KTCL: THE UNSUNG CORONA WARRIOR

May 5, 2020
Vaishakha 18, 1941

Written by: Janhavi Savaikar

The Kadamba Transport Corporation Ltd. (KTCL) created a total change of image for its entire organization during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The KTCL team with sleeves pulled discharge their role diligently, solely leading the Government transportation in both inter and intra state front. Be it Grocery on wheels, dropping the foreign tourists to airport, distributing masks in the remote villages in the State or sanitisation of bus stands and well as the private buses, the Kadamba Parivar worked silently, evolving as an unsung hero.

Special kudos to the two dynamic drivers, Shri Savlo Parab and Shri Mahesh Kanolkar, who journeyed 2740 odd kms to Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh and vice versa to drop 19 students of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Delhi and picked up 13 Goan students stranded in Delhi in six days.

When quipped about the challenges, Managing Director, Shri. Venancio Furtado told, “The officers and crew members are KTCL’s biggest strength. Their safety was my priority before letting them in the service of the people. We had a lecture series for our staff in early January wherein doctors/resource persons had impressed upon our staff the importance of sanitization which eventually was useful and effectively put into practice during the pandemic. Out on the field, initially 60 buses moved the staff involved in Essential services day, to and fro from their destination to work place. After the first lockdown, the demand soared and buses transported cooked food to various shelter homes. Four buses were dedicated for ‘Groceries on wheels’ a novel idea initiated to mitigate the suffering of the people for essential commodities in association with Directorate of Civil Supplies.” Currently, the KTCL operates around 224 buses on one person on each seat basis to commute Government servants.

When pondered about the manpower on field, General Manager, Shri. Sanjay Ghate informed that 604 drivers and 321 conductors worked tirelessly, in day and night shifts while the Administration and Depot staff worked in alternate
shifts. Majority of drivers and conductors who were on field duty were not more than 50 years of age. The technical and support staff took cleanliness drives in depots. Pre-monsoon work such as trimming branches of trees, washing bus stands and KTCL offices, sanitizing buses inside out was undertaken by trained staff itself.”

The Corporation adhered to MHA guidelines very strictly. The bus stands and buses were sanitised with Dettol and Lizol; and bleached with Sodium Dichloride every day before service. This is being carried out till today. 17 sanitizing manual Pressure Pumps were provided to various bus stands and depots. Currently, when a bus gets ready for a travel, especially outside Goa, a thermal gun and Sanitizing Pump is provided to the crew as a safety essential.

“Comfort of the passenger is utmost important to us. So far the buses have transported more than 7000 stranded foreign tourists and hundreds of students and interstate tourists to Red and Orange COVID-19 Zones such as Mumbai airport, Kasargod in Karnataka, Silvassa, Surat, Ahmadabadin Gujarat and Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh. The KTCL also stores essentials snacks and water for inter-state journeys so that no passenger moves out of the bus during small hunger pangs,” shares Shri. Furtado. The drivers who go on interstate travels are quarantined and tested back home. They resume only after testing negative.

Public transport is a backbone of the State’s economy and an essential service to be maintained as long as reasonable. It is the responsibility of every citizen to co-operate with crew member. KTCL suggests that every passenger must wear a face mask and hand gloves if possible and carry with them a small bottle of sanitizer. The Corporation has provided face masks to their employees and encouraging staff to follow Physical Distancing.

“The Government machinery worked 24x7 and the Kadamba Parivar is proud to be a part of it. The major challenge lied in arranging travel permits during interstate travels. I salute the officers and the crew on field who worked very efficiently, hand in hand with other Government departments; and the family members of our staff members for their solidarity. It was a picture of humanity being at its best,” concludes Ghate.
Quotes from Drivers who travelled Madhya Pradesh

Shri. Savlo Parab, hailing from Tivim, said that he was not prepared for such a long trip during the Pandemic. “I am 55 years old and have completed more than 30 years of service in KTCL. I love my job and during my service have driven buses to Kanyakumari, Bhopal etc. Driving a Volvo is relaxing. However, crossing the state borders, changing routes due to blockages in Red Zones, waiting in long queues for constant security checks was hectic. This will be indeed an unforgettable experience.”

Shri. Mahesh Kanolkar, 45, hailing from Dhargal, opines, “These Children were like our own. It was initially scary to shoulder this big responsibility. We travelled from Valpoi via Belgaum, Pune, Malegaon, Dhar to Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh. The Volvo buses have GPS tracking system. We were constantly in touch with our Officers. Today, I am proud and feel more responsible. Government has arranged the trip so well. Each person was provided with safety gears and sanitizers, Food and other essentials. We did not halt anywhere except for food. The students also were patient and co-operative. Their zeal to be in their mother land was also a constant motivation for us.”

(The writer is an Information Assistant at Dept. of Information and Publicity)
Cleanliness drive by technical staff at Depot premises

Regular temperature scan before boarding
Distribution of Masks on the occasion of Chief Minister's bday

Drivers with students from Delhi
Sanitisation of Vasco Bus stand