

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE
(2002-2003)

FIFTEENTH REPORT

(THIRTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CULTURE
(DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM)

DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE FOR GROWTH OF TOURISM –
DEVELOPMENT OF AJMER CITY

Presented to Lok Sabha on 25.4. 2003

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

April ,2003/Vaisakha ,1925(S)

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COMPOSITION OF THE ESTIMATES COMMITTEE
(2002-2003)

Prof. Ummareddy Venkateswarlu – Chairman

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INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of the Estimates Committee having been authorised by the Committee to submit the report on their behalf present this Fifteenth Report on the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (Department of Tourism) - 'Development of Infrastructure for Growth of Tourism – Development of Ajmer City.'

2. The subject was selected for detailed examination by the Estimates Committee (2001-2002) following their visit to Pushkar Lake and discussion with the officials of Indian Tourism Development Corporation Limited (ITDC) and the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan regarding 'Development of Infrastructure for Growth of Tourism' on 5th November, 2001. The Committee examined every aspect of the subject by calling for written information from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (Department of Tourism), the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation and taking evidence of the representatives of the aforesaid Ministries on 23rd April, 2002. The Committee interacted with the representatives to get first hand information on the subject. The Committee wish to express their thanks to the officers of the Ministries for placing before them detailed written notes on the subject and for furnishing information desired in connection with the examination of the subject. The Committee also appreciate the frankness with which the officers shared their views, perceptions and constraints with the Committee.

3. The Committee would also like to express their gratitude to the Estimates Committee (2001-2002) for the able guidance and right direction provided by them in obtaining information for indepth and comprehensive study of the subject.

4. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 31st March, 2003.

5. The Report is divided into five chapters. The Committee have inter alia made the following important observations/recommendations:

- (i) All-round concerted efforts should be made to turn Ajmer into a premier tourist destination in the country by developing better infrastructural facilities to meet the requirements of increasing number of tourists visiting Ajmer and Pushkar from time to time.
- (ii) Concerted efforts should be made to develop guest houses, dharamshalas and budget hotels in Ajmer and Pushkar to meet the requirements particularly of middle class tourists and pilgrims keeping in view their low paying capacity.

- (iii) Decision on the viability of airport at 'Kayar' should be taken as early as possible after working out air route circuits for linking some of the nearby tourist destinations in consultation with the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- (iv) The stretch of NH 8 between Jaipur and Ajmer should be converted into four lane Highway for the smooth flow of traffic which will avert frequent accidents.
- (v) Pushkar Lake should be developed further by introducing boating facilities, proper lighting arrangements and musical fountains. The areas around also should be developed with social forestry.
- (vi) Concerted efforts should be made so that tourism projects are completed within the stipulated time to avoid time and cost overrun and to make effective use of the meagre resources available.
- (vii) In view of the limited resources available, the Department of Tourism should chalk out other alternatives for mobilising the required investment in the tourism sector. In order to attract more investment, the possibility of offering more incentives and concessions to private sector in the tourism sector should also be considered. Limited resources of other Departments of the Central and State Governments should also be utilised in a coordinated manner so as to help development of infrastructure for growth of tourism.

6. For facility of reference, the observations/ recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold type in the body of the report and have also been reproduced in consolidated form in the Appendix.

New Delhi
April 23, 2003
Vaisakha 3, 1925(S)

UMMAREDDY VENKATESWARLU
Chairman
Committee on Estimates

PART – A

CHAPTER - I

Introductory

1.1 Founded by Ajaipal Chauhan in early 7th century and named Ajaimeru - The Invincible Hill, the Ajmer city is situated in the lap of the serene and beautiful surroundings of Aravallis range of hills in the heart of the royal land of Rajasthan. Ajmer, for long, has always been a politically, spiritually and strategically important location for the Rajputs, the Mughals and the Marathas. The place hence offers a compatible blend of Sufi culture and Hindu religion.

1.2 Now Ajmer is an important spiritual, cultural, tourist and pilgrim centre of India and people from all walks and religions of life throng to the city to seek the blessings at Dargah Sharif, the final resting place of the great Sufi Saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti. Apart from Dargah, there are various other places of tourist attractions at Ajmer and it has immense tourism potential.

1.3 During the visit of the Estimates Committee to Ajmer in November, 2001 in connection with examination of the subject 'Development of Infrastructure for Growth of Tourism' it was observed that Ajmer city does not have proper infrastructure to cater to the requirements of about 13 lakh domestic/international tourists and pilgrims who visit Ajmer annually to pay obeisance at Dargah Sharif and to visit Pushkar Mela. It was also pointed out that the city has poor roads, lacks adequate drinking water, sanitation, accommodation facilities and other infrastructure considered necessary for tourists. The Committee gathered the impression that developing infrastructural facilities would give further impetus to growth of tourism in Ajmer city. Hence the Committee after calling for Preliminary Material on the subject, took evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (Department of Tourism), the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation on the subject.

TOURISM POTENTIAL IN AJMER

1.4 Highlighting on the importance of Ajmer from tourism point of view, the Director General, Tourism stated during evidence as follows:

“...Ajmer is a famous and popular pilgrim centre for people of all faiths. It is famous for the Dargah of Sufi Saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. Thousands of pilgrims and other tourists find their way to this shrine with a wish in their heart everyday. It is believed that their wishes do get fulfilled. The main attractions of Ajmer are the Dargah, Shah-e-Jahan Mosque, Adhai Din Ka Jhompra, Taragrah Fort and Chauhan Museum. Ajmer is also the take off point, as you have mentioned, for Pushkar, which is about 11 kms. away and is an important pilgrim and tourist centre. The Pushkar Fair held during October- November every year

has now become world famous. The Pushkar Lake, Manmahal, etc. are the main attractions of Pushkar.”

1.5 The Department of Tourism in a reply submitted to the Committee furnished details of annual inflow of foreign and domestic tourists as well as growth rate of tourist arrivals in Ajmer during 1996-2001 which are as under:-

Domestic and Foreign Tourist Arrivals and Growth Rate during 1996-2001

Inflow of Tourists

**Growth Rate of Tourist Arrivals
During the Last Five years,
Year-wise**

Calender	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total Tourists	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total Tourists
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1996	527008	56126	583134			
1997	493596	60066	553662	-6.34%	7.02%	-5.05%
1998	783782	48808	832590	58.79%	-18.74%	50.38%
1999	766497	45202	811699	-2.21%	-7.39%	-2.51%
2000	1088000	51344	1139344	41.94%	13.59%	40.37%
2001	1269309	54040	1323349	16.66%	5.25%	16.15%

1.6 The Director General, Tourism commenting on tourist inflow to Ajmer stated during evidence as under:-

“It is heartening that tourist arrivals in Ajmer have been increasing over the years. Last year 12.69 lakh domestic and 0.54 lakh foreign tourists are estimated to have visited Ajmer. The combined figure of 13.23 lakh in 2001 is 16.15 per cent higher than the arrival figures of the year 2000. Similarly, the total tourist arrivals in 2000 were 40.37 per cent higher than in 1999.”

