The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Why in News?

The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2019 that seeks to amend the Motor Vehicles Act of 1988, was passed in Parliament recently.

What is the act about?

- The Act provides for grant of licenses and permits related to motor vehicles, standards for motor vehicles.
- It also provides for the penalties for violation of these provisions.

What is the compensation for road accident victims in the bill?

- The central government will develop a scheme for **cashless treatment** of road accident victims during golden hour (i.e. up to one hour following a traumatic injury).
- The Centre may also develop a scheme to provide interim relief to claimants seeking compensation under 3rd party insurance.
- The bill increases the minimum compensation for hit and run cases:
    1. In case of death, from Rs 25,000 to Rs 2 Lakh,
    2. In case of grievous injury, from Rs 12,500 to Rs 50,000.

What is the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund?

- The central government should constitute this fund which will provide a compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India.
- It will be utilised for:
    1. Treatment of persons injured in road accidents,
    2. Compensation to representatives of a person who died or grievously hurt in a hit and run accident,
    3. Compensation to any other persons as prescribed by the central government.

Who is a Good Samaritan?

- **Good Samaritan** - A person who renders emergency medical or non-medical assistance to a victim at the accident scene.
- The assistance must have been in good faith, voluntary and without the

expectation of any reward.
- Such a person will not be liable for any civil or criminal action for any injury to or death of an accident victim.

How are the vehicles recalled?

- The Bill allows the central government to order for recall of motor vehicles if a defect in the vehicle may cause damage to the environment, or the driver, or other road users.
- The manufacturer of the recalled vehicle will be required to:
    1. Reimburse the buyers for the full cost of the vehicle, or
    2. Replace the defective vehicle with another vehicle with similar or better specifications

What is the National Transportation Policy?

- The central government may develop a National Transportation Policy, in consultation with state governments. The Policy will:
    1. Establish a planning framework for road transport,
    2. Develop a framework for grant of permits,
    3. Specify priorities for the transport system.

What is a Road Safety Board?

- It can be created by the central government through a notification.
- It will advise the central and state governments on all aspects of road safety and traffic management.

What are the Offences and penalties?

- The Bill increases penalties for several offences under the Act such as, for drunken driving, non-compliance of vehicle manufacturer with motor vehicle standards, non-compliance of contractor to comply with road design standards, etc.,
- The central government may increase fines mentioned under the Act every year by up to 10%.

Who are the taxi aggregators?

- **Aggregators** (As per the Bill) – Digital intermediaries or market places which can be used by passengers to connect with a driver for transportation purposes (taxi services).
- They will be issued licenses by state. Further, they must comply with the Information Technology Act, 2000.

How were the charges of being anti-federal tackled?

- It was said that the proposed amendments were reviewed by 18 State Transport Ministers, and the Bill reflects the modifications they suggested.
- Also, Rajya Sabha which represents the states in Parliament introduced some last-minute changes.

What is the way forward?

- The Centre must deliver on its promise that the amended Act will help reduce dependence on personal vehicles.
- It must present its National Transport Policy without delay.
- States must be incentivised to provide clean, comfortable and affordable services for all users, including people with disabilities.
- State Transport Corporations must adopt modern management practices to tackle the structural reform and an upgrade to subsidised electric buses for low-cost air-conditioned travel.
- Sustained, zero tolerance enforcement of small fines will reduce violations, while the stringent ones which lead to more bribery.

Source: PRS India, The Hindu

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