

**FORTY-THIRD REPORT
COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS
(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)**

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

(Presented to Lok Sabha on 24.3.2023)



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
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Minutes of the 28th sitting of the Committee on Petitions held on 23.03.2023

(i)

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

Shri Harish Dwivedi - *Chairperson*

MEMBERS

2. Shri Anto Antony
3. Shri Hanuman Beniwal
4. Prof. Sanjay Sadashivrao Mandlik
5. Shri P. Ravindhranath
6. Dr. Jayanta Kumar Roy
7. Shri Brijendra Singh
8. Shri Sunil Kumar Singh
9. Shri Sushil Kumar Singh
10. Shri Manoj Kumar Tiwari
11. Shri Prabhubhai Nagarbai Vasava
12. Shri Rajan Baburao Vichare
13. Vacant
14. Vacant
15. Vacant

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri T.G. Chandrasekhar - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Raju Srivastava - Director
3. Shri Vivek Saini - Executive Officer

**FORTY-THIRD REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS
(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)**

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Committee on Petitions, having been authorised by the Committee to present on their behalf, this Forty-Third Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee to the House on the representation of Shri Praveen Kumar regarding promotion and development of Tourism in Lakshadweep and other important issues related therewith.

2. The Committee considered and adopted the draft Forty-Third Report at their sitting held on 23 March, 2023.

3. The observations/recommendations of the Committee on the above matters have been included in the Report.

NEW DELHI;

23 March, 2023

02 Chaitra, 1945 (Saka)

**HARISH DWIVEDI,
Chairperson,
Committee on Petitions.**

REPORT

REPRESENTATION OF SHRI PRAVEEN KUMAR REGARDING PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN LAKSHADWEEP AND OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES RELATED THEREWITH.

Shri Praveen Kumar had submitted a representation dated 14.07.2022 regarding promotion and development of Tourism in Lakshadweep and other important issues related therewith.

2. The representationist, in his representation, has *inter alia* stated that Lakshadweep is a group of 36 small Islands, out of which only 10 are inhabited with human population. However, until 2014, the development of these Islands has not been consistent with the vast available potential. Located in the Arabian Sea, 300 kilometers away from Kerala's coast in the south of India, Lakshadweep, which is the India's smallest Union Territory, is one of the most beautiful destinations in the world that surprisingly neither Indian citizens nor international travelers know much about. Sadly, even the most basic facilities were not available for tourists visiting the Islands all these years. But progressive steps taken by the administration after 2014 have given momentum and a positive direction to development in the region. For the first time, under the directions of our Hon'ble Prime Minister, the Administration has laid the foundation for the future of Lakshadweep in a smart, systematic and planned manner, which includes making the cluster of Islands a world class Tourist destination.

3. The representationist has also stated that there are some important aspects which the Lakshadweep Administration has to take into account for the promotion and development of Tourism:-

- (I) Whether Lakshadweep still faces constraints in development of Tourism, like connectivity, accommodation, supply of water, etc. In order to overcome these constraints, is it a fact that the

following policy decisions had been taken by the Lakshadweep Administration:-

- (a) To overcome the connectivity constraints, Alliance Air under Air India is operating an ATR 42 Aircraft six days a week between Kochi and Agatti. Helicopter service is also provided between Agatti, Kavaratti and Bangaram. Some seats are also reserved in passenger ships for tourists.
 - (b) To overcome limitations of accommodation, the Department of Tourism, Lakshadweep has created a total bed capacity of more than 176 beds including 52 bed capacity in the tented accommodation at Bangaram and Thinnakara. Moreover, ship based packages i.e. packages where passengers stay overnight on ship only and visit the Islands in daytime have also been introduced so as to reduce load on Islands.
 - (c) The Low Power Thermal Desalination Plants have been set up in the Islands of Kavaratti and Kadmat to meet the drinking water requirements of inhabitants and visiting tourists.
- (II) The Lakshadweep Administration has also notified Lakshadweep Tourism Policy, which envisages for holistic development of tourism in the entire Union Territory of Lakshadweep. Besides, the following steps have been taken by the Department of Tourism, UT of Lakshadweep:-
- (a) Agatti and Minicoy Islands of Lakshadweep have been declared as authorized Immigration Check Posts for entry/exit from our main land with valid travel documents for all classes of passengers.
 - (b) Department of Tourism participates in various fairs and festivals conducted in various parts of the country to promote Lakshadweep tourism.

