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# The Daily Telegrams

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INR / 1 Euro : 73.8119	S&P CNX Nifty : 7868.50*
INR / 100 YEN : 54.9200	* as on previous day
INR / 1 GBP : 100.3168	<b>Bullion Rate</b>
	22ct Gold per 10 gram 25220
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## Brain drain can become brain gain: PM

San Jose, Sept. 28  
 Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today said that the 21st century is India's century and attributed the sudden change in India's fortune to the commitment, strength and pledge of the 125 crore people of the country.

"For some time now, people are saying that the 21st century is India's century," Shri Modi thundered in an address to a strong crowd of 18,500 Indian-Americans at the SAP Center in San Jose, which is the hub of Silicon Valley. Asserting that he is giving every minute of his life in the service of the nation, Shri Modi said he would live and die for the country. Shri Modi said that in the past 16 months, world's



perception about India has changed dramatically. The world is looking at India with a new vision and aspiration.

He attributed this change to the commitment, strength and pledge of the 125 crore people of the country.

Shri Modi said he is

confident of India's success because 65 per cent of the population of the country are of less than 35 years - 800 million. "I can tell you with confidence that this country will not remain behind," he said during his speech, which was marked with several

round of thunderous applause. Shri Modi said India is in a strong position today.

In just 15 months, India has scaled new height, has attained economic stability. In the past six months almost all rating agencies have said in one voice that India is the fastest growing economy in large countries, he said.

Prime Minister Shri Modi said that no one ever thought that brain drain can become brain gain. This is actually brain deposit," he asserted, adding that it would serve its motherland at an appropriate time. "Now it is the time that every Indian can show people their strength," he said in his hour-long speech.

## Modi Government's Rs 10,000 crore plan to transform Andaman and Nicobar Islands

New Delhi, Sept 28

India has drawn up an ambitious, Rs 10,000 crore plan to transform the Andaman and Nicobar Islands into the country's first maritime hub, taking advantage of its strategic location and making it the base for infrastructure that will include an expanded dry dock and ship repair industry in the capital Port Blair. The Narendra Modi government has readied a blueprint of the plan that also entails protection of the original Jarawa inhabitants while boosting the tourism potential of locations such as limestone caves and mud volcanoes.

"Plans for the projects that are to be undertaken over the next two years have already been formulated," Shipping Minister, Shri Nitin Gadkari told 'The Economic Times'. "Action is being initiated." Projects that entail an investment of Rs 2,000 crore have been sanctioned and work on the rest of the programme will start soon.

The Shipping Ministry has prepared a 15-year perspective plan for the development of shipping and port infrastructure on the islands, which are home to India's eastern and southern tips, putting them within close distance of an international shipping route. Apart from ship repairs, the plan includes the development of port infrastructure, the acquisition of vessels to run mainland-island services, the purchase of tugs for safe berthing and sprucing up docking capacity.

"Andaman is a very sensitive zone. So, all these projects

will have to be undertaken after assessing the impact on environment," said a senior government official. "Tribal areas and tourist areas would be bifurcated. We are creating sea routes so that these areas are not disturbed."

Over the past decades, the Jarawa indigenous peoples have been hit by the arrival of settlers from elsewhere in India and the limited development that has taken place, especially the construction of the Andaman Trunk Road and the rise in tourism. As is typical in such instances, this has meant the spread of disease among the Jarawa, sexual and other forms of abuse by outsiders, incursions into their territory and rampant poaching. Campaigners have demanded that the government shut the trunk road and that there should be no forcible attempts to 'mainstream' them.

