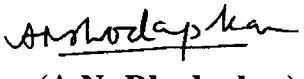
international road signs, most countries in Europe have developed a system of signage using symbols to take the place of words.

The modern era has witnessed pioneering evolution in the science of road signages. Today, we have Variable Message Signs (VMS) which are electronic traffic signs, often used on the roads to direct and inform drivers where there are changing traffic and weather conditions, traffic routes and statutory provisions etc. Such signs warn of traffic congestions, accidents, work zones or speed limits on a specific highway segment. In urban areas, VMSs are used within Parking Guidance and Information Systems to guide the drivers to the available car parking spaces. They may also guide the vehicle to take alternative routes, limit travel speed, warn of duration and location of the incidents or just inform the traffic conditions. In some places VMSs are set up with permanent, semi-static displays indicating predicted travel times to important destinations such as major cities or interchanges along the route of highways. It is expected that by providing real time information to the drivers on the roads, VMSs can improve vehicles' route selection, reduce travel time, mitigate the severity and duration of incidents and improve the performance of the transportation network.

National Information Communications Technology, Australia (NICTA) has developed a system known as Driver Assistance System (DAS) by which the drivers can be made aware of the road signs ahead. This system automatically detects and recognizes the road signs placed near streets and highways and matches their image to images that are already present in its underlying database. It assists the driver by displaying the road signs on the dash board thereby alerting the driver to take appropriate action. Such detection of road signs, however, can be a problem when signages are faded or covered with tree or distorted due to minor accidents. But, despite these numerous problems that can hamper the recognition of road signs, this system does not fail to detect the presence of a road sign on the road.

Use of advance warning instruments like Flashers, Speed Radars, Lux Meters, Handycams, Digital Still Cameras should be encouraged on a large scale. In developed countries Flashers are used for monitoring traffic in addition to warning motorists about approaching traffic hazards. They are especially useful during late hours for checking and to warn the approaching motorists about the barriers deployed for slowing down the vehicles. Solar traffic signs are truly ideal for advanced hazard warning systems and many other traffic management applications. They are bright, easy to read, and conserve energy in an eco-friendly manner by using the power of the Sun rather than sources of electricity. Solar traffic signs are self-sufficient, and need very little maintenance throughout their life. Despite being small and portable, they are capable of withstanding adverse weather conditions, including strong winds.

The usefulness of the road signages has to be understood by one and all in order to develop a sense of togetherness when on the road. The governments around the world should strive to impart the basic education to the road users, about strict adherance to the information conveyed by different types of road signs and take steps to modernize these road signages from time to time, to cater to the requirements of basic road facilities and enhancing safety on the roads.



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