- (c) Department of Tourism has been conducting National Minicoy Fest, every year to showcase Lakshadweep culture and customs to rest of the world.
 - (d) Several short films on important tourist destinations and water sports activities have been produced by the Department for promoting Lakshadweep Tourism.
- (III) The Union Territory of Lakshadweep has issued the Lakshadweep Tourism Policy 2016 on 4 March, 2016 to position tourism as an engine of socio-economic development of Lakshadweep to transform and position Lakshadweep as a unique and best dive tourist destination in the world. Their plan is to promote and facilitate; Eco- friendly Resorts, Tourist Homes, Cruise Tourism, Beach Tourism, Dive Tourism, Heli-Tourism, Film Tourism, improve inter-island connectivity, expansion of Agatti Island Airport, etc. The Union Territory of Lakshadweep Administration claim that they have also obtained clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs to notify Agatti Island as Customs Port.
- (IV) Apart from this, the NITI Aayog has taken up the holistic development of identified Islands and the final site potential development report has also been prepared for five Islands in Lakshadweep, namely, Minicoy Island, Bangaram Island, Thinnakara Island, Cheriya Island and Suheli Island. The development of projects for identified Islands has also been planned in consultation with Lakshadweep Administration.
- (V) The holistic development plan includes the aspects of hotel accommodation, connectivity and other tourist facilities as per the carrying capacity of these Islands. Further an Airport at Minicoy has also been proposed for construction by Indian Air Force which would also be for use by civilian aircrafts.

3. The representationist has further stated that the UT of Lakshadweep Administration have rolled out these ambitious projects during the last 8 to 10 years which are aimed at promotion and development of Tourism in Lakshadweep. However, the facts and figures of Domestic Tourists and Foreign Tourists in Lakshadweep present a very dismal picture as under:-

- From 2015 to 2017, the yearly average Domestic Tourists comes to 10859, whereas, the yearly average Foreign Tourists comes to 984.
- In 2019, the total Tourists comes to 7805.
- Yearly average Tourists from 1997 to 2021 comes to 6620.
- In 2021, the total Tourists comes to 13500.

4. The representationist has also stated that if the arrival of tourists in Lakshadweep is compared with Maldives which has the same natural beauty and similar geographical location, it is found that Maldives has emerged as great tourism location in the world map. The facts and figures of Tourists visiting Maldives from 2015 to 2022 are as under:-

2015	1.23 million
2016	1.29 million
2017	1.39 million
2018	1.48 million
2019	1.7 million
2020	1.6 million
2021	1.3 million
2022 (upto June)	3,59,272

The above comparison is in itself proving beyond doubt that as far as the efforts made by the UT of Lakshadweep Administration is concerned, they are far from sufficient. Moreover, it is also a matter of examination as to whether the initiatives taken by the Lakshadweep Administration for promotion and

development of Tourism, for which crores and crores of rupees have been sanctioned and utilized, have actually resulted in all round development of Lakshadweep Islands or not. It is a matter of simple understanding that when the total Tourists visiting Lakshadweep always remained below 15 thousand, how we could claim that we have achieved the target of transforming Lakshadweep as a world class tourist destination. It is also learnt that in the year 2015, the Union Government had received a proposal from the Union Territory Administration of Lakshadweep for amendment of Section 3(e) of "The Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands (Restrictions on Entry and Residence) Rules, 1967 to relax the restrictions on entry and stay in various Islands of the Union Territory. If the said amendment had been approved and implemented, then, it is beyond comprehension as to why the inflow of Tourists in Lakshadweep is so dismal. The representationist has, therefore, requested to make an independent study of all these aspects and suggest some practical solution so that promotion and development of tourism Lakshadweep could at least reach to the level of Maldives, if not that of Switzerland or any other American or Europe tourist destinations.

5. In order to have realistic assessment of the issues/points raised in the representation of Shri Praveen Kumar, the Committee also undertook an on-the-spot Study Visit to Lakshadweep on 13 September, 2022. During the said Study Visit, the Committee held informal discussion with the representatives of the Ministry of Tourism and UT Administration of Lakshadweep in connection with examination of the instant representation.

