

**PETITION FILED WITH THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION/
MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT TO BAN THE USE OF
JEEPS AS PUBLIC TRANSPORT VEHICLES.**

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Ban on `Use of Jeeps as Public Transport Vehicles in view of the increasing casualties involving jeeps in road accidents – Petition filed on humanitarian grounds

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1. Background

1.1 The fact that almost everyday there is a fatal accident or two somewhere in the country is no secret. Infact this is a common feature in almost all daily newspapers and there are very few days in a year, where newspaper do not carry any news on accidents. Even this could perhaps be attributed to the late flow of information to the press. However, the fact that nearly 15-20% of the accidents involve jeeps is something which needs to be highlighted, especially in view of the fact that Jeeps have come to be used as Public Transport Vehicles, due to non-availability of adequate state transport services.

1.2 A sample survey of newsitems in two select Hindi dailies of Rajasthan was made related to jeep accidents in the months of June – August and the resultant picture was over nine reported jeep accidents resulting in 50 deaths and 46 grievous injuries.

1.2.1 Some illustrative incidents of road accidents involving jeeps on Highways, as reported is reproduced as below:

S.No	Newspaper and Date	District	Place of Accident	Deaths	Injuries
1.	R.P./02.05.01	Jodhpur	Sar-Sarecha village	4	3
2.	R.P./04.05.01	Chittor-garh	Arniyapanth village	4	3
3	R.P./05.05.01	Jaipur	Near Bassi	4	5
4.	D.B./07.05.01	Ajmer	Near Kharwa village	3	5
5.	R.P./10.07.01	Banswara	Near Varda Hamlet	4	4
6.	R.P./18.07.01	Sikar	Fatehpur near Asas BS	4	2
7	R.P./01.08.01	Dausa	Near Rashid-pur village	18	13
8.	D.B./25.08.01	Kota	Near Semalya	4	6
9.	D.B./25.08.01	Bharatpur	Near Deeg	5	5
	Total:			50	46

1.3 According to the above stated news reports regarding road accidents involving jeeps on National Highways, the casualties and injuries on an average are 6 and 5 respectively per accident. Similar is the ratio of casualties and injuries in such accidents, which represents that the number of casualties (loss of human lives) are more than the number of people who were injured.

1.4 This would present an alarming situation on making an assessment of the total number of such fatal accidents taking place in the State. This can be taken just an indicator, and not a conclusion, of the gravity and seriousness of the problem. The real picture may be somewhat different if the actual figures in totality are made available by the department.

2. An Overview

2.1 In the past ten years, the number of registered vehicles, road accidents vis-a-vis the casualties and injuries to people have created a history in the State, with 1999 recording an abnormally large number of accidents. An overview of the accidents in numbers, during the last 10 years is as below:

Year	Registered Vehicles	Accidents	Casualties	Injured
1991	11,72,592	11,043	3,718	12,281
1992	12,92,033	11,851	3,638	13,391
1993	14,09,061	12,756	3,821	15,194
1994	15,46,595	13,915	4,129	16,756
1995	17,20,990	16,610	4,863	20,504
1996	19,28,527	18,891	5,430	24,214
1997	21,46,741	19,879	5,620	25,639
1998	23,82,241	20,798	5,622	26,881
1999	26,47,979	21,132	6,010	26,545
2000	28,88,060	19,932	5,388	25,433

(R.P.08.04.01)

2.2 The percentage rise in the period of 5 years and 10 years i.e. in the year 1995 and 2000 respectively, in comparison to the figures of 1991, has been as given under: -

Year	Registered vehicles (%)	Accidents (%)	Casualties (%)	Injuries (%)
1995	146.72	150.0	130.8	167.0
2000	246.30	180.5	145.0	207.1

2.3 While there has been an 8% increase in accidents per year, the number of casualties and injuries have been increasing at the rate of 5% and 11% respectively.

