

24

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
RAILWAYS
(2018-19)
SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA**

**MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)**

**[Action taken by Government on the recommendations/observations contained in
the 18th Report of the Standing Committee on Railways (Sixteenth Lok Sabha) on
'Tourism Promotion and Pilgrimage Circuit']**

TWENTY FOURTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

FEBRUARY, 2019/ MAGHA, 1940 (SAKA)

SCR NO. _____

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS
(2018-19)

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(RAILWAY BOARD)

[Action taken by Government on the recommendations/observations contained in the 18th Report of the Standing Committee on Railways (Sixteenth Lok Sabha) on 'Tourism Promotion and Pilgrimage Circuit']

Presented to Lok Sabha on 07.02.2019

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 06.02.2019



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

FEBRUARY, 2019/ MAGHA, 1940 (SAKA)

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COMPOSITION OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS (2018-19)[@]

Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyay - Chairperson

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Smt. Anju Bala
3. Shri Ram Tahal Choudhary
4. Shri Pankaj Chowdhary
5. Shri Sudheer Gupta
6. Dr. Sanjay Jaiswal
7. Shri Gajanan Chandrakant Kirtikar
8. Shri Kunhalikutty P.K.
9. Shri Balabhadra Majhi
10. Dr. K.H. Muniyappa
11. Shri Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu
12. Shri A.T. (Nana) Patil
13. Shri Vijayakumar S.R.
14. Shri R. Radhakrishnan
15. Shri Lakhan Lal Sahu
16. Shri Rajeev Shankarrao Satav
17. Prof. (Dr.) Ram Shankar
18. Shri Gowdar Mallikarjunappa Siddheshwara
19. Shri Ganesh Singh
20. Shri Uday Pratap Singh
21. Shri Kukade Madhukarrao Yashwantrao

RAJYA SABHA

22. Shri A.K. Antony
23. Shri Shwait Malik
24. Shri Satish Chandra Misra
25. Shri Mukut Mithi
26. Ms. Saroj Pandey
27. Shri Garikapati Mohan Rao
28. Shri T. Rathinavel
29. Shri Bashistha Narain Singh
30. Mahant Shambhuprasadji Tundiya
31. Shri Motilal Vora

[@] Constituted w.e.f. 01.09.2018 *vide* Lok Sabha Bulletin Part II No. 7332 dated 18.09.2018.

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Smt. Kavita Prasad | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. | Shri Arun K. Kaushik | - | Director |
| 3. | Shri R.L. Yadav | - | Additional Director |
| 3. | Dr. Mohit Rajan | - | Under Secretary |

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on Railways (2018-19), having been authorised by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Twenty Fourth Report on Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations/Observations of the Committee contained in their Eighteenth Report (Sixteenth Lok Sabha) on 'Tourism Promotion and Pilgrimage Circuit'.

2. The Eighteenth Report was presented to the Lok Sabha and laid in the Rajya Sabha on 04.01.2018. The Report contained 12 recommendations/observations besides para 1 which is introductory in nature and does not contain any recommendation. The Ministry of Railways furnished their Action Taken Notes on all the recommendations/observations contained in the Report on 29.06.2018.

3. The Committee considered and adopted the Draft Action Taken Report at their sitting held on 04.02.2019. The minutes of the sitting are given in Appendix-I.

4. For facility of reference and convenience, the observation and recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold letters.

5. An analysis of the Action Taken by Government on the recommendations/observations contained in the Twenty Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Railways (Sixteenth Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix-II.

NEW DELHI:
4 February, 2019
15 Magha, 1940 (Saka)

SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on Railways

CHAPTER I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Railways deals with the action taken by the Government on the Recommendations/Observations contained in their Eighteenth Report (16th Lok Sabha) on "Tourism Promotion and Pilgrimage Circuit".

2. The Eighteenth Report was presented to the Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 04.01.2018. It contained 11 Recommendations/Observations excluding para 1 which does not contain recommendation.

3. Action Taken Notes in respect of 11 Recommendations/Observations have been received and categorised as follows:

(i) Recommendations/observations which have been accepted by the Government:-

Para Nos. 2,3,4,5,7,8,11 and 12

Total : 08
Chapter II

(ii) Recommendations/observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies:-

Para No. 9

Total : 01
Chapter III

(iii) Recommendations/observations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration:-

Para No. 6, 10

Total : 02
Chapter IV

(iv) Recommendations/observations in respect of which final replies are still awaited:-

Para No. Nil

Total : Nil
Chapter V

4. The Committee trust that utmost importance will be given to the implementation of the Recommendations accepted by the Government. The Committee desire that final action taken notes to the Recommendations/Observations contained in Chapter-I of this Report should be furnished to them not later than three months of the presentation of this Report.

