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there was a shortage of passenger capacity for inter-island transport. He suggested that vessels with faster speeds may be procured and that existing vessels with idle cargo capacity may be converted to increased passenger capacity. It was agreed that proposals in this regard would be considered.

(Action: Chief Secretary, A & N Administration)

30. Minister of Shipping felt that there was a need to encourage private shipping, and that rather than directly spending on procurement and running of ships, the Administration may consider giving an equivalent subsidy to private shipping lines for performing delivery of the required transportation services. Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission supported this view and felt that preference should be to take ships on lease. Lt. Governor, A & N Islands felt that in the matter of purchase of ships, they should be allowed to directly give orders to foreign shipyards in view of the delays experienced in domestic shipyards.

31. The Minister of Labour agreed to consider opening a vocational institute for skill development to address the specific skill requirements of the Islands.

(Action: Secretary, Ministry of Labour)

32. Member of Parliament, A & N Islands proposed that ships going to Kolkata should be able to load and unload at the Jetty at Mayabunder. Technical difficulties in this regard were mentioned by the Administration. It was decided that the matter would be referred for decision to the Minister for Shipping, who would give appropriate directions, taking into account various considerations.

(Action: Chief Secretary, A&N Administration)

33. Member of Parliament, A & N Islands suggested that the Andaman Trunk Road be upgraded to a national highway. Following discussions, it was decided that keeping in view the Supreme Court order on the subject, this would not be possible.

34. Member of Parliament, A & N Islands felt that a private Consultant may be retained to consider the issue of whether air services would be cost-effective in relation to shipping services for transportation of islanders to the mainland. In view of the fact that there already exists a Task Force on Development Strategy to Project Traffic Demand, which is seized of this and other related issues, it was decided that this may be sorted out by the Task Force.

35. Regarding information and broadcasting facilities, Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting mentioned that a proposal of Rs. 50 crores for strengthening of transmission network in the Islands was