



FIFTEENTH KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

**PUBLIC UNDERTAKINGS
(2023-26)**

TWENTY SIXTH REPORT

(Presented on 25th June 2024)

SECRETARIAT OF THE KERALA LEGISLATURE

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

2024

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On

Kerala State Road Transport Corporation

**(Based on the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for
the year ended 31st March, 2016)**

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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC UNDERTAKINGS

(2023-26)

COMPOSITION

Chairman:

Shri E. Chandrasekharan

Members:

Shri A.P. Anilkumar

Shri Anwar Sadath

Shri Ahammad Devarkovil

Shri T. V. Ibrahim

Shri P. Mammikutty

Shri K. P. Mohanan

Shri D. K. Murali

Shri P. Nandakumar

Shri Kadakampally Surendran

Shri P. Ubaidulla

Legislature Secretariat:

Shri Dr. N. Krishna Kumar, Secretary

Shri Venugopal R., Joint Secretary

Shri Anilkumar B., Deputy Secretary

Shri Mohanan O., Under Secretary

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman, Committee on Public Undertakings (2023-26) having been authorised by the Committee to present the Report on its behalf, present this 26th Report on Kerala State Road Transport Corporation based on the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year ended 31st March, 2016 relating to the Public Sector Undertakings of the State of Kerala.

The aforesaid Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India was laid on the Table of the House on 23-05-2017. The consideration of the audit paragraphs included in this report and the examination of the departmental witness in connection thereto were made by the Committee on Public Undertakings (2021-2023) at its meeting held on 17.05.2022.

This Report was considered and approved by the Committee (2023-2026) at its meeting held on 20.06.2024.

The Committee place on record its appreciation for the assistance rendered to them by the Accountant General (Audit), Kerala in the examination of the Audit paragraphs included in this Report.

The Committee wishes to express thanks to the officials of the Transport Department of the Secretariat, Kerala State Road Transport Corporation for placing the materials and information solicited in connection with the examination of the subject. The Committee also wishes to thank in particular the Secretaries to Government, Transport and Finance Department and the officials of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation who appeared for evidence and assisted the Committee by placing their views before the Committee.

Thiruvananthapuram,
25th June 2024.

E. CHANDRASEKHARAN
Chairman,
Committee on Public Undertakings.

**REPORT
ON
KERALA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION**

Audit Report (2015-2016)

3.11 - Infusion of buses into fleet.

3.11.1 - Introduction

Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) provides public transport to 32 lakh commuters daily through its 94 Depots, Sub Depots and Operating Centres. KSRTC had a fleet strength of 5,686 buses as on 31 March 2016. In order to augment/ replace its fleet, KSRTC procures chassis¹ from manufacturers through open tenders and thereafter, carries out bus body building at its central and four regional workshops² .

We examined the procurement of chassis, bus body building and infusion of buses into the fleet during 2011-12 to 2015-16 to see whether KSRTC had planned and procured chassis in an efficient and timely manner, was able to build and infuse buses into fleet timely and could generate adequate revenue by infusing new buses.

Audit Findings

3.11.2 Audit findings are discussed below:

Procurement

3.11.3 - Shortfall in procurement of new chassis

As per its own norms, KSRTC is required to replace buses after 10 years of commissioning or after operation of 10 lakh kilometres (km) distance, whichever is earlier. Further, according to Rule 260A of the Kerala Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989 (KMVR), KSRTC is required to replace stage carriages³ older than five years in Super Class⁴ services with new ones.

1 The base frame of a bus

2 Central workshop at Pappanamcode and regional workshops at Mavelikkara, Aluva, Edappal and Kozhikode.

3 Stage carriage means a motor vehicle constructed or adapted to carry more than six passengers, excluding the driver, for hire or reward at separate fares paid by or for individual passengers, either for the whole journey or for stages of the journey.

4 Fast, Super Fast, Super Express, Super Deluxe, etc.

We noticed that though KSRTC had to infuse 3,578 buses during 2011-12 to 2015-16 as per the above norms, it had infused only 1,845 buses as shown in *Table 3.16*.

Table 3.16: Details of requirement of chassis as per norms during 2011-12 to 2015-16

Sl.No.	Particulars	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Total
1	Number of new chassis required ⁵	1919	269	489	601	300	3578
2	Purchase order quantity	625	325	60	1215	285	2510 ⁶
3	New buses infused	215	486	332	203	609	1845 ⁷
4	Shortfall in infusion (1- 3)	1704	(-) 217	157	298	(-) 309	1733
5	Cumulative shortfall in infusion ⁸	1704	1487	1644	2042	1733	1733

Source : Data compiled from vehicle data provided by EDP Centre of KSRTC.

The main reasons for the shortfall were:

As against the norm of 10 years, KSRTC replaced buses which were 13 to 15 years old. As a result, 1,068 buses⁹ were not considered for replacement.

Though KSRTC placed 16 Purchase Orders for procuring 2,500 chassis during the period 2011-12 to 2015-16, it received 2,241 chassis and built 1,835 buses. The shortfall of 665 buses¹⁰ was due to delay in procurement of chassis, body building and final releasing of buses to Depots as discussed in Paragraphs 3.11.4 and 3.11.5. During the period 2011-12 to 2013-14, KSRTC availed loan of ₹120 crore from HUDCO¹¹ for procurement of 825 buses and received fund of ₹87 crore from Government of Kerala (GoK) for procurement of 466 buses. KSRTC, however, procured only 1,000 buses¹² against the required number of 1,291 leaving a

5 This includes buses required for replacement of old buses and buses required for introducing new schedules after adjusting the number of buses replaced from Super Class services.