To be sure, the islands are a big tourist draw because the pristine waters make it ideal for diving. To promote the area as a destination, the government has sanctioned a Rs 50 crore project on the development of a sea route from Port Blair to Baratang, one of the islands and home to the mud volcanoes. The project is being implemented by Andaman Lakshadweep Harbour Works and will be completed by October 2017. To augment the dry docking capacity in Port Blair, the existing

(Contd. on last page)

## India's 1st dedicated astronomy research satellite 'Astrosat' launched successfully

Sriharikota, Sept 28

India's first dedicated astronomy research satellite Astrosat has been successfully launched this morning. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C30 blasted off from the first launch pad of Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota at 10 am and inserted it within 22 minutes, 52 seconds into the low earth, equatorial orbit of 650 kilometre height. The 1531 kilogram satellite has a planned lifespan of five years. With the launch, India has joined a select league of nations having their observatories in space. ISRO



says, Astrosat has the ability to observe various celestial objects in different wavelengths simultaneously, giving it an edge over its peers. The rocket PSLV-C30 in its extended version also positioned six small satellites

of foreign customers from the US, Canada and Indonesia into their orbits. This marks the first commercial launch of US payloads from India. ISRO has been launching mostly application oriented

(Contd. on last page)

## International Day of the Elderly to be observed on Oct.1; befitting progs. chalked out

Port Blair, Sept. 28

Every year, October 1 is celebrated all over the world as International Day of the Elderly. The basic idea behind these celebrations is to recognize the services rendered by the senior citizens, to sensitize the society at large about the problems and needs of the older persons, and to reiterate the government's

commitment towards the cause of the elderly.

The Department of Social Welfare will celebrate the occasion in a befitting manner in collaboration with Directorate of Health Services and PRIs. To mark the occasion, a health camp will be organized at Old Age Home, Ferrargunj from 9 am to 12 noon followed by cultural programme. Similar

programmes will also be organized by the respective CDPOs in their jurisdiction throughout this UT.

The senior citizens of Andaman & Nicobar Islands have been requested to participate in the celebration of Elderly Day on 1st October, 2015 at Old Age Home, Ferrargunj, a communication from the Director (Social Welfare) said here today.

## Frequency of chartered flights increased; to operate on Wednesdays

Port Blair, Sept. 28

Air India has confirmed to operate increased frequency of chartered flights on Chennai-Port Blair-Chennai Sector on every Wednesdays (maximum 4 flights per month) from October to December 2015. As per the schedule, the services will be available on Oct. 7, Oct. 14, Oct. 21, Oct. 28, Nov. 4, Nov. 11, Nov. 18, Nov. 25, Dec. 2, Dec. 9, Dec. 16 & Dec. 23, 2015.

Further, the cost of tickets for the Islanders and for Non-Islanders for travelling on these dates during peak season (October to December 2015) has been revised. Accordingly, the fare for Islanders will be Rs. 5000/- (one way) while it will

be Rs.9000/- (one way) for non-Islanders.

The passengers intending to travel from Port Blair to Chennai and from Chennai to Port Blair on above flights can book their tickets in advance at the Inter-Island Helicopter terminal, VIP Road, Port Blair between 9 am to 4 pm on all working

days from 30th September, 2015 onwards. Tickets for sector Chennai to Port Blair can also be booked at the Directorate of Shipping Services counter at Chennai, No.5 Rajaji Salai, near custom House, Chennai, a communication from the Dy. Director, Civil Aviation said here today.

## Election to Office of ZPSA Adhyaksha on Sept. 30

Port Blair, Sept. 28

A meeting of all the newly elected Members of South Andaman Zilla Parishad will be held at 3 pm on Sept. 30 in the Conference Hall of the Zilla Parishad, South Andaman for administering for the Oath of Office to the newly elected members. Thereafter election to the Office of the Adhyaksha and U p - A d h y a k s h a / U p - Adhyaksha for the 1st year

term of South Andaman Zilla Parishad commencing from Oct. 11, 2015 will be held. The seat for the office of the Adhyaksha for the 1st and 3rd year of South Andaman Zilla Parishad shall be reserved for women and for 5th year in favour of a member, if any belonging to the Scheduled Tribes, a communication from the Dy. Commissioner, South Andaman said.

