

Totos face disciplinary drive



GURVINDER SINGH gurvinder@ thestatesman. net Kolkata, 8 September Ahead of the festive season, the Howrah Municipal Corporation (HMC) and cops have decided to rein in the battery- run three wheelers, popularly known as toto, by issuing them licence and booking those flouting traffic norms.

They also aim to chalk out a permanent plying route and fare for the erickshaws and nab those who escape after being involved in an accident as they ply without any official document.

The High Court in its verdict on 28 July had asked the state government to legalise tolos by issuing them licences.

" Traffic control is always a problem during puja days as the roads are choc- a- bloc with huge crowd and vehicles. It is difficult to keep a check on cycle rickshaws that sneak into the lanes and violate traffic rules.

Totos have added to the headache as they ply illegally and without any permanent routes. Without a license, it would be extremely difficult to identify and punish the toto drivers if they get involved in an accident or the vehicle overturns because of overloading," said Mr Sumit Kumar, ADCP, Howrah.

" We are already in talks with Bureau of Indian Standards to inspect and issue ISI certificate to the e- rickshaws who are fit to ply," he added.

He said, the cops have already made suggestions to the Corporation officials about legalising and controlling the tolos.

A senior cop on condition of anonymity said, those drivers taking the wrong route or running the unfit vehicle would be charged with hefty fines, which may be up to Rs 2,000 Officials, however, admitted, sporadic accidents of tolos have served as an alarm call for the administrative officials to sit up and take cognizance of the matter.

Divulging their plan for further action, the officials at the HMC said, toto drivers would be provided with a uniform, and the three- wheelers would have different colours for different routes. " We have already made a fare chart and are working to chalk out the route permits for the tolos. At present, they ply and charge arbitrary fare which would not be tolerated further. We hope to legalise them before puja," said Mr Arun Rai Choudhury, membermayor- in- council.

He further toto drivers allowed to carry than four passengers those violating would be dealt Sources said, corporation aims permanently remove rickshaws from by legalising rickshaws as soon possible.

More than rickshaws are plying Howrah, particularly Bally and Salkia with nearly hitting the streets everyday.

They have serious dent earnings of autorickshaws and buses violent tussles them turning regular affairs.

REINING ` EM IN The civic body aims to chalk out a permanent route chart and fares for the e- rickshaws E- rickshaw drivers escape action after being involved in an accident as they ply without documents; this would be curbed Toto drivers would be given uniforms; the vehicles would have different colours for different routes.