6 Including 10 fully built AC buses.

7 Including 10 fully built AC buses.

8 Shortfall of current year plus shortfall of previous years.

9 3,578 buses -2,510 (No. of chassis plus 10 buses actually received).

10 2,510 buses – 1,845 buses = 665 buses.

11 Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited.

12 Included in 1,845 buses.

shortage of 291 buses. We observed that the balance fund was not utilised for the procurement of chassis and instead diverted for working capital purposes.

Accepting the audit observation, GoK stated (March 2017) that the balance available fund had been utilised for meeting working capital requirements due to paucity of sufficient fund.

3.11.4 - Delay in procurement of chassis

KSRTC did not prepare annual plans to assess the requirements for addition of new buses in place of scrapped/ withdrawn buses, for commencing new schedules, etc. Instead, KSRTC assessed its requirement of buses to be procured over a period including backlog at irregular intervals.

During the five year period, KSRTC had processed Purchase Orders (PO) for two bulk¹³ procurements consisting of 1,000 chassis (March 2011) and 1,500 chassis (December 2013).

We noticed in this connection that:

According to Stores Purchase Manual (SPM) of GoK, the time allowed to bidders for submission of bids is one month from date of the invitation of tender and maximum validity period of bid is three months. Thus, a normal time of four months is required for invitation and finalisation of tender. Since the chassis procured are to be used for body building from the beginning of the financial year, KSRTC should initiate the procurement process during the last quarter of the previous year.

In the case of procurement of 1,000 chassis, we observed that the Board of Directors (BoD) accorded its approval for procurement in March 2011, tenders were invited in July 2011 and POs placed by September 2011. The delay in inviting tender was due to delay in arranging finance for the procurement. Delivery of chassis against the POs was started only at the end of October 2011. Thus, there

¹³ In which 16 POs were placed.

was no stock of bare chassis at body building units during the period April 2011 to October 2011. KSRTC could infuse only 215 buses during the year 2011-12 against 338 buses required for replacement of scrapped buses¹⁴ and operation of new services¹⁵. Had KSRTC carried out the procurement in time, it could have built more buses and avoided the position of shortage of 123 buses in the year 2011-12.

Further, the PO price in the above tender was valid up to 24 August 2012. However, after procuring 625 chassis, the BoD invited fresh tender (February 2012) to procure the remaining 375 chassis¹⁶. Since the lowest unit rate (L1) for conventional chassis obtained in the new tender was ₹1.20 lakh higher than the existing price, KSRTC placed (August 2012) POs for 325 conventional chassis¹⁷ at the existing price of ₹10.20 lakh per unit with applicable variation in statutory duties and taxes. The suppliers did not accept the POs at the existing rates initially but, accepted (December 2012) after a lapse of four months. Due to delay in acceptance, the delivery schedule of September 2012 to November 2012 in the POs was amended as January 2013 to April 2013.

We observed that the invitation of a new tender during the validity of the existing PO price was unwarranted as KSRTC did not foresee lower market price. Thus, due to its injudicious decision to invite a new tender, KSRTC lost 11 months (February 2012 to December 2012). We further observed that during the period from November 2012 to January 2013, there was no body building of buses owing to the stock out position of chassis. KSRTC could infuse only 486 buses against 759 buses¹⁸ required for replacement of scrapped buses and operation of new services for the year 2012-13. Had KSRTC placed POs at the existing rate without inviting

14 215 buses.

15 123 new services.

16 325 conventional chassis and 50 air suspension chassis.

17 Since there was no valid rate available for Rear Air Front Weveller Suspension chassis, the BoD decided to go for retender in respect of 50 air suspension chassis.

18 Replacement for 468 buses scrapped plus 168 new services plus back log of 123 buses.

fresh tender, it could have avoided the stock out position of chassis and consequent loss of body building of 125 buses¹⁹ .

GoK admitted (March 2017) that there was no specific yearly purchase plans for chassis/ buses. With regard to invitation of tender in February 2012 for 375 chassis, GoK stated that the tender was invited in order to obtain more competitive rates but, seeing the fresh rates on the higher side, Purchase Orders were placed at the old rates. The reply is not acceptable because invitation of fresh tender in February 2012 was not to obtain more competitive rates and the delay had resulted in stock-out position of chassis and consequent production loss of buses.

In the second case, KSRTC invited (February 2014) tender for procurement of 1,500 chassis²⁰ . It, however, had to retender twice owing to technical problems faced by participants in e-tendering procedures. Meanwhile, the Model Code of Conduct for the General Election 2014 came into force in March 2014 due to which tender proceedings were stalled. KSRTC placed (October 2014) POs for 1,350 conventional chassis at the L1 rate of ₹10.42 lakh per chassis obtained in the re-tender (August 2014).

We observed that there was a requirement of 656 new buses²¹ to replace scrapped buses and to operate new services for the year 2013-14. As a normal time of four months was required for invitation and finalisation of tender, KSRTC should have initiated the procurement process in the last quarter of 2012 or procured more quantity in the previous procurement to meet the requirement of buses in the beginning of the year 2013-14. KSRTC, however, initiated the process in December 2013. Due to the delay, supply of chassis got delayed leading to stock out position of chassis during the period October 2013 to October 2014²² and

19 (3 months (October 2012 to December 2012) * Average production of 46 buses per month) – Actual production of 13 buses = 125 buses.