1.7 On the suggestion of the Committee to make Ajmer an ideal city keeping in view its importance from tourism point of view, the Director General, Tourism stated during evidence as follows :-

“We, in the Department of Tourism, quite recognise the importance of Ajmer not only for international tourism but also for domestic tourism..... One is the issue about giving due publicity so that the city of Ajmer and Pushkar come on the international map of tourism. I assure the Hon. Members and the Committee that we will see that in the existing collateral material, the brochures and other things – I will see at my own level –

wherever there is any inadequacy of projecting Ajmer because Ajmer gets close to about 60,000 international tourists other than a few lakhs of domestic tourists, we will definitely take all the remedial actions on that. The new collateral materials are coming out

Another Member raised the point that Ajmer is a city of cultural confluence. It is a city of different religions' confluence. It is something we must highlight and we must work upon. We will keep this aspect in future when we produce and publicise the literature on this. It can not only work in the interest of tourism but also in the interest of peace and harmony of the communities. I think it is a very valid point. Ajmer is a shining example. So we will work on that.”

1.8 On developing Ajmer city, the Director General, Tourism commented during evidence as under :-

“Development of any city is a complex and a multi-dimensional subject. It involves careful planning and implementation of projects by various agencies of the State and the Central Government. For tourism development of Ajmer likewise, the role of the State Government and the Ministries of Road Transport and Highways, Urban Development, Civil Aviation, Tourism and Culture and Railways are very important. Local municipal bodies also play a very important role..... .

The concerned Departments and organisations have implemented their projects in the past. But we have been in interaction with the State Government of Rajasthan approaching them to have a coordinated approach and synergy in the development of these things because as you have very rightly observed, Sir, that Ajmer is one of the premier destinations and we need to do a lot for the tourism to prosper and grow there.”

1.9 The Department of Tourism informed the Committee that strategy for development of a particular tourist/pilgrim place is primarily formulated by the State Governments. Department of Tourism, Government of India has appointed a consultant for preparation of a 20 years perspective plan for sustainable development of tourism in the entire state of Rajasthan including Ajmer.

CHAPTER- II

Infrastructural Facilities

2.1 According to the Department of Tourism the following infrastructural facilities are considered essential for growth of tourism in Ajmer:

- (i) Airport
- (ii) Better Roads to all places of tourist interest and intercity roads.
- (iii) Better connectivity by train to various destinations in the country.
- (iv) Up-keep and cleanliness of all places of tourist interest
- (v) Availability of accommodation in all categories of hotels.

2.2 Elaborating on the status of availability of infrastructural facilities at Ajmer, the Department of Tourism furnished the following details:-

- “(i) N.H. 8 passes through the district
- (ii) Airstrip for small aircraft is available at Kishangarh and helipads are available at Ghoogra (8 km near Ajmer) and Pushkar.
- (iii) Broadgauge and meter gauge connectivity with Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai is available.
- (iv) Wide network of State roadways service connecting all the main cities in the State.
- (v) Total accommodation bed capacity: 2000 beds in Ajmer and 1500 beds in Pushkar available in all categories. More beds are required in moderate class in Ajmer.
- (vi) Proper arrangements for garbage disposal and comprehensive sewage plan is not existing.
- (vii) Water supply is adequate.
- (viii) Power supply is adequate.
- (ix) Telecommunication facilities are adequate.
- (x) Medical facilities are adequate.
- (xi) Banking facilities are adequate.”

There is need to expand and upgrade the infrastructural facilities like roads, accommodation, road transport facilities and civic amenities to meet the demand due to growing number of tourists.

Accommodation

2.3 There are about 70 hotels/guest houses and five dharamshalas available in Ajmer. There is also one three star hotel in Ajmer with 64 rooms. There are about 100 hotels/guest houses, sixty dharamshalas and one heritage hotel named Pushkar Palace, with 36 rooms in Pushkar.

In this connection, the Department of Tourism stated in a written reply as follows:-

“..... rest rooms/dharamshalas have been constructed for convenience of pilgrims visiting Ajmer Sharief and Pushkar for religious purpose. In Ajmer, vishramsthali or pilgrim shades and guest houses are available for pilgrims. In Pushkar, there are community dharamshalas for all pilgrims. In addition, one guest house ‘Pushkar Dhaam’ from municipality fund is also constructed.”

2.4 Asked to furnish details of constraints, if any, being faced in enhancing accommodation for tourists and pilgrims at Ajmer and Pushkar the Department of Tourism in a written reply informed that one constraint in this regard is non-availability of land near Dargah Sharief in Ajmer and pilgrims generally like to stay near the Dargah.

2.5 Considering that hotel accommodation is a major constraint in the expansion of tourist traffic, the Committee enquired about the efforts being made to enhance approved accommodation for tourists in Ajmer. The Department of Tourism in their reply furnished to the Committee stated as follows:

“To encourage development of tourism and to attract private sector participation for development of tourism infrastructure the Government of India provides the following incentives:-

- Interest subsidy to hotel projects upto 3-star category and Heritage hotels.
- Income Tax Exemption under Section 80-HHD and 80-IA.
- Exemption under expenditure tax in respect of hotels located in hilly area/rural area/pilgrim area.
- Imports under EPCG scheme, import of specially food items, import under concessional customs duty scheme and export house status.”

2.6 In addition to the incentives offered by the Government of India mentioned above the State Government of Rajasthan also offers following incentives and concessions for tourism units including hotels:-

- “Remission in Stamp Duty: To the extent of 50% on transfer of deeds relating to land purchased in municipal area and to the extent of 100% on transfer of deeds relating to land purchased in panchayat area of such hotels.
- Remission in Land and Building Tax: 100% for hotels for 5 years in municipal areas.

- Remission in Luxury Tax: 50% for 5 years in municipal areas and to the extent of 100% for 5 years in panchayat areas.

The above remissions to be considered only if such new hotels shall invest at least Rs. one crore during the period between 1.4.2000 to 31.2.2002 and start functioning by 31.12.2002.”

Airport

2.7 In order to boost tourism as also to bring Ajmer on the International Tourist Map, the Committee asked whether there was any proposal to build an Airport at Ajmer as tourists have to undertake road journey from Jaipur to reach Ajmer. In this connection, the Department of Tourism in their reply submitted to the Committee stated as follows:-

“The Airports Authority of India has identified a possible site located on Ajmer-Sikar Road near village “Kayar” about 8 kms from Ajmer and 15 kms from Pushkar for construction of an airport, the feasibility report for which is presently under examination. The proposal is presently at a preliminary stage.”

2.8 Elaborating further during evidence, the Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan stated as follows:-

“Regarding air-strip the problem in this regard is that for acquiring the land only we need about rupees five crores and during 1996-97 this problem was raised that who will bear this expenditure - the State Government or the Government of India. The opinion of experts is that the distance between Jaipur and Ajmer is only 165 kilometers and this air-strip is not viable in itself. The aeroplane which will land at Jaipur will not land again at Ajmer. With the result, the landing and take off time will be so much that this is not viable.”

2.9 Enquired whether another air route can be taken, the witness further replied:

“Those routes are also not viable. We can't say whether aeroplanes of the Airlines will land here even after construction of air-strip.”

2.10 In this context, the Committee cited the case of Mumbai – Pune route which has proved to be very successful. To this, the witness responded by stating during evidence:

“That is more on account of business, because Pune is a very major business hub and so is Bombay. Here, this was the understanding of the Airports Authority of India also and that is why we have not pursued this matter further.”