6. On being enquired about basic information relating to the Promotion and Development of Tourism in Lakshadweep, the Ministry of Tourism, UT administration of Lakshadweep and NITI Aayog furnished the following details:-

- (i) Ministry of Tourism promotes India as a holistic destination, including places of natural tourist attractions such as wildlife, adventure, rural tourism etc. As part of its on-going activities, it releases global print, electronic and online media campaigns in

important and potential markets overseas for the promotion of various tourist destinations and products of the country, under the 'Incredible India' brand-line. Promotions are also regularly undertaken through the website (www.incredibleindia.org), the Social Media accounts of the Ministry and by the India Tourism domestic and overseas offices.

- (ii) Social media promotions have been regularly undertaken on two social media handles of the Ministry of Tourism, viz., *@incredibleindia* and *@tourismgoi*. Some of the social media promotions undertaken to highlight the tourist potential of the destination, amongst others, are as follows:-
 - (a) An Influencer activity has been done showcasing the picturesque places to visit in Lakshadweep.
 - (b) A Scuba Diving post highlighting the adventure tourism potential of the lands.
 - (c) Snorkeling experience in Lakshadweep has been highlighted in 'Adventure Tourism Destinations of India' video.
 - (d) In adherence to the broad vision of GOI to promote Coastal Tourism, regular amplification have been carried out of Lakshadweep as a destination through stories and posts.
- (iii) The Ministry of Tourism has now revamped its Swadesh Darshan scheme as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0) in order to develop sustainable and responsible tourism destinations in the country with tourist & destination centric approach. The guidelines for Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme has already been issued to all the States/Union Territory Administrations including Lakshadweep. The UT Administration of Lakshadweep has been requested to submit proposal for the consideration of the Ministry.
- (iv) Ministry of Tourism does not maintain the data on number of

domestic tourists and foreign tourists visiting destinations in India. However, based on the information provided by State/UT Administrations Tourism department, the data on the number of Domestic Tourist Visits (DTVs) and Foreign Tourist Visits (FTVs) are as under:-

From 2015 to 2017, the yearly average Domestic Tourist Visits comes to 10859, whereas, the yearly average Foreign Tourist Visits comes to 984. In 2019, the total Tourists Visits (Domestic and Foreign) comes to 7805. Yearly average Tourists Visits (Domestic and Foreign) from 1997 to 2021 comes to 8396. In 2021, the total Domestic Tourist Visits comes to 13500.

- (v) The data on Domestic Tourists Visits (DTVs) and Foreign Tourists Visits (FTVs) during 1997-2021 for Lakshadweep are given in the following table:-

Year	DTVs	FTVs	Total
1997	3700	1038	4738
1998	2058	595	2653
1999	1927	924	2851
2000	1087	597	1684
2001	3501	650	4151
2002	6173	912	7085
2003	4604	682	5286
2004	3889	1285	5174
2005	6908	941	7849
2006	22941	2142	25083
2007	16642	2933	19575
2008	1571	1699	3270
2009	6553	4309	10862
2010	7705	1512	9217
2011	9424	567	9991
2012	4417	580	4997
2013	4784	371	5155
2014	7315	514	7829
2015	17241	1173	18414
2016	8716	753	9469

2017	6620	1027	7647
2018	10435	1313	11748
2019	6985	820	7805
2020	3462	413	3875
2021	13500	4	13504
TOTAL	182158	27754	209912
AVERAGE	7286.32	1110.16	8396

Source: Tourism department, Government of Lakshadweep

- (vi) NITI Aayog informed that the "Concept Development Plan and Detailed Master Plans for 5 Island (Minicoy, Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriya and Suheli) in Lakshadweep have been prepared for holistic development of Lakshadweep Islands. The key outcome included PPP anchor projects in hospitality sector with investment of Rs. 806 crore. The projects include India's first ever villas projects in Minicoy (150 keys, projects cost of Rs.319 crore), Suheli (110 keys, Rs.247 crore) and Kadmat (110 keys, Rs.240 crore) Islands. Water villa projects in Kadmat and Suheli were successfully awarded to the winning bidder concessionaire in July 2022. To repeat the success of first phase of the programme, five new Islands under package V have been taken for Preparation of Feasibility Report for holistic development of Islands in Lakshadweep.
- (vii) Lakshadweep Administration informed that to overcome the connectivity constraints, proposals are underway for expansion of Agatti airport and construction of a Defence Airport at Minicoy Island. Moreover the UT Administration of Lakshadweep is welcoming prospective cruise line companies for operating cruise ships to the Islands. During the last tourist season, M/s. Cordalia Curises has visited Kadmat Island making a total tourist footfall of 25,000 tourists in a single tourist season. The Lakshadweep Administration is in the process of augmenting the tourism infrastructures by setting up of world class tourist resorts and allied infrastructures in the Islands of Kavaratti, Agatti, Bangaram and Kadamt to meet the accommodation requirements. The UT Administration of Lakshadweep has floated RFP for Development of Tent Resorts at Agatti Island with 50 tents and Bangaram

