

Inter Provincial Bus Service

In Sri Lanka, the bus transport system was started in the second decade of 20th century. Since then it was maintained as a private sector enterprise in which operations were undertaken by individuals at first and later by private companies. In 1958 the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP) government led by the late S W R D Bandaranaike nationalized the private bus services and established the Ceylon Transport Board (CTB) since then the mass transportation of passengers was a State monopoly until 1978.

When Mr. J R Jayawardana came into power in 1977, his government decided to allow private operators to enter into the passenger transportation business under a route permit system, which had existed in an unorganized form for some time. In order to manage private bus operators the Government formulated and established the Private Omnibus Department in 1988 and the services were operated with the assistance of the Bus Operator Associations. Later with the establishment of Provincial Councils at the beginning of 1990s bus services in the provinces were controlled by the respective Road Passenger Transport Authorities.

In 1991, by Act No. 37 of 1991 the Government established the National Transport Commission to advise the Government on the national policy regarding the passenger transportation by omnibus and to implement policies effectively. Under this law, some of its important activities that come under the Commission in the task of advising the Government on the National Policy relating to passenger transport services are mentioned below:

- * Monitoring the availability of omnibus services of an acceptable quality to meet the passenger transport needs of the public and to determine the minimum levels at which such services shall be maintained;
- * Enforcement and monitoring the compliance of permit holders with the conditions stipulated in the passenger service permits.
- * Ensuring the provision of omnibus services on un-remunerative routes.
- * Arranging the carrying of goods on omnibuses.
- * Promotion and development of the services relating to omnibus passenger transportation.
- * Granting passenger services permits for inter provincial omnibus services.

Through my brief description of the history of bus transportation I have identified destructive

phases of organizational change, and the following institutions came into existence or were formulated to meet the needs of particular periods.

- * Private Operators & Companies
- * Bus Barons or Bus Mudalalis
- * Ceylon Transport Board (CTB) - Regional Transport Boards (RTB) Sri Lanka Central Transport Board, Peoples Bus Depots, and Cluster Companies.
- * Commissioner of Motor Traffic.
- * Private Omnibus Department
- * Provincial Councils and Road Passenger Transport Authorities.
- * National Transport Commission.

When the transport sector as a whole in Sri Lanka is taken into consideration certain specific features could also be identified.

Firstly, the amount of money people spend on individual transport has risen much faster than what a person can bear on the most essential needs for life. For example, as an University undergraduate I spent only 05 cents on bus travel for the first fare stage or the section in the early 1970s. At that time, the price of a lunch packet at the university

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canteen was only 50 cents. The price of a lunch packet was very similar to this even in a work-place like Central Bank where better prospects were enjoyed by its employees those days. When these increase in the bus fare and of a lunch packet are compared, the percentage increase in bus fare is three times more than the increase in the price of a lunch packet. i.e. while the percentage increase in the price of a lunch packet from 1970s to 2000s is 2000 per cent, the increase in bus fares during the same period stands at 6000 per cent. I don't think it is necessary to refer to any more examples of the increases in the price of other essential items that are very important in the day-to-day life of a person to show the remarkable increase of bus fare, in the last three decades.

Secondly, the economic importance of transport sector is considerable. The transport sector normally employs a number of the wage-earners and accordingly a reasonable number of employees make their livelihood from services related to transport.

Further, transportation also plays a prime role in regional development as well as the overall development of a country. This phenomenon plays a major role in Sri Lanka as well. Therefore the transport of goods too has steadily increased with the rise of production.

Lastly, the public stake in transport is decreasing due to the entry of private enterprise into the field. This represents a major breakthrough as private companies are being invited to take over cluster companies and their properties to provide a better service to the public.

In most countries the transport sector could again be divided into following categories:

1. Road Transport
2. Railway Transport
3. Sea Transport
4. Waterways Transport
5. Air Transport

All these types of transport are discussed at length in this volume of the "Economic Review" by eminent personalities. Therefore, I am not going to touch on them again. In the road transport, the bus is the major means of passenger transport. In Sri Lanka bus transportation is mainly conducted by the following institutions:

- * Depots under Cluster Companies with the help of Sri Lanka Central Transport Board
- * Provincial Passenger Transport Authorities
- * National Transport Commission

The bus services conducted by the above institutions could be categorised into -

- * Intra Provincial Services
- * Inter Provincial Services

The management of intra-provincial services are handled by the provincial transport authorities and the CTB. Inter-provincial services are provided by the CTB and the National Transport Commission. These inter-provincial services of NTC operate for the benefit of the passengers either under the respective provincial authorities or in their absence with the help of the District Secretariats or Divisional Secretariats in a particular area. Altogether over 30,000 buses are operated in both intra and inter provincial services and these buses are owned by private and state operators. The total number of buses including buses for special hire throughout the country may be over 60,000.

The Inter-provincial bus services are mainly handled by the National Transport Commission. Inter-provincial bus services of CTB are limited due to a number of reasons. However, the lion share of Inter-provincial services are in the hands of private operators who have obtained Passenger Service Permits the National Transport Commission. At present four kinds of permits are issued by the Commission to private operators, who are ready to provide inter-city transport services.