## DSW to launch campaign against drug abuse

Port Blair, Sept. 28

The Directorate of Social Welfare, A&N Administration will launch an awareness campaign on 'Ill-effects of Drug Abuse & Alcoholism' w.e.f. 3rd October, 2015 in various schools, colleges and community centres to educate the students of the schools, colleges and society too. The

Resource Person from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Port Blair will focus the views and various issues on its impact on the Society.

The Department will continue such programme on regular basis in all other Islands, a communication from the Programme Officer (ICDS) said here today.

## ANC conducts disaster relief exercise at all stations

Port Blair, Sept. 28

HQ Andaman & Nicobar Command has commenced full scale Disaster Relief Exercise today. To be conducted over a period of two days, this exercise will encompass movement of Army columns, and MARCOS with various

types of search, rescue and disaster relief equipment. Apart from move over land, the troops will also be transported by ships and aircraft.

A plethora of simulated emergencies including collapse of buildings, damage to roads,

power outages, disruption of water supply, capsizing of boats, rescue of personnel at sea will be practiced at various places, including outlying units such as Diglipur, Shibpur, Hut Bay, Kamorta and Campbell Bay. Assets of all components of ANC will be employed to respond to emerging situations. Prior to this annual exercise, a theoretical 'Table -Top' exercise has already been conducted.

(Contd. on last page)

## EPFO to organise 'PF Near You' on October 12

Port Blair, Sept. 28

The Employment Provident Fund Organisation here will be organising 'Nidhi Aapke Nikat' or 'PF Near You' on October 12, 2015 to redress grievances of its stakeholders viz. employees/subscribers, trade unions and employers' association. The objective of the programme is not only to redress the grievances but also invite suggestions from various stakeholders and enable employers to vent their grievances, if any, and sensitize the stakeholders at large about the multitude of

new initiative taken in their interest by the Organization.

This programme will be held in the Sub-Regional Office, Employee Provident Fund Organisation, Supply Line, Port Blair on October 12, 2015. For effective conduct of Nidhi Aapke Nikat programme, specific time slots are allotted to various stakeholders, which are subscribers/members from 10 am to 1 pm and employers from 3 pm to 4 pm, a communication from the Accounts Officer/OIC, SRO, Port Blair said.

## 'Green Consumers Day 2015' observed by ANCOL



Port Blair, Sept. 28

ANCOL Eco Club of Andaman College, Port Blair observed 'Green Consumers Day 2015' today. The theme selected by the Eco Club for this year was 'Consumerism: Be Green Conscious'. Various programmes were conducted to observe the day in a

meaningful manner.

Earlier, Principal of the College, Dr R Dev Das highlighted on the importance of the observance of the day. He stressed on the point that this global celebration highlights the problems of consumerism

(Contd. on last page)

## No Public Hearing at Raj Niwas

Port Blair, Sept. 28

There will be no public hearing by the Lt Governor at Raj Niwas on 29.09.2015, an official communication said.

## Nation celebrates 108th birth anniversary of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh

Chandigarh, Sept. 28

The Nation celebrated the 108th birth anniversary of the great son of the soil, Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh, today. He was born this day in 1907. Many functions were organised by various organisations across the country to remember him. In Punjab, a special function was held at his native village Khatkar Kalan in Shaheed Bhagat Singh

Nagar district. People also visited National Martyrs Memorial at Hussainiwala in Ferozepur.

As a tribute to the martyr, his village Khatkar Kalan was included under Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojna, today. Union Rural Development Minister Shri Chaudhary Birender Singh who reached at the village announced the inclusion. He paid tributes at the statue.

## Meeting on IRS certification of boats on Sept. 29

Port Blair, Sept. 28

Pursuant to the meeting held in the Ministry of Shipping, Delhi on Sept. 3, 2015, the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS), Mumbai has decided to place a team of Naval Architects headed by Shri Ramiz Ismail at Port Blair to facilitate the speedy IRS certification of pending FRP/ OBM boats & Decked Boats (bigger vessels).

In this regard a meeting has been convened in the conference hall of IP & T building at 4 pm on Sept. 29, 2015. All Presidents of FRP/ OBM boats and Deck Boats (bigger vessels) along with their Naval Architects/ consultants have been requested to attend the said meeting, a communication from the Director (Tourism) said here today.