2.11 The Committee drew attention towards the efforts made by consecutive Chief Ministers of the State and Civil Aviation Ministers and as also the observation by the Prime Minister to construct an airport at Ajmer, the witness responded by stating during evidence as under:

“I was submitting that this is the initial view of the Airports Authority of India. This decision will be taken at the Government of India level and not at the level of State Government. I was telling regarding the opinion of Airports Authority of India and according to this opinion they did not find it viable yet and if they make it in Ajmer, the State Government would be very happy and we will also extend our full support. But this decision is to be taken at the level of Government of India not at the level of State Government.”

2.12 The Director General, Tourism further corroborated this by stating during evidence as under:

“With your permission, going by the report I have from the Airports Authority of India....., the proposal is under examination. The proposal is at a preliminary stage. I would convey the sentiments of the Committee to the Airports Authority because it is still under examination. Of course, they would have to see the commercial viability and other aspects but we would convey the sentiments and also see what final decision is taken”.

Roads

2.13 The Ministry of Tourism in their reply furnished to the Committee submitted that Ajmer city and Pushkar have good network of roads which need to be augmented and strengthened. The existing public transport system consists of ordinary Government buses and average quality private buses. The fleet of public transport buses needs to be increased and their quality improved.

2.14 Ajmer and Pushkar are connected by two roads, one is passing through Nosar Ghati and the other passing through MDS University_ Janana Hospital – Makarwali –Hokara.The second route is part of National Highway No. 89.However the geometrics of the roads needs to be improved. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has recently initiated a study for inventorisation and improvement of the condition of this road.

2.15 The Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan commenting on State Highways stated during evidence as under:

“.....Rajasthan Government is carrying out works in regard to improving roads in the whole State through Asian Development Bank project. The roads in Ajmer district which connect Ajmer are also under this project. Therefore we understand that after completion of this project most of the State Highways and District Highways will be covered and the roads will be better and smooth.”

2.16 The Chief Engineer, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways commenting on the National Highways touching Ajmer stated during evidence:

“.....There are three National Highways which are touching Ajmer, namely, National Highway Nos. 8, 79 – which is from Ajmer to Indore, and 89 which is from Ajmer to Bikaner. Out of this, major portion of National Highway Nos. 8 and 79, are part of the Golden Quadrilateral component of the National Highway Development Project which is a time bound programme. All the works on this have already been awarded and works are going on. Major portion of this will have at least four lanes divided highway. We are expecting substantial completion by December, 2003. As regards the remaining portion, for the last two years or so, our emphasis has been on improving the riding quality of the National Highways. We are giving less emphasis on widening of the highways. Our intention is to improve the riding quality of the entire National Highway network in the next two years or so. Already, a large portion of National Highways in Rajasthan have been improved as far as riding quality is concerned. In the next two years, we will be improving the riding quality of the entire National Highway network.”

2.17 There was plan to make four laning of the three National Highways No. 79, 89 and 8 of Ajmer and Pushkar, but Ajmer has been left out and a bypass is being constructed near Ajmer. Asked as to what was the difficulty in connecting Ajmer and why the bypass was about 20 kilometers away, the Chief Engineer, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways clarified during evidence as follows:

“Originally, the alignment of the Golden Quadrilateral was passing through Jaipur, Ajmer and Udaipur via Beawar. While doing the project preparation, we had got a technical and economic feasibility study done for the two possible alignments – one was Kishangarh, Ajmer, Beawar and Udaipur and the other one was Kishangarh, Nasirabad, Bhilwara, Chittaurgarh and Udaipur. The alignment was changed because there is some ghat portion near Udaipur and it would have been very difficult to do four lanes in that portion. Also, the vehicles would have experienced difficulty.”

The witness further added as follows:

“Ultimately, the through traffic have to go away from Ajmer, National Highway 79 is already there and it is in good condition. It is a two-lane road. We find that it would be much more economical to develop it into a four-lane highway. That is why, the decision was taken to go via Kishangarh to Nasirabad. In this case, even we had to declare an additional national highway from Kishangarh to Nasirabad. But we thought this would be a better alignment for the traffic. That is why, this decision was taken.....”

2.18 On the remaining National Highway from Kishangarh to Ajmer, the witness commented as under:

“As regards the remaining National Highway from Kishangarh to Ajmer, of the 30 kilometers, we have improved the riding quality for 10 kilometres. Ten meters of the carriageway is available at the moment. For the remaining 20 kilometers also, we are trying to keep it in good condition and to improve the riding quality.”

2.19 As the portion from Jaipur to Kishangarh is proposed to be widened to 6 land divided carriageway, the Committee pointed out that the work from Jaipur to Kishangarh has not yet been started whereas from Kishangarh onwards upto Bhilwara thousands of people are working on it, the Chief Engineer, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways clarified by stating as under:

“The work beyond Kishangarh is being done from State Funds.”

The witness further added:

“Kishangarh is about 91 kms. away from Jaipur. We have awarded this to BTO. It was awarded on 22nd February. It’s total cost is Rs. 644 crore.”

The witness further stated:

“After awarding to BTO, some time is given for financial closure. He has to mobilize the funding for that. Anticipated start is October, 2002 and targeted date of completion is May, 2005.”

Road Maps/Signages

2.20 Giving details of the position regarding production of good quality road maps and putting up road signages along the routes to Ajmer and Pushkar, the Department of Tourism stated in their reply as under:

“Good quality road maps have been frequently published by State Tourism Department. Road signs along the routes of Ajmer and Pushkar have been put up by the District Administration at several points. It is reported that display of road maps and road signs is not upto the mark in Ajmer City portion.”

2.21 Furnishing details on road signs, the Chief Engineer, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways stated during evidence as under:

“...We have been providing road signs on national highways. But I agree that there is need for augmentation of road signs. As regards over-head signs I would like to submit that where we are doing four-lanes like in the Jaipur-Delhi and in a large number of other places, the over-head signs are being provided.”

2.22 On the language used in the road signs, the witness informed as under:

“It is in Hindi, English and in local language. Our instruction is that it should be in three languages – English, Hindi and where the local language is different, it should be in the local language also. That has been the instruction of the Central Government.”

2.23 On defacing and damaging the road signs, which causes problems to road users, the witness stated during evidence as under:

“There has also been a problem of vandalism of the road signs. This is especially pronounced in the urban areas. People put posters and deface. This problem is there in the rural area also. These signs are very expensive but people just cut it and remove it. They may not have any re-sale value but just for the sake of it they remove it. So, the vandalism problem is there. We can only request them and educate them and tell them that road signs are ultimately for the benefit of the road users. People also would have to be vigilant. If they see somebody doing such a thing, then they should stop them.”

The Director General, Tourism further added as under:

“If there has been defacing of walls or posters have been put, then the local municipality should get into action, and this can be done.”

Wayside Amenities/Facilities

2.24 The Department of Tourism informed that Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation has wayside facilities on the following roads:

1. Udaipur to Ajmer
2. Ajmer to Jodhpur
3. Ajmer to Nagaur
4. Ajmer to Bundi

Wayside facilities are also available on Jaipur-Ajmer Road in the private sector.

