PART III

PROBLEMS AND PLANNING

CHAPTER X  TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS

CHAPTER XI  SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF TRANSPORT NETWORK
CHAPTER X

TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS

In light of the different features of transportation at various levels their shortcomings and weaknesses, an attempt can be made towards the sound planning of transport system in the state. For the purpose, it is necessary to identify the specific problems pertaining to the different means of transport, based on which an integrated plan can be taken up to make the transport network an important aspect in socio-economic transformation of Manipur.

PROBLEMS OF REGIONAL TRANSPORT

Road Transport

The variety in relief and climate and the resultant cultural pattern in Manipur necessitate a careful planning of the various means of transport and communication for the cultural and emotional integration of the people for streamlining the State's economy. The problems of road transport may be summed up as follows.
(i) **Inaccessibility**: In this hilly isolated state, roads are the only effective means of transport which bring the isolated places, people and goods in close contact with each other and the world at large. As seen in Chapter V, the accessibility is limited to a few places especially in the plain district of Imphal, Thoubal and Bishnupur. Away from the main towns, inaccessibility increases rapidly because of varied relief as well as dense growth of forests. In the plains too inaccessibility exists in rural areas. In the remote hilly areas, e.g. the eastern part of Ukhrul district, south-eastern part of Chandel, northern and south-western part of Churachandpur, north-western part of Tamenglong and north-western part of Senapati districts. In the centre state, the inaccessibility is the highest in Ukhrul district, followed by Tamenglong and Chandel districts. These areas are to be made accessible by extending roads to the unserved areas.

(ii) **Poor surface condition of roads and lack of bridges**: The surface condition of roads in Manipur, both in the plains and hills, is sub-standard with
no requisite crust thickness. Hence, these roads are of limited use in the hills, while in the plains, these are quickly broken and torn due to frequent traffic of varied volume and density. Only the NH No.39, Imphal-Dimapur Road, has the required breadth and thickness, though not up to the standard. The State Highways and major district roads are single-lane structures, which earlier were inter-village roads, now converted to their present status of State Highways and major district roads simply by resurfacing and black-topping.

Hence, these roads are of limited use to heavy traffic. Most of these roads have bridges, mainly wooden structures, which are too narrow and too weak to allow vehicular traffic.

(iii) **Topography and Drainage:** Terrain and the river system play important roles in road transportation in Manipur. About 90% of the total geographical area of the state is hilly. Construction of roads in these hills with high and steep topography is not
an easy task. The existing roads are slid away from the mountain walls or depressed frequently due to landslides and solifluction during the rainy season. As construction of bridges on stream and rivers in the hills is difficult and expensive. Hence, traffic along these roads are blocked frequently. Similarly, the road traffic in the plains especially in depressed regions too get blocked due to frequent floods of both natural and artificial character. These frequent floods are naturally due to (1) heavy rainfall both in the upper and middle courses of the rivers, (2) excessive soil erosion due to deforestation in the hills leading to rise of river beds and overflow, (3) lack of strong river embankments, (4) lack of technical know-how to control the river water at dam sites, 5) waterlogging due to narrow outlet in the thickly built up areas and deposition of heavy wastages along the drainage. These factors singly or in combination lead to frequent floods in and around Imphal and in the plains. Besides blocking the traffic-flow, floods affect the condition of roads which develop
cracks and depression during the rains. In the hills, the swift-flowing streams sweep away not the bridges but also the roads, adding problems for road transport.

(iv) *Co-existence of Traffic*: Co-existence of various traffic on the roads in Manipur is not new. It is a common feature. There is no specification for different modes of transportation except in some parts of Imphal along the NH-39. On all other roads, from pedlars to fast moving vehicles, co-exist on the same road, creating obstruction to the fast-moving vehicles.

(v) *Organisational Problems*: There is lack of co-operation among the various agencies of road transport viz., Public Works Department (PWD), Police Department, State Transport Authority, and Town Planning Department etc. The P.W.D. authorities construct and maintain the roads and bridges, but the private and public operators take no care for the upkeep of the roads and bridges. Motor Vehicles Department (the licencing authority), checking the vehicles enroute, also takes little
care of the overload of the passenger or goods vehicles, which finally lead to rapid breakage of sub-standard road surfaces and breakdown of bridges. The Traffic Controlling Police also shows indifference to the overloaded vehicles sometimes. However, the Police Department have started taking up legal action against the wrong traffic and encroachers on public roads and streets, which hamper the free flow of traffic to some extent, and cause accidents (Map 43).

(vi) **Statutory Problems:** The free operation of motor vehicles is much restricted in Manipur. The state, which is far from the railheads at Dimapur and Silchar on North-East Frontier Railway, has to depend fully on road transportation. Again, the state's vehicles are to cross the territories of Nagaland and Assam. The amount of tax to be paid also differs from state to state. For getting inter-state service permits, the operators are required to pay taxes to several states. It discourages private and public operators for such inter-state services.
River Transport

The problem of river transport in Manipur is the lack of navigable water channels. Earlier the transportation of both men and materials were through the rivers by small boats, which served as ferry services. With construction of bridges across the rivers, the remote villages have come closer to the urban centres and river water transport in Manipur has declined except in the neighbourhood of the Loktak lake and in Jiribam area.

