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tourism

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
BENCH AT AURANGABAD

SUO MOTO PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION NO.13799 OF 2026

THE REGISTRAR (JUDICIAL), HIGH COURT OF BOMBAY,
BENCH AT AURANGABAD

VERSUS

THE STATE OF MAHARASHTRA AND OTHERS

...

Mr. A. A. Nimbalkar, Amicus Curiae

Mr. A. B. Girase, Government Pleader for State

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**CORAM : SMT. VIBHA KANKANWADI AND
AJIT B. KADETHANKAR, JJ.**

DATE : 04.05.2026

PER COURT :-

. Today, we have come across one another news item from *Daily Lokmat* and *Daily Divya Marathi*, wherein once again there is an attack of the honeybees on tourists who had gone to the world heritage Ellora in Taluka Khultabad, District Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. It has been reported that the incident took place on 03.05.2026, which is Sunday – day always used by the tourists to enjoy their holidays by visiting such monuments. It has been then reported that in the past, such attacks had occurred on tourists who had gone to see the Ajantha Caves, which is one of the world heritage sites near Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. The honeybees have attacked around 60 to 100 tourists and out of them, around 8 tourists were seriously injured. It has been

reported that the incident took place near Cave No.10 and when tourists started running to save themselves and went to Cave No.16, there also they were attacked. When such serious incidents are taking place, then there should have been a permanent solution.

2. We are taking note of the history which has been reported in the newspaper dated 28th April 2026 in *Daily Lokmat*, that the world heritage of Ajanta was discovered by one British Military Officer, Mr. John Smith, and on 28th April it completed 207 years of its discovery. The British Military Officer, Mr. John Smith, had gone to the jungles around Ajanta, and when he was chasing a tiger, he discovered the caves. The caves have world heritage status as it is discovered that they depict Buddhism and are the finest examples of carved culture. Since time immemorial, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar is identified with these two heritage sites, i.e., Ajanta and Ellora, and apart from that, it has its own other heritage sites, i.e., Devgiri Fort, Bibi Ka Maqbara, Panchakki, etc. All these heritage sites are attractive. Tourists not only from within India but also from across the world visit Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar to see the caves and other sites. The city is proud of its world heritage. But now, with the passage of time due to the non-availability of various facilities, the number of visitors is going down. The pride of Maharashtra for tourists is the

Deccan Odyssey. In the itinerary, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar is included, where even tourists should book tickets through the Deccan Odyssey and visit the city. Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar is also part of the “Buddhist Circuit” that connects important places all over the world. The Government should give more importance to tourism, especially where we have such treasures, and it is the livelihood of many persons connected to tourism. The report dated 28th April 2026 suggests that even the tour operators had given feedback in 2023, but the administration has not done anything in respect of the same. They had suggested increasing air connectivity particularly in the light of the “Buddhist Circuit”, providing e-buses in the vicinity of Ajanta, providing toilet facilities, and improving road conditions. We are aware that when the road between Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and Ajanta was under repairs, it took many months to complete, and the bad road condition had affected tourism. Now also, when the road condition appears to be better, still there are reports of traffic jams lasting for hours together, causing inconvenience to commuters, including tourists.

3. The Archaeological Department maintains both the world heritage sites as also the other heritage sites in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. If they had taken steps to address the problem, then such incidents would not

have occurred. Basically, it is not only one incident, but when it gets repeated, it is certainly going to affect the flow of tourists, and ultimately many persons may lose their livelihood who are dependent upon tourism and tourism-related activities. It includes hotel owners, transport operators, and even small vendors nearby.

4. The news item also gives the opinion of an expert that the honeycombs should be shifted by an expert to a different place; there should be restrictions on the use of perfume and bright-coloured clothes; and there should also be restrictions on the behavior of tourists in the form of shouting and whistling. These restrictions, if approved by the Expert Committee, may be imposed. The tourists could even be subjected to sensitization and awareness on modalities to be observed at such places. However, when it comes to such attacks, at least they can be avoided. When such things are happening repeatedly, we are concerned and take cognizance of the same.

5. The long traffic jams will have to be curbed and when repeatedly news in respect of the same appears in the newspaper, then it is the bounden duty upon the respective officers, including the police officers, to make a permanent arrangement so that any problem that arises is addressed within a few minutes. We would consider all these factors when we will take up the

matters finally. However, at this stage, we want to give certain directions before we invite the various departments.

6. We appoint Mr. A. A. Nimbalkar as Amicus Curiae, and he may also engage Senior Counsel Mr. P. R. Katneshwarkar to assist us. Registry is directed to supply the copies of the newspaper cuttings to the Amicus Curiae. Amicus Curiae to prepare the petition and file it on or before 10.06.2026. We suggest Amicus Curiae to add, apart from the State Government and the Central Government, the Archaeological Department and the Ministry of Environment as party respondents so also to add the Collector, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Collector Jalgaon, District Superintendent of Police (Rural), Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, District Superintendent of Police, Jalgaon, Public Works Department Officers, Department of Tourism and Forest Department as party respondents, or any other related departments.

7. As a stop-gap arrangement, we direct the District Superintendent of Police (Rural), Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, as well as the District Superintendent of Police, Jalgaon, to deploy requisite police force in the Ajantha Ghat section and also to deploy a crane 24/7 and to regulate the traffic without interruption until further orders.

8. Stand over to 16.06.2026.
9. Parties to act upon an authenticated copy of this order.

(AJIT B. KADETHANKAR, J.)

(SMT. VIBHA KANKANWADI, J.)

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