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Light to control 600 intersections

DMP plans to introduce lanes on most roads; unfit vehicles stay off road for ongoing drive

MUKHLESUR RAHMAN

Dhaka Metropolitan Police wants to bring around 600 more intersections in the capital under the automated traffic signal system and make all existing signal lights operative to further improve traffic situation.

DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque said in a meeting yesterday that the authorities also agreed to demarcate lanes on almost all roads in Dhaka city and bring all intersections under the automated signalling system in phases.

The traffic situation in the city has already seen some improvement after lanes were marked on three major roads and the automated signalling system was introduced. But it is the strict enforcement of the traffic rules that contributed a lot to the improvement by driving out almost all unfit vehicles from city streets.

Drivers with fake driving licences also remained off the roads, fearing arrest in the DMP drive that started December 8 and arrested around 100 drivers as of December 15.

Many bus companies have also withdrawn unfit buses and minibuses from city streets and

deployed them in adjacent towns.

HT Imam, an adviser to the prime minister, chaired yesterday's meeting at the Prime Minister's Office also attended by PM's Finance Adviser Mashur Rahman, the finance secretary, and the inspector general of police.

The DMP cannot specify the total number of unfit vehicles but it seized over 10,413 such vehicles during August 9-December 15.

DMP Deputy Commissioner Awlad Hossain assumes that around 20 percent vehicles operating on the city streets are unfit.

The DMP had to release almost all previously seized vehicles after fining their owners and having undertakings that they would not operate unfit vehicles on city roads because of a lack of space for keeping those vehicles.

"But this time we are not releasing any seized unfit vehicle, which has had a positive impact on the traffic situation," DMP Commissioner Shahidul told The Daily Star.

DMP Joint Commissioner (Traffic) Shafiqur Rahman told this correspondent eight lakh motor vehicles operate on the city streets and 2.5 lakh of them are private cars.

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The homebound day labourers risking lives regularly travel on the rooftop of bus to save their hard earned pennies. The picture was taken at the Second Buriganga Bridge in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: SHAFIQU ALAM

Police hiring before Jan 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided in principle to complete all procedures for appointing over 17,000 police personnel ahead of "Police Week 2010" to be held from January 5, officials said.

The decision came from a high-profile meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office with Prime Minister's Adviser HT Imam in chair.

Another adviser Moshir Rahman, Finance Secretary Mohammad Tareque, Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder, Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad, Additional Inspector General of Police NBK Tripura and

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Civil surgeons lose control over drugs

Govt takes the decision to ensure transparency, curb graft

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

To ensure transparency and curb corruption, the government has decided to strip civil surgeons of the authority to procure drugs, putting the responsibility on its Central Medicine Store Depot (CMSD) from now.

To curb pilferage of the drugs from public hospitals, a special packaging format will be introduced, the health ministry sources said.

As part of this decision, the government is buying medicines worth Tk 70

crore for upazila and district hospitals through the CMSD.

District civil surgeons have traditionally been procuring 30 percent of medicines required at the public hospitals through bidding process.

The remaining 70 percent drugs are supplied free by the government owned medicine manufacturer Essential Drugs Company Limited.

It has been long alleged that the civil surgeons tend to pocket a huge amount of money by manipulating the tenders in connivance with local drug traders who,

in return, supply lower quality drugs at higher prices.

The government's decision will ensure transparency in medicine procurement, as the CMSD will select the companies to supply drugs in the district and upazila hospitals through open tender, said health ministry sources.

"The tender has been called already and the Central Medicine Store Depot is collecting the annual demand of the drugs from the district civil surgeons," said Director of CMSD Brig Gen Shahidul Haque Mallik.

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2001 POST-POLL VIOLENCE Body formed to probe offences

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government formed a four-member commission yesterday to conduct a probe into the offences against minorities and supporters of opposition parties that took place just after the 2001 parliamentary elections.

The commission comprises Deputy Secretary of the home ministry Abdul Hannan, former deputy inspector general of police Nazrul Islam and Mir Shahidul Islam, special superintendent of Criminal Investigation Department. Retired district judge Mohammad Sahabuddin heads the commission.

