

Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill, 2017

Why in news?

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The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill passed by the Lok Sabha will take a little more time to come into force, since it has not cleared the Rajya Sabha in the 2017 Budget session.

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What are the significant proposals to the Motor Vehicles (MV) Act of 1988?

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- A group of State Transport Ministers went into the reform question last year, while the comprehensive recommendations of the **Sundar Committee on road safety** have been left on the back burner for nearly a decade.

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- The Centre assumes a direct role in the reforms, since it will introduce guidelines that **bind State governments** in several areas, notably in creating a framework for taxicab aggregators, financing insurance to treat the injured and to **compensate families** of the dead in hit-and-run cases, **prescribing standards for electronically monitoring highways** and urban roads for enforcement and **modernising driver licensing**.

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- **Protection from harassment for good samaritans** who help accident victims is something the amended law provides, and this needs to be in place.

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What the researches indicate?

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- Research shows that imposing stricter penalties tends to reduce the level of enforcement of road rules.

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- As the **IIT Delhi's Road Safety in India report of 2015** points out, the deterrent effect of law depends on the severity and swiftness of penalties, but also the perception that the possibility of being caught for violations is high.

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- The amendments to the MV Act set **enhanced penalties for several offences, notably drunken driving, speeding, jumping red lights** and so on, but periodic and ineffective enforcement, which is the norm, makes it less likely that these will be uniformly applied.

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What is the way ahead?

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- Without an accountable and professional police force, the ghastly record of traffic fatalities, which stood at 1,46,133 in 2015, is unlikely to change.

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- On another front, **State governments must prepare for an early roll-out of administrative reforms** prescribed in the amended law, such as **issuing learner's licences online, recording address changes through an online application, and electronic service delivery with set deadlines.**

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- Indeed, to eliminate corruption, all applications should be accepted by transport departments online, rather than merely computerising them.

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Source: The Hindu

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