## Floating restaurant to be operated from 3rd October

Port Blair, Sept. 28

As like previous year, this year too, M.V. Panchawati will be operated as floating restaurant as a special tourist attraction by ANIIDCO in association with Directorate of Shipping Services. Accordingly, floating restaurant will be in operation during this tourist season from 3rd October 2015. The floating restaurant will be operated as evening cruise from 5 pm to 6.30 pm and 7 pm to 8.30 pm from Junglight jetty. Entry ticket will be Rs. 500/- for adult and Rs. 350/- for children upto 12 years inclusive of all taxes. The entry ticket price would include one hour evening cruise and live band. Snacks, beverages, liquor and packed dinner shall be available on

extra payment. Special rate shall be offered to the islanders.

All travel agents and hoteliers are requested to promote floating restaurant which will be additional tourist attraction for evening cruise. The tickets will be available on sale from Megapode Resort, ANIIDCO petrol pump, Goalghar, IMFL Self Service Shop, Delanipur and Air Ticketing unit, Vikas Bhawan, Port Blair.

## Heavy rain forecast

Port Blair, Sept. 28

Heavy rain (07-12 cm) may occur at isolated places over Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a communication from the Meteorological Office, Shadipur said here today.

**SPORTS**

**PCB should resolve reservations of Indian board: Rajiv Shukla**

Karachi, Sept 28  
Ruling out any chances whatsoever of an Indo-Pak series in December, senior Indian cricket official Rajiv Shukla has said he would like to see both countries resume cricketing ties but only after Pakistan have resolved "some issues and reservations" of the BCCI. Shukla, who is presently Chairman of the Indian Premier League, also dismissed claims by PCB Chairman Shaharyar Khan that India must honour the MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) signed between the two boards last year. "You ask Shaharyar Khan details about the MoU and whether conditions set in it are being met at the moment to play any bilateral series," Shukla said on Saturday night. He also ruled out any chances of the two boards resuming bilateral ties in December. "That is not happening because of the existing situation and secondly we first need to get clearance from our government for the series and then ask PCB to also first resolve some reservations and issues that we have," he said. Shukla said whenever the series is held, India would first like

Pakistan to resolve these issues but didn't elaborate on them. Meanwhile Shaharyar told the media this week that a boycott of matches against India in ICC and ACC events was an option if the Indian board officially refused to play the planned series against Pakistan in December. In a hard-hitting statement Shaharyar, a retired career diplomat, said it was disappointing that until now the BCCI had not even sought permission for the December series from the concerned ministry in India. "Nothing is final or decided as yet but if the Indian board officially backs out of the series than we have the option of boycotting all matches against them in ICC

and ACC events as well," he said in the interview. Shukla said that if Pakistan took the decision of boycotting India in international events then the ICC had laws to deal with such a situation. India have avoided playing against Pakistan since 2007, the last time the two countries played a proper bilateral test series. Shukla said he would like to see both countries play cricket but only when the situation was normal and relations improved. "Right now no team is willing to tour Pakistan because of the security situation there." Due to the Eid holidays since Thursday there has been no reaction from the PCB on Shukla's statements.

**'Formidable' South African cricket team arrives in Delhi**



New Delhi, Sept 28  
A formidable South African cricket team arrived in Delhi for a two-and-a-half month long series to begin on October 2 with the first Twenty20 against India at Dharamsala. Big Proteas names like AB de Villiers, Hashim Amla, Faf du Plessis touched Delhi from Johannesburg. The South African side will play three T20s, five ODIs and four Tests against

India during their 72-day long tour. The visitors will also play a warm-up T20 against Indian President's XI on Tuesday and a two-day game in Mumbai on October 30-31 before the Test series. The visitors will head for Dharamsala, the venue for the first T20 after playing their practice game against India A at the Airforce ground in Palam.

