

MAHABALESHWAR-PANCHGANI REGIONAL PLAN

RECOMMENDATIONS **OF** **TOURISM SUB COMMITTEE**

In view of the Supreme Court order as well as considering the Notification declaring the Mahabaleshwar – Panchgani Region as a Eco-Sensitive Zone, Tourism Sub Committee would like to make the following recommendations:

INTERPRETATION CENTRES

Interpretation Centers will play a very important role in leading to pro-environment actions to support the natural and cultural heritage of the newly created Eco-sensitive Zone Region.

Interpretation Centers are required to be set up with well trained personnel to implement a comprehensive Interpretation plan designed for a variety of target groups, each requiring a highly specific awareness programs among the various stake holders in the region. (Viz: (a) Forests and Ecology, (b) History and religious importance of Kshetramahabaleshwar of the PMEZ. (c) Geological importance of the plateau and other morphological features).

QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENT TO TOURIST

ATTRACTIONS

The greatest attraction of the Region is its natural beauty. All efforts should be made to preserve and qualitatively improve it.

- a) The preservation of tranquility of these hill stations by reducing or channeling the traffic, in particular of large commercial vehicles and restricting the speed of vehicles is necessary. The possibility of restricting the movement of trucks that have no concern with these hill stations but only pass through is required to be examined.

In this regard it is recommended that to reduce through traffic, alternate road connecting the areas with konkan may be made within five years and only till the alternate road is made, through traffic (i.e. vehicles which have no business with Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar may be allowed through Mahabaleshwar – Panchgani Region.

- b) Due emphasis should be given to proper maintenance of the points of tourist attraction which are the heritage of these hill stations. While doing so, care should be taken to preserve their natural character. The safety of tourists should also be born in mind.

- c) Mahabaleshwar Municipal Council maintains considerable road length in and around Mahabaleshwar including rides and tarred roads some of them even out side the Municipal limits. The Municipal Council is not in a position to adequately

maintain these rides and roads, which require constant attention because of the heavy rainfall and traffic. The Government gives some grants, which are not adequate. Committee members suggested that instead of present method adopted by Govt. for allotting the funds is not effective for hill stations.

Hence it is recommended that the basis for road grants to be given should be the "Population Census figures" of the town plus floating population for that year, so that the amount specified is not "understated".

Adequate funds should be placed at the disposal of both the Municipal Councils for effective road maintenance

d) No further roads should be constructed to points of scenic beauty in and around Mahabaleshwar so as to preserve them in their natural state. This excluded "footpath" which may be created wherever necessary.

It is recommended that provision should be made at certain entry points for parking all non-resident vehicles and all internal transport should be made Eco-friendly. Largely transport should be public and only eco friendly, while private transport to be allowed internally for permanent residents only.

Walking pathways and cycle tracks may be provided to all the points(list enclosed as an appendix 'A') to encourage walking and cycling. No motorized transport to be allowed.

- e) Aesthetically designed street furniture may be provided at all public places.
- f) Neon signs, glaring / dazzling lights in bazaar, streets, resorts, hotels should be banned.
- g) Cleanliness of highest order may be maintained.

Litter of non-biodegradable material to be strictly prohibited. Plastic to be banned in the Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani Region.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING
ENVIRONMENT

The lands of Mahabaleshwar are hilly and undulating. To negotiate the undulating land roads are meandering and binding. The Development is concentrated in and around the gaathan area and most of the hilly land is under forest. The beautiful and rustic landscape of the town has been retained and preserved by maintaining the forest. As already stated interlaid(?) the town is main attraction for tourist. Millions of tourists have already visited this place of and on, and thousand of tourists would visit this town in future. In spite of being bestrode with the natural scenic beauty, the town at present lacks in modern sophisticated amenities which would not only adorn its beauty but also attract the tourist and tempt them to stay

for few days more in the town. From tourist point of view following recommendations is made.

PARKING

At present there are three sites made available for parking of cars etc. at Mahabaleshwar. Two are near Venna Lake and third one is just to the north of Makhariya High School. It is observed that these parking plots are inadequate to meet the current requirement. Hence three additional parking lots have been proposed at the following sites: (1) Entrance of Malcolm Peth gaolhan towards north and (2) Bombay Point, and (3) Near Venna Lake. Commercial Parking in Panchgani to be shifted to 'P' and 'V' plots to restrict uncontrolled parking. The endeavor should be to pedestrianise as many streets in the town as possible, and restrict uncontrolled parking all over the town.

TERMINAL FACILITY

Except for the S.T. Bus terminus, the terminal facility of any kind is not given in the towns resulting in large number of private buses being parked on the already congested narrow roads in the town creating chaotic situation in season. All non resident's vehicles must be stopped and parked at the public parking lots.

DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM

Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani attract tourists from all over the country. The rate of increase in tourist traffic has been exponential with the result that the existing infrastructure, civic and natural, has been straining to meet the increasing demands. The effort now should be not to increase the volume of tourist traffic beyond the carrying capacity of the Region but to improve the quality of the environment so that it does not lose its charm as a refuge for nature lovers. Following recommendations are therefore made.

i) Distribution of tourist traffic throughout the year

The existing facilities of drinking water, drainage, accommodation, transportation etc. have already reached saturation point with the result that these hill stations cannot bear more tourist traffic during the peak season without qualitative deterioration. Therefore, efforts should be made to disperse tourist traffic all round the year. Increase in tourist tax during peak season, reduction in tourist tax, during the non-peak season and suitable public transportation facility needs to be made so that tourists are prompted to visit the hill station out side the peak season also. No additional construction whatsoever should be allowed within the town area

ii) Facilitation of alternate tourist places

Several places in the vicinity of the Region may be capable of development within the preview of Eco - sensitive Zone guide lines with a view to divert the pressure of tourist traffic from Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani. **Alternatively** the tourists who are staying at these hill stations can be encouraged to take excursions to these places. These would include Tapola, Mandherdev, Dhom

reservoir, Gude Panchgani, Kas, Kamalgad, Pandavgad and kenjalgad and surrounding areas.

An FSI of 0.25 should be allowed for new tourism units in areas outside of the Municipal limits within the Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani Region. Tourists units will be as defined in G.R. No.MTC-2001/CR 23/TOURISM, dt.16-09-2002 (as appendix 'B').

All leased hold heritage residential buildings may be allowed to be converted into heritage resorts or hotels with additional FSI of 0.10% of existing built-up area to be provided for adding amenities like covered passages, varandas and toilets. However, no additional accommodation to be allowed using this FSI.

iii) Dispersal of Tourists within the Hill Stations

There is a tendency to crowd around certain points of attractions with the result that while these points get congested, several other equally fascinating points are left unattended by tourists. Tourists should be stimulated to 'discover' the beauties of the plateau about which much publicity has not been given. In particular, following points could be considered:

- a) Lodwick point, Babington point and Connought points should be promoted as alternate sun set points to reduce the pressure and rush at Bombay point.
- b) The Polo ground and Golf course at Mahabaleshwar and Table land at Panchgani should be preserved as open

public spaces. The Golf Course should be revived and made a heritage Golf Course which could attract international tourists.

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS

The road network in the town is narrow and steep. But it will ~~be~~ cease to be a problem, once the non-resident vehicles are provided a parking area on the outskirts. The network can then be considered as compatible with the 'hill station' character of the town. The traffic and transportation problem of the town, is therefore, not considered as burning problem to be looked into urgently.

IMPROVING ENVIRONMENT OF THE PANCHGANI TOWN.

It is essential to preserve and improve the environment of the Panchgani town to make it more pleasant and beautiful. This may be achieved by means of the following measures:

A) Six sites are reserved for the purpose of parks- Gardens. Swimming pool etc. These sites may be developed by the Municipal Council in a phased programme.

- B) All lands, which are not developable and the lands under forest may be included in the green zone for being duly afforested.
- C) The area of tableland may be kept open and development of any sort detrimental to environment, especially the geological uniqueness of the tableland, should not be undertaken. The unique character of Panchgani as a Hill Station for schools should be preserved to the extent possible.
- D) Minimum size of plots and other regulations are framed in such a manner as to prevent congestion and over crowding.
- E) Preservation and conservation of the tableland may be taken up.

GENERAL POINTS:

- i) A buffer of "No development zone" around Mahabaleshwar - Panchgani Region may be created to the extent as indicated in the environmental status report of the Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani Eco Sensitive zone prepared by the committee appointed by the Government of Maharashtra to maintain the environment, ambience and fragile eco system of the region. (Copy of the relevant extract enclosed as appendix: 'C').

ii) Special funds may be provided to establish and improve basic amenities and services.

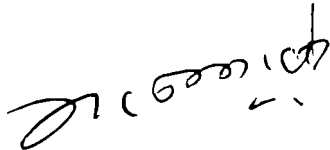
iii) Most of the points at Mahabaleshwar are in the forest area and outside of the Municipal limits making it difficult to carry out any development / improvement works. Possibility of Forest Department maintaining the points in their area from the funds provided by tourism could be ascertained.

General Points for Improvement of View Points:

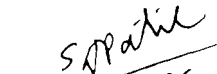
- Approach roads to the viewpoints require improvement by way of regular maintenance
- Adequate road signage aesthetically designed and fabricated with special material to withstand heavy rainfall may be provided. Sizes, colours and designs should be uniform.
- Destination signage giving general information like altitude of the point, names of the different forts / places those could be seen from the point, map of the area showing jungle trails and lesser known points and information about them leading to the next point and information about flora, fauna and avifauna and history if any should be displayed
- Proper steps / ramps are required to be provided to go down to the points like Aurther seat, Elphinston Point.
- Parapet walls / safety railings are required.
- Fence to be provided for the safety and protection of tourists at the points with steep falls especially at points like Aurther seat, Kate's

point, Upper and lower Elphinston point, Savitri point, Castle rock point etc.

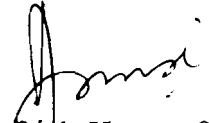
- Street furniture around trees may be provided at suitable intervals at the points involving long walk or steep descend / ascends to facilitate children, ladies and elderly persons to take rest.
- Though Municipal council has provided urinals for ladies and gents made of fiber glass material at few points, they are required to be properly designed and painted to match the local environment and will have to be maintained serviceable all the time.



Madanrao Patil
MLC



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MP



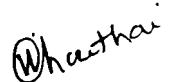
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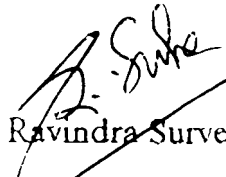
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