2.25 The Committee drew the attention towards lack of basic wayside amenities and facilities along the National Highways. The Chief Engineer, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways dwelling upon these points stated during evidence as under:

“...Our Ministry had in the past taken up a few schemes for provision of wayside amenities where we tried to provide some fast food corners, toilets, parking places, etc., but they are very few. About 22 such facilities were constructed. Basically it is for the private sector to bring in this type of facilities. We have a scheme that along the Highways we can even acquire the land and give it on lease to entrepreneurs. Construction and maintenance of the wayside amenities, we would like to leave to the private sector only. We would not like to involve the Government in that. We can only assist them in giving land on lease through a competitive process.”

2.26 Explaining the position of providing STD/ISD telephone facilities along the National Highways the witness further stated as follows:

“Another problem mentioned was about the telephone. Now, STD/ISD telephone facilities are mostly available all along the National Highways. That is not really a problem now. On Delhi-Jaipur Highway we have now installed emergency telephone at every two kilometres where you can just lift the receiver and talk to the control room. In case of an accident or breakdown of vehicle, you can call for assistance of ambulance or crane. This is a pilot project, we have provided on Delhi-Jaipur Highway. Hopefully this will be replicated on other Highways also.....”

Water Supply

2.27 Furnishing details of position of drinking water supply, the Department of Tourism in a reply submitted to the Committee stated that the position of drinking water supply in Ajmer is fairly adequate. Water supply to Ajmer city is from Bilaspur Dam on regular basis. Water supply to Pushkar is from tube wells of Ganetra, Bansely and other nearby places.

Cleanliness

2.28 About the efforts made to ensure cleanliness at Ajmer and Pushkar and improving the sanitation at Pushkar Lake, viz. cleaning of bathing ghats, filling water in the Lake and removing mud from the lake, etc. the Department of Tourism in their reply submitted to the Committee stated as under:

“There is no proper arrangement for cleaning of ghats. Municipality is getting the cleaning done on contract basis, which is not effective. Water is being regularly filled in lake through PHED water supply through 5 tubewells dug up for the purpose. No efforts have been made to remove mud from the lake. Cleaning of city is being done on contract basis by the municipality which is not sufficient for the purpose, but just satisfactory.”

2.29 On the efforts made to check water pollution in Pushkar Lake, the Department of Tourism stated that no scientific efforts have been made to check water pollution in Pushkar Lake. However, use of soap and washing of clothes is strictly prohibited in the Lake. Filtration of water is also needed.

2.30 On water availability, beautification, environment improvement, etc. the Director General, Tourism during evidence stated as follows:

“Now, about the Pushkar Sarovar water availability, beautification, environment improvement, afforestation, etc. I would request the hon. Chairman to kindly allow us time because we will have to work probably with the Urban Development on the integrated approach and also other Ministries including the Ministry of Environment and so on. Wherever some funding is concerned for the improvement of Ghats, there should not be much problem. But I think, it is a composite project. This will receive our attention.”

2.31 In this respect, the Department of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation in their reply stated as under:

“Town & Country Planning Organisation (TCPO) under the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation had studied the problem faced by Pushkar town like disposal of waste and effluent in the lake over the years, absence of proper drainage, siltation of lake area, encroachment of land, depleted condition of ghats and lack of tourist infrastructure facilities. The TCPO has submitted a report to the State Government for environmental improvement of Pushkar area. It contained various suggestions like improvement of sanitation in Pushkar Lake area along with cleanliness of ghats and desilting of lake and keeping the lake water clean”.

2.32 The Director General, Tourism during evidence stated as under:

“Upgradation and improvement of other civic facilities like drainage, solid waste disposal system, electricity and water supply are also necessary for proper development of these places.”

2.33 Asked whether the Department of Urban Development has any proposal to undertake development of Ajmer City covering wide range of components like adequate water supply and sanitation, roads and bridges, city transport, solid waste management, etc. the Department in their reply stated as under:

“Water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, etc. being State subjects, it is the responsibility of the concerned State Government/urban/local body to plan, execute, operate and maintain these facilities through State resources.”

Safety and Security of Tourists

2.34 Asked about the efforts made for ensuring the safety and security of foreign tourists visiting India alongwith their views on deploying Special Police Force at important tourist places for the safety and security of tourists in Rajasthan, the Department of Tourism in a written reply stated as follows:

“The Department of Tourism has been advising State Governments at various fora to enact legislation/depute tourist police in their respective States for safety and security of tourists. Some of the States have enacted legislation/deputed tourist police for this purpose. Rajasthan has also deputed Tourist Assistance Force at important tourist places in the State including Ajmer-Pushkar.”

Legislation regarding regulation on promoting Trade by the Tourist

2.35 On the need to enact legislation to regulate and develop tourism, the Department of Tourism in a written reply submitted to the Committee stated as follows:

“The Department of Tourism has been advising the State Governments at various fora to enact suitable legislation to regulate the activities of tourist for promoting trade and to ensure their safety and security.”

Complaints by Tourists in respect of inadequacy of Infrastructural Facilities

2.36 In respect of complaints/suggestions received from tourists/ pilgrims visiting tourist/pilgrim places during the last three years with reference to lack /inadequacy of infrastructural facilities, the Department of Tourism in a written reply stated that the State Government has informed that no complaints have been received in this regard.

CHAPTER-III

Infrastructural Projects

3.1 Regarding infrastructural projects, the Director General, Tourism stated during evidence as follows:

“Though development of tourist and pilgrim places is primarily undertaken by the State Governments, Department of Tourism, Government of India also, through its central financial assistance schemes, does assist the State Governments in implementation of certain projects. The Government of India, I am happy to report to you Sir, has sanctioned 6 tourism projects with Central Financial Assistance component of Rs. 129.74 lakh for Ajmer and Pushkar during the 9th Plan.....For improving, the infrastructure in and around Ajmer, various projects have been taken up. The Department of Tourism has provided financial assistance for integrated development of vishramsthali, public amenities, landscaping of Akbar-ka-Quila in Ajmer, improvements to Taragarh Fort and Shilpgram Tourist Village at Pushkar and development of Pushkar Ghat.”

3.2 The Department of Tourism furnished the following details of projects sanctioned under Central Financial Assistance at Ajmer and Pushkar during the IXth Plan:

Project	Amount Sanctioned	Amount Released
	(Rs. in Lakhs)	
1. Integrated Development of Pushkar Ghats	51.66	15.50
2. Integrated Development of vishramsthali, Ajmer	46.70	23.35
3. Upgradation of Tourist Bungalow at Ajmer	5.00	4.00
4. Toilets and Development of Lawns of Akbar-ka-Quila, Ajmer	3.31	2.65
5. Development of Steps of Taragarh, Ajmer	9.33	2.70
6. Shilpgram Tourist Village, Pushkar, Ajmer	13.74	4.12

The following projects have also been sanctioned under the scheme of Central Financial Assistance. However, work on the following projects is yet to be started by the State Government.

1. Integrated Development of Pushkar Ghats
2. Integrated Development of vishramsthali, Ajmer

3.3 The Committee enquired as to why the amount released in these projects was less than the amount sanctioned. To this Director General, Tourism during evidence stated:

“...I would like to submit to the hon. Member that this was sanctioned as per the earlier scheme where the State Government had to contribute 50 per cent. Only in some schemes, the Government of India’s contribution is total. In other infrastructure schemes, the State Government also has to chip in an equivalent amount. The Rajasthan Government had some financial difficulties and they have not been able to contribute their share. We have also not released the balance instalment. However, I have just discussed this matter with the Secretary (Tourism), Rajasthan. This year they hope to release their part, so we will be forthcoming and we will be releasing this amount also.”

