Steep hike in traffic fines from I-Day

ACT AMENDED President cleared changes in MV Act on Friday, city traffic police will implement it from August 15

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NEW DELHI: Come Thursday, Delhiites will have to shell out at least ₹1,000 as fines for a traffic offence, under the amended Motor Vehicles Act.

Delhi Traffic Police officials said that although the President of India gave his assent to the Motor Vehicles Amendment Act on Friday, the department will begin issuing challans under the new law from August 15.

"We have not begun issuing the increased challans (levying the new fines). After August 15, any traffic violator will be charged as per the new law," a senior Delhi Traffic Police official said.

Traffic officials said that as per the new rules, violators will not only be liable to higher fines but that certain bad driving practices, which earlier not listed as an offence, will also land drivers with a ticket.

Violators will have to pay ₹1,000 for offences, such as jumping red lights, speeding and riding without helmets. Earlier, the fines for signal jumping and riding without helmets were as low as ₹100, and for speeding, the fine was ₹400 for the first offence. Disrupting emergency vehicles, such as ambulances and fire tenders, will also attract a fine as high as ₹10,000.

The amendment also gives government agencies the power to recall any vehicle found causing harm to the driver, environment or other road users.

Although the Delhi Traffic Police was yet to update any details about the revised fines and offences on their official website till 9pm on Monday, a senior official, with the Union ministry of road transport and highways, said that higher penalties are supposed to be implemented as soon as the Bill received the President's nod.

"Ideally, from the day the Bill receives assent from the President, it is supposed to be implemented," the official said.

The amendment was introduced with the aim to overhaul the country's transportation laws, by addressing crucial issues, such as road safety, reducing deaths due to road accidents, imposing stiffer penalties for violation of rules, and weeding out corruption. In the revised list of penalties, violators will have to pay as much as ₹1,000 for speeding, ₹1,000 and suspension of driver licence for nearly three months for riding without a helmet, ₹5,000 for dangerous driving and up to ₹10,000 for drink driving.

The amended law also has provisions to penalise drivers for obstructing the way of emergency vehicles. Violators will be liable to pay a fine of ₹10,000, along with six months' imprisonment.

"This amendment is an important first step to improve road safety in India. At present, drivers don't think twice before shelling ₹100 for an offence. This isn't a deterrent. The new law will help us meet our international commitments under the Brasilia Declaration of 2015 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals," said Piyush Tewari, co-founder of SaveLIFE Foundation, a road safety NGO.

Lawbreaking gets dearer

Offence	Penalty (Old / New)
Speeding	₹400 → ₹1,000 to ₹2,000
Driving without insurance	₹500 → ₹2,000
Riding without helmet	₹100 → ₹1,000 and three months suspension of licence
Road offence by juveniles	₹500 (Owner or guardian fined) → ₹25,000
Dangerous driving	₹2,000 (₹1,000 for first offence) → ₹5,000
Driving without licence	₹500 → ₹5,000
Drink driving	Court challan → ₹10,000

WHAT'S NEW?

- Automated fitness tests
- Government to issue recalls for any vehicle in case of a defect that harms the user, ecology or other road users
- Creation of National Road Safety Board to advise central and state governments on road safety, traffic management, licensing and promoting new vehicle technology
- Ten-fold increase in the insurance compensation. The insurance claims process will be simplified and cleared within a month
- Compulsory insurance under the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund
- Recognition of cab aggregator services. Those violating norms will be fined up to ₹1L

STPs out of order, Hry pollutes Yamuna

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GURUGRAM: On paper, Haryana has the capacity to recycle about 80% of the domestic effluents it releases into the Yamuna River. But four years after the NGT first ordered a thorough clean up of the river, the state continues to discharge at least 1140MLD of untreated, or partially treated, sewage per day into the Yamuna. Official numbers also indicate that Gurugram and Faridabad districts are the state's biggest polluters.