Island with 120 tents. To cater to the drinking water requirement in the tourist focal islands of Lakshadweep, the low power thermal desalination plants and RO plants have been set up in the Islands of Kadmat, Kavaratti and Bangaram that can cater to the requirements of inhabitants and visiting tourists. In connection with the holistic development of Lakshadweep Islands, NITI Aayog, New Delhi has identified Kadmat, Suheli and Minicoy Islands for development of eco-tourism projects consisting of beach villas and lagoon villas in these islands. The UT administration of Lakshadweep has issued letter of award for development of beach villas and lagoon villas at Kadmat and Suheli Islands. With regard to the carrying capacity of Lakshadweep Islands, each and every tourist focal Islands have a very specific technically feasible and demographically viable carrying capacity (bed capacity). The UT Administration of Lakshadweep operates tourism within the carrying capacity of the islands in such a way that tourist footfall beyond the carrying capacity does not adversely affect fragile eco-system and social-cultural environment of these Islands. As you are aware, Lakshadweep being the tiniest Union Territory in the country has very limited land area compared to Maldives wherein the UT administration of Lakshadweep focuses on setting up the tourist infrastructure within the frame work of carrying capacity and other ecological aspects of these Islands. Whereas, Maldives is large group of Islands in terms of land area and has numerous islands with adequate tourist infrastructure and carrying capacity for accommodating large number of tourists every year. Hence, there is discrepancy in the number of tourist footfall between Lakshadweep and Maldives at present.

7. After having the basic information about Tourism profile of the island, the Committee enquired about the Salient features/guidelines of Swadesh Darshan [Phase-I] and its quantifiable deliverables with reference to Lakshadweep and Salient features/guidelines of Swadesh Darshan 2.0 for developing Lakshadweep as a sustainable and responsible tourism destination, the Ministry of Tourism/UT administration of Lakshadweep/NITI Aayog, in a written

reply, furnished the following information:-

Ministry of Tourism

- (a) The Ministry of Tourism launched its Swadesh Darshan scheme in the year 2014-15 with the objective to develop theme based tourist circuits in an integrated manner.
- (b) During the period 2014-15 to 2018-19, the Ministry of Tourism sanctioned 76 projects under 13 themes for more than Rs.5300 crore.
- (c) As of now, 51 of the sanctioned projects are physically complete.
- (d) Financial Assistance under the 'Swadesh Darshan Scheme' is provided to the State Governments/ UTs Administrations for development of tourism infrastructure at various destinations subject to availability of funds, submission of suitable Detailed Project Reports, adherence to scheme guidelines and utilization of funds released earlier, etc.
- (e) The Swadesh Darshan scheme was reviewed at the highest level and thereafter the Ministry of Tourism revamped its scheme as Swadesh Darshan 2.0, with the objective to develop sustainable and responsible destinations following a tourist & destination centric approach. The guidelines for SD2.0 scheme have been issued including the UT of Lakshadweep. Further, the Ministry of Tourism has also circulated a format for 'State Perspective Plan for Selection of Destinations under Swadesh Darshan Scheme 2.0' to the States/UTs.
- (f) As per the scheme guidelines, the Scheme aims at enhancing tourist experience throughout his journey from arrival to return and it will be a key element of planning for tourism development under the Scheme. The Scheme accordingly focuses on the destination as a whole and not merely adding a few components here and there at the destination.

