burnt alive as the doors and windows jammed, cutting off escape. So, until the inquiry is over, he has demanded a ban on power windows (those operated by switches or buttons) and central locking systems in all cars in the country.

The apex court will within a few days decide whether to hear the public interest litigation.

The petitioner says he moved the top court after failing to “get any satisfactory answer or explanation from (the) ministry of surface transport and (the) Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers... about whether any official inquiry or forensic study for such incidents had been done”.

Quoting Delhi police, the petition says that at least 35-40 such fires have been occurring every year in the national capital alone. It adds that several manufacturing defects can be responsible for such fires.

The petition says that “the lobby” of car manufacturing companies “is very strong and dominating and responsible for (the) present lax attitude of (the) government”.

It contrasts the situation with that “prevalent in countries such as (the) United States, Japan and South Korea, which have strict regulations on (product) recalls and specialised bodies looking into them”.

In his petition, the surgeon has cited two incidents reported in Delhi last month:

- On May 24, a car caught fire near the Defence Colony but the two occupants managed to get out.
- On May 9, a 38-year-old businessman was charred to death inside his car when it suddenly burst into flames. Witnesses said they could see a man desperately trying to get out but the doors seemed to have jammed.
New Delhi, June 5: A paediatric surgeon today moved a petition in the Supreme Court seeking a probe into what he says are growing instances of cars catching fires spontaneously, often killing the occupants.

Dr Sanjay Kulshresthra, an Agra resident, has demanded criminal action against the car manufacturers and dealers if the probe finds prima facie evidence of gross negligence in some of the fatal accidents.

His petition says that in several such car fires, the occupants were burnt alive as the doors and windows jammed, cutting off escape. So, until the inquiry is over, he has demanded a ban on power windows (those operated by switches or buttons) and central locking systems in all cars in the country.

The apex court will within a few days decide whether to hear the public interest litigation.

The petitioner says he moved the top court after failing to “get any satisfactory answer or explanation from (the) ministry of surface transport and (the) Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers... about whether any official inquiry or forensic study for such incidents had been done”.

Quoting Delhi police, the petition says that at least 35-40 such fires have been occurring every year in the national capital alone. It adds that several manufacturing defects can be responsible for such fires.

The petition says that “the lobby” of car manufacturing companies “is very strong and dominating and responsible for (the) present lax attitude of (the) government”.

It contrasts the situation with that “prevalent in countries such as (the) United States, Japan and South Korea, which have strict regulations on (product) recalls and specialised bodies looking into them”.

In his petition, the surgeon has cited two incidents reported in Delhi last month:

On May 24, a car caught fire near the Defence Colony but the two occupants managed to get out.

On May 9, a 38-year-old businessman was charred to death inside his car when it suddenly burst into flames. Witnesses said they could see a man desperately trying to get out but the doors seemed to have jammed.
कार में आग क्यों लगती बार-बार

कार में लगी घिमकी के उपरांत से छेड़छाड़ करना, गाड़ी का इसी रक्षकाल नहीं करना या फिर उसमें गैर-जरीय बदलाव करना आपको महंगा पड़ सकता है। हालांकि, कार की गुणवत्ता बदलने के लिए नहीं है। इसलिए, सशक्त तरीक़े के जरिए कार की बचाव की जाने का महत्व है।

हादसों की वजह

कंपनियों का कहना है कि कार का महंगा दंगे से रखरखाव नहीं करने या फिर उससे गैर-जरीय में लगाने से कार के इलेक्ट्राकल सिस्टम पर बाधा पड़ती है और ऐसे हादसे होते हैं।

सेंटिल लाइट करने की बजाय से अगले पर गाड़ी से बाहर नहीं। इसलिए, सशक्त तरीक़े के जरिए कार की बचाव की जाने का महत्व है।

कंपनियों का कहना है कि कार का महंगा दंगे से रखरखाव नहीं करने या फिर उससे गैर-जरीय में लगाने से कार के इलेक्ट्राकल सिस्टम पर बाधा पड़ती है और ऐसे हादसे होते हैं।
‘Make inspection regime mandatory to prevent car fires’

SWARAJ BAGGONKAR
Mumbai, 9 June

Tampering with electrical fittings of a car, subjecting it to improper maintenance or making unwarranted changes to it are the primary reasons behind the spurt in cases of vehicle fires, which have claimed several lives in the recent past.

In a span of less than two months, more than half a dozen incidents of vehicle fires have been reported in Delhi and Mumbai. These incidents have triggered panic among car users.

Sanjay Kulshreshtha, a medical practitioner from Agra, has filed a public interest litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court, seeking an independent probe into the fires. He has also sought to fix the responsibility of car fires on manufacturers and dealers.

The PIL also sought to impose a ban on convenience features such as power window and central locking in cars.

In Delhi, last Wednesday, two brothers were charred to death when they failed to open the doors of the Hyundai Santro they were travelling in. Last month, a Delhi businessman found the door of his Toyota Etios jammed, preventing his escape, when the fire due to short-circuit gutted his car killing him on the spot.

Kulshreshtha, who drives a Maruti Suzuki SX4, has been studying road traffic hazards for seven-eight years and has challenged the lachardistical approach of the manufacturers. According to the Delhi Police, at least 35 such fire incidents occur every year in the capital alone. So, we can easily assume that it must be a huge number at national level, argued the PIL.

Car manufacturers, however, claim that most such incidents happen due to lack of genuine maintenance of the vehicle or unwarranted additions made to the car, which could put extra load on the electrical systems of the vehicle.

P. Balendran, vice-president (corporate affairs) General Motors, said, “Invariably about 99 per cent of (fire) cases happen because of work done by unauthorised people. Buyers also opt for after-market compressed natural gas (CNG) or liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) fitment or installation of some electronic gadgets not suitable to the vehicle.”

Due to their low-operating cost, CNG or LPG became the preferred fuel for many car owners. Roadside garages across the country doubled up as engineers to fix the gas tank in the boot of the car which often lead to haphazard handling of fuel pipes and ignition wires.

An engineer from the Automotive Research Association of India said, “Electrical wires, upholstery made from inflammable material, battery terminals coming loose, ill maintenance of the car can prove hazardous. Manufacturers can only do up to a certain extent but the onus lies on the owner as regards to the upkeep of the vehicle. The main culprit here is the some unwarranted tinkering with the electrical fittings, which often go unnoticed by the owner. The illegal retrofitting should be stopped immediately.”

S P Singh, senior fellow, Indian Foundation of Transport Research and Training, said, “The very procedure of issuing type approvals should be made more stringent. Checks are done by authorities with prior intimation, rather there should be random and surprise testing of vehicles.”

Singh is in favour of a mandatory inspection regime for cars like there is for buses, which have to go for annual check-ups. He argues that regional transport offices need to be given greater powers to check the workmanship of vehicles. “Many of the models are more compliant overseas than in India. Product failure is a much larger issue,” he points out.

Dilip Chhabria, ace designer and founder of DC Design, said, “Cases of fire always occur due to bad maintenance of the vehicle. The owners generally neglect the car after buying them. At DC Design, we do not do any modifications to the structural or mechanicals of the car or we do not disturb any electrical set up in the car. It is only the aesthetic value of the car we change.”