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Brace for hassles as bus strike continues

RTC staff refuse to budge; government offers to talk if employees resume work

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

While the bus strike was almost complete across the State on Wednesday, the road transport corporation (RTC) employees have announced that the stir will continue indefinitely till the State government agrees to their demand. They have sought implementation of the Sixth Pay Commission.

The State government is threatening to invoke provisions of the Karnataka Essential Services Maintenance Act, 2013, and withhold the March salary of striking employees.

Strike unfair: CM

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa opened a window for negotiations on Wednesday and said talks could be held if they suspend the strike.

Mr. Yediyurappa, busy campaigning for bypolls all day in Belagavi, said, "The State government has fulfilled eight of the nine de-



KSRTC buses parked at Mysuru Road satellite bus terminal in Bengaluru on Wednesday during the strike by RTC employees.

• K. MURALI KUMAR

mands and have also announced an 8% salary hike. In these tough times, it is wrong to go on an indefinite strike. I hope they do not force a situation where tough measures will be necessitated." While welcoming the invitation for talks, Kodihalli Chandrashekar, honorary president of the KSRTC Employees League, said they believed talks

were the only way ahead and they would participate, but said the strike would continue till the Sixth Pay Commission was implemented.

Transport Minister Laxman Savadi, also busy campaigning in Basavakalyan, argued that the strike was adversely impacting the already financially stressed RTCs, jeopardising their

ability to even pay salaries. RTCs suffered a loss of ₹17 crore on Wednesday.

Other arrangements

On day one of the strike, while many seemed to have postponed or suspended their travel plans, others who were out on emergency or for work were stranded. The situation is expected to get tougher by Thursday even though private vehicles have been pressed into service.

In preparation, the government has done away with the permit rule allowing any private vehicle to ferry passengers, deregulating the entire transport sector, till the strike ends.

Meanwhile, South Western Railway has announced nine additional trains within the State over the next five days. Namma Metro in Bengaluru too has begun running additional trips.

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