- (g) The States/UTs will prepare a State Perspective Plan analysing tourism potential of various destinations, The Ministry will select 2-3 destinations of the State for development based on the State Perspective Plan and availability of funds.
- (h) In respect of each selected destination, Destination Master Plan will be prepared based on benchmarking and detailed gap assessment. It will have proposed hard and soft interventions and shelf of projects with block costs.
- (i) After approval of the Master Plan, the Detailed Project Report (DPR) shall be prepared for each destination as per toolkit of Ministry of Tourism. The DPR will be prepared keeping in view the following:-
- Principles and recommendations included in the Master Plan.
 - Benchmarking and gap analysis with respect to carrying capacity, tourism infrastructure, activities, connectivity, skill development, safety, marketing and promotion.
 - Proposed hard and soft interventions.
 - Pre-construction clearances.
 - O&M proposals.
- (f) The Ministry of Tourism has also formulated a robust institutional structure for providing overall vision and guidance, sanctioning of projects, review standards, review the progress of the projects etc. Institutional structure includes formation of –
- National Steering Committee.
 - Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee.
 - Mission Directorate.

UT Administration of Lakshadweep

Concept note has been submitted to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India for the infrastructural development under Coastal Circuit in Agatti, Kavaratti, Banagram and Thinnakara Islands at an

extended cost of Rs. 93.87 crore In respect of the comments of UT Administration of Lakshadweep, it is clarified that circuit development was considered as part of SD1.0. Now, the Ministry of Tourism has revamped the scheme as SD2.0 under which development of responsible and sustainable tourism destinations will be undertaken.

8. On being asked about the Concept Development Plan/Detailed Master Plans formulated by NITI Aayog for holistic development of Minicoy, Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriya and Suheli Islands in Lakshadweep and its implementation, the Ministry of Tourism and UT administration of Lakshadweep /NITI Aayog furnished the following information:-

NITI Aayog

- (a) The Concept Development Plan and Detailed Master Plans for 5 islands (Minicoy, Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriya and Suheli) in Lakshadweep have been prepared for holistic development of Lakshadweep islands. The key outcome based on carrying capacity includes PPP anchor projects in hospitality sector with investment of Rs.806 Crore. The projects include India's first ever villas projects in Minicoy (150 keys, project cost of Rs.319 crore), Suheli (110 keys, Rs.247 crore) and Kadmat (110 keys, Rs.240 crore) islands.
- (b) Water villa projects in Kadmat and Suheli were successfully awarded to the, winning bidder concessionaire in July 2022.
- (c) To repeat the success of first phase of the programme, five new Islands under Package V have been taken for Preparation of Feasibility Report for holistic development of Islands in Lakshadweep.
- (d) Further information may be obtained from the Ministry of Home Affairs/Lakshadweep Administration.

UT Administration of Lakshadweep

Under package-III islands 5 islands has been taken into consideration for the Holistic Development. Several projects were proposed to boost the overall development of the Islands and to ensure sustainable progress. Amongst these phase 2 projects are taken up for PPP based development including Beach Villas and Lagoon Villas based premiere resorts in the islands of Minicoy, Kadmat, and Suheli Cheriyakara.

For Kadmat and Suheli island eco-tourism projects Letter of Award (LoA) has been issued to the successful Bidder M/s Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) on 29.07.2022 and acknowledgement has been received from them on 01.08.2022

9. The Committee thereafter enquired about the 'Tourist Season' and simplification of the applicability of Laccadive Minicoy Islands (Restrictions on Entry & Residence) Rules, 1967, the following information was furnished by the Ministry of Tourism/UT administration of Lakshadweep/NITI Aayog:-

UT Administration of Lakshadweep

The Competent Authority, UT of Lakshadweep has designated the power to issue the 'Travel Manifest' to SPORTS and for Foreign Tourists. The tourist season for Lakshadweep is from 1st October to 31st March for around 227 days in a year.

10. The Committee also enquired about the Feasibility *vis-a-vis* functional difficulties in starting flights from Goa and Mumbai to reach Lakshadweep, the Ministry of Tourism/UT administration of Lakshadweep/NITI Aayog furnished following information:-

Ministry of Tourism

As on date there is only one flight connecting Kochi to Agati being operated by Alliance Air by small aircraft. In case, connectivity to Goa or

Mumbai is considered, this may require long Airport for which M/o Civil Aviation would be the Competent Authority.

UT Administration of Lakshadweep

Only one Airport in Agatti Island is situated in Lakshadweep. The size of the run-way is small as bigger flights cannot be operated at present. The economic feasibility of VGF is very high.