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- Super Luxury - Extra facilities such as TV etc in addition to A/C. 2 ¼ times the normal fare.
- Luxury - A/C buses with number of passengers, limited to the number of seats and are charged twice the normal fare
- Semi Luxury - Non A/C but with curtains and head-rests. Passenger capacity is limited to the number of seats available. 1 ½ times the normal fare
- Normal - Non A/C, limited stops Normal fare

Over 3,300 route permits were issued for the above four services islandwide under NTC supervision and with bus stand facilities of provincial authorities. (Please see the list of Inter Provincial Services) Number of services run under the above mentioned four kinds of services on 269 routes around the country are as follows:

NUMBER OF INTER PROVINCIAL SERVICES

The position in regard to the total number of permits issued for these different types of services as at the end of June 2002, is given below.

Normal	1,711
Semi Luxury	88
Luxury	1,468
Super Luxury	05

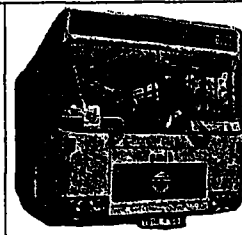
Permits of another kind have been issued under the name of "stand-by buses" which are widely known to the operators. These buses could be used by the time keepers or bus stand authorities, when a regular bus is not available due to reasons such as break-downs and unavailability of crews etc. This stand-by facility is used in the under-mentioned services.

NUMBER OF INTRIOR PROVINCIAL SERVICES WITH STAND-BY BUSES

My personal opinion on stand-by buses is that they may be useful for very popular routes to carry out a proper and continued bus services, when a regular bus is out of service.

Recently another new proposal was made before the Commission through our ministry to commence a new semi-luxury service for season ticket holders. This type of service will be definitely helpful to the bus commuters, especially to the students and office employees. The amount of time people spend travelling from home to work has increased with urban growth and the outward spread of suburbs. This has led to a critical situation so far as urban transport is concerned, and the problem is compounded even further by the daily entry of so many private vehicles to the major cities. Private vehicles daily stream into the cities and cause heavy congestion in streets that were never conceived to absorb such large number of vehicles. Daily and weekend rush hours traffic congestion now lasts much longer and have paralyzed the life of the community. Traffic jams are a waste of

taken to improve the bus services. I presume that these are worth taking into consideration.



- For an efficient and regular service the buses should be operated according to a plan, in keeping with the traffic demand, in necessary frequencies depending on the peak hour/off peak hour requirements. Present route net work has not been restructured for the last few decades, in keeping with the changing demand patterns.
- Unhealthy competition and non-operation of coordinated panel time-tables.
- Significant increase in lay over and dwell time at city centres and lingering at bus halts.
- Inter-changing of an arm of a linked service with an arm of another for mutual advantage of both routes.

Multi-billion bus deal in stock market today

By Chamitha Kuruppu
The much delayed and controversial privatisation of 13 state owned companies is scheduled to begin on Monday. Exchange to investors had submitted bid worth equivalent to five percent of the minimum bid price of Rs 200 million. Questions arise when one of the investors submitted bid to the bid down. According to Central Bus Company were the only two companies to submit the bid along with signed copies of the shareholders agreement and financing agreement. The two companies include British origin.

time and money besides being nerve-racking. On the other hand, the choking of the streets has slowed down public transport and may cause people to turn away from public bus transport. But notwithstanding the development of bus transport at the expense of private vehicles is precisely the solution to the problem. Therefore, new and attractive services such as private season ticket buses should be introduced to overcome the situation.

Inviting capable private companies to run the services provided by the cluster companies may also contribute to a better and quality passenger transport service. As it now appears the transport system seems to be going back to where it was before 1958 and reminds me the universal saying of "History repeats itself". The responsibility therefore, lies with the authorities not to allow such a thing happen to the public transport system.

Here, let me point out some of the suggestions made by my predecessor Mr. Tissa Abeysinghe in one of his consultancy assignments on the measures that should be

- Operation of buses from common bus stands for common services to reduce the inconvenience to the public. The present system of state and private bus stands should be changed.
- Operation of state and private sector buses under a coordinated panel time-table to reduce un-necessary running, unhealthy competition and increase of peak-hour operations (This may also be helpful to reduce the road accidents which are a major problem of the bus operation today.)
- Provision of new services to meet the demand in the road closed for security reasons. (It is an unfortunate that the A-9 road and some other roads are not properly open for public bus operations) Finally, I must mention that if any country wants to have prolific source of records in travel facilities that country has to take following very important factors into serious consideration.
- Punctuality achievable through the quality of the transport vehicle and infrastructure.
- Rapidity by well-thought out time-tables.
- Comfort which leads the trip could be a break for relaxation.
- Safety through stringent controls and imposing of operating standards.

NUMBER OF INTER PROVINCIAL SERVICES

Services	Type of Services			
	Normal	Semi-Luxury	Luxury	Super-Luxury
Between Colombo & Other Cities	79	11	79	1
Between Kandy & Other Cities	32	1	20	-
Between Kurunegala & Other Cities	24	-	5	-
Between Embilipitiya & Other Cities	12	-	-	-
Between Matara & Other Cities	9	-	9	-
Between Avissawella & Other Cities	9	-	-	-
Between Anuradhapura & Other Cities	8	-	2	-
Between Other Cities	59	-	12	-
Total :	232	12	127	1