

Port State Control Inspections. Government have recently opened two new Regional Offices of Mercantile Marine Departments at Cochin and Kandla and three new District level offices at New Manglore, Paradip and Haldia. A number of steps including e-governance, delegation of enhanced powers, issuance of no objection certificates for deep sea fishing vessels at central level and setting up of grievances cells have been taken to modernise and streamline the offices of Mercantile Marine Departments under the Directorate General of Shipping, Mumbai.

**Damage to heritage bridge due to Sethusamudram
Channel Project**

†1740. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether collaboration of the foreign companies is being sought in the Sethusamudram Channel Project near Rameshwaram;

(b) if so, whether an ancient heritage bridge which exists there and which has been confirmed to be touching Lanka, would be affected therefrom; and

(c) if so, the steps being taken by Government for protecting this heritage?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) As such, collaboration from foreign companies is not being sought in the Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project (SSCP) near Rameshwaram; however, a Memorandum of Understanding has been entered into between the Suez Canal Authority, Egypt and Sethusamudram Corporation Limited, India on mutual cooperation in the area of construction, operation and management of the ship channel.

(b) No scientific evidence has been found by the project authorities for the existence of man-made structure in Adam's Bridge area during sub-soil investigations undertaken by four different agencies upto a limited depth required for planning the project during the period 2001 to 2006.

(c) Does not arise.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.