11. In order to know about the initiatives/steps taken to enhance infrastructure/facilities to promote Tourism in Lakshadweep, the Committee enquired about outcome of the 'Request For Proposal' [RPF) floated by UT Administration of Lakshadweep for development of Tent Resorts at Agatti Island with 50 tents and Bangaram Island with 120 tents, the Ministry of Tourism/UT administration of Lakshadweep/NITI Aayog in written reply disseminated the following information:-

UT Administration of Lakshadweep

With a view to meeting the urgent requirement to augment the existing number of keys of accommodation facilities in Lakshadweep, the UTL Administration is engaged in the development of high-end tent Resort at Agatti and Bangaram. Accordingly, a RFP for the development of Tent Resort at Agatti Island for 30-50 Tents had been floated by the Department of Tourism, UT of Lakshadweep, on 10.08.2022 with a bid due date as 02.09.2022. In response to this only 1 bid has been received before the bid due date. Hence the Department of Tourism has re-tendered the same for getting more competitive bidders for the development of Tent Resorts in Agatti Island on 05.09.2022 with bid due date as 27.09.2022. In case of Bangaram Island, the RFP is floated on 23.08.2022 and the bid due date is on 14.09.2022.

12. The Committee further enquired about the assessment of the overall effectiveness of 'Thermal Desalination Plants' set up in the Islands of Kadmat,

Kavaratti and Bangaram, the Ministry of Tourism/UT administration of Lakshadweep/NITI Aayog in written reply stated as under:-

UT Administration of Lakshadweep

Thermal Desalination Plants is installed and commissioned in Kavaratti only. It has a capacity of 1,00,000 litre/ day and it is distributed to the people once in 3 days. Bangaram Island has a R.O Plant which is recently installed and provides 50,000 Litre/ day. This exclusively provided for the tourists. In Kadmat a 1.5 lakh Litre /day capacity Thermal Desalination Plant process is ongoing.

13. The Committee thereafter made an effort to understand the efforts to increase tourist footfall enquired about outcome of the 'Letter of Award' issued by the UT Administration of Lakshadweep for development of 'Beach Villas' and 'Lagoon Villas' at Kadmat and Suheli Islands on which, the Ministry of Tourism/UT administration of Lakshadweep/NITI Aayog furnished the following details:-

UT Administration of Lakshadweep

Letter of Award (LoA) for both Kadmat and Suheli island eco-tourism projects have been issued to the successful Bidder M/s Indian Hotels Company Ltd. (IHCL) on 29.07.2022 and acknowledgement has been received from them on 01.08.2022. The Concession Agreement will be signed soon with the M/s IHCL.

14. With respect to Query regarding Strategic importance of Lakshadweep *vis-a-vis* initiatives taken by UT Administration of Lakshadweep for revamping the tourism sector and arrival of tourists, both domestic and foreign, in the Island, the Ministry of Tourism/UT administration of Lakshadweep/NITI Aayog supplied following information:-

UT Administration of Lakshadweep

Cruise Tourism has been introduced that resulted in increase in the tourist flow. Since Sept, 2021 to May, 2022 around 24,000 tourists have visited Kadmat Island of Lakshadweep. Lakshadweep administration is striving hard to augment the existing number of keys to attract tourist. This includes, development of Beach Villas and Lagoon Villas based premiere resorts in the islands of Minicoy, Kadmat, and Suheli Cheriyakara. and development of Tent Resort accommodation in Agatti and Bangaram etc. UTL Administration is initiated process of Blue Flag Certification of potential beaches not only to win the eco-friendly status but also draw in more international tourists.

15. The Committee while acknowledging the fact that during the last 25 years (1997 to 2021), a total number of 2,09,912 tourists (Domestic and Foreign) have visited Lakshadweep, enquired about the anticipated increase in the tourist footfall after formulation and implementation of several Schemes, especially the Swadesh Darshan 2.0, by the UT Administration of Lakshadweep/Ministry of Tourism/NITI Aayog, the reply submitted was as under:-

NITI Aayog

NITI Aayog does not have a mandate to implement the specific scheme "Swadesh Darshan 2.0" and also not implemented any scheme in UT Administration of Lakshadweep by NITI Aayog.

UT Administration of Lakshadweep

By the development of Anchor Eco-tourism projects in Kadmat, Minicoy and Suheli Islands it is expected around 50,000 tourist arrivals to Lakshadweep in a tourist season. Furthermore, with the development of Tent Resort facilities and allied infrastructure in Agatti and Bangaram, the expected tourist arrival will be around 35,000 pax.

