



**ADMINISTRATION OF THE
UNION TERRITORY OF LAKSHADWEEP**

SPEECH

OF

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MEETING**

AT

NEW DELHI

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Hon'ble Prime Minister, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, Members of the National Development Council, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and distinguished dignitaries:

1. It is a matter of privilege for me to participate in the deliberations of the 54th National Development Council (NDC) convened by our Honorable Prime Minister to consider and approve the Eleventh Five Year Plan.

2. The Union Territory of Lakshadweep is a group of 36 coral islands and islets of which eleven are inhabited. These islands lie scattered randomly in the Arabian Sea, about 220 to 420 km off the Malabar Coast; geographically isolated, each island behaves almost like a country by itself (called 'Nadu' in local tongue, meaning 'Desh' in Hindi).

3. Despite its smallness in geographical terms, Lakshadweep has a total lagoon area of about 4,200 Sq.Km, large territorial waters (about 20,000 Sq.Km) and Exclusive Economic Zone (about 4,00,000 Sq.Km) accounting for about 20% of the EEZ of the country.

4. With continuous and coordinated efforts of the Administration coupled with firm and liberal support extended by the Govt. of India and mature cooperation of the people, we have brought visible and spectacular changes in the over-all quality of life and economic status of the people. However, more needs to be done to usher in rapid and inclusive development of these frontier and far-flung islands. Under the leadership of our Honorable Prime Minister in his capacity & as Chairman of the Island Development Authority (IDA) these Islands will continue to prosper further in the XI Five Year Plan and, I am sure, will be able to achieve the goals set.

5. The following Principal Objectives of development of the Islands have been identified for Lakshadweep:

- (i) To achieve self-sustaining economy preserving the ecological purity of the islands;**
- (ii) To develop the human resources and infrastructure for productive exploitation of the territorial waters and exclusive economic zone;**
- (iii) To enhance productivity of the precious scarce land and 'virtual expansion of land' through appropriate strategies;**
- (iv) To promote scientific, eco-friendly and people-friendly tourism, preserving cultural and social uniqueness; and**
- (v) To bring the islands to the mainstream of the nation through better transportation and advanced communication.**

6. The approach "Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth" approved by the Planning Commission in the 52nd National Development Council met on 09.12.2006 has set the road map for the formulation of the 11th Plan of Lakshadweep.

7. The Draft proposals 2007-2012 have been formulated primarily basing the SDR (State Development Report) prepared by the IAMR (Institute of Applied Manpower Research), New Delhi as assigned by the Planning Commission and the reports of studies commissioned by the Island Development Authority (IDA) have also been the basis for our plan formulation.

8. Intensive consultations have been made with the Panchayati Raj Institutions; viz. all the Dweep (Village) Panchayats and Lakshadweep District Panchayat, ensuring grass-roots level planning before formulating the XI Five Year Plan. The District Panchayat was convened specially for the purpose and I had the opportunity to participate in the deliberations of the Body to facilitate and guide the plan formulation process.

I would briefly deal with the salient features of important sectors of the XI Five Year Plan:-

Ports & Shipping

9. ***Shipping truly is the lifeline of the people of Lakshadweep.*** Vessels for inter island and mainland-island transportation, ordered on international shipyards, in X Plan period, are now being delivered gradually. Three 150 passenger high speed ferries have been procured from Singapore during 2007 and approval from DG Shipping has been obtained for operating them in the mainland – island sector also. These are one of the most modern passenger crafts in South Asia. One 15 passenger and another 20 passenger high speed crafts have already been inducted into service and are regularly transporting tourists. Three 50 passenger high speed crafts constructed in Malaysia are being taken over this week.

10. M.V Kavaratti a 700 passenger ship being constructed by Hindustan Shipyard Ltd at Vishakapatnam will replace the old vessels. After Global tendering, contracts have been signed with a Colombo Shipyard for construction of two 250 pax vessels. The proposal for acquisition of one additional 400 passenger ship is under active consideration of the Govt. of India.

11. The long standing demand of the islanders to have a dedicated wharf facility for their ships at Cochin, Kerala has been appreciated by the Govt. of India. Cochin Port Trust has been asked to allot a 300 Mtr. water front area for developing a dedicated berth for Lakshadweep vessels with all passenger amenities and cargo handling facilities. This will be ***a vital umbilical cord for mainstreaming Lakshadweep.***

12. The scheme for providing eastern side embarkation facilities at Kavaratti, Agatti, Amini and Minicoy islands are in different stages of construction. Similar eastern side embarkation facilities will be taken up in the XI Five Year Plan at Kadmat, Kiltan Chetlat and Bitra. ***Appropriate breakwaters need to be added to those facilities for their safe usage.***

13. With the introduction of private airlines from Kochi to Agatti air service has now improved and airfare has slightly come down. ATR – 72

flights of national airlines will further integrate these islands to the mainland. Expansion of existing airstrip at Agatti and construction of two mini airfields in Minicoy and Andrott are proposed in the XI Plan.

