

## **'Stop harassing us, we are going on strike', warn school bus operators over fines**

*The Regional Transport Authorities should provide school buses with specific parking places and bus halts.*



**Mumbai:** Over a month after no redressal of buses being fined for halting as they pick and drop students, the school bus owners operating in Mumbai have decided to stop the services if traffic authorities did not stop fining them.

School Bus Owners Association (SBOA) President Anil Garg told Free Press Journal that the members are going to stop the services as no action has been taken by the traffic authorities despite repeated requests.

Earlier, on November 25, Garg said, a meeting was held by Mumbai Bus Malak Sangathan (MBMS), and it was decided that vehicle owners would contact the local MLAs and RTO departments to push their demands further to the government.

“CCTVs should be uninstalled from roads and the traffic police must receive an official notification from authorities about not fining buses for taking halts,” Garg said, adding, sending e-Challans every now and then, must stop on an urgent basis.

According to the Maharashtra Motor Vehicles Rules, 2011, the Regional Transport Authorities should provide school buses with specific parking places and bus halts at feasible locations to ensure the safety of the students on board.

The Act states, “The Regional Transport Authority in consultation with the School Authorities, Traffic Police and Municipal Corporation or Council shall specify the parking and halting places at appropriate locations exclusively for the school buses having regard to the school timings and safety of the children.”

The SBOA president added that despite the guidelines released by the government, the RTO has not allotted any specific bus stops for school buses. “We are simply revenue machines for them,” he said.

According to Shahid Shaikh, Joint Treasurer, MBMS, last month in the whole of Mumbai, about 950 school buses were sent e-Challans, with each one being charged Rs 1,500.

“The reason to fine the buses was the halts they take for students to get in or off the bus,” Shaikh said.

An official from Maharashtra Regional Transport Office (RTO), who wished to remain anonymous, told FPJ that the process of allotting specific stops for school buses would take time and that the process is underway.

The Free Press Journal also reached out to schools from Bhandup, Chembur, Borivali, Andheri, and Ghatkopar; however, they avoided commenting on the same.

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