Even the island villages in the Loktak Lake are now connected by road, and water transport even in the lake area has declined to some extent. But in Jiribam area along the Jiri River, the water transport is still flourishing irrespective of good road links connecting Manipur with Assam. The rail link is also being extended to Jiribam from Silchar. However, the transportation along the Jiri river also sometime faces some problems sometimes, such as:

1. Navigational Difficulties: The water of river
River Transport

The problem of river transport in Manipur is the lack of navigable water channels. Earlier the transportation of both men and materials were through the rivers by small boats, which served as ferry services. With construction of bridges across the rivers, the remote villages have come closer to the urban centres and river water transport in Manipur has declined except in the neighbourhood of the Loktak lake and in Jiribam area.

Even the island villages in the Loktak Lake are now connected by road, and water transport even in the lake area has declined to some extent. But in Jiribam area along the Jiri River, the water transport is still flourishing irrespective of good road links connecting Manipur with Assam. The rail link is also being extended to Jiribam from Silchar. However, the transportation along the Jiri river also sometime faces some problems sometimes, such as:

(i) **Navigational Difficulties**: The water of river
Jiri fluctuates seasonally, hence only small boats of about 10 persons capacity or 6 to 8 quintals weight capacity are plying for transportation of goods and passengers from different villages along the river to Jiribam town. Above all, the river is not big enough to allow bigger boats. But bamboo and wood are transported frequently.

(ii) Inadequacy of Traffic: Since the construction of bridges and roads, traffic along the river has declined to a great extent. Moreover, river transport takes more time and less volume. Parallel construction of the roads has also taken away part of the traffic from the river navigation.

(iii) Lack of Suitable Organisation: The state lacks organisation for water transportation for her rivers and lakes. Operation of freight traffic is done by individual owners. Lack of Government's initiative in developing water transport is also responsible for poor state of river and lake navigation.

Air Transport

Next to road transport, air transport is the
only means to connect Manipur with other states of the country. During the rainy season the NH-39 and NH-53, the lifelines of Manipur, are often blocked due to heavy and mass landslides in the hills. Hence, movement of both passengers and goods traffic is hampered. People, therefore, have to move by air. The air transport also has some common problems:

(i) **Higher Freight**: In a backward economy like Manipur people are generally unable to pay the high air freights. Only the businessmen, high income group people and students (due to concessional fares for them) are able to utilize the comfort of air transport at a high rate.

(ii) **Frequent Cancellation of Air Services**: During the rainy season, air transport is sometime disturbed and even cancelled for many days due to heavy rains and overcast sky. Similarly, during the winter season due to intense fog and poor visibility air services are delayed and disturbed.

(iii) **Lack of Facilities at the Airport**: Unlike the other airports in other states, facilities in Imphal Airport is quite desolate to look at (i) The runway is not well
equipped for proper landing both during the day and night. (ii) The runway is not enough for landing of bigger aircrafts like Airbus etc.

PROBLEMS OF URBAN TRANSPORT

GENERAL PROBLEMS

The problems of intra-city transport at Imphal include the heavy traffic congestion along all radial and intra-city roads. This is due to (i) limited width of existing roads, (ii) frequent encroachment and unauthorised occupation along the roadsides, (iii) lack of well-classified system of roads, (iv) co-existence of traffic (v) lack of proper classified parking spaces for different types of vehicles and traffic, (vi) flash-flood during the rainy season, leading to traffic congestion as well as breakage of roads, (vii) lack of by-pass roads, (viii) Narrowness of bridges and lack of bridges especially over Nambul and Naga rivers, (ix) Lack of supervision by the authorities like P.W.D. and Traffic Control Police and Municipality Board in maintaining/upkeep of the roads. The roads and by-lanes sometimes are full of goods and other materials, and animals
like cows, and bullocks, which not only create traffic hazards but also create frequent accidents to both fast and slow moving vehicles and pedestrians too, (x) Lower height of power and telephone lines along and across the roads, (xi) lack of initiative on parts of the PWD, Forest Department and Municipal Board to replace the aged and dead trees from the road sides, which frequently fall over the roads creating traffic blockade besides taking lives of both men and animals, (xii) lack of proper transport organisations so as to provide efficient transport service to special peak hour traffic.

**Specific Problems**: All the above mentioned factors are not the causes of traffic congestion in other towns of Manipur, as most of them are developed under proper planning schemes by the Town Planning Department. The original streets and roads at Imphal were laid for different types of conveyances and for a small population. They have now became outdated and too crowded, and widening of roads and removing the buildings from the road sides is almost a big problem.

In Churachandpur, the main problems of transportation and traffic are (i) lack of proper parking spaces, (ii) construction of few new approach roads to
different villages and (iii) widening and improving the existing approach roads.

In Kakching also, main problems are (i) improving and widening of the existing approach roads to Pallel, Langmeidong, Irengbam, Sugnu etc., (ii) improvement of bye pass roads and circular road around Mahadev hill, (iii) development of bus terminals etc.

At Chandel town also, the main problems are (1) improvement of Chandel-Sugnu Road, Chandel-Workmu Road, Lawbung and Mantri Pantha approach roads, (2) development of ring road, (3) development of parking places etc.

The transport problems of other towns include the lack of construction and improvement of bye-pass roads and approach roads, parking spaces etc.

Problems of Rural Transport

The outstanding problem of rural transport in Manipur is the lack of improved surfaced roads with bridges over the rivers to enable the rural traffic to
traverse longer distances throughout the year. The problem in the rural tracts differ from region to region due to varied physical features. It is more so in the hill areas due to inhospitable terrain. Since there are numerous streams in the hills, construction of good bridges is not an easy task. Due to climatic and physiographic variations, construction of surface roads is also a problem. In the plain areas in the dry season, the dusty surface of inter-village roads poses problems for the rural transportation. Lack of bridges and culverts make the rural transportation in Manipur less effective and problematic.
REFERENCES