Drinking Water

14. ***Providing safe and adequate drinking water in these small islands in the middle of the oceans is one of the greatest challenges.*** One Low Thermal Temperature Desalination Plant is functioning successfully at Kavaratti, this has to be replicated in other inhabited islands also. Administration is taking up the issue with Ministry of Earth Science, NIOT and Planning Commission for executing those vital works without delay.

Maldivian Experience

15. The experience of sewerage disposal in Maldives which is an island territory similar to Lakshadweep, is being studied for suitable adoption in Lakshadweep.

16. Coastal protection systems successfully executed in Maldives at the very edge of the reef, if adopted suitable will open new possibilities for our coral islands. Under Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan these projects will have to be formulated.

Power & Non - Conventional Sources of Energy

17. It is notable that every household in every island in Lakshadweep is electrified. This may be the first case of complete universalisation of electricity. "Every home is lighted in our islands". Electricity is now generated through diesel generating sets in the territory which is not only expensive, but also affects the fragile ecosystem. Ferrying of diesel require for running the generating sets from the mainland involves tedious and hazardous handling.

18. ***A wind of change is blowing in Lakshadweep.*** We have plans to set up wind farms / turbines to meet the growing demand of electricity and to reduce dependence on costly and polluting diesel generators on PPP mode. During the windy season, especially in monsoon, when transportation of diesel is more difficult, wind energy will be a reliable supplement. An agency named "Lakshadweep Energy Development Agency (LEDA)" has been established to help execute these projects.

Agriculture & Allied activities

19. ***The target of doubling the rate of growth of agriculture and allied activities*** envisaged in the 11th Plan is expected to be achieved in this territory. Our annual fish landing is about 11,000 MT. We propose to double it by the end of XI Five Year Plan. For this, we have ambitious projects in hand; introduction of Mother Vessel for collection from subsidiary vessels, cleaning and processing of fish in the ship and taking the processed fish directly to the market. This would be first of its kind in India. This project is being carried out in consultation with Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). The tuna canning factory at Minicoy is being expanded and strengthened. We

proposed to have border trade outposts at Minicoy to facilitate direct export of canned tuna (fish) and 'masmeen' - cooked, smoked and sun dried tuna in packages.

20. Under Animal husbandry sector by the very first year of XI Five Year Plan ***we anticipate achieving 100% self sufficiency in poultry meat and eggs***, there by dispensing with the need for transportation from mainland. We propose to develop Animal husbandry projects for generating employment among the youth, utilizing the inter-coconut tree spaces for cattle and goat farming and poultry development.

21. Stress has been given for the cultivation of fruits, vegetables and spices, including mushroom by inter-cropping in the inter spaces of coconut garden. Rodent control through significant revival of time tested community rat hunting campaign through Village Panchayats, supplying rat hunting boxes (*eli petti*) to every houses are some of our strategies.

Food Security

22. No food grains is cultivated in these islands. Public distribution System is completely run on the shoulders of the co-operative societies. After much persuasion the FCI has now agreed to start construction of godowns. Food security is a matter of great concern for us.

Tourism

23. Cruise tourism is being promoted consciously in the inhabited and uninhabited islands. This has already brought a lot of dividends. In 2006-07, more than 25,000 tourists visited Lakshadweep as against the decadal average of about 4,500 per annum in the past. ***This five fold increase in the tourist inflow will grow further in the XI Five Year Plan*** as concerted efforts are being made for its promotion.

24. Modeling on the lines of the Maldivian success in tourism, Lakshadweep being very similar, we propose to promote ***high value low volume tourist villas and resorts. Water villas over the lagoons and modern transportation facilities like seaplanes, high speed boats and house boating can transform the tourism scenario to make Lakshadweep*** "the Maldives of India."

25. Allured by the natural beauty and pristine purity of our lagoons and islands, yatch tourism has already started picking up giving rich foreign exchange revenue. This will also be an area of focus.

26. To introduce Lakshadweep virtually to all the stakeholders, institutions, tourists, investors and media, an Information & Tourism and Cultural cum Convention Centre (ITCCC) is being planning to be established within the precincts of the Lakshadweep Bhawan at Chanakyapuri in Delhi.