20 1,350 conventional and 150 air suspension chassis.

21 Replacement for 283 buses scrapped plus 100 new services plus back log of 273 buses.

22 In Central workshop from December 2013 to October 2014.

consequent production loss of 480²³ buses. Against the requirement of 656 buses, KSRTC commissioned 332 buses leading to a shortfall of 324 buses.

We further noticed that there was a four per cent concession²⁴ in rate of excise duty on bus chassis during February 2014 to December 2014. However, due to the delayed purchase, KSRTC lost the opportunity of availing concessional excise duty. The savings on account of concessional rate of excise duty and VAT foregone due to the delay in purchase of 414 chassis²⁵ during the period from February 2014 to October 2014 worked out to ₹1.61 crore²⁶

GoK stated (March 2017) that the delay in initiation of the procurement of 1,500 chassis was unavoidable due to declaration of General Election and litigation due to disqualification of bidders. The reply was not acceptable in view of the fact that procurement process to be initiated by December 2013 was unduly delayed up to February 2014. Declaration of General Election in March 2014 impacted the procurement process because the initiation of process was delayed up to February 2014.

3.11.5 - Bus Body Building

After procurement, the chassis are issued to five workshops of KSRTC for bus body building. As per the production plan, time required for body building of a bus is 30 days and thereafter, five²⁷ days are required for registration before issuing them to Depots for operation.

We noticed delays in bus body building and putting the completed buses into operation as shown in Table 3.17

23 (11 months * Average monthly production of 46 buses) – Actual production 26 buses = 480 buses.

24 From 14 per cent to 10 per cent.

25 Based on average monthly production @ 46 buses for 9 months period from February 2014 to October 2014

26 414 buses * [₹10,80,879 (price at 14 per cent excise duty) - ₹10,42,000 (price at 10 per cent excise duty)] = ₹1.61crore.

27 A norm of five days was adopted since KSRTC could complete the formalities in five days as observed in 712 cases

Table 3.17: Details of delay in production and operation of buses

Particulars	Normal time	Number of buses which were infused into operation with delay			
		Delay 1 to 10 days	Delay 11 to 25 days	Above 25 days	Total
Delay in body building	30	315	139	160	614
Delay in releasing of buses	5	814	279	40	1133
Delay in operation of schedules	2	14	0	1	15

Source: Compiled from data provided by KSRTC

The issues noticed in bus production are brought out in the subsequent paragraphs.

Underutilisation of production capacity

3.11.5.1 - The sanctioned strength of employees, monthly production capacity, average number of workers employed, production target set and actual production during October 2014 to April 2016 at the five body building units of KSRTC are shown in Table 3.18.

Table-3.18: Unit-wise sanctioned strength, production capacity, target, etc.

Name of body building unit	Sanctioned strength	Monthly production capacity (buses)	Average workers employed	Production	
				Target ²⁸	Achieved
Pappanamcode	754	70	400	825	340
Mavelikkara	126	10	60	136	106
Aluva	126	10	100	136	123
Edappal	252	20	85	254	121
Kozhikode	126	10	78	135	125
Total	1384	120	723	1486	815

Source : Compiled from data provided by KSRTC

We noticed that KSRTC took 41 days to 272 days for building and releasing buses as against a normal time of 35 days²⁹. The major reasons for the inordinate time taken for building buses and putting them into operation are discussed below.

²⁸ Production target set (September 2014) for body building of 1,500 chassis for the period from October 2014 to April 2016.

²⁹ 30 days for production plus 5 days for registration related formalities.

- Total production capacity at body building units of KSRTC based on the sanctioned strength was 120 buses per month. We noticed that delivery schedules of chassis were not drawn in line with the above production capacity. Stock in yard ranged up to 397 chassis due to receipts in successive lots over and above the monthly production capacity of workshops. Out of 2,241 chassis received during 2011-12 to 2015-16, around 51 per cent (1,146 chassis) were held in the open yard for more than 50 days before being taken for body building. Since the workshops also failed to meet their production targets, successive receipts of chassis before exhausting the available stock resulted in accumulation and long holding of chassis in the open yard for periods ranging up to 246 days. As the chassis were procured out of the loan provided by HUDCO, idling of the same entailed avoidable interest burden of ₹2.99 crore³⁰ on the capital locked up for such period. The situation could have been avoided had the POs been placed in advance of requirement and delivery of chassis were made in a phased manner in line with the production capacity of the workshops. At the close of the year 2015-16, a total of 397 bare chassis costing around ₹43.70 crore³¹ were lying in the open yards of the five workshops.

KSRTC stated (November 2016) that accumulation of stock was due to bulk purchase for availing concessional excise duty.

The reply was not acceptable since while going in for bulk procurement of chassis, KSRTC did not reckon the aspect of concessional excise duty. The bulk procurement of chassis was, in fact, to meet the backlog of chassis requirement.

³⁰ Interest was worked out for the period over and above the 30 days from the date of receipt of chassis till the date of commencement of production.
³¹ ₹11,00,685 * 397 chassis = ₹43.70 crore.

