Madras HC Dismisses Challenge to TN's 'Vettri Payanam' Free Bus Scheme

The Madras High Court dismissed a writ petition filed by a private bus operator challenging the constitutional validity of Tamil Nadu's 'Vettri Payanam' no-fare bus travel scheme for women.

A landmark judicial endorsement affirming that state affirmative action providing free public transport for women across 12,695 government buses is legally protected under Article 15(3).

KEY EXAM POINTS

- Petitioner argued that providing free travel exclusively on state-run buses created an uneven playing field for private operators, violating Article 14 (Right to Equality).
- Petitioner also cited Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and TN Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989 claiming passenger fare collection was legally mandatory.
- High Court dismissed the plea, noting the petitioner challenged only the Rule 110 announcement and DIPR release rather than the substantive Government Order (G.O.).
- The scheme facilitates approximately 84.32 lakh zero-fare journeys daily for women across Tamil Nadu.

DID YOU KNOW..!?

Article 15(3) empowers the State to make "any special provision for women and children" as a protective discrimination carve-out to Article 15(1).

Rule 110 of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Rules allows Ministers to make statements of public importance with the consent of the Speaker without immediate debate.

Syllabus Relevance: High relevance for both Prelims Polity and Mains Governance & Social Welfare.

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