These findings are part of a recent report presented by an NGT-appointed state monitoring committee (MC), which was formed in July last year to oversee the Tribunal's 2015 judgment in the Manoj Misra case. The initial deadline for the Yamuna revitalisation plan, ordered by the NGT four years ago, was March 21, 2017. However, given the inability of various stakeholders to comply with the judgment, the MC was formed last year for more stringent oversight.

The reasons for Haryana's poor compliance with the judgment, according to the MC, are defunct or non-compliant sewage treatment plants (STPs) scattered across its 10 districts. Located in the Yamuna's catchment area, these districts generate about 1118MLD sewage every day, states the report, which was submitted to the NGT on July 2.

Additionally, there are 198 villages in Haryana which directly or indirectly discharge about 40MLD untreated effluents into the Yamuna. Thus, "a total 1140 MLD of domestic effluent is being discharged into the River Yamuna through 11 (natural) drains," the report notes while making a conservative estimate on the total volume of domestic effluents that eventually make their way into the Yamuna.

Experts pointed out that these drains are all originally meant to channel only rainwater. "This in itself is a violation of previous NGT orders which prevents the discharge of sewage into stormwater channels," Gurugram-based environmentalist Vaishali Rana Chandra said.

A total of 79 STPs have been proposed in these districts, with a capacity to treat about 905MLD sewage (about 80% of the total 1118 MLD generated by urban townships). However, the MC observed that only nine of these STPs were functioning effectively over the past four months. About 29 were discharging partly-treated effluents, while 41 were discharging untreated effluents or are yet to be constructed.

"Detailed inspections by the HMC (the MC's Haryana division) has also brought out the absence of proper maintenance of STPs. Obviously, the bulk of sewage generated is not conveyed to the STPs due to absence of a sewer network or because the STPs are not functioning properly," the report states.

"As a result, a small portion of the wastewater generated in Haryana's Yamuna catchment is actually treated and reused," said MK Das, head of the MC's Haryana division, who put down the delay in setting up STPs to 'operational deficiencies'. Dysfunctional STPs aside, Haryana also needs to finish laying about 1,600km sewer lines for it to reach its desired destination.

Yamuna floodplains, invisible treasure

BY INVITATION

VIKRAM SONI

The water levels of the floodplain need to be monitored. HT ARCHIVES

The sandy aquifers on the floodplains of our rivers naturally store and recharge a lot of monsoon water that can be used as a local, sustainable and perennial quality water source for cities. If we use less water than is recharged every year by rainfall and late-season floods, and not tamper with the reserve built over millions of years, then this precious resource would last forever. I had initiated the first sustainable, floodplain project in the world through the Prime Minister's secretariat in 2009. The realisation of this unique idea, known as the Palla floodplain project, was taken up by the Delhi government and is now providing water to nearly a million people in Delhi.

The Palla floodplain project runs over 20-25 odd kilometres of river length, north of Wazirabad. This floodplain was rigorously researched and was found to have a replenishable yield of between 80 -100 million cubic metres (MCM)/ year (50-60 million gallons per day(MGD)). The project has been running at less than half its potential due to old and leaky pipelines. We established an ecological 'Conserve and Use' plan to augment this to its full potential of 100 MCM/ year (60 MGD) . At the median rate of domestic water charged by the Jal Board for the consumer, this will provide a revenue of about ₹400 crore per year for the water utility.

The Delhi government in a public release in 2016 had announced the 'Palla project as an original, 'Conserve and Use" ecological, non-invasive and perennial water project — the first such project in the world'. Such floodplain projects can be used to sustainably water over 500 river towns in India. Not to forget, floodplain aquifers are perhaps the only unpolluted perennial water sources left in the country. The project is of global importance and has been lauded by South Australian Water. Delhi can be the flagship of this water scheme.

