

REPORT No.22 dated 22-09-2015**Present:**

- 1) **Justice M.Ramachandran (Retd.) Chairman**
- 2) **T.Elangovan Member**
- 3) **N.Niyathi Member**

The Kerala State Road Transport Corporation, by letter No.TR 2-030200/2013 dated 15-09-2015, had made a representation to the Government requesting that permission is to be given to them to charge a lower fare than the existing fare in the Interstate services for Super Fast and other Upper Class services in lean seasons/days when passenger travel is less. Simultaneously, there was a suggestion to permit them to charge a higher fare upto 10% of existing fare in respect of the types of stage carriages referred to earlier during peak seasons/days.

The changes proposed, as contained in the letter read earlier, are extracted herein below:

"Kerala State Road Transport Corporation is permitted to charge a lower fare upto 10% of existing fare in the Interstate services for Super Fast and other Upper Class

services in lean seasons/days when passenger travel is less and also to charge a higher fare upto 10% of existing fare in Interstate Super Fast services and other Upper Class services during peak seasons/days. Kerala State Road Transport Corporation is also permitted to fix the lean seasons/days and peak seasons/days considering the traffic demand."

Consequent to the above, the Committee had been required by the Government to look into the above matter and submit its report.

In view of the above request, the Committee desired to hear the views of KSRTC and general public. It had also been decided to give an opportunity to other interested persons/groups to address the Committee their views, if any, with respect to the proposal submitted by KSRTC.

Wide publicity had been given and it had been decided to hold a sitting at Government Guest House, Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram.

On the notified date, namely 17-08-2015, a hearing was held. The Member Secretary (Transport Commissioner) could not attend the sitting, as the Transport Commissioner had

informed sufficiently early that on the notified date she may not be available at Thiruvananthapuram. However, the Chairman and two members had attended the sitting. Sri.Sainuiddin, Joint Transport Commissioner was also present.

Apart from the Executive Director (Operations) of KSRTC Sri.Sharaf Mohammed other officers representing KSRTC were present. Sri.Sharaf Mohammed invited the attention of the Committee to the notification published in Kerala Gazette dated 19-05-2014, by which the fares as at present had been revised by the Kerala Government. It may not be necessary to advert to the details of the fares authorised to be levied from the passenger community. The notification referred to rates of fares for Ghat Roads, Flexi charges as could have been collected by the KSRTC, Season Tickets, fare during approved Festival occasions and students concession.

Sri.Sharaf Mohammed pointed out that the Government had, in principle, accepted a provision for flexi charge. By the notification, the

KSRTC Director Board had been given permission to charge a lower fare upto 15% of existing fares in the Interstate Services for Super Expresses and other upper class services in lean season when passenger travel is less and also to charge higher fare upto 10% of existing fare during peak seasons. The peak seasons were specifically mentioned as April, May, August, September, November, December and January. The notification made it clear that the lean seasons were February, March, June, July and October.

The suggestion was that this was not found sufficiently adequate to meet the actual requirements for economic operations. Of course, the KSRTC could have reduced or increased the fares within the limits and margin prescribed by the Government. This could not, he said, by itself ensure competitive climate. The Executive Director points out that the competition of the KSRTC was with Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation and Karnataka State Transport Corporation. The 'season' as defined was too rigid and a flexible arrangement for adopting flexi charges, with a rider for due and

previous notification was the need of the hour. He says that instead of lean and peak seasons, right be conferred to fix the rates on 'days' at the discretion of KSRTC. Other Road Transport Corporations could have adopted as authorised by the other State Governments to charges fares or days picked and chosen, whether they fell in a season or not. For example, if a Thursday or a Monday was a holiday, there was extra passenger traffic and there was heavy demand for tickets and this circumstance were being encashed by the sister operators, but the Kerala public sector undertaking had no such liberty as they had to wait for seasons. Therefore, the demand was that instead of prescribing seasons, authority should be there to prescribe different fares on a need based manner, which facility was being enjoyed by other operators. The Government, therefore, was to consider the issue in the above perspective, so as to facilitate to bring in optimum revenue.

Sri.Dijo Kappen, representing the general public, had opposed the demand raised by the ~~KSRTC~~. According to him, the KSRTC was

sustaining a loss, running to crores, because of mismanagement alone and flexi charges by itself would not have made any change to their advantage. He submits that the issue required serious consideration. When other State Road Transport undertaking were utilising the services of a driver-cum-conductor, the trade unions in Kerala State opposed the very idea and per trip the loss sustained was substantial. He also points out that the facility of flexi charges authorised by notification dated 19-05-2014 were not implemented so far by the State undertaking and it would have been justified to make a suggestion for a change for flexi charges on daily basis after at least experimenting the facility offered by the notification. He points out that the demand is without any basis and without proper studies. He had also submitted the figures of revenue collection claimed, which have been obtained under RTI Act and challenged the Corporation to come up with fuller details to sustain the demands.

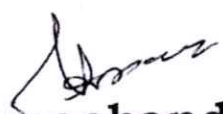
Sri.V.Jayasankar, who addressed us, representing a group of Interstate passengers,

was the President of an association working in the Face Book Family. He suggested that no real effort is being taken by the KSRTC for providing operational facilities and convenience. He has pointed out that the difficulty felt in online booking, while the other operators were far ahead. He says that the claim for higher fare was unrealistic and the matter has to be looked into in the light of facts and figures to be supplied by the KSRTC. A professional approach was never there. There was no effort taken for 'Thalkal booking' and the general approach was unfriendly. In short, an 'in-house cleaning' was what was needed.

The KSRTC was not in a position to supply further details to highlight as to what are the real reasons for not availing of flexi fares presently authorised to be levied. They were also not in a position to supply details about the collections during the lean seasons and rush seasons. On a query, it was submitted that fuller details will be submitted. We feel that before venturing to make a report, further adequate material is necessary.

In the circumstances, hearing was not complete. For facilitating the KSRTC, it was proposed to give them opportunity to submit further proposals after arranging for making an impact study. For this purpose, time is granted and the next sitting will on 18th November, 2015. The venue is fixed as the Government Guest House, Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram.

However, on a provisional basis, the K.S.R.T. Corporation is to be permitted to charge a lower fare, up to 15% to 20% of the existing fare, in the inter-State services for Super Fast and other upper classes. It should be ensured that sufficient advance intimation/information as such steps alone will result in desired results. Intimation/information should reach the commuters, so that it may be possible for the passengers to make arrangements for advance reservation to fully utilise the changed facilities.


Justice M. Ramachandran (Retd.)
-(Chairman)

T. Elangovan
(Member)

Sri. N. Niyathi
(Member)