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Driving schools set to roll

A STAFF REPORTER



The simulator that was inaugurated at a driving training institute in Ballygunge on Friday. Picture by Aranya Sen

The state government will shortly launch driving schools in the city in association with two automobile majors.

Training on light motor vehicles will be provided in association with Maruti Udyog, at four CSTC depots, including those at Kasba, Belegkata and Taratala. At least one of the centres is expected to open doors in June.

The government has teamed up with Ashok Leyland to train drivers of heavy motor vehicles on two floors of a four-storeyed building coming up in Nagerbazar.

“The fine points of the deal with the two companies are being worked out. The schools will be launched soon,” said transport secretary Sumantra Chowdhury on Friday while inaugurating a simulator-based driving training facility — the first in Calcutta — of the Automobile Association of Eastern India in Ballygunge.

A simulator is designed like the driver’s section inside a car and consists of all the controls. It allows learners to pick up basics without venturing on the road.

The driving schools coming up will also offer simulator-based training.

A driving course comprising eight two-hour lessons on the simulator and six lessons on the road will cost Rs 3,500, said officials of the institute.

Impressed with the simulator, the additional commissioner of Calcutta police, K. Harirajan, called upon the state government to install a similar gadget at the police traffic training school.

“Most driving schools lack proper facilities. Often, there is not even a course structure. The problem is more severe for heavy motor vehicles, which are sometimes driven by uneducated people. The schools will fill the gap,” said Chowdhury.

Maruti Udyog was approached last year after transport minister Subhas Chakraborty and Chowdhury visited the company’s training centre in New Delhi. Sources in the department said the school would be run by a society on a “no-profit” basis.

The state government initiated talks with Ashok Leyland around the same time.

Once a network of driving schools with proper facilities is in place, the state government might make training at these institutes mandatory for seeking a licence, said a transport department official.

“Once a driver is held in connection with a mishap, he could be sent to train on simulators while investigation into the case continues. Even cops driving police vehicles could be sent for such training,” added the official.

