GS-II: It is still an amber light for road light.

News

The Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill, 2019 passed by the Lok Sabha on 23 July and Rajya Sabha on 31 July has 63 clauses with the aim of reducing road traffic fatalities and injuries in India.

‘MOTOR VEHICLES (AMENDMENT) BILL 2019’:

Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill 2019

The Bill has amended the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to provide for road safety.

Salient features of the Act are:

Road safety: The bill has increased penalties for traffic violations and offences like juvenile driving, drunken driving, driving without licence, dangerous driving, over-speeding, overloading etc. Penalty to be increased by 10% every year.

Vehicle Fitness: The Bill has mandated automated fitness testing to reduce corruption for vehicles and introduced penalty for deliberate violation of safety/ environmental regulations.

Recall of vehicles: Defective vehicles will be compulsorily recalled. The manufacturer will either will reimburse for full cost or replace the defective vehicle.

Road Safety Board: A National Road Safety Board will be created to advise the central and state governments on all aspects of road safety and traffic management.

Protection of Good Samaritan: The bill defines ‘Good Samaritan’ is defined as a person who renders emergency medical or non-medical assistance to road accident victims. Guidelines have been incorporated to prevent their.

Cashless Treatment during Golden Hour: The time period of up to one hour following a traumatic injury, during which the likelihood of preventing death through prompt medical care is the highest.

Compulsory insurance: Motor Vehicle Accident Fund to be constituted to provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India.

All these are intended to reduce traffic crashes by at least 50% by 2030.

Out of the many amendments proposed in the Act the increased penalties have been implemented in many states from September 1, 2019.

At the same time many states have decided to “dilute” the suggested increase in penalties.

Penalties as deterrents:

- New penalties have been introduced for faulty registration details the concessionaire or
the contractor who is responsible for a faulty road design or has not followed standards and for guardians of juvenile offenders to be penalised.

- While there have to be penalties for offenders there does not seem to be nay correlation between stricter and higher penalties and a reduction in road traffic crashes in countries where road traffic deaths have reduced over the years.

**Challenges:**

- Unfortunately, the states who are topping the list of accidents are avoiding the implementation.
- “Chalta Hai” attitude prevails.
- With a Fund already existing to provide compensation for hit and run accidents, the purpose of the new Accident Fund is unclear.
- History of corruption may ripe up to the highest.
- State governments will issue licenses to taxi aggregators as per central government guidelines. Currently, state governments determine guidelines for plying of taxis. There could be cases where state taxi guidelines are at variance with the central guidelines on aggregators.
- While the penalties for contravening provisions of the proposed scheme on interim relief to accident victims are specified in the Bill, the offences that would warrant such penalties have not been specified. It may be argued that imposing penalties without knowing the nature of the offences is unreasonable.

**Way Forward:**

Therefore, if there is to be a reduction in India in the growing health burden due to traffic crashes it requires establishing a system or institutional structure which enables the generation of new knowledge new road standards thereby ensuring safe highways and urban roads. Thus, we have a long way to go in ensuring sage road behaviour.