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The Daily Star wishes its readers, advertisers, patrons and well-wishers a Happy New Year.

Union Parishad polls EC writes for troops, govt wants talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday sent a letter to the Armed Forces Division, seeking forces for the UP elections and is waiting for the government's response.

Meantime, The government will soon initiate a dialogue with the EC to make its position clear on army deployment for the January 25-March 16 union parishad polls.

Earlier on Monday, an EC law and order review meeting decided on army deployment to ensure a peaceful atmosphere during the UP elections.

However, Political Secretary to

the Prime Minister Haris Chowdhury said the government had no plan to deploy troops.

There is no precedent of army deployment for the UP polls, he said adding that it (deployment) is a matter to be decided by the defence ministry.

The government policymakers also believe such deployment would

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A whiff of fresh air... a New Year gift

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The city-dwellers get a whiff of fresh air as a special New Year gift when two-stroke autorickshaws get off the roads from today after 47 years of operation.

The government has taken adequate preparations to implement the decision. The Traffic Department of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) will deploy 66 mobile and stationary units of policemen to ensure that none of the remaining 6,575 two-stroke polluters can ply streets.

The decision to finally ban the polluters was the outcome of a long-drawn campaign by the media, protest from the general public and environmentalists. And finally a High Court ruling hit the last nail into the two-stroke coffin.

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PHOTO: STAR

Goodbye two-strokes...polluting three-wheelers are being loaded onto trains at Kamalapur station as a ban takes effect today.

The year that was... Human rights prey to power play

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Incidence of human rights violation in the country marked a sharp rise in the year that just went by. Such violations encompassed all levels of life and surpassed in magnitude similar instances in the previous years.

To add to the trend, the government, the executive branch of the state, ignored the judiciary to a great extent right from the start of 2002. Also, it showed sheer intolerance to divergent opinions, especially of the opposition.

The misuse of such controversial legal provisions as Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Special Powers Act (SPA) also rose. Human rights violation by the army, the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), and the police only added to the difficult situation in 2002.

Arrest and detention of several eminent leaders, journalists and columnists generated severe criticism at home and abroad. They were arrested without any specific charge, placed on police remand and were tortured. What's worse, when conventional laws did not permit further detention, the government took recourse to the SPA to keep them behind bars.

Notable among the victims is Shahriar Kabir, a freelance journalist and writer who is well known for his anti-fundamentalists stance and his strong voice for trial of the killers of the War of Liberation.

Also detained is eminent historian and columnist Professor Muntasir Mamun, a staunch critic of the government on various issues. Freelance journalist Saleem Samad and NGO worker Pricilla Raj round off the list.

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