The witness, in this context further stated:

“.....The Secretary (Tourism), Rajasthan has assured that on some of these incomplete projects which I have listed in our reply ...- one is the Pushkar Ghats and the other is the vishramsthali – the Rajasthan Government would be able to chip in their share this year, and in regard to the projects for which first instalment of money has been released by the Government, they would be able to undertake the work. But it is our duty to constantly monitor and persuade the State Government that they must do this. So, we hope that there will be progress on that this year.”

3.4 The Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan explaining the reasons for non-implementation of the projects stated during evidence as follows:

“Unfortunately, in the State Government, we have in the last three years or more, run into a very severe resource constraint. You may be aware that in the last three years, preceding the one which has just concluded, the State went through a very serious and a severe famine. Almost Rs. 800-1000 crore had to be diverted from the State fund to fight famine every year. Therefore, the money available for any other activity was just not there. This is one of the reasons why the Centrally Sponsored Schemes which have been given to the State could not be implemented. It is because there was no counter-funding from the State because most of the schemes were on the basis of 50:50 sharing basis. The resource was not available with us. Unfortunately, the current year also does not seem to be very promising.”

The witness further stated:

“.....The works under Centrally Sponsored Scheme, as DG has said that according to our resources position we will try to complete the works during current year but we are also requesting the Government of India that the ratio fixed by them in tenth plan i.e. 80:20, 80 percent is the contribution of Central Government and 20 percent is the contribution of State Government. We are requesting that if we also complete it then it will be easy for us to complete all the works. For this we are requesting the Government of India separately.”

3.5 The Director General, Tourism in respect of infrastructural projects stated as under:

“All these projects are being implemented through the State Government of Rajasthan. These projects, when completed, will make, in our view, significant improvement in tourist facilities at Ajmer and Pushkar.”

Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project

3.6 Giving present status of the ‘Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project’, one of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) projects which includes development of Ajmer also, the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation in their reply furnished to the Committee stated as under:

“The objective of the project is development of six cities namely Ajmer, Bikaner, Kota, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur at total project cost of Rs. 1529 crore with loan component of US \$ 250 million. The project component includes capacity building and community participation, water supply, rehabilitation and expansion improvement of Urban environmental quality, improvement of urban transportation and management. Loan negotiations were held during October, 1998. The loan was signed on 1.12.99.

As per the information made available by the Office of Project Director, Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project, Jaipur, the following is the tentative list of works proposed under Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project in Ajmer City.

- i) Water Supply Rehabilitation and Expansion (Rs. 18.02 crores)
- ii) Waste Water Management (Rs. 50.00 crores)
- iii) Fly-overs (ROB/RUB (Rs. 21.00 crores)
- iv) Streets (Rs. 12.00 crores)
- v) Slum Improvement (Rs. 4.22 crores)
- vi) Solid Waste Management (Rs. 2.77 crores)
- vii) Fire Fighting Services (Rs. 1.00 crore)
- viii) Community Awareness and Public Participation (Rs. 2.11 crores)

(ix) Drainage (Rs. 7.25 crores)

The work is likely to start in July, 2002.”

3.7 The Department of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation further stated in their reply as follows:

“Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project has also sought permission from the Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs to include infrastructure works of Pushkar. As soon as the permission is accorded by the Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs, the Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project would identify works for the Pushkar town.”

3.8 The Joint Secretary, Department of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation speaking on Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project stated during evidence as under:

“As far as Ajmer is concerned, the Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project is being implemented by the Rajasthan Government. The total project cost is around Rs. 1520 crore with the IDBI loan of Rs.1055 crore. That would be implemented in six cities which include Ajmer. For Ajmer, the earmarked allocation is Rs. 165 crore and the various components which they have included are water supply, rehabilitation, expansion, waste water management, construction of flyovers, improvement of roads, slum improvement, solid waste management and community awareness in drainage scheme. The State Government have proposed for inclusion of four more towns which include Puskhar because they expect savings in the scheme. Therefore, they wanted to include Pushkar. If Pushkar is agreed in principle by IDBI, then that can also be taken up under this project. They have started inviting the bids and they hope to start the implementation of the scheme by July, 2002.”

3.9 On the focus being given to rejuvenating culturally important cities, the witness informed the Committee during evidence as under:

“Sir, for all the culturally important cities inadequacy of infrastructure is one of the major issues. Keeping that in view, the Ministry has come up with the proposal for a new scheme for rejuvenation of culturally significant cities. We have got in principle approval of Planning Commission. We have proposed an outlay of Rs. 1000 crore in the Tenth Five Year Plan. Once the Tenth Plan allocation is finalised, we will be going to the Eleventh Finance Commission for getting approval of the scheme and would start implementing it. Under that, we propose to provide on an average Rs. 25 crore to each city which is culturally important. There is inadequacy of infrastructure which requires improvement for attracting the tourists. So, hopefully, during the current year, we will start implementing the scheme.”

Asked whether the areas had been identified, the witness replied as follows:

“Sir, it is for the State Government to decide the city. In principle, they have indicated Ajmer.”

CHAPTER -IV

BUDGETARY ALLOCATION

4.1 Details of allocation and actual expenditure on tourism (State Plan) in Rajasthan during each year of the Ninth Five Year Plan are as under:-

Year	Budget Allocation (Revised Estimates) (Rs. in crores)	Actual Expenditure (Rs. in crores)
1. Annual Plan 1997-98	13.25	12.35
2. Annual Plan 1998-99	7.96	7.91
3. Annual Plan 1999-2000	1.98	1.91
4. Annual Plan 2000-2001	3.10	2.94
5. Annual Plan 2001-2002	9.75	8.55
Total	36.04	33.66

4.2 Details of expenses incurred by State Tourism Department on fairs/festivals held at Ajmer Sharief/Pushkar during the last four years are as below:

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Urs	Rs. 30,000/-	-	-	Rs.35,000/-
Pushkar	Rs.1,25,757/-	Rs.1,72,210/-	Rs.3,22,271/-	Rs.1,70,000/-

There are numerous local (Government) agencies also who work and spend towards organisation of fairs and festivals in Ajmer and Pushkar.

4.3 The Secretary, Tourism, Government of Rajasthan on the adequacy of budgetary allocation stated during evidence as follows:

“The forecast of the State is that it is running into a deficit of almost Rs. 700 crore in the current year’s budget. Although the State is taking a right view on tourism, the State has dedicated this year’s budget to tourism and increased the allocation of Tourism Department from approximately Rs. 10 crore last year to Rs. 20 crore this year, which is just double. But still we feel that this is not enough to be able to maintain even the level at which we were functioning as far as tourism is concerned in the State.

So, unless we get substantial support from the Central Government, it may be very difficult for the State Government to be able to provide the kind of resources

which are necessary to bridge the gap in infrastructure, as has been rightly mentioned by this Committee.

This is one area where we would certainly need a very strong support.”

4.4 Asked about the suggestions for mobilisation of required funds for tourism development, the Department of Tourism in their reply stated as follows:

“Resources of various Departments/Organisations of Central and State Governments need to be utilised in a coordinated manner for this purpose. Private Sector also needs to be encouraged to invest in profit making tourism projects.”

