

# New Delhi bans smoking while driving

AP, New Delhi

A court has banned smoking while driving in India's capital in what is believed to be the first of its kind in any major city worldwide, police said yesterday.

Declaring "New Delhi roads dangerous to human life," the city's High Court imposed new measures aimed at deterring habitually bad drivers, including the smoking ban and a prohibition on using mobile phones while behind the wheel.

"Anything that distracts the attention of driver is dangerous. The human mind cannot do two things simultaneously," said New Delhi traffic commissioner Qamar Ahmed, welcoming Monday's ruling, which goes into effect April 9 and only covers New Delhi.

Those caught smoking behind the wheel would pay \$32, a heavy fine by local standards. Offenders caught more than five times would have their license revoked, the court said. The same fines apply to using a cell phone and the less well-defined offense of "dangerous driving."

Under the new measures, a motorist running a red light will pay \$13, compared with the current \$2.50. The new penalties came in an order issued by Justices Swami Kumar and H.R. Malhotra, who

were acting on their own as the death toll on city roads rose to more than 1,900 annually. Existing traffic laws, which have not been updated since their introduction 20 years ago, are going largely ignored.

"Immense influx of light and vehicular traffic has made New Delhi roads dangerous to human life," the two judges were quoted as saying by The Times of India.

"The gravity of offenses like rash driving and red-light jumping has lost their impact because of low fines."

Traffic has steadily worsened in recent years in New Delhi, where more than 14 million people and 4 million vehicles jostle for space on the roads. That's despite some 2 million people commuting daily on a metro rail introduced in parts of the capital in 2002.

"The court order will definitely make a dent. At present, motorists don't mind paying small fines and continue violating traffic rules," New Delhi police spokesman Rajan Bhagat said.

It's not the first time New Delhi's courts have played an activist role. A 1998 court order eventually forced all the city's public transport to switch from gasoline and diesel to compressed natural gas to cut pollution.

Meanwhile, the graft-body has been gearing up for a countrywide visit by ACC Chairman Lt Gen (retired) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury. The tour might begin in the first week of April, said an official of the commission.

The ACC has already sought from the government a chopper to use in the tour. Its application for funds to provide for the proposed rewards for investigation officers and the lawyers' fees awaits approval at the finance ministry.

The ACC boss will visit different districts, seeking to develop public awareness of issues critical to the fight against corruption. He will also exchange views with the civil society members and different stakeholders on ways to curb the graft menace.

Law Adviser barrister Mainul Hosein yesterday went to the ACC to meet its chairman. Details of the meeting could not be known.

Our Gazipur correspondent reports: a former state minister and BNP Joint Secretary General Prof MA Mannan yesterday submitted his wealth statement to the district ACC office.

He said the proposal for a multi-sector organisation chart would be sent to the government for approval.

According to commission sources, preparations regarding appointment of a panel of lawyers are at the final stage. The panel would help the ACC prosecution unit in dealing with the graft cases.

The commission has already appointed former attorney general (AG) Hasan Arif to front the unit that would deal with cases at the HC. Sharifuddin Ahmed Khan Mukul would oversee cases at the lower courts.

Officials said high-profile lawyers would move the cases against the top corruption suspects.

WB has not set any deadline. "That is up to the government to decide politically what is the right time to raise the prices," he said.

Talking to the reporters, Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam too spoke against continuing subsidy. "Our economy is becoming dependent on subsidy. We need a guideline on this matter."

The WB board might approve the fourth DSC instalment in May, he added.

Asked whether the NBR will try to retrieve the money deposited abroad by the graft suspects, the NBR chairman said, "if we have specific evidence or information, we will surely take appropriate action."

If inconsistencies were found in the known source of income of the government officials in their tax returns and their living standards, the NBR would also take actions against them, Rahman said.

He, however, did not specify the actions, saying that all problems could not be solved overnight.

## Ershad

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Airport on July 17, 1990 while they were trying to smuggle around 3.6 kg of gold worth around Tk 2.5 crore into Bangladesh, the prosecution said.

A smuggling case was filed with Cantonment Police Station the same day against the four - Bernhard Rudiger of Germany, David Anthony Chalmar Chaker of England, the then manager of Zia International Airport Major (retd) Ashraf Uddin Sekender and Abu Taher, an airport security guard.

During the investigation, the IO found evidence of Ershad's involvement in the smuggling and his name was included in the charge sheet on August 31, 1991.

### 2 MORE CASES

Another Dhaka court yesterday recorded statement of a prosecution witness in connection with a case filed against Ershad for setting up electronic news gathering (ENG) equipment in his secretariat for broadcasting facilities.

The court recorded the PW's statement after four years whereas the complainant of the case gave his deposition on March 29, 2003.

