Opposition to Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill

Why in news?

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- The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, passed last year by the Lok Sabha, now faces opposition in the Rajya Sabha.
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- Click here to know more on the Bill.
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What is the need for the amendment?

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- The Motor Vehicles (MV) Act, 1988 governing motor vehicles and transport is largely outdated.
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- It lacks the provisions that are necessary to manage the present fast motorisation.
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- Especially, the passenger transport sector operating for inter-city services has grown with vested interests.
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- This is a result of exploitation of the lack of transparency and regulatory bottlenecks.
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- So with a transparent system, professional new entrants can come into the sector.
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- Also, State-run services have not kept pace with the times.
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- E.g. investments in the urban metro rail systems are yielding poor results in the absence of last-mile connectivity services.

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- These lacunae have to be addressed to improve road safety, ensure orderly use of vehicles and expand public transport.
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- But the bill faces opposition from the states.
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What are the concerns?

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- Some state governments are concerned about the new provisions, Sections 66A and 88A.
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- This will empower the Centre to form a National Transportation Policy.
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- Notably, it would be through a process of consultation, and not concurrence.
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- It will also enable Centrally-drafted schemes for national, multi-modal and inter-State movement of goods and passengers, for rural mobility and even last-mile connectivity.
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- The provisions would bring in a new paradigm that would overhaul the sector, and hence the States see it anti-federal.
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- Clearly the issue is not one of legislative competence as the subject is in the Concurrent List.
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- So clearly, parliament can make a law defining powers available to the States.
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- The opposition is thus more due to the perceived shift of power from the States to the Centre.
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What is the way forward?

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- Well-run bus services have to be enabled to operate across States with suitable permit charges.
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- This is an imperative to meet the growing needs of a transforming economy.
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- The regulatory changes could contribute to fostering competition, reducing fares and increasing services.
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- Other provisions on road safety, fines and curbing corruption need proper enforcement.
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- A professional accident investigation agency has to be put in place to determine the best practices.
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- In all, an equitable regulatory framework has to be created for the orderly growth of transport services.
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- States should thus reconsider their opposition to amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act.
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- The passage of the Bill would also help meet the UN mandate to reduce road accidents up to 50% by 2020.
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Source: The Hindu

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