

Move India Move

Since coming to office in 2014, India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has launched dozens of schemes to push his agenda to get India ready for the future. One of his first and best known ones is 'Make in India', the other prominent ones being 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or Clean India', 'Smart Cities Mission - 100 Smart Cities', 'Digital India', 'Skill India', 'Stand-Up India' and now, 'MOVE India'.

Right after the Indian automobile industry's annual Automotive Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) and Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) summits, Mr. Modi invited some of the key global players like Osamu Suzuki, Chairman, Suzuki Motor Corporation; Takeshi Uchiyama, Chairman, Toyota Motor Corporation; Euisun Chung, Vice Chairman, Hyundai Motor Company; Dr. Volkmar Denner, Chairman, Robert Bosch GmbH; and Indian honchos like Anand Mahindra, Chairman, Mahindra Group; and Guenter Butschek, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director, Tata Motors; for the MOVE - Global Mobility Summit to discuss the future of mobility in India and maybe beyond. In his address, Prime Minister Modi was clear. For India's future, mobility is critical and it is also a key element of 'ease of living'.

Prime Minister Modi's vision for the future of mobility is based on 7 Cs - Common, Connected, Convenient, Congestion-free, Charged, Clean and Cutting-edge. Like every so often, Mr. Modi seems to be way ahead of the reality in India that stands more for 28 Cs - Collapse, Catastrophic, Careless, Criminal, Corrupt, Confused, Cancerous, Complicated, Commotion, Complex, Crowded, Challenging, Congested, Crazy, Conflict, Collision, Chase, Cheat, Crash, Crises, Costly, Casualty, Chock-a-blocked, Capital-locked, Clutter, Chicanery, Circus, Choked. On the other hand, without this kind of vision, India and maybe even the world, would be finished. If India were to follow the same path as the developed world, especially USA, Europe and Japan, there will be total chaos. With 20 odd cars per 1000 inhabitants in 2016, tripling the annual growth by 2026, as per the Automotive Mission Plan of the Indian government and the industry, and reaching approximately 85 cars per 1000, will be a challenge. Forget about 600 and more cars per 1000 inhabitants like in the West, or 120 like in China. India does not have the roads, even if the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways promises 40 kilometers a day by March 2019. With 8 out of the world's 10 most polluted cities, India doesn't even have the air that can absorb any more fumes. More so, it lacks parking space in the crowded cities and also oil to run the fleets. India is at a crossroads. Today, at this low level, it still can decide to trace a road of survival.

India has the capacity to leapfrog, like it has shown in the IT industry or with the mobile telephones. So just like the country got with communication, why not have a completely new mobility on the roads too? The technology itself is in for a revolution anyway, and that could give India the chance - like it got in telecom - to grab the latest technology and not accept an outdated one. As per a recent study from a Stanford University economist, Tony Seba, titled 'Rethinking Transportation 2020-2030', petrol cars will vanish in eight years.

An electric motor-driven car has 18 moving parts, one hundred times fewer than a combustion engine car, which additionally wastes 80% of its power through heat.

With climate change being anything but fake news, burning oil for transportation has no future. A precondition of cause would be an environment-friendly production of the electricity to drive the cars. In this area too, there is light at the end of the tunnel and it is not an incoming train! Renewables like solar and wind are making huge progress and most importantly, the storage technology, be it with batteries or other means, is improving by leaps and bounds. By the time the electric car surpasses the 200 miles per charge range, it will cost less than USD 20,000 - in about 2022 the breakthrough will be done. With IT all over, cars will be computers on wheels and nobody will worry anymore if the car, which is anyway used only for maximum 50 kilometers a day on average, is stranded in the middle of the road.

As we know from the past, nothing can be achieved without pressure. Also, here, India is in a unique position. With oil and coal prices spiralling higher, the economy growing by 7-8% but having a target of becoming a USD 5 trillion economy by 2022, India just cannot afford to move on at the same pace. It would be a vicious cycle. Currently, the coal supply for 76 out of the 121 thermal plants, has less than seven days' stock. So the recent slacking in the capacity creation in India's renewable energy sector, is more than worrying.

The target to quadruple the current solar capacity of 25,000 megawatts (MW) to 100,000 MW in 2022 and almost double the wind capacity from 34,393 MW to 60,000 MW, has to be achieved. And like with cars, India has to leapfrog with its buildings too. India's cooling requirement will increase by eight times in the next 20 years. But by 2037-38, the ICAP (India Cooling Action Plan) targets a cut of nearly 30% from its current level, in the energy consumption for cooling. While that timeline may look far away, actually it is just tomorrow.

Looking for guidance abroad or in India, to escape the energy trap, is tricky. If the government does not move, it will probably be the courts. India's Supreme Court, in the late 1990s, directed all non-CNG-powered public transport vehicles in Delhi to convert to CNG and more recently, in 2016, banned non-CNG cabs from the NCR region. Even in Germany, based on a court ruling, older diesel cars will not be allowed to drive anymore in several cities like Hamburg, Frankfurt or Stuttgart. India could make a start with two-wheelers and just copy the Chinese model. In 2004, there were only 40,000 electric motorcycles. Then a scheme was enforced that boomeranged the number to 100 million by 2009, with an annual increase of 20 million then onwards. And for our over 40 cities, with more than a million people each, we can take Singapore as the role model. Just make our cities as smart, with consumer-friendly public transport, controlled individual traffic and the highest environmental standards.

The latest scheme of the Prime Minister is Modicare, the world's largest health insurance scheme that will provide secondary and tertiary healthcare service to 500 million people. With better air, safer traffic and more ease of living, we could have Modicare for all Indians. Just MOVE it!

Modi Optimistic Vibrant Energetic.

India is at a crossroads. Either it takes the sustainable multipurpose route, or it gets stuck in a one-way that is a dead end.