

Report No.25 dated 22-11-2017

Re: Fixation of fares of Super Air Express
Buses operated by K.S.R.T.C

Present:

Mr.Justice M.Ramachandran	:::	Chairman
T.Elangovan	:::	Member
N.Niyathy	:::	Member
Anil Kant, IPS	:::	Member Secretary

By letter dated 27-06-2017, the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation had requested the State Government that steps may be taken for fixing fares of the newly introduced Super Air Express Buses. This request was made in the context that the fares prevailing as per the Government Notifications did not cover such stage carriages because such a class of vehicles were not in operation when the fare structure was considered by the Fare Revision Committee, when a report of general fare revision had been submitted to the Government and this anomalous position needed examination.

2. On receipt of the request, as above, the Government, by order No.B1/150/2017/Trans. dated 07-

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08-2017, had directed the Transport Commissioner that the proposal and applications may be placed before the Kerala State Fare Revision Committee, presided over by Justice M.Ramachandran (Retd.), and recommendations and report in respect of the matter may be obtained and made available to the Government for the Government to take follow up steps that may be necessary.

3. Public notice had been arranged to be issued by the Committee and in the sittings held at Thiruvananthapuram, the views of the K.S.R.T.C and persons, who were interested in the subject matter, were heard by the Committee. Only one individual was present, namely Mr.Dijo Kappen, as a representative of Consumer Guidance Bureau.

4. The submissions made on behalf of the KSRTC in respect of the proposal mooted could be summarised as below:

There were requests from general public and especially long distance and inter-State passengers for bringing into operation a better class of stage carriages as it was suggested that air travel links and train connectivity was inadequate to the actual needs, and there was potential for qualitative growth. Accent was to be given to speedy transport, economical and better comfort levels to reach distant destinations in the State

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and near district centers. Thus the competition was to air travel and super-fast trains, as these modes of travels were not adequate enough to reach to interior parts with efficiency.

The passengers were also being exploited by private operators by putting special conveyances, especially in rush seasons and hours. But this was not dependable and was available only at sporadic intervals. If regularly operated high class services were available travelling public might have accepted the same, and the studies by KSRTC showed that for comfortable journey, a higher fare was not objectionable at all. Exploitation also could be got rid of and thus the proposal was in public interest.

5. Deliberations were held and the suggestion finalized was that a coach with 36 to 40 seats would fit in. The express class of vehicles currently in operation had provision for seating 53 passengers. The arrangement of seating was three plus two in a row.

6. An innovative coach with up to 40 seats give facility for providing seating arrangement of 2 x 2 i.e. four in a row. This gave better aisles, broader and seats with adequate legroom. Push back seats were to be provided for better restful journey and good air-conditioning was to be offered. Good air-conditioning, convenient timings would have added to acceptance.

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7. But, in view of the additional initial expenditure, a fare structure different from the existing express class vehicles was required, especially taking note of lesser seating arrangement. Government's permission was therefore essential.

8. The request, referred to earlier, was made by the KSRTC to the Government, in the above said context.


9. The Committee had sought for clarifications as to the additional expenditure that was to be incurred and also about the necessity and workability of the new venture. The response given appeared to be positive and such services are found to be the need of the hour. The need of comfortable journey, including overnight journey, were being made available by private bus owners and contract carriages and the fares levied were far higher than the prevailing fares of express buses. For one of the queries, it had been suggested that in the place of Rs.20/- as minimum charges and 77 paise per kilometer levied in respect of express buses, initially in the new buses, the minimum charge may be continued, but the per kilometer rate may be increased to 85 paise per kilometer.

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10. The Committee considered the above request and it was felt that the rate suggested, especially as introductory rate, is not at all on the higher side. It was all the more a reasonable step on the part of KSRTC to suggest that the minimum charge may be maintained as being levied in the express buses. The KSRTC is hopeful that the long distance passengers might be prepared to pay the additional per kilometer rate of 8 paise as it may not be burdensome compared to the advantages, viz., comfort, legroom and conducive atmosphere.

11. Mr.Dijo Kapppen raised an objection that such higher charges may drive away passengers from using this new class of vehicles as the railways offer a better rate and the travelling public will be reluctant to avail of the new service by paying extra money.


12. However, taking note of the additional convenience of the passengers to reach their destination without hassles, the Committee feels that the higher rate per kilometer may not be a hurdle for discerning passengers to put to full use the newly introduced facility.



13. A further objection had been raised by Mr.Kappen that the concept of minimum charge should be dispensed with and a traveller should be expected to pay only the per kilometer rate for the travel undertaken by them. But, however, he concedes that the pattern of minimum charges currently introduced in the State has been endorsed by the Honourable High Court as an acceptable situation since there was nothing objectionable in levying a minimum charge and thereafter per kilometer rate for the journey a traveller may undertake.

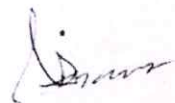
14. In the aforesaid circumstances, we are inclined to accept the suggestion of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation, that the new class of vehicles, as noted above, may be notified as a special service and for availing of the services a passenger is obliged to pay a minimum charge of Rs.20/- and a kilometer rate of 85 paise.

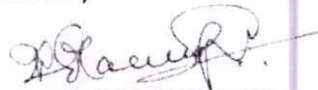
15. We recommend that such a classification may be newly introduced and appropriate notification be issued. However, it is to be ensured that such vehicles are to be strictly monitored that there is no over speeding at any point of time and that standing

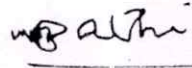


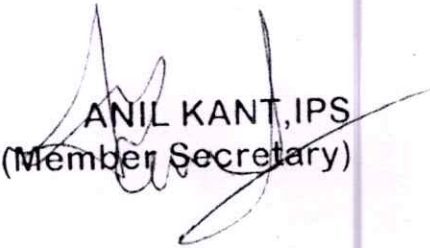
passengers are not to be allowed for travelling more than a maximum distance of 20 kms., for the safety of all concerned. Facilities should be there to rest the crew and being a super luxury class, it should be ensured that passengers are given the best standards of care and convenience.

Dated this the 22nd day of November, 2017.


JUSTICE M. RAMACHANDRAN
(Chairman)


T. ELANGO
(Member)


N. NIYATHY
(Member)


ANIL KANT, IPS
(Member Secretary)