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Thursday, December 16, 2010 11:25 PM I

## Auto fares raised, minimum charge Rs 14

Express News Service

First Published : 15 Dec 2010 01:06:20 AM IST

Last Updated : 15 Dec 2010 08:42:06 AM IST

HYDERABAD: City denizens will from now on have to shell out extra money to ride in autos. After postponing the decision to the ire of auto unions, the state government has decided to allow the hike in minimum auto fares from the existing Rs 12 to Rs 14, which will come in to effect from Wednesday.

The decision to hike fares was taken following talks held between Transport minister Botsa Satyanarayana and several auto union leaders on Tuesday. Unions had been demanding fares be hiked to Rs 20. But for the moment they have settled for the government offer of Rs 14. "For every one km henceforth, the customer will have to pay Rs 8 instead of Rs 7," Auto Parirakshana Porata Committee member Krishna Prasad told Express.

Besides, the government also decided to hike waiting charges from the existing Rs 0.20 to Rs 0.50. It also assured auto unions that 400 auto stands will be identified by the Transport department in coordination with the GHMC.

Auto drivers who ply in the city suburbs can from now ply their autos in Greater Hyderabad limits. "During the meeting it was decided only those auto drivers whose residential address is located in the GHMC limits can ply anywhere in Greater Hyderabad. This decision will benefit many auto drivers from the Rangareddy district," Krishna Prasad added.

Meanwhile, cracks were evident within unions later in the day as the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) members expressed their displeasure after fares were revised marginally. "Several drivers will be affected by the hurriedly taken decision, after a few unions conceded to the government offer of a meagre hike of just Rs 2. The Union government has once again hiked petrol fares and this meagre hike would not serve any purpose," BMS leader Ravi Shankar said. The government however kept several demands in abeyance including establishment of a welfare board for auto drivers.  
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