5. The Committee will now deal with the action taken by the Government on some of their recommendations/observations.

A. TOURISM PROMOTION AND PILGRIMAGE CIRCUIT

(Recommendation Para No.6)

6. The Committee had recommended as under :

“Tirupati and Shirdi are two of the most important and popular pilgrimage stations in the country and attract a large number of people from around the country. The Committee note that Tirupati and Shirdi are connected by only two pairs of mail/express train services and one weekly special train. Despite the resource and operational constraints, as specified by the Ministry, for lack of enough service on the route, the Committee think that it becomes imperative on the part of Railways to explore the other possibilities to run more number of trains or look into the alternative route connecting Tirupati with Shirdi, keeping in view the demand of passengers and volume of people travelling between these two stations. They strongly recommended the Ministry to promptly look at all the possibilities of running more trains between Tirupati and Shirdi and also widening the connectivity of these stations from other parts of the country. The Committee would also like to be apprised on the progress made in this regard from time to time.”

7. In their Action Taken Replies, the Ministry of Railways have stated as under:

“At present, Shirdi is connected to various prominent locations of the country like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Puri etc. Shirdi is also connected to Tirupati by a weekly service of 17417/17418 Tirupati-Sainagar Express. At present, it is not feasible to

introduce train services from Shirdi & Tirupati stations due to operational and resource constraints. However, introduction of trains is an ongoing process on Indian Railways.

IRCTC regularly operates tours to Shirdi and Tirupati by rail, road as well as by air from different parts of the country. IRCTC also provides holiday packages to Tirupati through its area office at Tirupati. More Rail Tour packages to Shirdi and Tirupati will be operated to these places as the new policy for VAT blocking has been issued by Railways.”

8. The Committee had strongly recommended the Ministry to explore the possibilities of running more trains between Tirupati and Shirdi and also widening the connectivity of these stations from other parts of the country. In the reply, the Ministry have submitted that Shirdi is connected to Tirupati by a weekly service of 17417/17418 Tirupati- Sainagar Express and at present, it is not feasible to introduce train services between these two stations owing to operational/resource constraints. In this regard, the Committee is not convinced with the reasons furnished by the Ministry expressing their inability for non-augmentation of train service between two most important religious places like Tirupati and Shirdi which attracts the devotees from all over the country. The Committee feel that if train services are further augmented between these two places, it will not only facilitate devotees, but also generate revenue for exchequer. Further, the Committee are dissatisfied to find that these places are currently connected with only one weekly train service. They would like to know the occupancy rate of this train in last one year; revenue generated and expenditure incurred on this train in last one year. While reiterating their earlier recommendation, they would like to be apprised of the factors which are refraining Indian Railways from introduction of more trains on this route.

B. LUXURY TOURIST TRAINS

(Recommendation Para No. 10)

9. The Committee had recommended as under :

“Regarding the complementary travel, the Committee are dismayed to note that the provision of complementary travel is continuing in these luxury trains on the recommendation of either Railway Board or IRCTC or State Tourism Development Corporation. In the years 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16, a total of 30, 97, 53 and 71 passengers respectively availed the complimentary travel in Maharaja Express. The Committee fail to understand the need to provide complimentary travel when these luxury trains have hardly been generating the revenue to meet their own working expenses. As a public entity financed by the budget, the Railway, under any obligation, have no right to misuse the tax payers’ money by providing advances to some people in the form of complimentary travel in these luxury trains. The Committee desire to know the reason behind providing the complimentary travel on luxury trains and strongly recommend the Ministry to discontinue the system of complimentary travel with immediate effect. They would like to be apprised of the steps taken in this direction.”

10. In their Action Taken Replies, the Ministry of Railways have submitted as under:

“Senior officers are permitted for complimentary travel on luxury trains for the purpose of inspecting in details all aspects of train operations.

Representatives of foreign tour operators/agents, representatives of Indian agents/ tour operators, representatives of print and electronic media or other influence makers from India and foreign countries and persons nominated by Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India are permitted for complimentary travel with the sole purpose of promotion of the trains. The travel of such persons is considered as FAM Travel, which is a marketing tool for promotion of the train.”

