

Mumbai cabs to turn yellow by June

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MUMBAI: The state transport department has decided to colour Mumbai's black-and-yellow taxis into yellow by June 2010.

"We wanted a common colour code and have received a consensus from taxiwallahs. If things go well, then yellow taxis might ply by mid-2010," Transport Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil told *Hindustan Times*.

The black-and-yellow taxis have been plying on Mumbai roads since 1960s.

The reason behind this proposal is to give the 56,000-odd taxis a distinct look by making them single-coloured.

It will also save the expense of painting taxis in two colours. "The city is getting alternate modes of transport like the Metro and Monorail. So even the taxis should flaunt a new look that can offer both com-

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fort and security to passengers," Vikhe-Patil added.

The Mumbai Taxi Union has agreed to the proposal. "We have no problems with the proposal of converting taxis to yellow," said Mumbai Taxi Union, general secretary, AL Quadros.

The union will meet the transport department in January to discuss the implementation of the proposal.

The taxis will be painted yellow in a phased manner. In the first phase, about 8,000 taxis, which are aged between 15 and 25 years and are being slowly phased out, will be painted.

"This will save the additional expenses that drivers and

owner of taxis incur. We need to think of a method to colour the remaining number of taxis," said another official of Mumbai Taxi Union.

The transport authorities have already begun replacing city's aging fleet of taxis, by not permitting taxis older than 25 years to ply. New cars, like Maruti Omni, Alto, Wagon R Hyundai Santro and Tata Indica, are replacing these taxis.

The authorities have also made it mandatory for these new vehicles to have electronic meters.

The government has also proposed to replace the badges given to drivers with identity cards along with name of the on-duty driver displayed inside the cab.

The unions have also demanded more space for advertisements, which will help the owners recover the cost of the makeover, especially those who recently bought new taxis.

THE STORY OF CITY CABS



- Black-and-yellow Fiat-Premier Padmini's have been a part of Mumbai's public transport system for nearly half-a-century.

- Since 1960s, the black-and-yellow taxis have grown to a number of 56,000.

- Now, the transport department has put a cap on this number. It is now looking at introducing private air-conditioned cabs.

- The government has sought a ban on taxis older than 25 years to reduce pollution in the city. This move resulted in newer cars, like Maruti Esteem, WagonR, Omni and Hyundai Santro, slowly replacing the Fiat.

- The administration is now contemplating on reducing the cap on the age of taxis further to 15 years.