On the other hand, the same court adjourned the proceedings of another graft case until April 29 following a time petition by the prosecution lawyers.

In the first case filed with Tejgaon Police Station, it was alleged that Ershad, while in power, directed the authorities concerned to set up electronic news gathering equipment worth about Tk 2.93 crore at his secretariat.

The former president also directed the authorities concerned to create eight new posts for this purpose, the prosecution said.

Judge Md Abdur Al Amin of the Special Court for Dhaka Division recorded statement of former assistant engineer of Bangladesh Television (BTV) Iqbal Ahmed Bhuiyan and set April 29 for next hearing of the case.

In the second case filed with the same police station, it was alleged that the former president, defying the authorities' decision, directed to accept donation from France instead of Finland for setting up 'microwave telephone lines' in 49 upazilas.

Due to Ershad's unilateral decision, the government had to pay Tk 28 crore to France in interest, as the plan was not implemented finally, sources said.

### 55 graft suspects

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early March asked all banks to freeze the accounts of 55. They include high profile politicians like barrister Moudud Ahmed, barrister Nazmul Huda, Mohammad Nasim, Mosaddak Ali Falu, Nasser Rahman, etc.

"Now we will serve each of them with a notice to pay the due tax against these hidden deposits," NBR chairman told the reporters, "if they do not oblige, we will sue them."

"This move is a continuous process. Whenever we find a suspect, we will follow this process to determine his or her true wealth," Rahman observed.

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### NBR survey

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therefore the whole task should be easy for both the tax officials and the taxpayers.

The sectors to be covered in the NBR survey are: 1. clinics and diagnostic centres, 2. community centres, residential hotels and restaurants, Chinese restaurants and fast food shops, sweetmeat, bakery and confectionery shops, 3. commercially run English/Bangla medium schools and coaching centres, 4. internet and computer centres, 5. beauty parlours, fitness centres and physiotherapy centres, 6. firms of lawyers, physicians, engineers, tax lawyers, chartered accountants, cost and management accountants, and architects, 7. book stalls, book binding shops, printing presses, travel agencies, and advertising firms, 8. machinery shops, grocery shops, general stores, retail shops, and department stores, 9. shopping malls and super markets, 10. thread producers, thread dying, finishing, coning and weaving houses, textiles manufacturers, 11. real estate companies and developers, 12. saw mills, rice mills, flour mills, oil mills, and timber traders, 13. tailoring, laundry and sanitary ware shops, and 14. phone-fax and laminating centres, cassette-CD shops etc.

The tax officials will visit these places and talk to the owners of these establishments. They will be given particular forms to fill in. If someone refuses to fill in the forms, they will not be pressurised," the NBR chairman said.

Speaking on the occasion, the first army chief of the country Lt Gen (retd) KM Shafiuallah lauded the current role of the armed forces and asked for the assistance of the army in reinstating the 'correct history' by declaring Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the 'father of the nation'.

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Maj Gen (retd) Syed Md Ibrahim

# Tax evasion

FROM PAGE 16

to prepare for holding a free, fair and credible election, the creation of an enabling environment for business and the restoring of the business climate in order to ensure growth.

Mahbubur Rahman, president, Latifur Rahman and Samson H Chowdhury vice-president of ICC-B president among others executive members were present at the meeting.

Commenting on the demolition drive by Dhaka City Corporation and Rajuk, the chamber urged the government to give a time limit for owners of unauthorized properties to obtain the correct Rajuk approval instead of demolishing structures.

Such actions are slowing down business activities of small traders who have taken possession of shops from the owners on payment. Such a situation has forced a number of small traders to close down the business, it said.

Similarly, the eviction of hawkers, slum dwellers and small traders in different kutchha bazaars will add to their miseries. These groups of petty traders have no other means of earnings, the memorandum added.

As regards, hawkers, slum dwellers and petty traders in kwacha bazaars alternative arrangements should be made so that they could continue with their livelihood and refrain from taking part in unwanted activities, it suggested.

Welcoming the government's recent drive for tackling corruption, ICC-B said it would definitely help in confidence building within the country as well as to outside world.

"We strongly believe and agree with the move of the government to punish those politicians who have utilized public offices for personal gain as this will send out a signal to the rank & file to deter recurrence of such development in the future. Similar action should also be taken for their cronies," it said.

"We urge the government to continue with the drive but at the same time ensure not to harass innocent people. We also urge that government to make public only those names against whom there are specific charges," it said.

The Government decision of waiving duties on rice and wheat import will definitely help in reducing price in the local market. In this regard, the business leaders reiterated their suggestion for duty free import of some other essential commodities for stabilising the market price.

The ICC-B leaders also welcomed the move by Bangladesh Bank for the commercial banks to

reduce the L/C margin and to encourage small importers side by side with the large importers to import essential food.

