

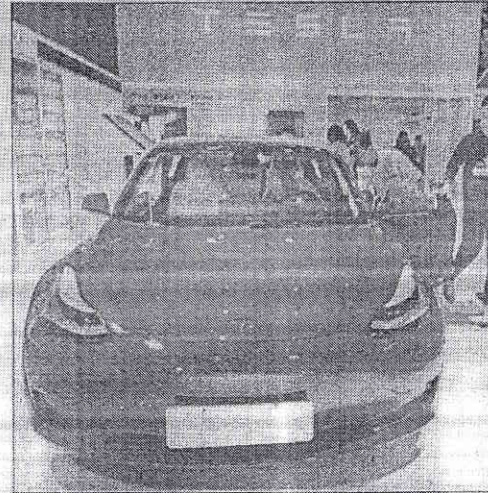
# Tesla Braces for Its First Trial on Autopilot Fatality

**San Francisco:** Tesla Inc is set to defend itself for the first time at trial against allegations that failure of its Autopilot driver assistant feature led to death, in what will likely be a major test of Chief Executive Elon Musk's assertions about the technology.

Self-driving capability is central to Tesla's financial future, according to Musk, whose own reputation as an engineering leader is being challenged with allegations by plaintiffs in one of two lawsuits that he personally leads the group behind technology that failed. Wins by Tesla could raise confidence and sales for the software, which costs up to \$15,000 per vehicle.

Tesla faces two trials in quick succession, with more to follow.

The first, scheduled for mid-September in a California state court, is a civil lawsuit containing allegations that the Autopilot system caused owner Micah Lee's Model 3 to suddenly veer off a highway east of Los Ange-



les at 65 miles per hour, strike a palm tree and burst into flames, all in the span of seconds.

The 2019 crash, which has not been previously reported, killed Lee and seriously injured his two passengers, including a then-8-year old boy who was disemboweled. The lawsuit, filed against Tesla by the passengers and Lee's estate, accuses Tesla of knowing that Autopilot and other safety systems were defective when it sold the car. **Reuters**