**Five sports recommended for inclusion at 2020 Tokyo Games**

Tokyo, Sept 28  
Five additional sports -- baseball/softball, karate, skateboarding, sports climbing and surfing -- have been recommended by the organisers of the Tokyo Olympics for inclusion at the 2020 Summer Games, it was announced on Monday. Under the proposal, a total of 18 new medal events, nine each for men and women, would be contested by an extra 474 athletes at the Games. Under new rules, Olympic host cities can hand-pick sports they want to see contested at the Games, although the final decision rests with the International Olympic Committee, which will vote on the 2020 recommendations next August. Bowling, squash and wushu had also been short-listed

for inclusion in Tokyo but were left off the final recommended list. "This package of events represents both traditional and emerging, youth-focused events, all of which are popular both in Japan and internationally," Tokyo organisers said in a statement. "They will serve as a driving force to further promote the Olympic Movement and its values, with a focus on youth appeal, and will add value to the Games by engaging the Japanese population and new audiences worldwide, reflecting the Tokyo 2020 Games vision." As part of reforms initiated by IOC president Thomas Bach last year, future Olympic hosts are now being offered the chance to bring in sports popular in their countries to boost ratings and attract greater sponsorship.

**Lionel Messi will return in less than two months: Argentine team doctor**

Buenos Aires, Sept 28  
Argentina football team doctor Donato Villani said he is confident that injured Barcelona star Lionel Messi will return to action in less than two months. Messi is set to miss the next seven-to-eight weeks after suffering a tear in the internal collateral ligament of his left knee in Barcelona's 2-1 win over Las Palmas on Saturday. "For years I've known Leo and I have no doubt that he will be ready in the shortest possible time of the

injury, perhaps before that period of six-to-eight weeks," Villani was quoted as saying by ole.com on Sunday. The 28-year-old's injury is a blow for both Barca and Argentina but Villani believes the Argentina national team captain will return quicker than expected. "He gets mad when he cannot play. The desire to play again and the will to heal can influence. There is a break in need of surgery. It heals with rest as a first step and then kinesiology," Villani said.

**MORE LOCAL/NATIONAL NEWS**

**ITBOA, Makruzz celebrate WTD**

Port Blair, Sept. 28  
The Island Tourist Boat Operators Association here in association with the Tourism Department also celebrated World Tourism Day yesterday. To mark the day, it organised a quiz competition at Water Sports Complex where the tourists were asked questions and the winners were given prizes.

Meanwhile, Makruzz greeted their guests with flowers while the Master of the vessel cut the ceremonial cake which was



distributed among the passengers/guests. Events

and activities were also held onboard the vessel during voyage from Port Blair to Havelock.

**World Tourism Day celebrated**



Port Blair, Sept. 28  
MV Green Ocean 1 celebrated World Tourism Day yesterday by organising games, musical and dance programme on board the

vessel. Captain A M Joseph, Chief Officer Yama Rao and 2nd Officer Ms. Rati Shan and all commercial staff distributed sweets and toys to all passengers.

**Prize distributed to the winners of painting competition by traffic police**



Port Blair, Sept. 28  
In a simple function held at PS Aberdeen recently, prizes were distributed to the students who had participated in the painting competition on Road Safety held on 12/9/2015. Shri Mohd. Aslam, Dy.SP, South Andaman in presence of Shri M. Umar, Dy.SP(Traffic) gave away the cash prize alongwith certificates to the winning students. Among the recipients of the prizes are GJanisha of VKV, Gayathri

of GSSS, Mohanpura, A.Asha of K.V-I, FatemaKhatun and Goutami Roy of R.B.V from the first category and T.NaveenVamsi of Govt. Model Sr. Sec. School, C.P.Anand of VKV, D.Sarath of Govt. S.S.S, Haddo (Telugu Medium), V.Naveen of Nirmala Sr. Sec. School and Sutapa Roy of Mahatma Gandhi International School were from the second category, a communication from the SP, South Andaman District said.