2.4 Accidents in Jaipur City

2.4.1 With the objective to analyse data about number of accidents involving jeeps and assess the number of casualties and injuries thereof, the CUTS team collected the available information from 'Accident Thana–North and South Zone' of Jaipur City. The information is as follows: -

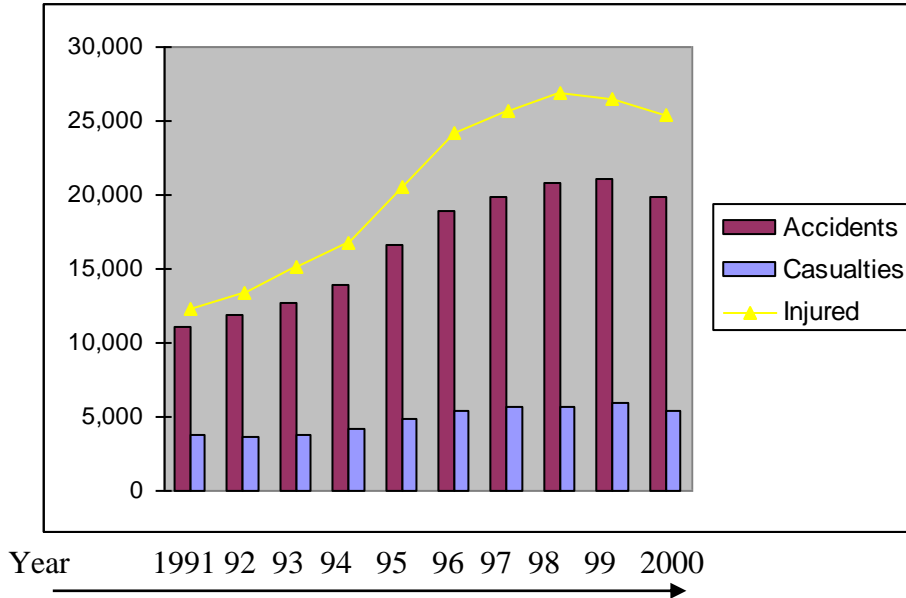
Accidents of Light Motor Vehicles (North Zone):

Year	Accidents	Casualties	Injuries
1998	136	12	176
1999	133	11	136
2000	195	11	196
2001(Upto July)	119	12	107

Accidents involving Jeeps (Jaipur City):

Year	Accidents	Casualties	Injuries
2000	191	19	173
2001(Upto July)	93	9	84
Total:	284	28	257

2.4.2 The above data gives an idea that the road accidents involving jeeps in Jaipur City are around 200 per year, the Casualties and Injuries ratio being 1:9 in these accidents. The percentage of number of casualties and injuries to number of accidents involving jeeps (in Jaipur City) is also around 10 percent and 90 percent respectively.



2.4.3 On an average, every year 565 persons meet with casualties (loss of human lives) while 5082 people get injured from road accidents involving jeeps, in the State, on the basis of the population figures of 2000 [Jaipur City =20.00 lakh, excluding Amer and Sanganer and State = 564.73 lakh].

2.4.4 The above figures may not represent the state scenario, but an inference drawn from the same indicate that accidents involving jeeps are responsible for about 25 percent of the total number of road accidents and around 10 percent of the total casualties per year in the state. Similarly, 20 percent of people injured in road accidents are injured due to jeep accidents every year, in the State.

3. Objections

3.1 Road accidents involving jeeps have been continuously on the rise since the use of jeeps as public transport vehicles, mainly on the National Highways. The non-availability of adequate number of Roadways buses, especially to cater the passengers for short distances coming from nearby villages/towns and suburbs, and the increased fare of buses has resulted in intensive use of jeeps as public transport vehicle.

3.2 Further, the non-availability of adequate public transport vehicles also result in their overcrowding, which is one of the factors leading to increase in accidents and make jeeps look unworthy of being a safe public carrier.

3.3 Furthermore, plying of jeeps from and to villages is proving to be a lucrative business, as this is the only mode of transport for the public. To make it more lucrative coupled with the fact that they need to charge less than the road transport fares, most jeep owners appoint unemployed youth as drivers, who have very little driving experience, no license and many cases, not even eligible for a driving licence at very low wages.

3.4 To make the jeeps accommodate more passengers, jeep owners tend to make some modifications in their vehicles, which may not have any said technical specifications. This leads to the

3.5 Furthermore, there is also the added problem of plying old and outdated jeeps, which are definitely not road worthy. Some of these jeeps are as good as something driven out of museums.

3.6 There is no doubt rules and regulations enacted by the state governments to prevent some of the above mentioned deeds, and many a time as a knee jerk reaction to these accidents, the Government sometimes takes action against overloaded jeep drivers and owners. For instance, just after the tragic jeep accident near Rashidpur (Dausa) on Alwar-Karauli Highway on 01.08.2001, Sh. R.K.Meena, Transport Commissioner, Govt. of Rajasthan, ordered to cease the registration of overloaded jeeps for four months, legal action against jeep owners and cancellation of driving license of jeep drivers in the event of an accident

3.7 Section 72 of the Motor Vehicle Act prohibits operation of commercial vehicles, such as jeeps, buses, trucks etc., older than 15 years. Transport department and traffic police rarely launch an operation for cancellation of permits of such vehicles and that too become eyewash. But, owners of these old vehicles have alternatives to save their skin from such actions. They suspend operation of these vehicles during the period of campaign and thrive for the same old routine thereafter. There are more than 1.5 lakh vehicles, which are older than 15 years.