But we found that the entire water resource of the aquifer is in immediate danger of being lost due to a lack of protection and misuse. Foremost, intensive wheat and flower cultivation that uses about 30 cm of raw water, and another minimum of 30 cm or so for a second annual crop (even basmati rice) over the summer and monsoon months, has taken over the floodplain. About 4-5 kilometres wide and 20-25 kilometers long, this 80-100 sq km of area is drawing over 60 MCM/ year(℄35 - 40MGD) of water. This is depleting the aquifer, leaving a balance of less than 40 MCM/ year for Delhi's water supply.

I had already suggested in an article that farmers on the floodplain can plant and harvest food forests or fruit forests on the floodplain, which are water lean and be given an assured income of Rs 30,000 per acre per year for providing water to citizens of Delhi. According to reports, the Delhi government has done just that, which is a very welcome step, as the water intensive agriculture is depriving Delhi of water for well over a million citizens .

But the Delhi government has been overzealous in announcing that they would create a medley of lakes on the floodplain to trap monsoon floodwaters. Since the floodplain is already a porous sandy aquifer and absorbs most of the floodwater, such an intrusion may not be optimal. The floodplain itself is like an invisible underground lake. I would like to suggest that organic agriculture, for example, planting of food forest or fruit forests on the floodplain, would be a better option than carving out lakes, where vast quantities of sand would have to be transported out affecting the wetland ecology of the floodplains — very much akin to sand mining, . Furthermore, in any case, the floodplains are designated as a protected Zone-O in the master plan and declared a biodiversity zone. Also, open lakes would lose a very large amount of water — nearly 3 metres depth of water — in a year from evaporation.

Further, villages are routing their sewage into nearby depressions on the floodplains and contaminating this vital resource. If this is not stopped forthwith, the floodplain will terminally lose quality water. Also, the Delhi government had earlier announced a scheme of creating 70 more borewells and Ranney wells in this area .This would exceed the maximum withdrawal that is sustainable and bring the groundwater levels in the floodplain down to below the river water levels in the lean season, allowing gravity flow from the polluted river into the unpolluted floodplain . Noida had a sustainable and perennial water source from its Yamuna floodplain aquifer, which provided it with good quality water for over 30 years till about four years ago. It was thoughtlessly over-exploited and with sand mining on the banks of the Yamuna on one side and the Hindon on the other, polluted water entered, terminally destroying the aquifer. This is permanent loss of a vital water resource for future generations.

Most importantly, the water levels of the floodplain need to be monitored very scrupulously to be well above the polluted river water level to avoid contamination. Once contaminated, the aquifer cannot be restored. It must be urgently protected as a water sanctuary for Delhi.

Vikram Soni, Emeritus Professor, Jamia Millia and JNU & PI Sci Foundation (Science in Public Interest)

App to report missing persons in final stage

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NEW DELHI: The city police has informed the Delhi High Court that the mobile application for receiving complaints regarding missing persons, including children, is in its final stage and it will soon be ready for testing.

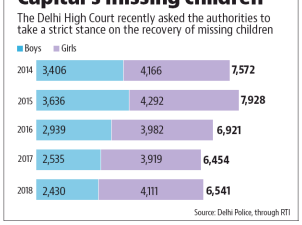
In a status report filed through advocate Rahul Mehra, standing counsel (criminal), the Delhi government apprised the court of the development and told the court that the work was issued to the department concerned on June 28.

Mehra, along with advocate Chaitanya, also told a bench, of justices Manmohan Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal, that the Delhi Police has circulated a standing order detailing the procedure to be followed on receipt of information about missing children/ persons.

"It also includes the investigation procedure followed by the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU)/ Crime in missing cases. The standing order comprises general guidelines to ensure that certain essential steps, inter alia, like flashing of message on wireless and placing the information of the missing person on the ZIPNET are taken in a time-barred manner," he said.

Capital's missing children

The Delhi High Court recently asked the authorities to take a strict stance on the recovery of missing children



Source: Delhi Police, through RTI

THE COURT TOLD THE DCP (CRIME) TO ATTEND THE NEXT HEARING, TO EXPLAIN THE FUNCTIONS OF THE APP AND GIVE A TIMEFRAME TO USE IT

He also provided screenshots of the mobile application, listing the various pages and details that a complainant would have to enter before his/her complaint is registered.

