Driving Change: The Imperative Shift to Electric Trucks in India

Why is there a need to transition to electric trucks?

1. **Growing Truck Fleet:** Approximately 9 lakh new trucks are added annually in India, contributing to increased PM2.5 pollution. The existing fleet already stands at 70 lakh trucks.

2. **High Fuel Consumption and Emissions:** Trucks consume over a quarter of India's oil imports and are responsible for over 90% of road transport CO_2 emissions.

3. **Electric Vehicles Penetration:** Despite electric vehicle use crossing 6%, electric trucks face limitations, primarily due to cost and infrastructure challenges.

4. **Need for Decarbonization:** Achieving the 2070 net zero target necessitates decarbonizing the transport sector, with a crucial focus on truck electrification.

Steps taken by the government to facilitate the shift towards electric vehicles:

1. **FAME Schemes:** The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles initiative offers incentives for purchasing EVs and establishing charging stations.

2. **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan:** Launched in 2020, it targets having 30% electric vehicles on roads by 2030.

3. **Tax Incentives:** An additional tax deduction of INR 1.5 Lakh is provided for the interest on loans for electric vehicle purchases.

4. **Public Transport Enhancement:** Financial support is given for electric buses in cities like Delhi.

5. **Transformative Mobility Mission:** Focuses on the manufacturing of EVs, components, and batteries.

6. **NITI Aayog's Battery Manufacturing Subsidy:** Proposes a $4.6 billion subsidy to boost domestic lithium battery production.

What should be done to facilitate this transition?

1. **Address High Upfront Costs:** Tackle the issue of e-trucks being expensive (₹1.5 crore for electric vs. ₹40 lakh for diesel trucks) through subsidies or financial incentives.

2. **Accelerate E-Truck Adoption:** Increase the pace of transitioning to electric trucks, aiming beyond the 7,750 e-truck targets for 2030.

3. **Public-Private Investment:** Mobilize funding by combining public and private investments, aiming for a high ratio of private to public funds.

4. **Expand Electric Rail Freight:** Utilize India's electrified rail freight more, as it currently covers only 20% of freight.

5. **Set Electrification Targets:** Establish clear targets for electrifying trucks, similar to what's being done for buses.

6. **Create Green Freight Corridors:** Designate specific highways as green corridors to demonstrate the effectiveness of e-trucks.

7. **Innovative Financing and Incentives:** Implement innovative financial tools, incentives for charging infrastructure, support for entrepreneurial initiatives, and a favorable regulatory environment to achieve the essential breakthrough in India's truck electrification.

Terminology Used:

Particulate Matter (PM): Air pollution consisting of tiny particles and droplets in the air, categorized mainly into PM10 and PM2.5 based on their size. PM2.5 poses significant health risks as it can penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream.

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper 3- Security- Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in Internal Security Challenges etc.

Media Control: Traditional Censorship in a Modern Era

What is media?

Media encompasses various methods and channels used to communicate information and messages to people. It includes tools and platforms for sharing news, entertainment, and educational content. Types of media range from traditional print and broadcast media to the vast landscape of the internet and social media.

Recent Important Developments around Media Control in India:

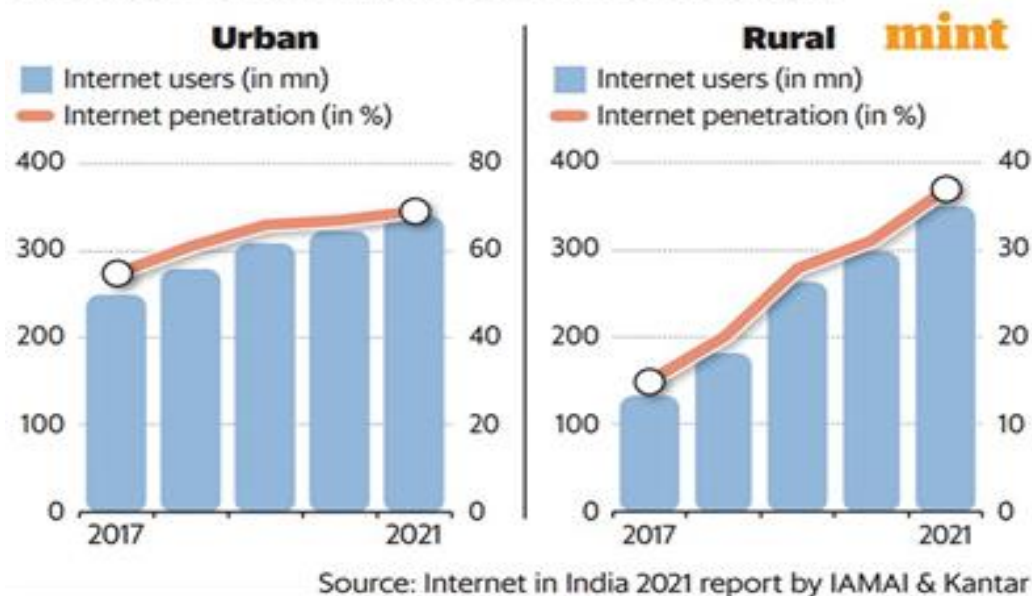1. **Selective Reporting in Media:**

   - **Uttarakhand Tunnel Collapse:** Following the tunnel collapse in Uttarakhand, there was a notable difference in reporting between newspapers and television. While newspapers extensively covered the incident from day one, television initially provided sparse coverage. This raises questions about selective reporting, potentially influenced by government and ideological factors.

2. **Proposed Government Legislation:**

   - **Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023:** The government's proposed legislation aims to increase oversight in the media landscape. This bill not only seeks to regulate traditional broadcasters but also extends its scope to include online content creators. The move reflects a broader perspective on media control, encompassing a diverse range of platforms.

These developments underscore the evolving landscape of media in India, with discussions around transparency, government influence, and the regulation of online content creators shaping the narrative.

Internet penetration in India has expanded hugely since 2017. Rural India has more internet users than urban India.

Urban

Internet users (in mn)
Internet penetration (in %)

Rural mint

Internet users (in mn)
Internet penetration (in %)

Source: Internet in India 2021 report by IAMAI & Kantar

Internet's Growing Influence and Government's Response:

- The rise of internet usage, particularly among rural populations, is challenging the dominance of traditional media.

- Government efforts to regulate online content, as indicated by the proposed Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, signal a desire to exert control over digital media.

Self-Regulation vs Government Control:

- Existing self-regulation practices in the media sector are facing overshadowing by more direct government interventions.

- This shift suggests a move towards increased centralized control over media content.

Implications of Government Control on Media:

- The Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023, enhances government control over media, leading to reduced transparency and accountability.

- The heightened control erodes fundamental rights, particularly related to free speech and information access.

- Government use of digital technologies under these new rules can manipulate public sentiment, indicating a shift towards more authoritarian control.

What Should Be Done?

1. **Pursue Legal Resistance:**

    - Emulate successful legal challenges against measures like the Information Technology Rules, 2021, as evidenced by stays issued by the High Courts of Madras and Bombay.

    - Apply similar legal strategies to oppose censorship measures such as the Broadcasting

Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023.

2. **Promote Stronger Self-Regulation:**

   - Media organizations should prioritize robust self-regulation to prevent overreach by the government.

   - This approach offers a balanced alternative to direct government control over content.

3. **Support Digital Platform Freedom:**

   - Safeguard spaces from excessive government regulation, especially considering the significant internet usage in rural areas.

   - Protecting these spaces ensures they remain open and free, allowing diverse content and opinions to thrive, as highlighted in Nielsen's India Internet Report of 2023.

Navigating these challenges requires a strategic combination of legal resistance, strengthened self-regulation, and the preservation of digital platform freedom to uphold the principles of a free and diverse media landscape in India.