Medical & Public Health

27. Although we have favorable health indicators, in terms of low infant mortality, zero maternal mortality etc. we do have the menace of chikungunya virus visiting some of the islands from the neighbouring States. Being an island territory with appropriate safeguards and scientific screenings, **we hope to make Lakshadweep completely "Chikungunya free"**. For this purpose, Infrared fever screening machineries are proposed at various entry points, namely at Kochi seaport and Agatti Airport, **which will be first of their kind in our country.**

28. Being remote islands Lakshadweep is most suitable candidate for telemedicine system. We propose to strengthen telemedicine centers in every island to overcome the need for physical travel of patients and also evacuations to mainland as far as possible.

Education

29. Ours is the 3rd highest literate State / Territory, after Kerala and Mizoram. Our elementary education has been practically universalized. Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan only 200 odd left out children are being covered now.

30. We have augmented livelihood and incomes of Self Help Groups by getting the school uniforms and bio-degradable school bags stitched by them. We have extended mid-day meals upto X Std and we propose to provide bicycles to girl students from BPL families studying in X to XII Standards.

Unemployment

31. About 1/5th of the population, i.e, around 15,000 persons have registered themselves in the Employment Exchange. We have introduced for the first time in the country, "Total digitization of employment services" which has bagged Manthan Award this year in recognition. Apart from objectivity and transparency in registration of names, maintenance of seniority and sponsoring of names **a lot of trust has been built among the youth.**

32. To upgrade the skills of the youth there is a proposal to start a Polytechnic Institute offering courses in fisheries, tourism and marine engineering. Similarly the Industrial Training Institute is being expanded and upgraded for additional courses relevant for the islands.

I C T & Aggressive e- Governance Efforts

33. Lakshadweep Administration has implemented several e-Governance projects with a focus on delivering of public services virtually anywhere, anytime, as also to usher in transparency, accountability and efficiency. **Information and communication technology has helped digitally integrate the geographically dispersed islands** in respect of several important needs of life. In the last two months this year in recognition of our concerted and scientific efforts, **two of e-Governance projects have**

been selected for prestigious awards for these best e-Governance practice and sustainable e-content.

34. Lakshadweep has attained the **unique distinction of being the first UT / State in the country to fully digitize its employment exchange and related services in the country**. This project has been recognized by a twenty – member critical jury of ICT professionals and has justifiably received the Manthan Award 2007 for being the best e-Governance project with e-content sustainability. A 24-hour call office would be established to provide assistance to employment seekers for finding employment in the country and abroad.

35. The Electricity department of Lakshadweep has been selected for the best e-Governed department award 2007 by the Computer Society of India. This prestigious award is in consideration of achievements in implementing a series of comprehensive web-based projects; consumer management and energy billing, inventory / material management system, e-Personnel system, e-Pay roll system and internet.

36. PORT NET enables web – based ship ticket reservation cargo booking, know ship schedule ticket status etc. This project has received the Microsoft National e-Governance Award, 2006 for “Innovative Project” being the first of its kind in the shipping sector.

37. Video conferencing facility provided through NICNET-VSAT’S installed in all islands has definitely brought the islands closer and boosted the morale of the people.

38. Lakshadweep is a restricted area, a valid entry permit is necessary for visiting the islands. Web – enabled Permit Management Information System accepts application for entry permit and issues the permit.

39. Web – enabled Students Scholarship Management System validates the scholarship claims of students studying in various parts of the country, processes and grants the claims,

40. The proposed “Ever Alert”: Web-enabled Medical Inventory Management System will inter-connect all the hospitals, community health centers, primary health centers in various islands with medical directorate on availability of medicines and appliances with their complete details.

41. We have proposal to integrate every island and every government offices through State Wide Area Network (SWAN).

Administrative Reforms

42. To eliminate many inconsistencies and mismatches in the administrative set-up and to bring in a modern well tuned structure in place, we have restructured various departments in the Administration. To deliver better services in a functional way, we are conscious that only through good governance the fruits of Five Year Plan can reach everyone equitably.

43. Meaningful and structural administrative reforms coupled with ICT measures can flourish symbiotically. Our Administration has been striving towards effective administrative reforms through aggressive e-governance measures. We have taken into confidence all political representatives including our Member of Parliament, Chairmen and Members of the District and Village (Dweep) Panchayats in these efforts. We are going to have "a basket of e-governance projects" and may even compete shortly for becoming best e-administered State / UT of the country.

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