

**For Favour of Publicity**

**4th December, 2013**

**Vikrant is not a vessel but the Pride of Nation: Ram Naik**

**Mumbai, Wednesday:** “We cannot tolerate the government’s plan to auction Vikrant as it’s not just an ordinary vessel but is the Pride of the Nation.”, said Shri Ram Naik, former Petroleum Minister while condemning the plan to auction Vikrant. Shri Naik was instrumental in making Vikrant a naval museum when it was decommissioned in 1997. Obviously he was angered by the government’s move to scrap it after 15 years.

Vikrant was decommissioned on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1997 and was to go in scrap. Shri Naik promptly raised the issue in Lok Sabha under ‘Special Mention’ and opposed the move on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1997. He rightly pointed out that Vikrant has bravely fought 14 battles and is treated as a symbol of patriotism and bravery! Hence he suggested conserving it as a naval museum. He consistently followed up the suggestion. Vajpayee Government moved to put up Vikrant as a museum on dry port area in 1999. However, due to of the reluctance on part of the State Congress Government, the Project cost sky-rocketed and the Project could not be completed. Shri Naik opined that still it is not too late. Shri Naik said that Maharashtra carries the legacy of Raja Shivaji who had extra-ordinary vision and built the first sea fort. Shri Naik urged on the Chief Minister Shri Prithviraj Chavan to come forward and conserve the museum; else neither the history nor the people of Maharashtra will forgive him.

**(Office Secretary)**