- As per the work norms in vogue, mandays prescribed for body building of Ordinary and Fast Passenger (FP) buses were 325 and that for Super Fast (SF) buses were 340. We observed that the work norms were fixed not on the basis of any scientific work study but on the basis of bi-lateral settlement with labour unions. KSRTC introduced pneumatic doors³² in new buses to be built from November 2014 which required additional mandays. We, however, observed that KSRTC did not update the work norms to incorporate the above change.
- The Chief Office of KSRTC set (September 2014) the production targets, directing the body building units to make necessary arrangement for employing required number of workers up to the maximum of the sanctioned strength to achieve the target. The units, however, could not engage the required number of workers as there was Court's Stay Order on engaging temporary workers and therefore, failed to achieve the target. Total number of buses produced in all the units during the period October 2014 to March 2016 was 815 buses against the production target of 1,486 buses (up to March 2016). We observed that in the last five years, KSRTC did not recruit workers³³ on permanent basis to fill the vacancies in permanent posts in body building units but employed temporary hands as and when required. Thus, non-recruitment of sufficient number of permanent workers against the vacancies existing in the body building units and dependence on temporary workers led to under achievement of the production target.

Accepting the audit observation, GoK stated (March 2017) that the body building was delayed due to shortage of staff in workshops.

- As per the production plan, time required for production of buses was a maximum of 30 days. We, however, noticed that time taken for completion of

³² Driver operated automatic door system.

³³ Through Kerala Public Service Commission.

body building of buses ranged between 31 days and 121 days in 614 out of 1,835 cases. The delay in completion of body building was due to non-availability of material in time and shortage of workers. We observed stock out position of essential material at various points of time and the workshops had to keep waiting for the material to complete the production process. The heads of the body building units also stated the same reasons for the delay as observed by Audit.

Considering 30 days required for body building of a bus, 11,271 bus days were lost due to excess production time leading to probable revenue loss of ₹11.47 crore³⁴ .

GoK admitted (March 2017) that there was delay in production during certain periods due to shortage of material.

The reply was not acceptable as availability of material can be ensured through better planning at the time of placement of purchase order for chassis.

3.11.6 - Operation of buses

We noticed inordinate delay in infusion of vehicles into the fleet after these were ready for operation due to delay in arranging insurance, delay in registration, etc., as discussed below:

3.11.6.1 - Loss of vehicle days due to delay in arranging insurance

The process of registration of vehicles and obtaining certificate of fitness, insurance, etc. of buses produced in the workshops was being done at the Chief Office of KSRTC. After completion of body building, the buses were measured and inspected by the Regional Transport Authorities (RTA) and reports thereon forwarded to the Transport Authority at Thiruvananthapuram, who issued

³⁴ Worked out at average Earnings Per Bus (EPB) of ₹10,179 per day of the five year period.

Registration Certificate and Certificate of Fitness (CF) based on such field inspection reports. After obtaining CF, the Chief Office of KSRTC obtained temporary permits valid for four months and insurance for the new buses before allotting them to Depots.

We noticed that out of 1,845 buses commissioned during the period 2011-12 to 2015-16, 1,133 buses were released to Depots after delay ranging up to 65 days³⁵. Total vehicle days lost on account of the delay worked out to 9,943 days. The delay was mainly attributable to the delay in insuring the vehicles. The delay in releasing the vehicles to Depots resulted in loss of revenue of ₹10.12 crore worked out at average Earning Per Bus per day (EPB) of ₹10,179.

Further, according to the circular³⁶ issued by GoK, all general insurance transactions of Public Sector Undertakings should be carried out only through Kerala State Insurance Department. KSRTC, however, insured its buses with New India Insurance Company Limited in violation of the circular issued by the GoK.

GoK replied (March 2017) that the delays in arranging the insurance happened due to poor financial position of KSRTC. The reply is not acceptable because the amount of loan provided by HUDCO for the procurement of buses included the cost of insurance also.

3.11.6.2 - Loss of vehicle days due to delay in putting the new buses into operation

The Chief Office of KSRTC, after completing the formalities related to registration, certificate of fitness, permit and insurance allotted the newly commissioned buses to Depots. Depots, on receipt of new buses were to press them immediately into scheduled operations.

³⁵ A norm of five days was adopted since KSRTC could complete the formalities in five days as observed in 712 cases.

³⁶ No.16/14/Fin. dated 21/02/2014.

We noticed that out of the 658 buses released to 11 Depots³⁷, operation of service in respect of 15 buses³⁸ commenced after delay (after considering minimum two days for allotting the buses for operation) ranging between 1 and 32 days, mainly due to shortage of crew. Total vehicle days and revenue lost due to the delay was 74 days and ₹7.53 lakh³⁹ respectively.

3.11.6.3 - Loss of vehicle days due to delay in replacement of scrapped buses

During 2011-12 to 2015-16, KSRTC had scrapped 1,951 buses. Against this, KSRTC had infused 1,845 buses into the fleet during the same period. Thus, 106 buses were short replaced. Shortage of buses for want of replacement ranged between 33 (July 2014) and 194 (December 2014) which stood at 106 as on 31 March 2016 as given in Table 3.19.

Table 3.19: Details of buses scrapped and shortage in replacement

Period	Buses scrapped	Buses commissioned	Shortage in replacement
	(Number)		
April 2011 to October 2011	82	33	49
July 2014 to March 2016	917	811	106

The delay in replacement of scrapped buses which was in turn due to delay in procurement of chassis, bus body building and final release of buses to Depots, affected scheduled operations causing loss of 1,01,771 vehicle days during the period from April 2011 to October 2011 and July 2014 to March 2016 with a revenue loss of ₹103.59 crore⁴⁰.

