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Recruitment rules often not followed

NEW DELHI: According to the traffic police, of the 2,595 buses booked for violations till date, a little more than half of them were cluster buses. They were cited for improper overtaking, illegal parking, over speeding and dangerous driving.

The reason for the cluster system logging more prosecutions despite having fewer buses than DTC — 1,465 to 4,707 vehicles — perhaps lies in the driver recruitment process. The concessionaires that own the orange buses hire drivers after putting them through a test for a licence, but police sources say the rules of this test are often relaxed. In addition, while DTC makes prospective drivers undergo physical and medical tests prior to hiring them, the cluster bus drivers need to clear only the one test before being sent to the Institute of Driving and Traffic Research for training.

Traffic cops aren't surprised, therefore, that cluster bus drivers indulge in rash driving. "The buses try to overtake each other, dangerously cutting into other lanes and stopping wherever the drivers wish," said a police officer. The cops said these reckless buses remind them of the days when Blueline buses wreaked havoc on the capital's roads.

In fact, many cluster bus drivers are former Blueline staffers. "The deficit of trained bus drivers in Delhi force concessionaires to hire them," said a traffic officer.

There are 3,400 drivers in the cluster system, with no record of how many of them were earlier booked by police for serious violations.

Their overspeeding is inexplicable, say the cops, because unlike in the Blueline syndication, where operators competed to pick up more passengers to earn higher revenues, the cluster system earned the concessionaires a pre-determined amount for each trip, irrespective of the number of passengers carried.