The home ministry yesterday sent a letter to the law ministry in this regard and sought to have the commission vetted before they undertake the task.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed told reporters at his secretariat office that they sent a letter back to the home ministry after

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Third BDR trial begins in Feni Feb 25

A CORRESPONDENT, Feni

The third trial in connection with the BDR mutiny on February 25-26 will start in Feni on Sunday.

Everything is set to start the trial of 62 soldiers of 19 Rifle Battalion under the Comilla Sector of Bangladesh Rifles for their alleged involvement in the mutiny.

The BDR Special Court-3 would conduct the trial at 19 Rifles Battalion headquarters in Jailaskar in Daganbhuiyan upazila.

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EC moves to discourage dummy candidates

Security deposits for DCC polls hiked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mayoral candidate in Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) polls will have to deposit Tk 1 lakh as security as the Election Commission (EC) yesterday finalised a proposal to increase the amount ten times to discourage dummy candidates.

Security deposit for a councillor to the DCC has also been

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Ashura on Dec 28

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Ashura will be observed across the country on December 28, as the moon of Muharram month was not sighted yesterday.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee at the Islamic Foundation conference room with Religious Affairs Secretary and Committee Vice Chairman Md Abdur Rab Hawlader in the chair.

Additional Secretary M Abu Bakar Siddiqui, Islamic Foundation Director General

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The solar panel on a tin-shed house of a Marma family at Aungsaajai Karbari Para in Rangamati helps them earn better income while children learn lessons at night. Many indigenous people in hill areas now use such solar panels.

PHOTO: STAR

Solar panels light up remote CHT

PORIMOL PALMA, back from Rangamati

Electricity generated from solar panels in remote parts of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is helping indigenous communities to involve themselves in new income-generating activities.

Traditional income sources of the hill people are fishing, jhum cultivation and selling daily labour. But they are now rearing goats and cows, weaving clothes and making bamboo baskets in the extra hours into the night thanks to power generated by solar panels.

"On an average my income is now Tk 80 daily, which was Tk 50 when we had to use kerosene lamps only three years back," 40-year old Anil Kumar Chakma told The Daily Star during a visit to his Sagu Para village, 10km off Rangamati Sadar.

Anil got a 50-watt capacity solar panel at Tk 28,500. He got a grant of Tk 15,000 from the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), while he has paid the rest of the money in monthly instalments of Tk 205.

UNDP provides grants of Tk 4 lakh to each of around 2,600 Para Development Committees (PDC) formed under a project titled "Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in CHT." The PDCs then decide to buy solar panels or cows and goats for its members to generate income.

The project started in 2003 with support from European Commission, Canada, Denmark, USA, Norway, Australia and Japan to improve socio-economic status of the poorer communities in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari.

According to official statistics, 62 percent people in CHT are absolute poor (intake of per person per day is 2,122 kilo calorie), while 36 percent are hardcore poor (1,805 kilo calorie).

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JS MEMBERSHIP Kashem obtains SC stay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed for six weeks the High Court judgement that had declared the parliamentary membership of Jatiya Party (JP) lawmaker Abul Kashem illegal and void.

Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice SK Sinha passed the order upon a petition filed by Kashem.

The judge also asked Kashem to file a regular leave-to-appeal with the Supreme Court against the High Court verdict within these six weeks.

Kashem was elected from Tangail-5 constituency securing JP ticket in the December 29, 2008 national elections.

On December 15, the High Court in a verdict declared his

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Pakistan court strikes down graft amnesty

Zardari under pressure to quit after ruling

AP, AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's president faced fresh calls to step down yesterday after the Supreme Court struck down an amnesty that had protected the increasingly unpopular leader and several of his political allies from corruption charges.

While President Asif Ali Zardari is immune from prosecution while in office, Wednesday's ruling heaps pressure on his administration, which is a key partner of the United States in the

fight against Taliban and al-Qaeda militants. The Supreme Court hearing has churned up details of Zardari's alleged personal fortune, and the president already faces plummeting public approval ratings and fractious relations with the powerful military.

Interior Minister Rehman Malik and Defence Minister Ahmed Mukhtar were among more than 30 politicians and 8,000 people who had benefitted from the original amnesty

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Star Insight

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