Further, due to non-availability of new buses for replacing 303 five year old buses in Super Class services, KSRTC had to seek exemption⁴¹ from the State

37 Thiruvananthapuram Central, Vizhinjam, Chathanoor, Kollam, Kottayam, Pala, Thiruvalla, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad and Kasargod.

38 Mentioned in Table 3.17.

39 Calculated at average EPB for the five year period of ₹10,179 * 74 vehicle days = ₹7.53 lakh.

40 Calculated at average EPB for the five year period of ₹10,179 * 1,01,771 vehicle days = ₹103.59 crore.

41 The Government had granted (June 2014) exemption for six months to 119 buses whose 5 years' life had expired between April and July 2014 and to another 184 buses for three months whose 5 years' life had expired between August and December 2014.

Government for plying the same 5 years old vehicles for another 3 to 6 months. Thus, KSRTC had to retain old buses resulting in the denial of high quality vehicles to passengers of Super Class services.

GoK replied (March 2017) that during the audit period KSRTC held 5,984 buses against 5,040 schedules and the delay in replacing buses in Super Class services were due to the delay in procurement of buses caused due to imposition of Code of Conduct for Parliament Election and litigation by bidders.

The reply is not correct in view of the fact that during the five year period, in place of 1,951 buses scrapped, KSRTC infused only 1,845 buses. Further, 5,040 schedules as stated in the reply was calculated without considering new schedules added (560) during the audit period and schedules cancelled due to non-availability of buses.

3.11.6.4 - Non-operation of schedules taken over from private operators

GoK had approved a scheme as per which Super Class services all over the State shall be run and operated by the State Transport Undertaking i.e., KSRTC. Accordingly, as of March 2016, KSRTC had taken over 214 Super Class services operated in the State by private stage carriages.

We observed that out of the 49 Super Class services taken over in 11 Depots, nine services commenced belatedly due to shortage of buses. In Palakkad and Kottayam Depots, three⁴² and one taken-over services respectively were stopped for want of new buses. Similarly, in Kasargod Depot, due to non-allotment of buses, two schedules have not yet (July 2016) started. Thus, KSRTC had taken over Super Class services, but was unable to operate them for want of buses.

We also observed that operation of 15 taken-over schedules was not feasible as the revenue collections from these schedules were below the revenue generation

⁴² One from August 2015, one from November 2015 and one from February 2016.

criteria set for the respective service. The Depot authorities stated that the poor collection from these schedules was due to the continued operation of private stage carriages on these routes. Though Kasargod Depot had lodged complaints with RTA/ Police, no effective action was taken by RTA/Police to curb illegal/unauthorised operation by private stage carriages.

GoK admitted (March 2017) that the delay in operation and non-operation of taken-over services were due to shortage of buses.

3.11.7 - Low collection from operation of new buses

The Executive Director (Operations) developed (November 2012) criteria for ascertaining the profitability of different services. Accordingly, Earnings Per Bus per day (EPB) for Ordinary, Fast Past Passenger, Super Fast and Super Deluxe were set as ₹12,700, ₹14,700, ₹17,000 and ₹20,000 respectively. If the EPB falls below ₹7,500, ₹9,500, ₹12,000 and ₹14,500 in the cases of Ordinary, Fast Past Passenger, Super Fast and Super Deluxe respectively, the schedule should be stopped. We carried out bus wise revenue analysis by checking the revenue collections of schedules in which the new buses were operated. We noticed that of the 658 buses allotted to the 11 Depots selected in audit, EPB were less than the criteria set in 59 cases. Reasons for non-achievement of criteria were wrong selection of schedules, wrong timing of schedules, etc. KSRTC had not taken any action either to cancel these schedules or to improve the collection from the schedules.

GoK replied (March 2017) that steps had been taken to rearrange the low earning schedules to improve revenue collection.

Conclusion

Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) failed to comply with the norms of replacement of buses and as a result, it could not infuse required number of buses into the fleet during the five year period which led to shortage of buses for operations. Initiation of purchases was delayed and consequently body building and fleet addition were also delayed. Due to delayed procurement process, KSRTC failed to avail the benefits of concessional rate of excise duty. Though KSRTC had sufficient body building capacity to meet the demand for new buses during the period, it could not utilise body building capacity optimally due to non-engagement of sufficient manpower, lapses in material management, etc. Release of newly commissioned vehicles to Depots was delayed due to delay in completing registration formalities and arranging insurance. Further, after receipt of new buses in Depots, there was delay in pressing the buses into operation.

[Audit Paragraphs 3.11.1 to 3.11.7 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year ended 31st March 2016]

(The Notes furnished by the Government on the audit paragraphs are given in Appendix II)

Discussions and Findings of the Committee

3.11 - Infusion of buses into fleet.

3.11.1 - Introduction

Regarding the audit para the witness admitted that KSRTC had no efficient purchase plan for procuring chassis and informed that it was mainly due to the scarcity of fund. He added that the procurement was based on the actual requirement, availability of fund and price of the vehicle.