11. The Committee in their earlier recommendation had desired to know the reason behind providing the complimentary travel on various Luxury Trains and strongly recommended the Ministry to discontinue the system of complimentary travel with immediate effect in view of low occupancy and low revenue generation by the six Luxury Trains. In response, the Ministry have stated that the senior officers are permitted for complimentary travel for inspection purpose while others are permitted for promotion purpose as a marketing tool. The Committee are not satisfied with the reply of the Government. Inspection and marketing tool are two different issues and cannot be clubbed together for the purpose of promotion of tourism etc. The Committee fail to understand that despite using Complementary Travel as a marketing tool for promotion of Luxury Trains since 2012-13 no significant rise/improvement has been observed either in occupancy or in revenue generation of these trains. Moreover, the cost of complimentary travel has been borne by Indian Railways which further adds to the losses of Railways and is gross wastage of public money. In this regard, the Committee would like the Ministry to conduct a study on the financial/other benefits achieved through these complimentary tickets *vis-à-vis* the cost involved therein during the last six years. They also recommend the Ministry to frame stringent guidelines for issue of these complimentary tickets to prevent the possible misuse of public money.

CHAPTER-II

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation (Para No. 2)

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), a Government owned Public Sector Enterprise under Ministry of Railways, is an extended arm of the Indian Railways to promote tourism. IRCTC related matters are looked after by the Tourism and Catering Directorate which works under Member (Traffic) in Railway Board. The Committee feel that keeping in view the huge potential emerging out of tremendous annual growth in tourism sector of the country, the notion of Railway Board being the apex body of the Ministry of Railway in both administration and policy making seems incomplete in the absence of any representation from Tourism and Catering Directorate/IRCTC. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that there should be proper representation for tourism in the Railway Board so that it gives the desired acceleration to the promotion of tourism related policies of the Railway and also help the Ministry to become more sensitive towards the demands of passengers in general and tourists as well as pilgrims in particular.

Reply of the Government

Noted.

There is a post of Executive Director looking after Tourism in a Directorate dealing with Tourism headed by Additional Member (Tourism & Catering).

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Recommendation (Para No. 3)

The Committee note that the budget earmarked by IRCTC for tourism promotion during the years 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 was to the tune of Rs. 6 crore, 4.17 crore, 4 crore and 3.65 crore respectively. The Committee feel that the budget allocation for such a major head is grossly inadequate and with declining trend. However, the Committee are perturbed to note that the IRCTC have not been able to fully utilize

even these meager funds allocated for promotion of tourism. The actual utilization ranged from 54.8% to 90.48% of the allocated fund for which Ministry have not assigned any reason whatsoever. Further the Committee note that no funds for promotion of pilgrim places have been provided separately. The Committee recommend the Ministry to increase the budget allocation to IRCTC for promotion of tourism with immediate effect and to create a separate fund for the promotion of tourism and pilgrimage in India and ensure optimal utilisation of the same. The Committee understand that it is the most appropriate time for the Railways to grab the opportunity as the tourism industry in the country is growing with at an unprecedented rate. The Committee further desire the due attention, commitment and focused approach by the Ministry in promotion of tourism, under intimation to the Committee.

Reply of the Government

Suggestion noted.

IRCTC allocates marketing budget to their respective zones based on core tourism activities planned for the year, i.e. Bharat Darshan / Aastha trains, Buddhist circuit trains, Tiger circuit, Desert circuit trains, Rail Tour packages, land Tour Packages, Domestic & International Air Packages etc. Further, for the year 2017-18, IRCTC has allotted marketing budget Rs 302 Lakhs for the zones of which Rs. 216 lakhs (71.5%) has already been spent upto Jan, 2018. Corporate office allots additional marketing budget over and above already sanctioned amount based on the requirement of the zones. More Corporate level marketing and branding activities are being planned.

TOURISM PROMOTION & PILGRIMAGE CIRCUIT

Recommendation (Para No. 4)

Indian Railways promote tourism primarily by connecting various tourist places across the country. Many tourist/pilgrim destinations are already connected by rail. However, States having high potential for tourism like Jammu & Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, northern part of Kerala and States of North East region witness minimal presence of Railways. The Ministry themselves have accepted that connecting

Kashmir Valley and tourist destinations in North-East Region will give a great boost to the tourism in those areas. The Committee hold a similar view on expanding the rail network in the Kashmir Valley and North East Region and desire the Ministry to include parts of Central India like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, Kerala and Uttarakhand in their scheme of covering more touristic places. The Committee feel that if Railways have to increase their revenue, they will have to focus on those areas which possess touristic/historic/religious importance and are not connected by rail. The Committee feel that the primary role of Railways in promoting tourism is to provide rail connectivity to the touristic and pilgrimage places and strongly recommend the Ministry to put forth their true efforts in order to provide extensive rail connectivity to the Kashmir Valley, North East Region and Central India at the earliest.

