

Over 30,000 private buses off Kerala roads

Operators of more than 30,000 private buses in Kerala struck work Tuesday, demanding an increase in the minimum fare charged from commuters.

'We agreed to reduce the bus fares when the prices of diesel were reduced. Now, there has been an upward revision in diesel so the fares should go up,' Coordination Committee of Bus Owners chairman A.K. Abdulla said.

The committee, comprising seven unions, went on a one-day strike, demanding an increase in minimum fare from Rs.3.50 to Rs.5, reduction of concession to students and limitation of service on nationalised routes by Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC).

'This is just a token strike. If our demands are not met, we will go on an indefinite strike from Dec 1. Moreover, we are not aware of any discussion with the transport minister as no one has informed us,' he said.

State Transport Minister Jose Thettayil said he would be meeting the striking bus owners Tuesday evening.

'Some of the leaders of the striking unions said they would like to meet me. We will have a meeting in the evening. The government has an open mind and we would solve the crisis,' he said.

The strike has affected commuters in Kerala as KSRTC operates less than 4,000 buses in the state. The worst-affected districts are Ernakulam and Kottayam.

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