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(Action : Department of Agriculture & Cooperation and A& N Admn.)

16. Minister of Shipping assured that the 700 passenger vessel under construction at HSL Vishakapatnam would be delivered by August 2007.

(Action : Department of Shipping)

17. Minister of State for Environment and Forests stated that 91% of the land area in ANI is forest and tribal land and A&N Administration is to move the Supreme Court if it needs land for development purposes.

(Action : A& N Admn.)

18. Defence Minister highlighted the strategic importance of the Andaman Islands which are closer to South East Asia than to mainland. He agreed to extend all support for the development of the islands.

19. Minister of Tribal Affairs stated that the Jarawas, Shompens, Ongese, Great Andamanese and Sentinelese belong to the country's natural heritage. Their population is dwindling and all measures would be taken up to protect them.

(Action : Ministry of Tribal Affairs)

20. Dr. Syeda Hameed, Member Planning Commission informed that she had visited Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands which offer sustenance and are a microcosm of Indian society. She highlighted the acute scarcity of drinking water in Port Blair, the slow progress in implementation of projects to resolve the problem and rain water harvesting. She felt that the influx of population in ANI was far in excess of the carrying capacity and was adding to the problem of drinking water and disposal of sewage. Lakshadweep had restrictions on entry of people but no such provisions existed in ANI. She suggested that larger incentives were needed to attract doctors to serve in the island territories.

(Action : Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health)

21. Prime Minister stated that useful discussions had been held today. He asked the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission to resolve the problems of the island territories during meetings of the Standing Committee of IDA. He issued the following specific directions.

i) Cabinet Secretary to monitor every quarter, all inter-ministerial issues by ensuring accountability.

(Action : Cabinet Secretariat)

ii) Cabinet Secretary and MHA to finalize the Cabinet Note to address the influx issues in ANI within two months.

(Action : Ministry of Home Affairs and Cabinet Secretariat)