3.8 Jeeps as public transport vehicles are more often than not used by the rural poor, many of them being bread earners – using the jeep to commute to their work place or markets to sell their produce. In many cases, women use jeeps to commute to the market place. In addition to the bread earners, another major users of jeeps are students – commuting from their homes to schools and colleges – future bread earners of their family. In many cases, families have come to roads due to the death of the bread earner or future bread earners in these jeep accidents.

3.8 The post accident scenario is also something which need immediate and urgent action and attention. After the accident takes place, there are no facilities available for quick evacuation of the victims of mishap, giving them first aid and medical relief on the spot of incident. Many times, the nearby villagers get immediately gathered at the spot of accident but they are helpless having no means of transport or communication leading to undue delays in providing a the succors rescue and relief. Due to non-availability of

mobile vans/ ambulances on the spot of accident, the chances of survival of badly injured victims get reduced after every fraction of second.

3.10 In view of the above, CUTS strongly recommends the ban of jeeps as public transport vehicles. However, an immediate ban would result in handicapping the rural masses by removing their only means of travel to market, school and colleges etc.

3.10.1 Hence, CUTS has come up with a series of recommendations, which it strongly advocate to be implemented in the short run, while efforts to ban jeeps as public transport vehicles would be as a long run measure.

3.10.2 The recommendations are as follows:

Short run

- Cancellation of registration of jeeps and other commercial vehicles older than 15 years;
- Validation of licenses and taking stern action against driving without license;
- Cancellation of permit of jeep owners for overloading;
- Legal action against drivers and owners of jeeps which met accident;
- Immediate measure to improve condition of road at the 'Black Spot';
- Availability of trauma hospital/ medical relief center within range of 20-25 Kms on the National Highway;
- Availability of one mobile van/ ambulance at every police station on the National Highway for immediate evacuation and medical relief;
- Sensitisation of private hospitals owners and medical practitioners towards the victims of road accident.
- Follow up of accident victims regarding medical aid and recovery
- Increase in public transport vehicles at an affordable fares
- Allow use of private vehicles – such as buses and mini vans to operate as public transport vehicles as they are more stable on roads, can take heavier loads and more rugged.

Long run Measure

- On successful implementation of the above recommendations, impose a complete ban on jeeps as public transport vehicles. This to be done over a period not longer than 1 year from the date of this petition.

3.11 All this is in complete government knowledge and despite this, it is a pity that government is considering private jeeps as an alternative to public transport vehicles in rural areas. This was discussed at the recently organised meeting of subcommittee of ministers, under the chairmanship of home minister Gulab Singh Shaktawat (*RP 20.08.01*). However, the final decision is yet to be taken.

4. Past Efforts in this direction

4.1 The Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS), a leading consumer organisation, based in Jaipur, and member of National Road Safety Council has been advocating the issue of road safety. It has emphasized the need to bring in stringent norms to ensure that jeeps are banned from operating as public transport vehicles. Further, CUTS has been involved not only in the identification of various road safety issues but also in getting appropriate implementation mechanism to ensure road safety.

4.2 Sensitive to the rising incidents of jeep accidents, CUTS had sent a letter to Sh. Chogaram Bakolia, the Minister of Transport way back in September 2000, requesting him to impose ban and take action against illegal use of jeeps as a public transport vehicle on the National Highways. But, no action in this connection appears to have been taken by the State Government as yet. On its contrary, there has been continuous increase in the number of jeep accidents operating as public transport vehicles on the Highways and resultant increase in the number of casualties too, as is evident from the data given above.

5. Prayer

CUTS humbly prays to the Human Rights Commission to take up the matter as a Human Rights Violation, in view of the increasing number of deaths and casualties caused by jeeps, which are more like killers on the road. CUTS also humbly prays to Ministry of Surface Transport to consider our request to ban the use of jeeps as illegal public transport vehicles and ensure proper implementation of the policy measures for road safety.

Annexures

1. News clippings
2. Press releases of CUTS
3. Correspondence
4. CUTS dossier on road safety
5. Road-Map of Jaipur city