

Advisory Group on Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project meet to assess progress

COLOMBO: The Advisory Group on Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project (SSCP) will meet at the Lakshman Kadirgamar International Institute of Research & Strategic Studies (LKIIRSS) at Horton Place, Colombo on August 25 to assess work already completed, underway and future directions of activities.

These study exercises are being continued while awaiting the Indian response for joint monitoring activities and further bilateral discussions, a Foreign Ministry release said.

The construction of the Sethusamudram Ship Channel commenced on July 2, 2005. Ministers established an Advisory Group to study the impact of this project on Sri Lanka. The Advisory Group commenced activities in October, 2005.

The following four sub-groups of expertise were established:

Hydrodynamic Modelling Projections; environmental measures for the sustainability of the eco-system within the channel and its adjacent areas, including the impact on marine archaeology; livelihood issues stemming from the Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project; and measures to cope with Navigational emergencies including marine pollution.

The Advisory Group established a Secre-

tariat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and experts were drawn in from the National Aquatic Resources, Research & Development Agency, The Ministry of Fisheries, Lanka Hydraulic Institute Marine Pollution Prevention Authority, Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Sri Lanka Navy, Department of Meteorology, Department of Coast Conservation, Department of Survey, Universities of Katubedde, Peradeniya, East, South and Jaffna, IUCN Sri Lanka and other organisations within the country.

The Advisory Group studied the shortcomings of the Indian reports collected, secondary information available in Sri Lanka undertook field studies to establish bench marks and monitor changes and undertook hydrodynamic model testing activities and have concluded the need to undertake more extensive work preferably as a joint activity to ensure the project will not jeopardise Sri Lanka's interests.

The third bilateral meeting on April 21 in Colombo saw the presentation of the Sri Lankan research to the Indian delegation with a strong request that joint monitoring and study activities are a necessity to ensure that the project undertaken by the Indian authorities will not cause environmental and other adverse impacts on both Sri Lanka and India.