

drink-and-drive menace'

Praveen Sood, the man in charge of the city traffic police, is confident that his department will be able to ease Bangalore's increasingly chaotic traffic scenario

S M SHASHI PRASAD

One of the youngest to join the Indian Police Service, Praveen Sood once headed the anti-rowdy squad in Karnataka and was invited by the government of Mauritius as police adviser. His academic qualifications are enviable — B.Tech from IIT, Delhi, and an MBA from IIM, Bangalore. Sood joined IPS in 1986 and has since served as Mysore police commissioner receiving several recognitions like Chief Minister's Gold Medal and also President's Police Medal for meritorious service.

Recently, he took over as the Additional Commissioner for Traffic & Security. In an exclusive interview with *Bangalore Mirror*, he speaks about the challenge and his goals as the chief of the traffic department.

Excerpts from the interview:

How can the police solve the uncontrollable traffic problem in Bangalore?

The police alone cannot solve the traffic problem. Yes, it is a big challenge but can be solved. There are quite a few civic agencies, which contribute in creating or solving the problem. Effective coordination and understanding between the agencies like BBMP, BDA, BMTC, BESCO, BWSSB and Airport Authority and the traffic department can work wonders to ease the traffic situation.

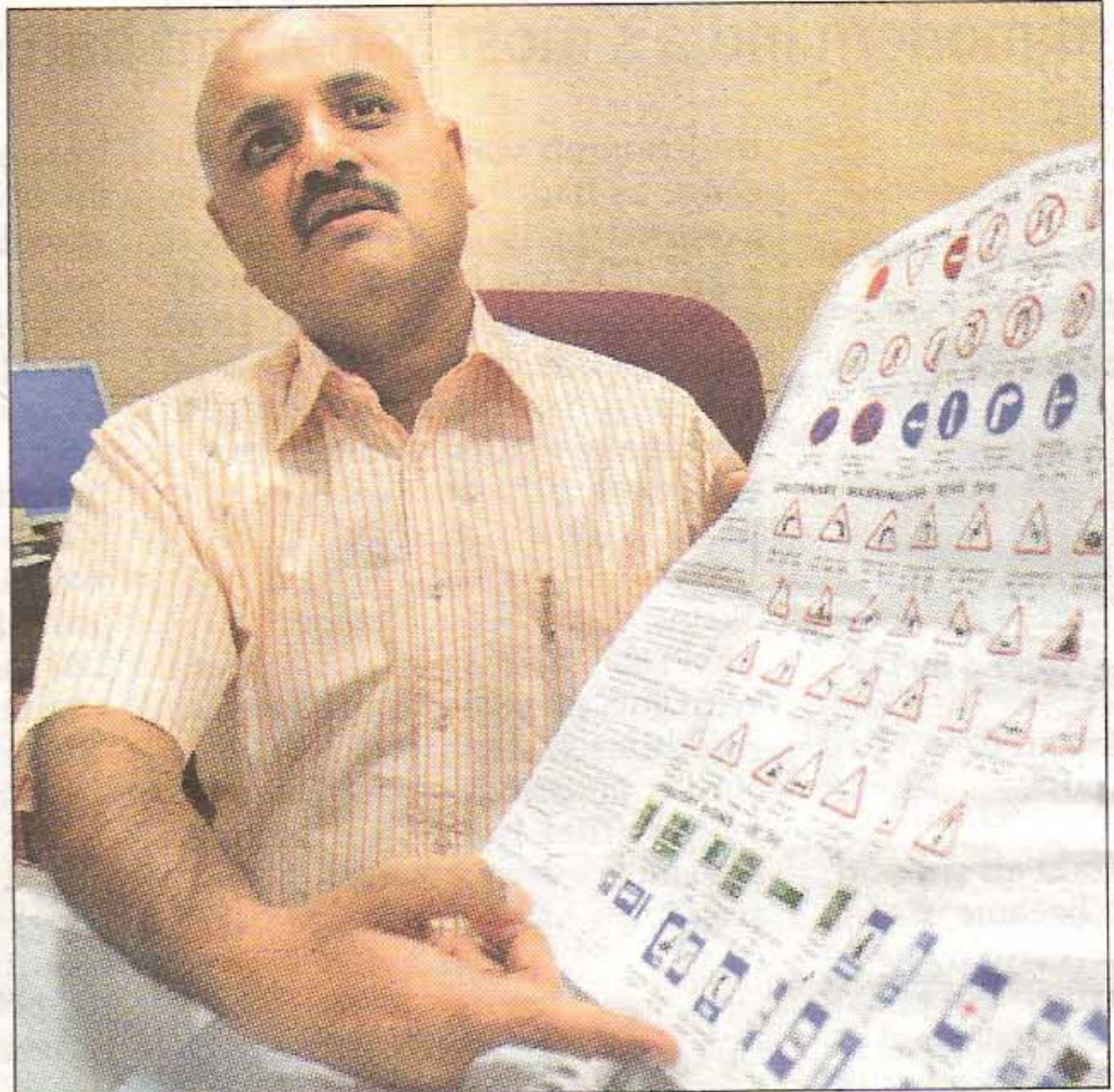
What is aggravating the existing problem?

People think that increasing the number of cops at every junction results in effective maintenance, but in reality, it is not the case. The biggest hurdles definitely are the narrow roads in the city, improperly planned traffic junctions and increasing traffic. There are more than 30,000 junctions.

What measures will the traffic police take to improve junctions and signals?

With the coordination of other civic agencies, we have already started to improve a few junctions by identifying them in stages. Among them, 12 junctions have been identified to design them properly and improve their capacity.

Apart from junctions, a lot of old signals have been up-



PIC: S SHIV KUMAR

What ails Bangalore traffic – narrow roads, improperly planned traffic and increasing traffic, says the head honcho of the traffic department

graded already and at least 210 additional signals will be installed. Work on T junctions have also been taken up, as these junctions are creating lot of chaos with their civil engineering problem.

How are you planning to enforce all the plans?

There are a few engineering issues which have to be addressed first. We are using technology in a big way in enforcement as well as in regulation. Around 40 surveillance cameras will function in a month's time. Connectivity is proving to be a challenge with the traffic management centre located at Ashok Nagar. Though five surveillance cameras are already functioning, I will ensure that the rest start functioning in a month's time.

Any plans of introducing new technologies in the traffic department?

Red Eye cameras and some other equipment are already functioning. I am planning to introduce interceptor vehicles. They are nothing but enforcement vehicles which are equipped with a high-speed laser camera and facilities for testing drunken driving, reckless driving and other problems.

On what issues will you be focussing the most?

I have directed all my colleagues to focus on five basic issues apart from taking care of other problems too. My main focus is on totally curbing the drunk-and-drive menace. It will be dealt with severely and there will be no excuse for it. Others are: (a) Jumping red lights (b) Going against one-way (c) Driving while talking on the mobile (d) Reckless driving.

Are you also stressing on educating the road users?

It is going to be one of the highlights of our plans. Whatever we might do, all enforcements and even if roads are improved, if the road user behaviour is not changed, the entire process will collapse. So, we will educate road users and they have to understand and be sincere in following the rules. Because the rules are for their safety.

Don't you think sometimes government-owned vehicles do tend to violate rules?

In fact, I am told that it happens most of the time. They assume that they have immunity to ignore rules and have license to violate the law. Agencies like KSRTC and BMTC should be more responsive as their one wrong move can cause havoc on roads. All these things have to be worked together in coordination with all the agencies and also by the people.