The Committee observed that KSRTC had done bulk purchase of chassis without an effective purchase plan and working plan that caused accumulation of

stock resulting in revenue loss. The Committee lamented that the financial crisis of KSRTC was the outcome of its own doing.

3.11.2 Procurement

3.11.3 - Shortfall in procurement of new chassis

The Committee wanted to explain the reason for the shortfall in the procurement of new chassis. The witness replied that normally, the buses which completed 10 years in service or 10 lakh km. will be withdrawn from its fleet. But Kerala Motor Vehicles Rules permitted KSRTC to operate a stage carrier up to 15 years. More over KSRTC had infused 1845 buses during 2015-16 and 106 buses had been scrapped. KSRTC had 5700-5800 buses in its holding during 2012-13 and operated 4800-5000 buses. He added that there was no physical shortage of the number of buses during the period.

The Committee asked what was the purpose of adopting its own norms if KSRTC was following the provisions of Kerala Motor Vehicles Rules in non operationalizing buses. The witness responded that KSRTC adopted the norms with the intention of strengthening its fleet. When the Committee asked to explain the reason for diverting fund for creating capital assets to working capital, it was attributed to then prevailing financial crisis.

Conclusions/Recommendations of the Committee -

1. The Committee observed that as per the provisions of the Kerala Motor Vehicles Rules a stage carrier can be operated upto 15 years from its date of registration. The Corporation withdraws its buses from operating fleet after completing 10 years in service in order to strengthen its fleet as put forth by the officials. The remark of the officials is bitter for the Committee to swallow and the Committee suspect it as a dubious design to purchase buses in bulk and a report detailing every aspect of the issue should be furnished to the Committee at the earliest.

2. The Committee criticizes KSRTC for diverting fund allotted for creating capital assets to working capital and recommends to furnish an explanation for the same.

3.11.4 - Delay in procurement of chassis

The Committee asked explanation on inviting a new tender during the validity of the existing purchase order which resulted in stock out position of chassis and consequent idling of body building units. The witness explained that the tender was invited to obtain more competitive rates, but seeing the fresh rates on the higher side, purchase orders were placed at the old rates and the supplier accepted it after a delay of four months. The witness added that when the procurement of 1000 chassis was placed before the board of directors, the board sanctioned only 500 numbers considering the financial position and in the second stage board sanctioned the purchase of another 125 chassis and in the third stage sanctioned the purchase of 275 chassis.

The committee opined that the delay could have been avoided, had KSRTC placed purchase orders at the existing rate, with out inviting fresh tender.

The Committee inquired about the body building units. The witness informed that KSRTC stopped body building and now undertake only accident repairs and CF repairs. KSRTC is now purchasing only fully built buses and consequent to that the temporary employees in the body building units had been terminated. The committee asked whether KSRTC had done any scientific study in procuring fully built buses.

The witness replied that it would be better to buy fully built bus in the event of new norms in body building. He added that other states like Tamilnadu purchased only fully built buses and KSRTC had not conducted any comparative study regarding this. To this the committee commented that they were not making such a loss.

The Committee asked about the logic behind the closing of workshops and doubted that it might affect the maintenance work. The witness explained that modernization of workshops was a recommendation of Sushil Khanna Report and it was only restructuring. He added that a three phased maintenance system was introduced in which daily maintenance, engine oil change, weekly maintenance were to be done in depot workshops and major works were to be done in 22 major district workshops.

The Committee doubted since the depot workshop already have infrastructure facilities and employees whom could not be terminated what advantage would be attained by the restructuring. The witness informed that the mechanical staff in the depots were redeployed. The witness also informed that daily maintenance work should be done in depot workshops and the district workshops do only major works. The committee objected it and pointed out an instance at Palode Depot in Thiruvananthapuram district where the mechanical staff had been deployed to district depot and stopped the working of the depot workshop not considering the fact that it would take two days for a vehicle from district depot to reach the remote areas of Thiruvananthapuram district.

Then the Committee commented that modernization did not mean reducing number and added that it was an impracticable decision which would affect the efficiency of maintenance and deny service to remote areas. The committee opined that as the depots already had infrastructure facilities and employees, the decision of shifting the work done there to district depots would not attain any advantage and might have done adverse effect. The committee wanted KSRTC to reconsider the decision.

The Committee inquired about the measures taken to improve the financial condition of the corporation. The witness informed that the continuous price hike

of diesel was one of the major issue KSRTC is facing now. The price of the spare parts also raised to 20-30% after covid 19 and KSRTC had to pay Rs.129 per litre as a result the benefit of bulk purchasing had been stopped. KSRTC was now trying to overhead non-operational revenue and opened some fuel pumps as a part of it. But they were also making loss as the staff worked there were re-deployed staff and had to pay salary under wage structure. KSRTC got some revenue from rent-out of estates and from advertisement in buses. The non-operating revenue reached up to Rs. 7 crores in some months and had to raise it up to Rs.25 cores. The witness also added that KSRTC had started a new avenue known as Budget Tourism to raise its operating revenue and earned Rs.90-92 per km and compared with other operating revenue it was profitable and was trying to make it more profitable. The witness informed that the repeated price hike of fuel made all the efforts futile. To a specific query of the committee regarding expenditure and income the witness informed that the expenditure on salary, diesel, tyres and spare parts could not be reduced. The maximum income per day after the fare hike was Rs.6.9 cores and all the expenditure in 93 depots had to be met from this.

