

# A BUSLOAD OF PROBLEMS

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Urbanisation and related Issues

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

July 24, 2023 12:15 am | Updated 01:40 am IST

COMMENTS

SHARE

READ LATER

The Kerala State Road Transport Corporation, with an operational fleet of around 4,600-4,700 buses, has often been in the midst of controversy as trade unions have repeatedly opposed its proposed reforms. File | Photo Credit: The Hindu

The cash-strapped Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) is heading towards another crisis with Biju Prabhakar, the chairman and managing director of the public utility, announcing that he will step down.

The Corporation, with an operational fleet of around 4,600-4,700 buses, has often been in the midst of controversy as trade unions have repeatedly opposed its proposed reforms. This time, the public utility has grabbed headlines for a different reason. Repeated raps from the Kerala High Court along with inter-departmental feuds have forced Mr. Prabhakar to inform the government about his willingness to call it a day.

In the latest incident, while [expressing strong displeasure over the non-payment of last month's salary](#) to KSRTC employees, the High Court on July 14 directed Mr. Prabhakar to appear online before it if salaries are not paid by July 20. The reluctance of the Finance Department to provide the assured monthly financial aid to the Corporation on time has made things worse. A section of employees owing allegiance to the Opposition Congress marched in protest to the official residence of Mr. Prabhakar.

Also read | [Provide further financial aid to KSRTC to pay staff salary: Kerala HC tells govt.](#)

It was during an earlier crisis that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had provided assurance that a monthly financial aid of 50 crore would be given to the Corporation before the 5th of every month, which would pay the salary of the 25,000-odd employees. However, the Finance Department has been dragging its feet by not paying the promised amount. It instead issued only 30 crore, that too after repeated requests by the Corporation every month. The KSRTC has an average monthly turnover of 210 crore, and requires around 260 crore to meet all its expenses, including salaries. Had the government provided the assured monthly aid of 50 crore on time, the Corporation could have stayed more afloat without relying on other financial institutions. In addition, the State has not provided adequate major working capital sought by the Corporation in recent times. As a result, around 1,200 buses are lying idle without proper maintenance after COVID-19.

To add to the KSRTC's woes, miffed employees continue to resist the reforms that are mooted

by the management from time to time. A senior KSRTC official asked how the management could implement reforms when the employees were not even given their salaries, let alone other perks, on time. The Corporation's recent decision to implement a 12-hour single-duty system for employees has also run into rough weather with unions opposing the move.

Though the management forcefully implemented a new system for optimum utilisation of employees on a pilot basis at selected depots from October 1, 2022, it could not extend it across the State even nine months after the introduction of the new system.

The inefficiency of a section of employees is also a matter of serious concern for the Corporation. Further, the State is likely to effect a minor reshuffle in the Cabinet in the coming months. Transport Minister Antony Raju might be replaced by another ally from the Left front in Kerala. The incumbent KSRTC chairman and managing director, who shares a good rapport with the current Transport Minister, is reportedly reluctant to serve under another Minister.

Amid these developments, there is some good news. The new legal entity formed under the Corporation, KSRTC-SWIFT, could register profit as appointments in SWIFT are on a contract basis. This means that the management will be able to implement reforms with ease.

All this underscore the State government's apathy in finding a lasting solution to the issues plaguing the Corporation, its inability to deal with the demands of trade unions and solve the inter-departmental feud that has deepened the crisis in the Corporation, and the poor financial situation of Kerala.

The reluctance of the employee unions to toe the line of the government also indicates that the change of guard at the top will not bring any changes in the Corporation. Instead, the unions could become more emboldened in the future. The situation calls for a multi-pronged approach involving the management, employees, government departments, and trade unions. It is in the best interests of the government and citizens to keep KSRTC, which services over 25 lakh passengers every month, afloat and turn it around.

COMMENTS

SHARE

[Kerala](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

**END**

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by [crackIAS.com](#)