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Auto growth could distort transport policy, warn Nobel Laureates

Special Correspondent

If India's car industry continues growing at breakneck speed, its auto majors could manipulate climate and transport policies in the same way as their counterparts in the U.S., warned IPCC chairman R.K. Pachauri. On the other hand, the "laughable" speed of Indian trains hampers the growth of public transport.

Dr. Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 – was speaking during an interaction with three other Nobel Laureates at the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit 2011.

"In the U.S., special interest groups who have been dominating and dictating the country's climate policy have been arguing in their own interests," said Joseph Stiglitz, who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2001. "People have to realise that they are not speaking in the interest of the country as a whole, not in the interest of most ordinary citizens."

Dr. Pachauri said Indian policies are facing a similar danger. "My concern is that with the enormous growth of the auto industry in India, we are running into the same problem," he said.

For instance, the interests of the auto industry can be opposed to those of public transport. "With one of the largest rail networks in the world, what is the speed that we have? It's laughable," the IPCC chairman said. He pointed out that such a blinkered vision of transport amounts to "mortgaging our future energy security". By 2030, India could be importing 750 million tonnes of oil per year, he said.

Increasing the price of diesel, investing in the railways, waterways and coastal transport would all help to "make sure we don't get into the same kind of trap," he said.

Yuan Tseh Lee, who won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1986, warned that "if India follows China's path in an auto boom instead of public transport investment, its per capita emissions will increase to six or seven tonnes per capita." India's per capita emissions now stand at less than two tonnes.

Keywords: [automobile industry](#), [public transport](#), [carbon emissions](#), [climate change](#), [sustainable development](#)

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