Reply of the Government

Railway projects are mostly sanctioned keeping economic viability or socio-economic considerations for upliftment of served area. A railway line per se results into increased economic activities including tourism. Many places of religious and tourist importance invariably fall on Railway Network & alignment of railway links. In Jammu & Kashmir, Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla new line project is under construction and Mata Vaishno Devi has already been connected through Katra Station.

Construction of new lines in North East region has been taken up in big way which will have far reaching impact on connectivity and also on tourism.

In Central India also important tourist places like Sanchi & Khajuraho are already on railway map. Ratanpur Temple in Chhattisgarh is also only 20 Kms from Bilaspur station which is well connected on railway network.

The biggest problem in construction of new line is land acquisition and accordingly it has been decided that work on sanctioned New Line will be taken up only after complete land acquisition that will act as hedge against cost inflation also.

Indian Railways constantly endeavours to provide trains connection between stations, especially those of tourist/pilgrimage importance and remote locations. It would be appreciated that with this end in view, Indian Railways have introduced service connecting stations in North Eastern region with major locations like Indore, Katra, Delhi, Jodhpur, Chandigarh, Bengaluru etc. Further extension/introduction of trains from various important stations for Katra have helped the passenger of Kashmir valley as well. However, in view of vastness of the country, it is not always feasible to provided direct connectivity between every two station of tourist/pilgrimage importance.

IRCTC operates regular train tours like Bharat Darshan, Aastha Circuit trains, Mukhyamantri special tourist trains as well as launched Rail Tour Packages to those places where ever rail connectivity is provided. The places include tourist's spots at Jammu & Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala etc.

IRCTC also operates State special and Aastha Circuit trains from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Assam to various tourist destinations across the country.

IRCTC operates Holiday packages and domestic air packages to those areas where rail connectivity is not presently available such as North Eastern States, Ladakh etc. to promote tourism at these areas.

Recommendation (Para No. 5)

The IRCTC runs various tourist and pilgrimage special trains like Bharat Darshan Train, Pilgrim special tourist train and Buddhist special train. Railways have introduced around 600 trains in last five years (2011-16) covering various destinations across the country. The Committee observe that out of 600, only 7 trains have been dedicated for promotion of tourism and pilgrimage. Only two more trains namely, Tiger Express and Astha Circuit trains have been introduced in 2016-17. However, tiie IRCTC has reduced the number of trips of Buddhist Circuit Trains by 50 per cent after reviewing their performance but have not increased the trips of Bharat Darshan Trains which are performing very well with 90 percent occupancy. The Committee feel that frequent changes in the train trips and introducing the various circuits without analysing the reasons for closing the previous

ones only reveal the unpreparedness and unconsidered decision on the part of Railways and reflect a lack of perspective planning. The Committee recommend that the Ministry should prepare a comprehensive long term plan or road map for their future actions to evocatively cater the emerging needs of tourism sector in India and should move forward step by step through informed decisions rather than rushing into non-sustainable ventures. They should widely publicise the existence of such trains and the facilities provided therein. Further, extensive publicity about Pilgrimage sites like Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, Golden Temple, Durgiana Temple (Amritsar), Kurukshetra, Haridwar, Mathura & Vrindavan, Ayodhya, Varanasi, Belur Math, Kalighat Temple (Kolkata), Gangasagar, Kamakhya Temple (Guwahati), Chitrakoot Dham (Uttar Pradesh), Mahakaleshwar Temple (Ujjain), Maihar (Madhya Pradesh), Ratanpur (Chhattisgarh), Deoghar, Jagannath Puri, Rameswaram and Kanyakumari etc. and locations with scenic beauty/observing important festivals like Onam Festival, Goa Carnival, Cherry Blossom Festival (Meghalaya), Rann of Kutch, Jaisalmer, Chenab Rail Bridge, Amarkantak, Puducherry, Allahabad, Araku Valley, Velankanni (Tamil Nadu) and Kerala etc. This would definitely spark the wanderlust and adventure instincts of the tourists and customers.