Following this, the court directed the deputy commissioner of police (DCP), crime, to be present in the court on the next date of hearing to explain the functioning of the application and give a timeframe for making it operational.

The court was hearing a plea it had initiated itself on a missing house help from Rohini since April 2019.

During the course of the trial, the high court has also been monitoring the start and progress of the mobile application to file missing complaints online. The bench also suggested some changes to the application.

According to an RTI filed by advocate Shashank Deo Sudhi, the total number of missing children in 2018 was 6,541, 2017 was 6,454, 2016 was 6,921, 2015 was 7,928 and 2014 was 7,572. While 20,730 girls have gone missing from the city in the last five years, 14,936 boys have also been missing.

The high court had recently asked the authorities to take a strict stance on the recovery of missing children. It had also directed the Delhi government to expedite the appointment of paralegal volunteers at all police stations of the national capital.

Seven bouncers at toll plaza held for trucker's murder

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NOIDA : Seven privately hired bouncers were arrested for allegedly murdering a truck driver on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday near the Kalindi Kunj toll plaza over the driver's failure to pay ₹14,600, demanded as a penalty for crossing the border without paying the toll.

The driver was identified as Vimal Tiwari (30), a native of Balia. His body had been found on Saturday morning on the Yamuna bridge, just within the Noida border. The police said that the CCTV footage at the toll shows the suspects harassing Tiwari. The accused were identified as Manurup, Dharmpal, Amit Kumar, Chetan Prakash, Sarrajudin and Manoj, natives of Rajasthan and Krishna Kumar, a native of Haryana.

"Tiwari had crossed into Delhi without paying the toll, following which the suspects got into a flying team vehicle and followed him. They asked him to pay a penalty 10 times the toll (₹14,600). However, he did not have the money and called up his boss to clear things up," said Vaibhav Krishna, senior superintendent of police.

The driver was advised by his employer to apologise to them and settle the issue, but the suspects asked him to pay the money. "Things started heating up and the suspects started beating him, which he resisted. The autopsy revealed that the had sustained 10 major injuries to vital organs. He was beaten with hard and blunt objects, probably sticks," the SSP said.

The police said they had received several complaints of extortion as well and are investigating the case. SUNIL GHOSH/HT PHOTO

The suspects are employees of MEP infrastructure, the company contracted by the Delhi municipality for providing security at toll plazas. "They have been working for the company for almost a year and a half. We received complaints of extortion earlier as well and will now write to the Delhi police to look into the matter as well," said Krishna.

A senior official of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC), who did not wish to be name, said, "There is indeed a provision of charging 10 times penalty if a commercial vehicle tries to flee without paying the toll amount. However, this is a subject of police investigation now and we would like to comment on it only after the police gives a conclusive report."

The police are, meanwhile, also looking at the role of the driver of the flying team car. They are also on the lookout for the toll manager.

On the night of the incident, Tiwari had left Sector 59 around 11.30pm, ferrying electrical equipment, to Ghitorni in Delhi, according to Tiwari's family.

"After he encountered the bouncers, he called his boss, who lives in Ghaziabad. As the dispute wasn't settled, the boss came to our house as well, saying we should go there with the money to help him out. However, we were too late. When we reached there, we saw them assaulting my brother. Upon seeing us, they fled," said Ram Shringar Tiwari, the victim's brother.

A Delhi police constable had also reached the spot and a call was made to the police helpline, following which the Noida police recovered the body around 6am.

Based on Ram's complaint, a case was registered at the Sector 39 police station under sections 147, 149, 384 and 302 of the IPC.

Tiwari had living arrangements with his employer, while his family lives in Wajidpur village. He is survived by his wife and three children.