CHAPTER - V

MISCELLANEOUS

Restrictions imposed on tourists for visiting certain places in Rajasthan

5.1 The attention of the Department of Tourism was drawn towards a media report on some restriction being imposed on tourists visiting Jaisalmer from the security point of view. The Director General, Tourism responded to it by stating as under:

“ We have also come to know about this news item which quotes the Home Ministry’s sources. We have yet to verify it. But as of now, the visit to sand dunes and the areas around Jaisalmer was allowed. Initially, they had put some restriction in going to north-western side. But still approaches to the dunes were clear from Jaisalmer.

But what I have discussed with the Tourism Secretary, Rajasthan is that we will verify it from the Home Ministry. They will see that.”

Palace on Wheels

5.2 The Committee enquired about the reasons as to why Ajmer had been excluded from the route of Agra-Jaipur-Delhi for Palace on Wheels. The Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan responded to this by stating during evidence as under:

“Sir, as far as the Palace on Wheels is concerned, it caters to a totally different set of people. Because it is a mega priced product, it is not generally the pilgrims and others who use the Palace on Wheels. Generally, the foreign tourists, especially French and from other European countries have been coming into it. Their attraction is more towards the Western part of Rajasthan, specially the desert areas.

Then, Udaipur has also been an area of great attraction for the foreign tourists. It was not possible to include all the cities which came and which were important from this point of view. So, considering the interest of the consumers who would be paying for the ticket, the circuit was created. It was not deliberate exclusion of Ajmer. But the circuit was so created that it touched upon those areas which should be of interest to the foreign tourists.”

PART-B
OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

6.1 The Committee took up examination of the subject, 'Development of Infrastructure for Growth of Tourism – Development of Ajmer City' following their visit to Pushkar Lake on 5.11.2001 and discussion with the officials of Indian Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. (ITDC) and the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan regarding 'Development of Infrastructure for Growth of Tourism'. During their visit the Committee had noted that Ajmer is one of the growing tourist destinations in the country with much potential for attracting domestic and foreign tourists. The city, however, does not have adequate facilities and infrastructure commensurate with the growth in number of domestic/international tourists and pilgrims aggregating to more than 13 lakhs per annum visiting Ajmer and Pushkar. It was also observed that the city lacks good roads, adequate drinking water, sanitation, accommodation facilities and other infrastructure necessary for the convenience of tourists. Tourism being an important industry which plays a pivotal role in the economy of the country, contributing significantly not only in foreign exchange earnings but also in employment generation and development, the Committee decided to take up the subject, 'Development of Ajmer City' for indepth examination and report with a view to providing impetus to the development of Ajmer and growth of tourism in the city.

Thus, the Committee examined every aspect of the subject by calling for written information from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (Department of Tourism), the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation and taking oral evidence of the representatives of the aforesaid Ministries. After examining the subject, the Committee are of the view that there is sufficient scope for development of infrastructure in the city and its surroundings for the growth of tourism. These aspects have been dealt with in detail by the Committee in the succeeding paragraphs.

6.2 The Committee note that Ajmer, situated in the lap of the serene and beautiful surroundings of Aravallis range of hills in the heart of royal land of Rajasthan, is an important city from historical, cultural, religious, educational and strategic point of view. Today Ajmer is recognised as a premier pilgrimage centre because of the famous Dargah of Sufi Saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti at Ajmer and Lord Brahma's temple and the Lake at Pushkar. Every year lakhs of domestic and foreign tourists and pilgrims visit Ajmer to attend the annual Urs and Pushkar to take dip in the Pushkar Lake during the month of Kartik. Apart from these, in Ajmer there are various other places of tourist attractions, viz. Shah-e-Jahan Mosque, Adhai Din Ka Jhompra, Taragarh Fort, Chauhan Museum, etc. Keeping in view Ajmer's immense tourism potential the Committee stress

that priority should be accorded to Ajmer and Pushkar for development of infrastructure and other amenities for the growth of tourism.

- 6.3 From the data regarding inflow of tourists to Ajmer furnished by the Department of Tourism, fluctuating trends are observed in domestic and foreign tourist arrivals in the years from 1996 to 2001. The number of domestic tourists visiting Ajmer registered a decline during 1997 and 1999 and the number of foreign tourist arrivals decreased during 1998 and 1999. However, the Committee note that the inflow of tourists, both domestic and foreign, increased considerably from the year 2000, viz. from 766497 domestic tourists in 1999 the number went up to 1269309 in 2001 and from 45202 foreign tourists in 1999 the number increased to 54040 in 2001. The Committee are of the considered view that while the number of tourists visiting Ajmer is on the increase, the facilities and the infrastructure which are available at Ajmer and its surrounding areas are not commensurate with the growth of tourism. The Committee strongly feel that there is a need to expand and upgrade the infrastructural facilities like accommodation, roads, other civic amenities and rail and air transport facilities to meet the demand on account of the growing number of tourists. They, therefore, desire that all-round concerted efforts should be made to turn Ajmer into a premier tourist destination in the country by developing better infrastructural facilities to meet the requirements of increasing number of tourists visiting Ajmer and Pushkar from time to time.
- 6.4 While affirming the importance of Ajmer not only from the point of domestic and international tourism, but also as a city of cultural and religious confluence, the Department of Tourism held out an assurance before the Committee that they will give due publicity in tourist literature and other publicity materials so as to bring Ajmer and Pushkar on the international map of tourism. While stressing the need to target tourists from within the country and abroad, they desire that publicity should be given in a manner that will project the country as a major tourist destination in order to attract tourists. For attracting pilgrims from Central Asia and other Muslim countries to Dargah Sharif, package tours originating from these destinations should be prepared in coordination with other Departments. There is also a need to strengthen tourist information services to offer better services to domestic and foreign tourists and pilgrims visiting Ajmer. For rendering assistance to tourists, tourist information centres to impart relevant information about availability of accommodation, places of tourist interest, transportation, etc. should be set up at the Railway Station and bus stand at Ajmer so that tourists and pilgrims are not left to the mercy of touts. The Committee also suggest that information technology should be effectively utilised to impart tourist information to visiting tourists and pilgrims.

- 6.5** Development of any city is a complex and a multi-dimensional subject which involves careful planning and implementation of projects by various agencies of the State and the Central Government. In this context, the Union Ministries of Road Transport and Highways, Urban Development, Civil Aviation, Tourism and Culture and Railways, the State Government and the local and municipal bodies have their own role to play for development of tourism in Ajmer. For addressing the problems facing the city effectively and promoting faster development of tourism infrastructure, a more coordinated approach needs to be adopted. The Committee, however, note with satisfaction that the Department of Tourism, Government of India have appointed a consultant for preparation of a 20 year perspective plan for sustainable development of tourism in the entire State of Rajasthan, including Ajmer. They would like to be apprised of the important recommendations made by the consultant for development of tourism especially in Ajmer and the action plan formulated thereon by the Government.
- 6.6** The Committee note that an integrated approach to infrastructure facilities consisting of inter-city roads, airport, better roads to all places of tourist interest, better connectivity by train to various destinations in the country, upkeep and cleanliness of all places of tourist interest and availability of accommodation in all categories of hotels is essential for growth of tourism in Ajmer. It is found that tourist/pilgrim centres lack even basic infrastructure facilities like wayside amenities, drinking water, accommodation, clean toilets and bath rooms, transport facilities, etc. The Committee emphasise that existing facilities need to be substantially improved and additional infrastructural facilities are required to be developed at the tourist/pilgrim centres. Special efforts need to be made to keep the pilgrim centres neat and clean. Peoples' awareness and participation in keeping the places neat and clean are equally important. In the Committee's view, only concerted efforts by all concerned will give the necessary fillip to the development of tourism in Ajmer and Pushkar.
- 6.7** As far as accommodation is concerned, there are 70 hotels and guest houses, including one 3 star hotel and five dharamshalas, with a total capacity of 2000 beds in Ajmer and about 100 hotels and guest houses, including one heritage hotel and sixty dharamshalas, with 1500 beds in Pushkar. In spite of the incentives offered by the Union and the State Governments to attract private sector participation for development of infrastructure including hotels for tourism, it is seen that quality accommodation is either absent or inadequate in Ajmer and Pushkar. Vishramsthalis and dharamshalas are falling short of basic requirements causing inconvenience to the pilgrims and tourists. There is need to enhance approved accommodation and improve the existing facilities in the accommodation available both in Ajmer and Pushkar. As domestic tourists, particularly the budget tourists who are interested in cultural sightseeing and pilgrimage constitute a major chunk of

