

HC dismisses plea to reduce Metro Rail fares

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The Madras High Court on Thursday dismissed a public interest litigation petition which sought for a direction to Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) to fix minimum ticket fare at ₹5 per person and follow the same pricing pattern as adopted by the Southern Railway for the suburban electric trains.

A Division Bench of Justices K.K. Sasidharan and R. Subramanian refused to entertain the case at the admission stage itself on the ground that it was not for the court to decide the correctness of the fare structure evolved by the CMRL by taking into many factors including the costs involved in creating the facility.

R. Viswanathan alias 'MGR' Viswanathan, 61, of Gopalapuram, had filed the PIL plea. Apart from fare reduction, he had also sought a direction to the Centre to take over the Metro Rail services and operate it with the assistance of the Southern Railway.

Authoring the judgment for the Bench, Mr. Justice Sasidharan said "Certain matters like this, by their very nature, should be left to the authorities instead of courts themselves seeking to substitute their own views and perceptions. In matters of timings, tariff fixation and other operational functions, railways and CMRL must be given a free hand. It is not possible for the court to evolve a price mechanism by sitting in the armchair of railway officials and acting as if it is a cost auditor. The court must show judicial restraint in matters like this."