

Stir won't hit essential services

Only BEST AC buses to stay off road; taxis, autos to ply with caution

Rajendra Aklekar

While the rest of India is expected to join the Bharat bandh call on Tuesday, the city's public transport is expected to run as usual, but with caution.

Reason: Shiv Sena is supporting the strike.

While the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) undertaking will refrain from running air-conditioned buses, autorickshaw and taxi drivers have decided to stop

plying, if there is any incidence of violence or damage to their vehicles.

Though the railway unions are officially not participating in the strike, the railway police have cancelled the leaves of all their constables to increase vigil at suburban stations.

Tuesday's mega nationwide strike has been supported by 11 central trade unions and 5,000 smaller unions cutting across party lines, in protest against rising prices, disinvestment of profit-making public sector units and violation of labour laws

among other reasons.

More than eight lakh bank employees too are expected to joining them to protest against privatisation.

"Regular BEST buses will ply as per schedule, but we will not run AC buses in the morning. We will first observe the situation and then only ply them as any damage to the AC buses will pinch our pocket," said a BEST spokesperson.

The BEST has fitted 20 to 25 vehicles in all bus depots with grills and protective sheets.

"We have issued a special circular to our staff and driv-

ers saying that no one should participate in the strike," the spokesperson added.

Anthony Quadros, president of the Mumbai Taximen's Union, said: "This strike is about the organised sector. But, we are an unorganised sector and so, will not participate. All taxis will ply as usual in Mumbai, but if there is any incidence of violence or damage to our vehicles, we will be forced to go off the roads."

Shashank Rao of the Mumbai Automen's union said they will "morally support" the strike, but will not stop autos

from plying. "We will lead a morcha at Azad Maidan," Rao added.

Transport unions affiliated to the Sena are supporting the strike, but they too said that they will not stop vehicles from plying.

Railway Protection Force officials said they will increase security at all key suburban stations. "We have cancelled the leaves sanctioned to our staff on Tuesday," a Central Railway official said.

(With inputs from Alok Deshpande)

NO FORCED BANDH: UDDHAV



Shiv Sena executive president Uddhav Thackeray on Monday confirmed that his party will participate in Tuesday's nationwide strike. "This strike is called by labour unions and there will be no forced bandh. We will not carry out any violent agitations on the streets which will harm the Mumbaikars," promised Thackeray.

11 central trade unions and 5,000 smaller unions will support the nationwide strike

PUBLIC SECTOR POWER FIRM UNIONS TO JOIN STRIKE

DNA Correspondent

Unions from public sector power companies in the state have decided to join the nationwide strike called by labour unions on Tuesday.

Though the power utilities maintained that their services will remain unaffected, the unions claimed their participation in the strike will affect the functioning of these firms. "The Maharashtra State Elec-

tricity Workers Federation, Maharashtra Veej Kamgar Mahasangh, National Electricity Federation and the Rashtrawadi Veej Kamgar Congress have given a notice for the strike," said Mohan Sharma, working president of the Maharashtra State Electricity Workers Federation. "This will affect services in some way or the other."

Sharma said they were participating in the strike to oppose the adoption of the fran-

chisee model in areas which had a high distribution loss, the shutdown of old thermal power generating sets which made losses and outsourcing and employment of contract workers on exploitative terms.

Sharma claimed that of the 86,000 workers in the three utilities (generation, transmission and distribution), 60,000-65,000 workers would participate in the strike.

But, an official from the Ma-

harashtra State Power Generation Company Ltd said the non-participation of the unions of the graduate engineers and subordinate engineers would ensure that the strike would not impact the functioning of the power generation utility.

A senior official from the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd also claimed that the impact of the strike on the services, if any would only be marginal.