the tourists visiting the city, there is need to ensure that they are provided with clean and hygienic lodging facilities at reasonable rates. The Committee are of the view that hotel accommodation being a severe constraint in the expansion of tourist traffic, concerted efforts should be made to develop guest houses, dharamshalas and budget hotels in Ajmer and Pushkar to meet the requirements particularly of middle class tourists and pilgrims keeping in view their low paying capacity. Sincere efforts need to be made to attract the private sector to avail the incentives offered by the Government in tourism sector and to invest in building quality accommodation at Ajmer and Pushkar.

6.8 Air connectivity plays an important role in the promotion of tourism. The Airports Authority of India has reportedly identified a site near village 'Kayar', about 8 kms from Ajmer and 15 kms from Pushkar for construction of an airport, the feasibility report for which is stated to be under consideration. As back as in 1996-97 the question had also come up as to whether the State Government or the Central Government should bear the cost of about Rs. 5 crore required for acquisition of the land for construction of the airport. The Airports Authority of India seems to have apprehensions about the viability of the airport as the distance between Jaipur and Ajmer is only 165 kms and the airlines may find the air route unviable. Though the site for airport has been identified and feasibility report has been prepared, a final decision in the matter has been pending for quite some time. The Committee desire that a decision on the viability of the airport should be taken as early as possible after working out air route circuits for linking some of the nearby tourist destinations in consultation with the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

6.9 The Committee need hardly point out that road transport facilities play a vital role in the development and growth of tourist destinations. While there is a good network of roads in Ajmer and Pushkar, those need to be augmented and strengthened and the fleet and quality of public transport system which mainly consists of ordinary Government buses and average quality private buses need to be improved. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways have reportedly initiated a study for inventorisation and improvement of the condition of National Highway No. 89 connecting Ajmer and Pushkar. The Committee desire that the work for improving the geometrics of the road on the basis of the study should be taken up and completed expeditiously. The Government of Rajasthan through an Asian Development Bank project is improving the roads in entire Rajasthan including the roads connecting Ajmer. Three National Highways namely NH 8, NH 79 and NH 89 are touching Ajmer. Major portions of NH 8 and NH 79 form part of the Golden Quadrilateral component of the National Highway Development Project, which will have at least four lanes, major portion of which shall be completed by December, 2003. The riding quality of the

remaining portion of the National Highways is being improved and is expected to be completed in two years.

The Committee are hopeful that improvement of roads in Ajmer and Pushkar would give necessary boost to tourism in the absence of air connectivity available to tourists.

- 6.10 While connecting the Golden Quadrilateral from Kishangarh to Nasirabad, Ajmer has been left out. However, the Committee are informed that out of the 30 kms. stretch of the National Highway from Kishangarh to Ajmer, riding quality in 10 kms. stretch has been improved. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways assured the Committee to improve riding quality of the remaining 20 kms. stretch and keep the road in good condition.

Keeping in view the fact that traffic towards Jaipur and Jodhpur pass through Ajmer and also the city's importance from the tourism point of view, the Committee desire that all the National Highways touching Ajmer including the remaining portion of the Highway from Kishangarh to Ajmer should be upgraded and improved which will result in reducing the number of accidents and smooth flow of traffic. While the Delhi-Jaipur stretch of National Highway No. 8 is in good condition, the stretch between Jaipur and Ajmer, being two laned, is a major cause for many accidents. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the stretch of NH 8 between Jaipur and Ajmer should be converted into a 4 lane Highway for the smooth flow of traffic which will avert frequent accidents.

- 6.11 The Committee regret to note that road maps and road signs are not upto the mark in Ajmer city. Though road signs have been provided on National Highways, there is need for its augmentation. Defacing and damaging of road signs, which reportedly is a common phenomenon both in the urban and rural areas, is a matter of serious concern. It is desirable to organise public awareness campaigns involving local bodies to educate people about the importance of road signs and make them more vigilant in order to deter those indulging in such vandalism. In order to prevent defacing and damaging of the road signs, as far as possible, over-head signages should be used. Concerted efforts should be made also to improve road safety with the help of road signs.
- 6.12 The Committee note with concern that although tourists and pilgrims generally make use of road transport for visiting Ajmer and Pushkar, the National Highways and road segments connecting the city and the tourist spots around lack wayside amenities and facilities like clean drinking water, communication facilities, food plazas, clean toilets, etc. The Committee desire that in order to improve wayside amenities on the National Highways, the scheme to involve the private sector in construction and maintenance of wayside amenities/facilities should be encouraged, especially on the National Highways leading towards Ajmer and the road segments connecting Ajmer

and Pushkar to obviate inconveniences being faced by tourists and pilgrims visiting these places. While STD/ISD telephone facilities are mostly available along the National Highways, it is desirable to evolve a system by which certain check is kept on over-billing and exploitation of the tourists by the telephone booth operators. The Committee desire that after obtaining feed back about the pilot project of emergency hotline telephones installed on Delhi-Jaipur Highway to contact the control room in case of accident or breakdown of vehicle, similar facilities should be introduced on other Highways as well for the convenience of passengers.

- 6.13 With regard to cleanliness, the Committee note with concern that there is no proper arrangement for cleaning and maintenance of ghats at Pushkar. Cleaning of the city by the Municipality done on contract basis is not effective. No efforts have been made to remove mud from the Lake nor is there any scientific method to check water pollution in it. Town and Country Planning Organisation (TCPO) under the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation had studied the problems like disposal of waste and effluent in the lake over the years, absence of proper drainage, siltation of lake area, encroachment of land, depleted condition of ghats and lack of tourist infrastructure facilities faced by Pushkar Town. TCPO has submitted its report to the State Government for environmental improvement of Pushkar area with various suggestions for improvement of sanitation in Pushkar Lake area and the ghats, desilting of lake and maintaining the lake water clean. The Committee recommend that the Department of Tourism should pursue with the State Government and ensure that the recommendations made by TCPO are implemented expeditiously to ensure better upkeep and maintenance of Pushkar area.

The Committee are of the view that to attract more foreign tourists, Pushkar Lake should be developed further by introducing boating facilities, proper lighting arrangements and musical fountains. The areas around also should be developed with social forestry. They also desire that for beautification and improvement of environment, the Department of Tourism in coordination with other Ministries concerned like the Ministry of Environment and Forests, should adopt an integrated approach for the upkeep of Pushkar Lake.