Ministry of Tourism

Under the Swadesh Darshan 1.0, no project was sanctioned in Lakshadweep. The Ministry of Tourism has now formulated the guidelines for SD 2.0 and has been circulated to all the States/ UTs. The format from the preparation of State Perspective Plan has also been circulated. The details from the State are awaited and as of now no project under Swadesh Darshan scheme has been sanctioned.

16. Keeping the pro-active measures taken by the authorities for overall development of Tourism in Lakshadweep in backdrop, the Committee enquired about the factors, such as, the eco-system and the geographical location, which would eventually restrict the Authorities to transform Lakshadweep into a tourist attraction similar to that of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, the Ministry of Tourism/UT administration of Lakshadweep/NITI Aayog furnished the following information:-

UT Administration of Lakshadweep

Apart from eco-system and geographical location, Lakshadweep Tourism has the challenges/factors that adversely affect the growth are:-

- Domestic & international connectivity.
- Insufficient accommodation facilities.
- Lack of aggressive branding and marketing strategies.
- Poor internet connectivity, etc.
- The difficulties in the supply and transportation of the provisions. groceries and other required items from mainland.

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Tourism in Lakshadweep – An engine of growth

17. The Committee, while examining the representation of Shri Praveen Kumar regarding promotion and development of Tourism in Lakshadweep in the light of comments received from the Ministry of Tourism, note that Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world as it is closely inter-connected with a number of other sectors such as transport, hospitality, education, medical, entertainment, infrastructure, etc. This industry has gained immense importance in the growth of economies of the countries around the globe as tourism generates direct and indirect employment opportunities, strengthens the trade and commerce activities, contributes to local infrastructure development and reduce poverty and inequalities. Governments all over the world use tourism as a tool for fostering local and regional economic development. Tourism sector has immense potential for job creation not only in the big cities but also in small towns and rural agglomerations. The Committee are of the opinion that development of tourism in the Lakshadweep region has immense potential to enhance cross-cultural exchange, enable the locals to learn new languages, development of soft skills, etc.

18. In the context of Lakshadweep, the Committee have noticed that on the one hand, there has been uncertain scenario of economic activities

and on the other hand, there is heavy dependence on the Union Government support by way of grants, financial packages and various other economic interventions. Juxtaposition of the economic dependence with the development of tourism, the Committee are of the considered view that Lakshadweep Island have spectacular beauty of beaches, corals and lagoons, which could be used for promotion of tourism and generating huge revenue. Though the Committee acknowledge that Tourism has, of late, evolved into a major revenue earner in Lakshadweep, there is a need for an integrated formulation of a blue-print for the development of this sector without disturbing the natural assets of the Islands (Sea and its Environs) which are to be preserved and protected in such a manner that would bring about continuous economic advantages to the Islands on a long-term basis. The Committee, therefore, urge the Administration of Lakshadweep to formulated an integrated development blue-print for the Islands in general and Tourism sector in particular. The Committee would like to be apprised of the outcome of such an endeavour at the right earnest.

Tourists visiting Lakshadweep Islands

19. The Committee note that the nature has bestowed Lakshadweep Archipelago - 36 Islands with 132 kilometers of coastline, whopping 42 square kilometers of turquoise lagoon area coupled with a territorial extent of 20,000 square kilometers which could be transformed as a major tourist attraction of the world. However, the Committee are

concerned to note that despite being blessed with abundance of nature's bounty, the tourists footfall, both domestic as well as foreign, during last 10 years, i.e., from 2012-13 to 2021-22 has been a dismal 78,993. Keeping in view the unique scenic beauty of white sandy beaches, corals and diversified marine eco-system of the Island, the Committee could visualize that there remains huge potential for increasing the number of tourists visiting the Island on year-to-year basis. The Committee while expressing their concern over the unimpressive inflow of tourists in Lakshadweep strongly recommend that some practical solutions, devoid of cumbersome processes, should be found out for providing tourist friendly facilities such as connectivity, ease of accessibility, accommodation ranging from affordable to high-end, clean drinking water, electricity, internet connectivity, etc., so that more and more tourists visit the Island. The Committee would like to be apprised of the updated status in this regard.