**India's 1st dedicated ...**

(Contd. from page 1)  
satellites for telecommunication, broadcasting and remote sensing purposes. However, missions like Chandrayaan-1 and Mangalyaan marked significant advances in scientific studies. Today, it has laid another milestone by establishing India's own observatory in space by successfully putting Astrosat into orbit. ISRO Chairman AS Kirankumar congratulated the scientists for the resounding success of Astrosat Mission.

**ANC conducts...**

(Contd. from page 1)  
This year, focus will be on further streamlining the procedures to reduce timings, maintaining effective communications in the dynamically changing disaster environment and test the efficiency of training of troops on recently acquired specialist equipment such as bulldozers, mobile cranes, jibs, tractors, steel cutter, drilling machines, an ANC communiqué said.

**'Green Consumers Day ...**

(Contd. from page 1)  
and its impact on the environment. A massive signature campaign was also held at the college campus which witnessed active participation from the students and faculties of the College. Everyone pledged to carry on the message of Green Consumerism and also billed to practice 5R Rule: Refusing-Rethinking-Reducing-Reusing-Recycling in their day-to-day life.

**WEATHER**

Heavy rain may occur at isolated places over A&N Islands. Maximum and minimum temperature will be around 29°C and 24°C respectively on Tuesday 29/09/2015

**Observational data for Port Blair in last 24 hours**

Maximum Temperature (°C): 32.0  
Minimum Temperature (°C): 24.6  
Relative Humidity (%) at 0830 IST: 075  
Relative Humidity (%) at 1730 IST: 087  
Sunrise Time for tomorrow (in IST): 0509  
Sunset Time for tomorrow (in IST): 1712  
Rainfall upto 0830 hrs of date (last 24 hrs) in mm: 000.0  
Rainfall upto 1730 hrs of date in mm: 014.2  
Rainfall (Progressive total from 1st January 15: 2297.8 upto 0830 hrs (of date) in mm

**CINEMA**

**DIVIYUM TALKIES**

Following is the Schedule for week 25 Sept - 1 Oct  
Maze Runner (UA English) - 1.30 PM  
Calender Girls (A Hindi) - 1.00 PM & 7.00 PM  
Kis Kisko Pyar Karoon (UA Hindi) - 4.00 PM & 7:30 PM  
Bhaag Johnny (UA Hindi) - 4.30 PM  
Online booking at www.ticketnew.com  
For queries only 8373010002

**SEVA SUCHNAYEIN**

ALL THE SAILINGS ARE SUBJECT TO WEATHER CONDITIONS

Due to Administrative reason the schedule sailing of MV Kalighat for Car Nicobar via Hut Bay on 29.09.2015 (Tue) has been postponed. Now the vessel MV Kalighat is planned to sail for Car Nicobar via Hut Bay on 30.09.2015 (Wed) at 1200 Hrs from Haddo Wharf and will sail for Port Blair on 01.10.2015 (Mon) at 1000 Hrs from Car Nicobar via Hut Bay. Left out ticket if any for the above voyage will issued to the general public on 29.09.2015 at STAR ticketing counter. MV Kalighat will sail for Hut Bay on 29.09.2015 (Tue) at 0800 Hrs from Haddo Wharf and will sail for Port Blair on the same day at 2000 Hrs from Hut Bay. Passenger those who are holding ticket of MV Kalighat (under voyage No. 1343) upto hut Bay can avail the journey with the same ticket. However left out tickets for the above sailing will be issued to the general public on 29.09.2015 at Haddo Wharf one hour prior to the sailing time of departure of the vessel. Due to Administrative reason the schedule sailing of MV Kalighat for Hut Bay on 01.10.2015 (Thu) has been cancelled. Note: Due to technical snag in the Air Conditioning System, the vessel MV Kalighat will sail without Air Condition during her above voyage. Inconvenience caused to the passengers is regretted. 29.09.2015 (TUESDAY) HAVELOCK & NEIL ISLAND MV Bambooka will sail for Havelock on 29.09.2015 (Tue) at 0620 Hrs from Phoenix Bay Jetty and will sail for Port Blair on the same day at 0900 Hrs from Havelock. MV North Passage will sail for Neil Island on 29.09.2015 (Tue) at 0630 Hrs from Phoenix Bay Jetty and will sail for Port Blair on the same day at 0845 Hrs from Neil Island. MV North Passage will sail for Havelock via Neil Island on 29.09.2015 (Tue) at 1100 Hrs from Phoenix Bay Jetty and will sail for Port Blair on the same day at 1445 Hrs from Havelock via Neil Island. MV Bambooka will sail for Havelock on 29.09.2015 (Tue) at 1400 Hrs from Phoenix Bay Jetty and will sail for Port Blair on the same day at 1630 Hrs from Havelock. 30.09.2015 (WEDNESDAY) HAVELOCK & NEIL ISLAND MV North Passage will sail for Havelock on 30.09.2015 (Wed) at 0620 Hrs from Phoenix Bay Jetty and will sail for Port Blair on the same day at 0900 Hrs from Havelock. MV Bambooka will sail for Neil Island on 30.09.2015 (Wed) at 0630 Hrs. from Phoenix Bay Jetty and will sail for Port Blair on the same day at 0845 Hrs from Neil Island. MV Bambooka will sail for Havelock via Neil Island on 30.09.2015 (Wed) at 1100 Hrs from Phoenix Bay Jetty and will sail for Port Blair on the same day at 1445 Hrs from Havelock via Neil Island.