A query of the committee regarding the rent collection of buildings in KSRTC depots, the witness informed that they could collect about 80-90% of the rent and was given some exemption in covid time and notices had been issued to those who made default.

Conclusions/Recommendations of the Committee -

3. The Committee observed that KSRTC did not have a proper purchase plan for buying the Chassis and opined that KSRTC had to prepare a purchase plan for the current year. Absence of a proper purchase plan led to the delay in procurement of chassis which in turn caused the shortage of buses. The Committee also pointed out that KSRTC had invited two tenders in one year for the procurement of Chassis, which also led to the undue delay in procurement. Hence the Committee recommends to furnish a report detailing the reasons for such faults and to take stringent action against the officials concerned.

4. The Committee recommend that the Corporation should evolve a working strategy for each year by preparing a calendar including the scrapping of buses and planning to purchase buses and to fix the time interval to start operation of purchased buses after completing all formalities.

3.11.5 - Bus Body Building

Regarding the audit observation the witness explained that the body building process in KSRTC was a temporary process done phase by phase. Consequent to the stoppage of a phase due to completion, much delay was occurring to restart the next phase since the majority of the labourers employed was on temporary basis. The witness also added that the body building unit of the Papanamcode Central Workshop had only 400 employees in the place of 754 employees required during the period and the scarcity of labourers caused such a delay.

3.11.5.1 - Underutilisation of production capacity

The Committee commented that KSRTC would repeat the same reply of attributing it to the scarcity of fund and workers.

Conclusions/Recommendations of the Committee -

5. The Committee observe that besides the bulk purchase of buses without planning the shortage of workers and non availability of materials in time KSRTC could not complete the Bus body building in time and led to idling of Chassis which resulted in huge revenue loss. The Committee vehemently criticizes KSRTC for not ensuring better planning in such cases. The Committee could not find any reason for the delay in completing the insurance procedure citing paucity of funds after purchasing the buses in bulk thereby causing revenue loss.

3.11.6.1 - Loss of vehicle days due to delay in arranging insurance

The Committee wanted explanation regarding the audit observation. The witness explained that there was no delay occurred in connection with the process of taking insurance coverage and it would take some days to complete the process .

The witness also informed that when KSRTC approached KSID as per the circular mentioned in the audit, it was informed that the circular was not intended to insure vehicles used for commercial purposes and KSRTC continued to insure buses with insurance companies outside and the lowest bidder would be selected for the purpose.

The Committee decided to recommend that the insurance coverage of the KSRTC buses should be done through public insurance companies like KSID.

Conclusions/Recommendations of the Committee -

6. *The Committee observes that KSID was not ready to insure buses used for commercial purposes and KSRTC continued to insure buses with insurance companies outside. Therefore the Committee recommends that the insurance coverage of the KSRTC buses should be done through public insurance companies like KSID*

3.11.6.2 - Loss of vehicle days due to delay in putting the new buses into operation

In response to the audit para the witness admitted that there was a shortage of crew during the said period. when Committee asked whether there was any change in the staff position, the witness informed that KSRTC stopped recruiting new employees. He added that now it had only 25896 employees in the place of about 42000 employees once had and was trying to limit it to 18000 with the intention of increasing duty time and productivity.

Conclusions/Recommendations of the Committee -

7. *The Committee observed that there was a delay on the part of depots in pressing the newly commissioned buses into scheduled operation due to the shortage of crew. In the meeting, the officials of KSRTC assured the Committee that they are trying to limit the number of employees from 25896 to 18000 with the intention of increasing duty time and productivity. So the Committee recommends to furnish a report on the current staff strength and financial position of KSRTC.*

3.11.6.3 - Loss of vehicle days due to delay in replacement of scrapped buses

Regarding the audit para the witness informed that shortage of 106 buses had not affected the service operations, as it had 10% of buses in excess to the schedules to be operated and the average service during the period was 15.2 lakh km. The witness added that as KSRTC had about 5700 buses during the period and the total fleet included a reserve of 10%, it was able to maintain the service average of 15.2 lakh km inspite of the shortage of 106 scrapped buses which were a part of the reserve. The witness admitted that reserve ratio could not be maintained. To a specific query of the AG, the witness informed that a reply would be furnished whether the 106 buses were idling or not earlier.

3.11.6.4 - Non-operation of schedules taken over from private operators

Relating the audit para the witness informed that some of the services were not feasible to KSRTC as the private stage carriages were now operating LS ordinary services in the same route along with KSRTC super class services and could not do anything with it.

The Committee directed to furnish a detailed reply on whether all the 214 services taken over as of March 2016 were operational at present, total number of super class services taken over as on date and status of operation, the measures taken to compensate the shortage of revenue collection in these routes and status of the complaint filed with RTA/ police by Kasaragod depot.

Conclusions/Recommendations of the Committee -

8. *The Committee observed that some of the services were not feasible to KSRTC as the private stage carriages were operating LS ordinary services in the same route along with KSRTC super class services and could not do anything with it. Hence the Committee recommends to furnish a detailed reply on whether all the 214 services taken over as of March 2016 are operational at present, total number of super class services taken over as on date and*

status of operation, the measures taken to compensate the shortage of revenue collection in these routes and status of the complaint filed with RTA/ police by Kasaragod depot.

3.11.7 - Low collection from operation of new buses

The Committee asked to explain the steps KSRTC had taken to re-arrange the low earning schedules. The witness responded that many of the services continued to be operational due to public demand and could not be stopped as it would create protest.