Reply of the Government

During the FY 2016-17 IRCTC operated 67 Bharat Darshan Trips, 2 Aastha circuit trains tours, 5 trips of Buddhist special and 3 trips of semi luxury trains. During the FY 2017-18 till December, IRCTC has operated 54 trips of Bharat Darshan, 8 trips of Aastha Circuit train tours, 3 Buddhist special tours. All these train tours are planned well in advance and is uploaded in our webpage www.irctctourism.com for the benefit of the passengers. Proper publicity by way of release of advertisements in newspapers, press releases, participation in trade fairs etc is being done on regular basis for all these trips. Brochures with location/ scenic beauty of places being visited through these tours are made and are displayed at IRCTC offices and its Tourist Facilitation Centers. More brochures of such tours will be printed and displayed as and when the new tours are

announced. Moreover banners containing pictures/scenic beauty of places covered in tours are regularly displayed in IRCTC portal with prominence.

The decision to introduce semi luxury train tours was not only to utilise the rake of Buddhist train during the period the tour is not operated, but also to bridge the gap between the super luxury Maharajas' express and the budgeted tours, Bharat Darshan. These tours were operated on smaller circuits like Tiger Express, Desert Circuit special, etc. as planning of longer duration tours with the present charging principle of the train is financially unviable.

Recommendation (Para No. 7)

The Committee note with disappointment that the Ministry do not have any specific guideline for categorizing a particular station as of touristic and pilgrimage place even though the concerned Managers of the Zonal Railways having been given foil powers to do so. The Committee caution the Ministry not to take the tourism and pilgrimage sector too lightly as it may be proved a hidden treasure for Railways to increase revenue if explored judiciously. Further, the Committee recommend the Ministry to collaborate with Ministry of Tourism for sharing information/data and also to conduct their own survey. The Committee advise the Ministry to formulate a Committee at Zonal level to explore and identify the places of touristic and pilgrimage importance where Railways' contribution will be required. This Committee at Zonal level may include the Members of Parliament of the concerned zone/ representatives of local bodies/civil societies and officials of Railways, District Administration and Tourism Department also. Such inclusive approach would also bring harmony between the various sections of the society and government apart from opening up growth avenue for Railways.

Reply of the Government

As per the old Categorization, General Managers had powers to categorize a station as B category if it is a place of tourist importance and/or is an important junction station. Now, as per revised instructions issued for Categorization of stations, General Managers

shall have powers to categorize a station as NSG4 category if it is a place of Tourist importance and/or is an important junction station.

IRCTC has identified stations of tourists as well as pilgrim importance and is operating its Tourist Facilitation Centers (TFC) at these stations for the benefits of tourists/pilgrims. Currently IRCTC operates TFCs at Bangaluru, Mysore, Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Indore, New Delhi, Secunderabad, Vijaywada, Hyderabad, etc. which are of tourists importance and at Madurai, Gaya, Puri, Howrah, Tirupati, etc. which are of pilgrim importance. Further there are 44 numbers of Tourists Information Centers operated either by State Tourism bodies/departments or by district tourism organisations all over Indian Railways. IRCTC also have signed MoU with 20 States for mutual co-operation and for development of tourism in those regions.

LUXURY TOURIST TRAINS

Recommendation (Para No. 8)

Luxury Tourist Trains are premier luxury products/services being offered by Indian Railways/IRCTC in collaboration with State Tourism Development Corporations. The total revenue earned by all these five trains from 2012-13 to 2016-17 has been Rs. 497.31 crore with an average of Rs. 99.46 crore per year and Railway's share has been Rs. 259.52 crore i.e. 52.18% of the total revenue. The Committee are dismayed to note such a low revenue generation from these luxury trains and observe that revenue of Royal Rajasthan on Wheels, Deccan Odyssey and Golden Chariot have never crossed mark of Rs. 15 crore per year in last five years. Moreover, in case of Deccan Odyssey, total haulage charges for the years 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 have been Rs. 7.71 crore, Rs. 10.25 crore and Rs. 13.15 crore respectively which are higher than the total revenue earned by this trains i.e. Rs. 5.25 crore, Rs. 5.26 crore and Rs. 9.51 crore for the corresponding years. At a time when the tourism sector in the country is growing significantly, the Committee are distressed to note such diminutive amount as revenue generation from these luxury tourist trains puts a question mark over the operation of such trains. The Committee understand that Railways are only concerned with the haulage charges and do not make any loss in the operation of Luxury tourist trains but fail to understand how Railways calculate their

profit and loss incurred on running these luxury trains when Railways do not maintain the record of expenditure spent on them.