Connectivity constraints

20. The Committee take note of the fact that there is only one, narrow-body aircraft, flight connecting Lakshadweep to the mainland, i.e., from Kochi to Agatti. There is no connectivity from any International Airport abroad or from any other major cities in India such as Mumbai, Goa or Delhi, etc. The Committee have also been informed by the Ministry of Tourism/ UT Administration of Lakshadweep that the operation of wide-body aircraft and connectivity with other cities require a full-fledged

runway and due to geographical complexities and damage-prone ecosystem of Lakshadweep, it would be a challenging task to develop the desired level of aviation infrastructure. On this count, the Committee would like to draw a parallel with the Hulhule island in Maldives, which is having an area of around 4 square kilometers and even then they are able to establish an International Airport, well connected with all the major Airports around the world and also serving as a main gateway for tourists into the Maldives. The Committee, therefore, attribute the non-availability of a big Airport in the Island as one of the reasons for diversion of foreign tourists from Lakshadweep to Maldives. The Committee are of considered opinion that without overcoming the connectivity constraints, development of Lakshadweep as a tourist destination would remain a pipedream. During the course of examination of the representation, the Committee were also informed that proposal for expansion of Agatti Airport and construction of Defence Airport at Minicoy Island are under active consideration of the Government. In this regard, the Committee recommend the Ministry of Tourism to take up the matter with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and other Ministries concerned such as Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, etc., so that expansion of Agatti Airport could be initiated at the right earnest. In this backdrop, the Committee would also like to recommend that the Ministry of Tourism should also begin result-oriented consultation process with the Ministry of Defence for construction of a Defence Airport at Minicoy Island. The Committee would like to be apprised of the progress made and tangible outcome in this regard.

Development of Adventure Tourism and Water Sports

21. Adventure Tourism leads to improved mental and physical health by imparting a sense of accomplishment amongst tourists. The Committee take note of various initiatives taken by the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with UT Administration of Lakshadweep, for the development, easy availability and affordability of water sports activities at various Islands with a view to attracting the tourists for visiting Lakshadweep. It is learnt that the UT Administration have also developing 'Scuba Diving Centres' in Kavaratti, Kalpeni, Minicoy, Kadmat and Bangaram Islands to promote adventure tourism. The Committee have also been informed that Lakshadweep Administration have taken various initiatives for development of all the major Islands through Public-Private Partnership model. In this regard, the Committee are of the opinion that there are various facets of adventure tourism and water sports activities other than scuba diving, viz., sailing, rafting, yachting, kayaking, sea walking, etc. The Committee, therefore, recommend the Ministry of Tourism to not only identify various water sports activities besides scuba diving which could be available to the tourists visiting Lakshadweep but also publicize them in a fullest possible manner. In this regard, it is a well-acknowledged fact that easy availability of Adventure Tourism and Water Sports encourage the tourists to visit these places more frequently, thereby, transforming the region as an ultimate tourist destination.

Cruise Ship Tourism

22. The Committee were informed that Cruise-Liners started operating in Lakshadweep from 2004 onwards including the Cruise Liners like Superstar Libra, Europa, Ocean Odessy, Amet, Majesty, Ameda, etc. Besides, foreign Yatch like Indian Prince, India Empress, Queen K, Palilon, etc., are also being operated since 2005. In this context, the Committee would like to highlight that Cruise Tourism is a luxurious form of travelling, involving an all inclusive holiday on a Cruise Ship. Modern Cruise encompasses a variety of facilities and amenities, in line with the preferences of the tourists making sea travel a life time memorable experience. Cruise Tourism has come to be associated with marine resorts, offering tourists an alternative form of holiday. However, the Committee note that the frequency of Cruise Ships as a part of Adventure Tourism has been limited due to which the tourists are apprehensive of availing this mode of transport to Lakshadweep. Considering the fact that the Cruise Tourism has become a point of attraction amongst the tourists, the Committee recommend that the Ministry of Tourism/UT administration of Lakshadweep to work out modalities for increasing the frequency of Cruise ferrying between designated Islands for which they should liaise with the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways for urgent tangible outcomes. The Committee would like to be apprised of the steps initiated on the above-mentioned aspects within three months of the presentation of this report.

NEW DELHI;

HARISH DWIVEDI
Chairperson,
Committee on Petitions

23 March, 2023

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