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Civil Aviation

27. Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation informed that the two issues are related to A&N viz. (a) Declaration of Port Blair as an international airport: and (b) Purchase of helicopters / aircrafts. On (a) views of two or three Ministries are awaited and a decision is expected to be taken in the next two months. The A & N Administration has asked for two Dhruv helicopters and two Dornier aircrafts. He recalled that MoD was willing to place the helicopters in the islands. As regards aircrafts, he suggested that the A & N Administration may authorize the Ministry of Civil Aviation to make the purchases so that issues related to technical specification and procurement procedures are addressed suitably. He felt that maintenance and repair facility may also be tendered alongwith the purchase of aircraft.

28. Chief Secretary, clarified that at a meeting taken by the Home Minister, the representative of Ministry of Defence was not inclined to purchase the helicopters due to non-availability of pilots and night flying capability is needed in ANI.

29. Principal Adviser indicated that a Technical committee has been set up in Ministry of Civil Aviation to resolve the problem of purchase of aircrafts and helicopters. After the technical specifications are firmed up, the DGCA or Pawan Hans may be authorized by the SFC to purchase the aircraft. She stated that funds would be made available for purchase of aircrafts and their maintenance. It was decided that purchase of aircrafts/helicopters for A&N would be monitored by Ministry of Civil Aviation.

*(Action : Ministry of Civil Aviation)*

30. Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, informed that improvements in connectivity and air strips are two issues related to Lakshadweep. Encouraging private airlines to cover these islands is being dealt with in the proposed new Civil Aviation Policy expected to be presented to the Cabinet for approval. Airports Authority of India (AAI) is looking into the issue of additional airstrips and their extension and will come up with an action plan once the study on technical specifications in the islands is completed.

*(Action: Ministry of Civil Aviation)*

Telecommunication

31. Deputy Director General, Department of Telecommunication (DoT), informed that diverting the cable from Chennai to Singapore via Port Blair is estimated to cost around Rs.200 crore extra and the exact amount needed as budgetary support is expected to be available by the end of May 2006. Thereafter DoT would approach Ministry of Finance and Planning Commission for budgetary support.

*(Action: Department of Telecom)*