

BEST hopes 1k new buses will revive its fortunes

BMC will also pay BEST another Rs 400 crore to clear its loans because part of initial Rs 1,200 crore grant was used to pay salaries

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The Brihanmumbai Electricity Supply and Transport Undertaking is in survival mode and seeking to bring back commuters. The management plans on inducting 1,000 more buses by January 2020 to bring back commuters lost to share autos and taxi services.

On Monday, Force Motors handed

the first batch of five mini air-conditioned buses to BEST. The vehicles will ply on routes between the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus and a few longer routes starting from Colaba depot.

Municipal Commissioner Praveen Pardeshi, who was present at the event, said the vehicles have been acquired under a wet leasing model. The agreement reduces the operational cost by 20%, Pardeshi said while adding that the move will make the service a viable



option with the eventual increase in passengers.

The BEST plans on incorporating another 25 buses which will be delivered by September-end and another 200

in October. Dr Surendrakumar Bagde, BEST general manager, said the vehicles will be deployed across the city. Force Motors will manufacture 400 buses which will be operated by Shri Krupa Services Private Ltd. By January 2020, BEST is aiming at inducting around 1,000 more buses.

BEST hopes its recently subsidized rates coupled with an increased frequency of buses along routes and increased bus speed will make its operations financially viable.

Pardeshi pointed out that the suburban trains ferry around 80 lakh passengers. BEST at one point ferried 45 lakh but that went down to 22 lakh, he said.

BMC will also be paying BEST another Rs 400 crore to clear its pending loans as around 30% of the initial grant of Rs 1,200 crore had to be allotted towards employee salaries. "We will also be paying another Rs 100 crore a month to subsidize the losses incurred on operating bus operations," added Pardeshi.