

# CHANGE GEARS: AMENDMENTS TO THE MOTOR VEHICLES ACT

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Roads

India's law governing motor vehicles and transport is archaic, lacking the provisions necessary to manage fast motorisation. The lacunae in the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, require to be addressed to improve road safety, ensure orderly use of vehicles and expand public transport. The [Motor Vehicles \(Amendment\) Bill](#), passed by the Lok Sabha last year, seeks to do this, but it has now run into opposition in the Rajya Sabha because of its perceived shift of power from the States to the Centre. The issue is not one of legislative competence; as the subject is in the Concurrent List, Parliament can make a law defining powers available to the States. Some State governments are concerned about the new provisions, Sections 66A and 88A, which will empower the Centre to form a National Transportation Policy through a process of consultation, and not concurrence. The changes will also enable Centrally-drafted schemes to be issued for national, multi-modal and inter-State movement of goods and passengers, for rural mobility and even last-mile connectivity. Since all this represents a new paradigm that would shake up the sector, several States have opposed the provisions as being anti-federal. Doing nothing, however, is no longer an option. The passenger transport sector operating within cities and providing inter-city services has grown amorously, with vested interests exploiting the lack of transparency and regulatory bottlenecks. With a transparent system, professional new entrants can enter the sector. As things stand, State-run services have not kept pace with the times. Major investments made in the urban metro rail systems are yielding poor results in the absence of last-mile connectivity services.

Creating an equitable regulatory framework for the orderly growth of services is critical. This could be achieved through changes to the MV Act that set benchmarks for States. Enabling well-run bus services to operate across States with suitable permit charges is an imperative to meet the needs of a growing economy. Regulatory changes introduced in Europe over the past few years for bus services have fostered competition, reduced fares and increased services operating across European Union member-states. Other aspects of the proposed amendments deal with road safety. These, however, are likely to achieve little without strong enforcement by the States. The effort to curb institutionalised corruption at Regional Transport Offices by making it possible for dealers to directly register new vehicles, and enabling online applications for driving licences is welcome. Care is needed to see that other measures, such as sharply enhancing fines for rule violations, do not only result in greater harassment. It is the certainty of enforcement, zero tolerance and escalating penalties that will really work. There are some new provisions to harness technology, including CCTV monitoring, to improve road safety, but these cannot produce results when there is no professional accident investigation agency to determine best practices.

Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!

Please enter a valid email address.

The U.S. policy of separating children from undocumented migrant parents is cruel

Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.

END

crackIAS.com