The chamber welcomed the government recent steps for setting up an anti-hoarding policy at various supply chain.

However it said the policy of storage of goods should not be equated with hoarding and normal business and storage should not be disturbed and impeded in the name of hoarding in order to maintain the supply chain to the retail outlets.

Corporatisation of the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA)

may be undertaken to pave the way for investment in infrastructure development through capital market, the chamber hopes. Besides, private sector should be encouraged in the operation and management for greater efficiency.

For smooth and efficient operation of ports it is necessary to rationalise operation of trade unions and computerisation of terminal activities to reduce human interferences and increase efficiency, it said.

The country, even 36 years after independence is still undecided about the appropriate and efficient local government system.

ICC-B stressed on the need for efficient local government and urged the government to be addressed adequately before next election of the local government institutions.

The chamber appreciated the co-operation of businessmen establishments in saving electricity for domestic and industrial use by limiting their operation up to 7 pm. However, it urged the government to take immediate steps to enhance supply of power by at least 3000 megawatts to meet the growing demands.

The chamber urged upon to reconstitute and undertake necessary reforms in the Public Service Commission (PSC). It also welcome the move of the government against land grabbers and urge to continue the drive.

The political parties have been committing as election pledge to give full autonomy to government owned radio and television. But this has never happened. Therefore, we welcome the move by your Government to give full autonomy to these electronic media, it said.

# 4,000 more infected

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"Bird flu spread in other countries like forest fire. But here we are finding it in some pockets," said the adviser. Replying to a query, the adviser said if necessary the government might ask for technological and financial help from the international community.

Our Tariqul Haq correspondent reports: Bird flu was detected at a farm owned by Abdul Jallil at Rautbari near the Jamuna river. Around 2,000 chickens and 4,000 eggs were destroyed in presence of upazila livestock department officials last night.

Upazila Livestock Officer Dr Akhil Chandra told journalists that they received a fax from Dhaka notifying them that the chickens of that farm had bird flu. Earlier, the department had sent samples to a Dhaka lab to find out why 20 layer chickens died in the farm.

A correspondent in Jamalpur reports: 1,900 chickens were culled yesterday evening at Bhai Bhai Poultry Farm in Dikirbandor of Sharishabari upazila. Director General of Livestock Department Sunil Kumar visited Biman Poultry Complex at Ganobari in Savar where the first bird flu case was officially detected, our Gazipur correspondent reports.

They tried to determine the reason and source of avian influenza in the country.

KM Hasibul Khaled, manager of the poultry farm, told the investigation team that they supplied 1,03,426 chicks to 58 farms at different places in the country from February 4 to March 3. The birds in those farms are under the risk of avian influenza infection.

Meanwhile, livestock department officials in Gazipur found another farm at Muradpur of Kalikatri in Gazipur where 72 birds died in three days.

Dr Kafiluddin, district livestock officer, told The Daily Star last evening that he did not think it was a case of avian influenza infection even though he had sent samples to a lab to find out the reason for the chickens' death.

Meanwhile, chickens are dying due to unknown reasons at several poultry farms in Gazipur.

The Gazipur livestock officials formed a team to estimate the amount of loss at different farms in the district.

# Gen Moeen

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restore order and to pave the way for holding free, fair and credible elections. But he insisted that the army is not running the country.

He said, "After the proclamation of the state of emergency, I told the inspector general of police that I don't want to see anybody doing any harm or torch a single garment fighter."

ISPR in a press release said commanders of different sectors during the liberation war, and freedom fighters including Parade Commander of the Freedom Fighters.

Contingent Mir M Asalat attended the reception organised by the 9th Infantry Division.

The High court on April 30, 2001 upheld the death sentences of 12 including Maj (retd) Mohiuddin among the convicted 14. Only four of the condemned 12 - Lt Col Syed Farooq Rehman, Lt Col Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Lt Col Mohiuddin, and Maj Bazlul Huda have been behind bars so far.

Among the rest, one died while six others are believed to be hiding in various countries including the US, Canada, and Libya.

The NBR chairman said.

## Safta benefits

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'priorities and ground realities'.

But, Iftekhar reminded that the "Cardinal principle is of course mutuality of interests of the countries concerned."

He also said a common regional identity is required to move forward on more 'hardcore areas' such as trade and energy.

The adviser emphasised the need to build on commitments to cooperate on environmental issues made at the 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka last year.

Iftekhar also said Bangladesh would go to the upcoming Delhi summit with a view to 'redouble efforts' to meet the 22 Saarc Development Goals outlined at the last summit.

Keynote speaker at the roundtable, Abul Ahsan, the first secretary-general of the Saarc secretariat, said South Asian regional trade figures are dismal and need to be addressed through more dynamic policies regarding investment and broadening markets.