The Committee understand that Railways cannot do away from their core responsibility by simply arguing that they do not incur any loss in running luxury trains with their only concern being the haulage charges. These trains carry the image of Railways all over the world and are considered as iconic products/services in the luxury segment of tourism in India. If these trains run into losses where total revenue has been lower than the haulage charges, it becomes imperative on the part of Railways to introspect the matter within themselves and mark/guide the path of augmentation for IRCTC and State Tourism Departments. The Committee desire that the Ministry of Railways should probe the possibility of proactive advertisement and publicity with respect to running of these luxury trains along with State Tourism Department and also add some more destinations/incentives to make them more remunerative. The Committee also recommend the Ministry to maintain the records of all the expenditure incurred on these luxury trains along with the revenue earned so that real picture could be clear in terms of profit and loss.

Reply of the Government

Noted.

Instructions have been issued vide Board's letter No.2017/Tourism/200/4 dated 26.03.2018 (**ANNEXURE-I**) to Respective State Tourism Corporations / Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) advising to maintain records of all expenditures incurred on Luxury Tourist Trains along with revenue earned.

RETIRING ROOM FACILITY

Recommendation (Para No. 11)

The Committee note the efforts made by the Railways in providing retiring room facility at all A1 category stations but make a note that only 559 stations out of the 8495 stations have the facility of retiring rooms. They understand that this facility is neither required nor mandatory at all the stations, however, all the A category stations may be

provided with retiring rooms as at present almost one fourth A category stations do not have retiring rooms. Further, the Committee feel that since retiring room is one of the essential amenity being provided at stations, the Railways should identify the stations where this facility can be extended in view of its utility and for the same, opinion of public representatives may also be considered. In this regard, the Committee recommend that all A category stations should be provided with retiring room facility at the earliest and for rest of the stations where this facility is not available, selective identification of stations should be executed in consultation with the concerned public representatives. The Committee be apprised of the progress in this regard.

Reply of the Government

As per old comprehensive instructions for passenger amenities, Retiring rooms are required to be provided at A1, A & B category stations under Desirable Amenities. There were 75 A1, 332 A & 302 B category stations i.e. total 709 stations, out of which maximum stations have been provided with the 73 A1 category stations, 257 A category stations, and 128 B Category stations retiring room facility. Efforts are being under taken to provide the retiring room facility at rest of the A1, A & B category stations subject to feasibility for the same.

IRCTC has provided online booking facility for reserving retiring rooms through our tourism portal. Currently on line booking facility available at 496 railway stations of Indian Railway.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Recommendation (Para No. 12)

The Committee note the initiation of the Ministry and successfully execution of the Value Added Tour Packages which have not only become a profit making avenue but also have huge demand from Indian tourists. The Committee observe that launching of new packages of Gatiman express and removing packages with less than 50% utilization clearly indicate the move towards professionalism which is gradually imbibing in the working of Railways. The Committee desire the Ministry to continue their initiatives like Value Added

Tour Packages, introduction of more reasonably priced tourism packages and Indrail Passes with innovations and utility based optimization applying the performance oriented target based approach.

Reply of the Government

Noted.

The decision to withdraw packages having less than 50% utilisation was made for ensuring financial viability of the packages consequent to the issuance of the revised policy of VAT blocking. IRCTC will launch and operate more cost effective Value Added Tour packages as the tourism friendly VAT policy has been issued by Railways. In an effort to launch more reasonably priced tourism packages, IRCTC has also started operating Bharat Darshan tours from South Central Zone from January 2018 which are already in operation in North, South and West Zones.

Further, Indrail Pass facility has been discontinued from 19.09.017.

CHAPTER – III

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLIES

Recommendation (Para No. 9)

The matter of cancellation of one trip of Palace on Wheels came as a distressful revelation before the Committee and so they have further analysed the data being provided by the Ministry regarding the occupancy status on the luxury trains for last five years. The detailed analysis exposed a shocking picture before the Committee. The percentage of vacant seats during 2012 to 2017 has been 63.7, 61.07, 57.76, 45.46 and 45.81 for Maharaja Express, Golden Charriot, Royal Rajasthan on Wheels, Deccan Odyssey and Palace on Wheels respectively. What was even more disturbing that in Maharaja Express which is completely run by Indian Railways without State collaboration, during 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17, the occupancy has been 29.86%, 32.22%, 41.8%, 41.58% and 36.03% respectively. Further, in the same train during 2013-14, 758 seats were occupied out of 1594 in which 97 seats had been occupied by complementary travellers.