The Committee criticised KSRTC for the wrong selection of schedules and timings. The Committee also pointed out that there were instances of skipping scheduled timings of buses and thereby bunching of buses happening in the same route. The witness informed that strict action had been initiated in reporting of such cases and a study was being conducted to avoid bus bunching.

The Committee commented that KSRTC had no professional approach in the selection of routes. Many of the routes had low earnings and making loss, while many routes which had heavy passenger traffic, found scarcity of KSRTC buses and other RTCs and private operators were making profit from there by continuously operating buses. KSRTC could not even ascertain which route was profitable or not and they were doing things with out proper study. As an example, the Committee pointed out that Karnataka State RTC was operating many shedules in Kasaragod-Mangalore route and making profit. On the other hand KSRTC has failed to operate sufficient buses there. The Committee observes that Kasaragod depot could earn the highest collection for KSRTC from inter-state services. The Committee asked to examine the reason for the shortage of KSRTC buses in the Kasaragod-Mangalore route, the number of KSRTC buses operating and stopped operating and the number of private buses and Karnataka State RTC buses

operating in the above route. The committee also directed to examine the possibility of operating schedules to places like Suryakund in Karnataka.

Conclusions/Recommendations of the Committee -

9. *The Committee observes that Kasaragod depot could earn the highest collection for KSRTC from inter-state services. So the Committee recommends to examine the reason for the shortage of KSRTC buses in the Kasaragod-Mangalore route. The Committee also recommends to furnish a detailed report regarding the number of KSRTC buses operating, stopped operating and the number of private buses and Karnataka State RTC buses operating in the above route. The committee also directs to examine the possibility of operating schedules to the places like Suryakund in Karnataka.*

*Thiruvananthapuram,
25th June 2024.*

*E.Chandrasekharan,
Chairman,
Committee on Public Undertakings.*

APPENDIX – I SUMMARY OF MAIN CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATION			
Sl. No.	Para. No.	Department Concerned	Conclusions/Recommendations
1	1	Transport	The Committee observed that as per the provisions of the Kerala Motor Vehicles Rules a stage carrier can be operated upto 15 years from its date of registration. The Corporation withdraws its buses from operating fleet after completing 10 years in service in order to strengthen its fleet as put forth by the officials. The remark of the officials is bitter for the Committee to swallow and the Committee suspect it as a dubious design to purchase buses in bulk and a report detailing every aspect of the issue should be furnished to the Committee at the earliest.
2	2	Transport	The Committee criticizes KSRTC for diverting fund allotted for creating capital assets to working capital and recommends to furnish an explanation for the same.
3	3	Transport	The Committee observed that KSRTC did not have a proper purchase plan for buying the Chassis and opined that KSRTC had to prepare a purchase plan for the current year. Absence of a proper purchase plan led to the delay in procurement of chassis which in turn caused the shortage of buses. The Committee also pointed out that KSRTC had invited two tenders in one year for the procurement of Chassis, which also led to the undue delay in procurement. Hence the Committee recommends to furnish a report detailing the reasons for such faults and to take stringent action against the officials concerned.
4	4	Transport	The Committee recommend that the Corporation should evolve a working strategy for each year by preparing a calender including the scrapping of buses and planning to purchase buses and to fix the time interval to start operation of purchased buses after completing all formalities.

5	5	Transport	The Committee observe that besides the bulk purchase of buses without planning the shortage of workers and non availability of materials in time KSRTC could not complete the Bus body building in time and led to idling of Chassis which resulted in huge revenue loss. The Committee vehemently criticizes KSRTC for not ensuring better planning in such cases. The Committee could not find any reason for the delay in completing the insurance procedure citing paucity of funds after purchasing the buses in bulk thereby causing revenue loss.
6	6	Transport	The Committee observes that KSID was not ready to insure buses used for commercial purposes and KSRTC continued to insure buses with insurance companies outside. Therefore the Committee recommends that the insurance coverage of the KSRTC buses should be done through public insurance companies like KSID
7	7	Transport	The Committee observed that there was a delay on the part of depots in pressing the newly commissioned buses into scheduled operation due to the shortage of crew. In the meeting, the officials of KSRTC assured the Committee that they are trying to limit the number of employees from 25896 to 18000 with the intention of increasing duty time and productivity. So the Committee recommends to furnish a report on the current staff strength and financial position of KSRTC.
8	8	Transport	The Committee observed that some of the services were not feasible to KSRTC as the private stage carriages were operating LS ordinary services in the same route along with KSRTC super class services and could not do anything with it. Hence the Committee recommends to furnish a detailed reply on whether all the 214 services taken over as of March 2016 are operational at present, total number of super class services taken over as on date and status of operation, the measures taken to compensate the shortage of revenue collection in these routes and status of the complaint filed with RTA/ police by Kasaragod depot.

9	9	Transport	<p>The Committee observes that Kasaragod depot could earn the highest collection for KSRTC from inter-state services. So the Committee recommends to examine the reason for the shortage of KSRTC buses in the Kasaragod-Mangalore route. The Committee also recommends to furnish a detailed report regarding the number of KSRTC buses operating, stopped operating and the number of private buses and Karnataka State RTC buses operating in the above route. The committee also directs to examine the possibility of operating schedules to the places like Suryakund in Karnataka.</p>
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