1. No Parking, No Car: National Greet Tribunal

Prelims Level: Infrastructure Road, inland, Railway aviation, Housing, Rural & Urban

Mains Level: GS-III Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways, Etc.

Context:

- The National Green Tribunal asked the authorities of 122 cities (which lack ambient air quality), including Delhi, to curtail registration of vehicles if they do not have adequate parking space. And instead, the NGT asked the authorities to, upgrade the Public Transport System.

What is the Issue?

- Two major factors that will hinder development in urban areas are
  1. The lack of available public and Private Parking
  2. The lack of a Robust Transit System.
- While many of the urban cities in India have been performing better in the latter, they lack proper private or public parking facilities. Improper parking leads to congestion, which results in air pollution.
- The NGT, concerned over the growing air pollution in India, had said, the environment protection measures require - the number of vehicles in any city must be limited to the available parking space.

The Tribunal's Directions:

- Parking can be allowed only at designated places.
- Stringent measures must be taken by statutory authorities including the traffic police against any such parking.
- The transport departments of the states and the Union territories, must assess the available parking capacities in their cities and determine the number of vehicles that can be accommodated in these available parking space.
- In case, if the number of vehicles had exceeded the capacity, there should be an action plan for providing adequate additional parking space.
- The number of vehicles to be registered must be curtailed by using appropriate economic disincentives or otherwise, if the number of vehicles had exceeded the capacity.
- There should be an alternative provided to the citizens in the form of a public transport system.

- Concerned over the threat posed to limited natural resources due to their overuse, the NGT had directed for assessment of **carrying capacity** of 122 cities, including Delhi, where air quality does not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

What is Carrying Capacity?

- The concept of "carrying capacity" addresses the question as to how many people can be permitted into any area **without the risk of degrading the environment** there. In case of urban cities, the carrying capacity is largely determined by the level of economic activity carried out by the residents of the city.

The Issue of Parking Capacity:

- The NGT has directed the states and the Union territories, to assess the available parking capacities in their cities and determine the number of vehicles that can be accommodated in these available parking space.
  1. Indian cities often lack in discipline of vehicle parking, leading to congestion, which results in pollution.
  2. In Indian urban spaces, there is no clear regulation regarding parking spaces.
  3. The safety of bicyclers and pedestrians is also affected due to unavailability of parking spaces.
  4. **Delhi's parking woes** – Though the public transport in Delhi is far better than other cities, the aim of last mile connectivity is still unachieved. The vehicles from the neighbouring states, also occupy the streets of Delhi leading to congestion.

Denying Registration of New Vehicles:

- The NGT has ruled that, the number of vehicles to be registered must be curtailed by using appropriate economic disincentives or otherwise, if the number of vehicles had exceeded the capacity.
  1. This can hurt the movement of urban citizens, who rely on private mode of transportation.
  2. This is only a temporary fix, as the issue of construction and demolition waste has not been addressed.
  3. This would also affect the automobile sector, which is already reeling under pressure due to Unfavourable Market.
- Preventing the urban people from buying new vehicles, without improving the parking space, may lead to chaos in the Urban Areas.

Solution to the Parking Problems:

- Indian cities should move toward more organised parking management systems. This would not only reduce the congestion, but also **increase the effectiveness of the Public Transport Systems**.
    - ✓ Increased Parking Fees for parking in public spaces
    - ✓ Increase On-Street Parking facilities.
    - ✓ On-Street Angled Parking – increases the space availability.
    - ✓ Remote Parking and Shuttle Service – feeder facility.
    - ✓ GPS Tracking on Buses – to make the public transport reliable.
    - ✓ Parking Database – for better planning.
    - ✓ Informal Markets for Off -Street Parking.
    - ✓ Parking Spaces Sales and leasing.
    - ✓ Financial Incentives for using public transit.
    - ✓ Advanced Parking Management Systems.
    - ✓ On Demand Parking Mobile Apps.
    - ✓ Transferable Parking Rights.
    - ✓ Temporary Parking Structures.
- By integrating the parking database with the urban transit systems, these cities can fill the gaps in their **last mile connectivity**.
- The tribunal had made it clear that the adverse impact on public health and constitutional mandate that right to clean air is a fundamental right cannot be violated for long.

Background:

1. National Clean Air Programme

- It was envisioned as a scheme to provide the States and the Centre with a framework to combat air pollution.
- The intention is **to cut the concentration of PM10 and PM2.5 by at least 20% in the next five years**, with **2017 as the base year** for comparison.
- **Which cities will Fall Under This?**
    - ✓ Based on the reports by WHO and the air quality data obtained, **122 cities** have been chosen as **Non-Attainment Cities**.

- **Who All Will Participate?**
  - ✓ Industry and academia, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Ministry of Heavy Industry, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, NITI Aayog, and Central Pollution Control Board.

2. National Air Quality Index (AQI):

- ✓ Based on **'One Number- One Colour-One Description'.**
- ✓ There are **six AQI categories**, namely Good, Satisfactory, Moderately polluted, Poor, Very Poor, and Severe.
- ✓ The index will measure eight major pollutants, namely, particulate matter (PM 10 and PM 2.5), nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide, ammonia and lead.
- ✓ The simplicity of the NAQI also makes it accessible to the common man.
- ✓ The use of the colour coded system makes is easier for people to comprehend instantly.

3. Ambient Air Quality Standards in India

- ✓ Ambient air quality refers to the condition or quality of air surrounding us in the outdoors.
- ✓ National Ambient Air Quality Standards are the standards for ambient air quality set by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) that is applicable nationwide.
- ✓ The CPCB has been conferred this power by the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.**
- ✓ Government of India has laid **down National Ambient Air Quality standards (NAAQS) for twelve air pollutants,** namely, PM10, PM2.5, Carbon Monoxide (CO), Sulphur Dioxide (SO_2), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2), Ammonia (NH_3), ground level Ozone (O_3), Lead, Arsenic, Nickel, Benzene and Benzo Pyrene.