The Committee have taken a very serious note of lack of seriousness on the part of Ministry towards low occupancy in luxury trains and expect the Ministry to properly examine and spell out the reasons for running such trains with as low as 30% occupancy. The Committee feel that though the idea of compact tour package is a good idea, however, the period of 6 to 8 days is very long for many of the tourists, both domestic and foreigners, who would have preferred a smaller tour package along different stretches on the route of the train. The Committee recommend the Ministry to seriously look into the matter and take immediate steps to prevent the decreasing trend in occupancy of luxury trains and form a special panel/team which would look into the various reasons for such low occupancy and advice the Ministry a mechanism to attract more tourists towards these luxury trains. The Committee also suggest that the Ministry may also frame a policy of tariff/tour plan in such a way where tourist can avail the travel /facilities of these trains for

amendable number of night/day not necessarily for whole journey of 6-8 days as buying whole package becomes expensive for most of the tourists. Two or three sub-plans of shorter duration within the given journey should be chalked out to offer more acceptability by potential customers.

Reply of the Government

Noted.

Offering Shorter duration packages - Maharajas' Express is also offering 3 Nights/4 Days packages namely Treasures of India and Gems of India from 2012-13. However, the performance of the shorter duration packages is poorer than the performance of the longer 7 Nights/8 Days packages. Considering the past trend, it is evident that the longer itineraries are doing better than shorter duration itineraries. Details of guest numbers and percentage occupancy with other inputs are being studied by Marketing Team from time to time.

Offering Break journey options on longer duration packages - These would have to be studied operationally, if such a proposal is considered in the future. At the initial stage, these seem operationally difficult as it would be difficult to predict the number of guests on a particular leg of journey which is required to plan the logistics, meals at venues etc. accordingly. Since we pay a minimum guarantee of 25 guests for the entire journey, this may result in operational losses, if guests at a particular destination are less than 25. It would also be difficult to plan the transport logistics with varying number of guests at different destinations. Feasibility with respect to on-board operations, Haulage, sales and marketing etc. may also be studied.

CHAPTER – IV

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND WHICH REQUIRE REITERATION

Recommendation (Para No. 6)

Tirupati and Shirdi are two of the most important and popular pilgrimage stations in the country and attract a large amount of people from around the country. The Committee note that Tirupati and Shirdi are only connected by two pair of mail/express train services and one weekly special train. Despite the resource and operational constraints, as specified by the Ministry, for lack of enough service on the route, the Committee think that it becomes imperative on the part of Railways to explore the other possibilities to run more number of trains or look into the alternative route connecting Tirupati with Shirdi. Keeping in view the demand of passengers and volume of people travelling between these two stations. They strongly recommend the Ministry to promptly look at all the possibilities of running more trains between Tirupati and Shirdi and also widening the connectivity of these stations from other parts of the country. The Committee would also like to be apprised on the progress made in this regard from time to time.

Reply of the Government

At present, Shirdi is connected to various prominent locations of the country like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Puri etc. Shirdi is also connected to Tirupati by a weekly service of 17417/17418 Tirupati-Sainagar Express. At present, it is not feasible to introduce train services from Shirdi & Tirupati stations due to operational and resource constraints. However, introduction of trains is an ongoing process on Indian Railways.

IRCTC regularly operates tours to Shirdi and Tirupati by rail, road as well as by air from different parts of the country. IRCTC also provides holiday packages to Tirupati through its area office at Tirupati. More Rail Tour packages to Shirdi and Tirupati will be operated to these places as the new policy for VAT blocking has been issued by Railways.

Comments of the Committee

(Please *see* recommendation Para No. 8 of Chapter-I)

Recommendation (Para No. 10)

Regarding the complementary travel, the Committee are dismayed to note that the provision of complementary travel is continuing in these luxury trains on the recommendation of either Railway Board or IRCTC or State Tourism Development Corporation. In the years 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16, in total 30, 97, 53 and 71 passengers respectively availed the complimentary travel in Maharaja Express. The Committee fail to understand the need to provide complimentary travel when these luxury trains have hardly been generating the revenue to meet their own working expenses. As a public entity financed by the budget, the Railway, under any obligation, have no right to misuse the tax payers' money by providing advances to some people in the form of complimentary travel in these luxury trains. The Committee desire to know the reason behind providing the complimentary travel on luxury trains and strongly recommend the Ministry to discontinue the system of complimentary travel with immediate effect they would like to be apprised of the steps taken in this direction.