- 6.14 Safety and security of tourists is of paramount importance and is being viewed as a major concern by domestic and foreign tourists. The Committee note with satisfaction that Rajasthan has deputed contingents of Tourist Assistance Force at important tourist places in the State including Ajmer and Pushkar for the safety and security of tourists. They trust that as desired by the Department of Tourism, Rajasthan has enacted suitable legislation to regulate the activities of tourist trade in order to prevent malpractices, cheating and harassment of tourists. The Committee have sufficient reasons to believe that malpractices prevalent in the tourism industry act as a major damper to the enthusiasm of potential tourists and also inhibit

tourist traffic, particularly foreign tourists, besides projecting a bad image of the country abroad. They would therefore, like to be apprised of the effectiveness of the legislation regulating activities of tourist trade and the difficulties, if any, being faced in its implementation alongwith the efforts being made to overcome the difficulties.

- 6.15 During the Ninth Five Year Plan, Government of India sanctioned 6 projects with Central financial assistance worth Rs. 129.74 lakh for Ajmer and Pushkar, which are being implemented through the State Government. A number of other projects have also reportedly been taken up in and around Ajmer for implementation with Central financial assistance. It is a matter of concern to note that the Government of Rajasthan has not fully utilised the funds sanctioned under Central financial assistance for different projects at Ajmer and Pushkar. In the face of severe resource constraints in the last three years, the State Government could not contribute its share of 50% which resulted in non-release of balance instalment by the Central Government and non-implementation of some of the schemes. Rajasthan Government was expected to contribute its share this year for the incomplete projects, especially in Pushkar Ghats and Vishramsthali. The Committee hope that completion of these projects would significantly improve tourist facilities at Ajmer and Pushkar. They, therefore, stress that concerted efforts be made so that projects are completed within the stipulated time to avoid time and cost overruns and to make effective use of the meagre resources available. A number of projects with a total allocation of Rs. 165 crore, covering water supply, rehabilitation and expansion, waste water management, fly-overs, streets, slum improvement, solid waste management, drainage, fire fighting services, community awareness and public participation are under implementation in Ajmer under an Asian Development Bank Project called 'Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project'. Permission to include Pushkar for infrastructure works under this project has also been reportedly sought from the Ministry of Finance (Department of Economic Affairs). The Committee hope that the projects already identified and under implementation in Ajmer under 'Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project' would be completed within the time-frame and these would help to give a boost to tourism industry in the city.
- 6.16 A new scheme for rejuvenation of culturally significant cities has been approved in principle by the Planning Commission with a proposed outlay of Rs. 1000 crore as part of the Tenth Five Year Plan. On an average Rs. 25 crore is proposed to be provided to each city of cultural importance for development of infrastructure. They would like to be apprised of the details of the projects taken up for implementation in Ajmer and Pushkar under the scheme and the progress in their implementation.

- 6.17** The total allocation during the Ninth Five Year Plan for tourism sector in Rajasthan was Rs. 36.04 crore and the actual expenditure was Rs. 33.66 crore . The expenses incurred by the State Tourism Department on fairs and festivals in Ajmer and Pushkar registered an increasing trend from 1998 to 2000, but came down in 2001. However, the Government of Rajasthan, taking a right view on tourism, has dedicated 2002-2003 to tourism and doubled the budget allocation for tourism from Rs. 10 crore in the previous year to Rs. 20 crore in the current year. Even this allocation is not considered to be adequate and needs to be enhanced considerably to meet the needs of tourism sector in the State. While taking a sympathetic view of the severe financial constraints faced by Rajasthan Government in recent years due to drought and other factors beyond its control, the Committee would like to emphasise that in terms of generating income, tourism industry pays higher dividends for the investment made in this sector. In view of the limited resources available, they suggest that the Department of Tourism should chalk out other alternatives for mobilising the required investment in the tourism sector. Keeping in view the fact that tourism has been identified by the Government as a high priority industry for private investment, the Committee recommend that private sector should be encouraged to invest in tourism projects in order to upgrade the infrastructure facilities. The Committee also recommend that in order to attract more investment, the possibility of offering more incentives and concessions to private sector in the tourism sector should also be considered. Since allocations made for the development of other sectors like roads, public utilities, civil aviation, urban development, etc. also contribute towards development and growth of tourism, the Committee stress that limited resources of other Departments of the Central and State Governments should also be utilised in a coordinated manner so as to help development of infrastructure for growth of tourism.
- 6.18** When the Committee drew the attention of the Department of Tourism to media reports quoting the Home Ministry sources about certain restrictions being imposed on tourists visiting Jaisalmer from the security point of view, the representatives of the Department feigned ignorance about it and informed that the Department would have to get it verified from the Home Ministry. The Committee are surprised to find such lack of coordination and communication among different Departments of the Government. They feel that any decision regarding restrictions on tourists should have been taken by the Home Ministry in consultation with the Department of Tourism. However, the Committee would like to be apprised of the factual position in the matter.
- 6.19** The Committee note with concern that Ajmer had been excluded from the tourist circuit of Agra-Jaipur-Delhi for operating 'Palace on Wheels'. The justification given by Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan that being a mega priced project, generally pilgrims and others do

not use 'Palace on Wheels' is not convincing. The Committee feel that operation of 'Palace on Wheels' in the 'Golden Triangle' should be extended to Ajmer keeping in view that on an average as many as 55,000 foreign tourists and about 13 lakh domestic tourists visit Ajmer every year.

**NEW DELHI
April 23, 2003
Vaisakha 3, 1925(S)**

**UMMAREDDY VENKATESWARLU,
Chairman,
Committee on Estimates.**

MINUTES OF SITTING OF THE ESTIMATES COMMITTEE
(2002-2003)

FOURTEENTH SITTING

The Committee sat on Monday, the 31st March, 2003 from 1100 to 1140 hours.

PRESENT

Prof. Ummareddy Venkateswarlu – Chairman

MEMBERS

2. Shri Lal Muni Chaubey
3. Shri Dalit Ezhilmalai
4. Smt. Sheela Gautam
5. Shri Shankar Prasad Jaiswal
6. Shri Shriprakash Jaiswal
7. Dr. C. Krishnan
8. Shri Samik Lahiri
9. Shri Sanat Kumar Mandal
10. Shri Manjay Lal
11. Shri Shyam Bihari Mishra
12. Shri Subodh Mohite
13. Prof. Rasa Singh Rawat
14. Shri Dileep Sanghani
15. Shri Maheshwar Singh
16. Shri Rampal Singh
17. Shri Lal Bihari Tiwari
18. Shri Shankersinh Vaghela
19. Shri D. Venugopal

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri A.K. Singh - Director
2. Shri Cyril John - Under Secretary
3. Shri N.C. Gupta - Assistant Director

2. The Committee considered and adopted the following draft Reports without any modification :-

(i) Report on Ministry of Tourism and Culture (Department of Tourism)
'Development of Infrastructure for Growth of Tourism – Development of
Ajmer City.

(ii) xx xx xx xx

3. The Committee authorized the Chairman to finalise the Reports in the light of verbal and other consequential changes, if any, arising out of factual verification by the respective Ministries and to present the same to the House.

The Committee then adjourned.