(Inputs from HTC, Delhi)

Acid attack survivor claims murder attempt in hospital

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NEW DELHI: A 22-year-old acid attack survivor undergoing treatment at Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) hospital was allegedly attacked in the emergency surgery ward, where she has been admitted. The woman, of southwest Delhi's Najafgarh, has been admitted to the hospital since April 20 and is currently being fed through a nasal pipe.

According to the woman's complaint filed with the North Avenue police station, the alleged attack took place on July 26, around 5.25am, when she was asleep. The woman alleged that the attacker was one of her molesters, against whom an FIR was lodged five years ago.

The woman has been provided security by the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) following the incident. Women counsellors from an NGO have been deployed in three shifts for the woman's safety.

"A heavy set man entered the ward and pressed my mouth while I was sleeping. I signalled to my mother, who was sleeping beside, and she raised the alarm. The security guards also tried to catch him but he fled. He was sent by a group of men in my neighbourhood to kill me. They have been threatening and attacking my family since we filed an FIR against them for molesting me," the woman told the police.

SHE WAS ABDUCTED FROM OUTSIDE HER HOUSE, TAKEN TO RAJASTHAN, WHERE SHE WAS BEATEN, SEXUALLY ASSAULTED AND FORCED TO CONSUME ACID

However, a senior police officer said they had received a complaint and had also detained the man, but he was found to be a mentally unstable patient admitted to the same hospital.

DCP (New Delhi) Eish Singhal said, "After the incident was reported, we scanned the CCTV cameras and found that a man stood at the entrance gate of the ward. After checking his medical records, we found that he is a mental illness patient and has been admitted to the hospital for long. We have questioned all the security guards as well as patients in the ward and have not found anything suspicious."

The woman's family, in an FIR registered in December 2018 at Najafgarh police station, alleged that the accused men kidnapped her along with her two sisters and took them to Rajasthan, where they forced her to consume acid. "The men kidnapped us from outside our house in an autorickshaw while we were going to fetch milk. While my sisters managed to flee midway, I was taken to a secluded place in another state, where they beat me and injected me with needles. They sexually abused me too. Three of them forced acid down my throat and left me to die. I don't know who took me to a hospital, from where I called my parents," she said.

The woman is set to undergo a surgery. The DCW, on Thursday, issued a notice to Delhi Police, seeking details of the case and action taken.

A senior police officer said they are looking into the case details.

The medical superintendent of the hospital could not be reached for a comment. However, a doctor from the hospital who did not wish to be named, confirmed the police's version of the event.

Delhi minister wants PM to intervene in temple demolition case

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NEW DELHI: Amid the controversy over the demolition of a Guru Ravidas 'temple' in a forest in Tughlaqabad, Delhi social welfare minister Rajendra Pal Gautam on Monday sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention in ensuring that the "land be returned" to the community to rebuild the place of worship. The AAP minister, in a press conference, alleged the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), in presence of the police force, had demolished it on Saturday morning, and the "statue has been taken away".

The DDA in a statement issued on Monday, however, did not use the word temple, and said the "structure" was removed as per the orders of the Supreme Court.

The statement further read, "The semi-permanent structure was dismantled peacefully without any resistance or use of force, in the presence of Samiti members. It is also clarified that the suit was filed by Guru Ravi Das Jayanti Samaroh Samiti and not by the DDA."

A senior police officer said, based on the directions of the Supreme Court, the demolition was carried out by the authorities concerned.

Gautam claimed that Sant Ravidas had visited the area during the reign of Sikander Lodi and established an ashram there, adding, "in government documents, the temple and pond is marked".

"I have written to the PM, appealing to him to show the same readiness as he does in other important matters, since crores of people in the county follow Ravidas. I have urged him to intervene in the matter so that the land can be allocated back to the community, the temple rebuilt and the statue reinstalled," Gautam told reporters.

A DDA official said the place of worship was located in Jahanpanah City Forest in Tughlaqabad, "and, the aggrieved parties can still appeal to the Supreme Court if they are not satisfied."

Amid protest from the community, Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh on Sunday had sought PM Modi's intervention.

(With HTC inputs)

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