Reply of the Government

Senior officers are permitted for complimentary travel on luxury trains for the purpose of inspecting in details all aspects of train operations.

Representatives of foreign tour operators/Agents, Representatives of Indian Agents/Tour Operators, representatives of print and electronic media or other influence makers from India and foreign countries and persons nominated by Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India are permitted for complimentary travel with the sole purpose of promotion of the trains. The travel of such persons is considered as FAM Travel, which is a marketing tool for promotion of the train.

Comments of the Committee

(Please *see* recommendation Para No. 11 of Chapter-I)

CHAPTER – V

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH FINAL REPLIES ARE
STILL AWAITED

-NIL-

NEW DELHI:
4 February, 2019

15 Magha, 1940 (Saka)

SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on Railways

**Government of India
Ministry of Railways
(Railway Board)**

ANNEXURE-I

No.2017/Tourism/200/4

New Delhi, dt. 26.03.2018

The CMD,
IRCTC, B-148, 11th
Floor, Statesman House,
Barakhamba Road, New Delhi-
110001.

The Managing Director,
Karnata State Tourism Development
Corp., 49, 2nd Floor, Khanija
Bhawan, Race Course Road
Bengaluru-560001, KARNATAKA.

The Managing Director, *MTDC*
CDO, Hutment, Opposite LIC,
Yogakshena Building,
Madame Cama Road,
Mumbai-400020

The Managing Director, *RTDC*
Hotel Swagatem Campus,
Near Jaipur Railway Station
Road, JAIPUR-302001.

Sub: 18th Report of the Standing Committee on Railways on
"Tourism Promotion and Pilgrimage Circuit".

Please find enclosed herewith a copy of Recommendation No.8 contained in the 18th Report of Standing Committee on Railways. The Committee desires that the concerned Corporation should probe the possibility of proactive advertisement and publicity with respect to running of Luxury Tourist Trains along with State Tourism Department and also add some more destinations/incentives to make them more remunerative. The Committee also recommended to maintain records of all expenditure incurred on Luxury Tourist Trains along with revenue earned and submitted. The above details may be included in monthly PCDO/MCDO in this regard.

It is requested the above instructions may be compiled strictly.

DA: as above.

P. U.
(Pranjalaya Parth Lathe)
Dy. Director (Tourism & Catering)
(Railway Board)

Pl. Issue
26/03/18



APPENDIX-I

MINUTES OF THE FOURTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS (2018-19)

The Committee met on Monday, the 4th February, 2019 from 1500 hrs. to 1630 hrs. in Committee Room 'C', PHA, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyay - Chairperson

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Shri Ram Tahal Choudhary
3. Shri Gajanan Chandrakant Kirtikar
4. Shri P.K. Kunhalikutty
5. Shri Lakhan Lal Sahu
6. Shri Rajeev Shankarrao Satav
7. Shri Uday Pratap Singh
8. Shri Kukade Madhukarrao Yashwantrao

RAJYA SABHA

9. Shri Garikapati Mohan Rao
10. Shri Motilal Vora

SECRETARIAT

1. Smt. Kavita Prasad - Joint Secretary
2. Shri Arun K. Kaushik - Director
2. Shri R.L. Yadav - Additional Director

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAILWAY BOARD)

1	V. K. Yadav	Chairman, Railway Board and Ex-officio Principal Secretary to the Government of India
2	Girish Pillai	Member Traffic, Railway Board and Ex-officio Secretary to the Government of India

APPENDIX-II

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS CONTAINED IN THE 18TH REPORT (16TH LOK SABHA) ON "TOURISM PROMOTION AND PILGRIMAGE CIRCUIT"

Total number of Recommendations/Observations	11
(i) Recommendations/Observations which have been accepted by the Government –	
Para Nos. 2,3,4,5,7,8,11 and 12	8
Percentage of total	72.73%
(ii) Recommendations/Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies –	
Para No. 9	1
Percentage of total	9.09%
(iii) Recommendations/Observations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration –	
Para Nos. 6 and 10	2
Percentage of total	18.18%
(iv) Recommendations/Observations in respect of which final replies are still awaited -	
Para No. NIL	NIL
Percentage of total	---