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MINUTES OF THE STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATE/SUPPLEMENTARY SEA ROUTE TO BARATANG ISLAND IN A & N ISLANDS HELD ON 25.8.2014 UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF SECRETARY (SHIPPING).

The Standing Finance Committee (SFC) in Ministry of Shipping met for recommending the proposal regarding "Development of Alternate Sea Route from Port Blair to Baratang Island in A & N Islands" on 25.8.2014 under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Shipping) in Transport Bhawan, New Delhi. List of attendees are annexed.

2. Background of the Proposal: -

Baratang is one of the Islands between Middle Andaman and South Andaman Islands, at about 80 Km (Aerial distance) from Port Blair. About 360 km long National Highway No. 223, popularly known as Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) connecting Port Blair to Diglipur, passes through the Baratang and also through Jarawa Biosphere Reserve. Some of the tourist spots such as Mud Volcano, Lime stone caves etc. are situated in Baratang Islands, for which tourist inflow is quite good. However, rush of tourists, local residents and transport of goods, through ATR creates discomfort to the Jarawas, an aboriginal tribes inhabiting the area. The Jarawa is one of the primitive tribes of Andaman Island having Negroid origin with a total population of merely 300. Because of vehicular traffic through ATR, sustenance of Jarawa life is considered to be under danger. Accordingly, Hon'ble Supreme Court directed to find measures to close the ATR partly and explore/opening of alternate routes. On Jan 22, 2013, the Apex Court has ordered complete stoppage of vehicles through the stretch except Government vehicles. Later on Hon'ble Supreme Court of India gave interim relief to continue with regulated traffic and explore alternatives. After completion of this project tourist traffic and also regular local traffic shall use sea transport between Port Blair and Baratang. Thereby reducing traffic used on Jarawa Biosphere Reserve.

3. The SFC note was circulated for comments to the Planning Commission, Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Environment & Forest and Ministry of Home Affairs. The Ministry of Home Affairs has issued no objection and Department of Expenditure has not offered any comment except the provision of delegation of power with regard to the SFC may be followed. The Ministry of Environment & Forest has not replied anything with regard to the proposal whereas Planning Commission have following comments on the proposal.

(i) Since the infrastructure creation is mainly for tourists, cost of building a jetty could be borne by a private player on BOT type of model with bidding parameter being revenue share. The project could be self-sustaining or even generate a surplus for the UT.