Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill and Road Accidents

What is the issue?

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- Though Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2017 has been heralded as a measure to reduce road accidents, there is no mention of any measures to prevent accidents other than higher penalty for drivers and operators.
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- The proposed amendment is harsh on drivers, truckers and small players, without addressing the causes of accidents.
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What is the ground reality?

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- According to a study only 10 per cent of the accidents occur due to the drivers' fault.
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- Long duty hours, stress and strain on the drivers, particularly, the truck drivers are also contributory factors.
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- However, these facts were not considered while its formulation.
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- Factors such as traffic discipline, over-congestion, growing number of vehicles beyond the capacity of roads have not been addressed in the Bill.
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What are the concerns regarding its provisions?

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- To regulate and privatize the regulatory mechanism, right from registration of vehicles to inspection.
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- It will be achieved through concentration of all powers with the Centre in the name of simplification and promoting competition.
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- This will make the existing State-based regulatory and disciplinary mechanism redundant.
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- Further, third party insurance is made mandatory for STU buses putting a big burden on the STUs.
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- Despite State Transport Undertakings (STUs) recording the lowest accident rates in the country this Bill will affect them.
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- I t also introduces the new concept of ‘Aggregator’.
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- However the fallout of private aggregator such as Uber and Ola has not been well analyzed before introducing such a new concept.
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- These aggregators are a threat to auto rickshaws drivers, many of whom are self-employed and couldn’t fulfill the promised salary to the drivers who registered their vehicles with them.
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- Transport department employees will face job insecurity if their duties and responsibilities are given away to private agencies.
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What can be done in this regard?

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- Segregation of roads and rectification of defects in the construction of roads should be done immediately.
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- Incorporation of road safety and traffic rules in the school curriculum both in Central and State syllabi will help in ingraining the culture of safe driving.
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- Reduction of long duty hours and stress and strain on drivers will reduce the accidents due to physical fatigue.
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- Provision of parking, resting places, motel facilities on highways and strengthening the public transport system by discouraging personalized

transport are the other steps to reduce accidents.
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- The present Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill should be revised to reduce accidents rather than creating an uncertain environment for transport workers and facilitating big companies to earn more.
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