**Modi Government's ...**

(Contd. from page 1)  
facility will be expanded with an investment of about Rs 120 crore. The government doesn't want to be the sole participant in creating modern port and shipping infrastructure in the islands. "For the ship repair industry, we are expecting private participation. The government has also set aside Rs 1,000 crore for the same," said the official cited above. Around the islands, 23 sites have been identified for development into ports, with seven of these being small facilities. The government plans to spend about Rs 4,000 crore on this project and also to create direct connectivity with Chennai and Vizag ports. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are a chain of 572 islands of which a little more than 30 are inhabited. They constitute 0.2 per cent of India's land mass but provide for 30 per cent of the country's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). In keeping with their strategic location, the Ministry is also collaborating with the Ministry of Defence through the Andaman and Nicobar Command to undertake some of the projects. The islands are scattered between the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea and are closer to Myanmar and Indonesia than the Indian mainland. Parts of the islands were devastated by the 2004 tsunami that originated off the Indonesian coast. The Ministry of Defence is undertaking three different projects in the islands that will be of key strategic importance to India. Officials, however, didn't provide details about the projects, saying all of them were critical in nature. The Southern Islands lie near the Malacca Straits, a gateway to the Indian Ocean through which China gets some of its oil. The southernmost tip, known as Indira Point and located in the Greater Nicobar area, is 100 nautical miles away from Sumatra and 200 miles from Singapore. It's an overnight journey to Phuket through the sea route from Greater Nicobar. However, no ship currently operates on this route. "This region has huge potential for us as the international trading route that originates from Singapore and connects with the east-west corridor is hardly 15 nautical miles from Indira point," said another government official. The government has also planned a container transhipment terminal in the area to tap into the potential of the international trading route to cut down on freight costs. However, getting environmental clearance will be tough as the Greater Nicobar area has dense forests. The Andaman and Nicobar Administration is also planning to declare Port Blair a free trade area. But only clean, non-polluting industries will be allowed. The move is aimed at boosting employment opportunities, said an officer of the Andaman Administration. The government aims to acquire 60 small and large passenger and cargo ships for around Rs 5,000 crore. "These ships would provide better connectivity with Chennai and Vizag port," said one of the officials cited above. "We have already ordered two ships with capacity of 1,200 passengers and 100 tonnes of cargo each. Four small ships with capacity of 500 passengers each for inter-island connectivity are also being acquired." There is a plan to buy luxury cruise ships for wealthier visitors, to replace the aging, basic vessels that are available. (Courtesy: The Economic Times).