



SPEECH

OF

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AT

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Honourable Prime Minister, Deputy Chairman, Chief Ministers and other distinguished Members,

I stand before you representing the smallest Union Territory of our country, U.T. of Lakshadweep. As you know, these are a group of very small islands, 36 in number, of which only 10 are inhabited. They lie at a distance of about 220 to 440 kilometers away from the west coast of Kerala in the Arabian Sea. The inter island distance varies from about 10 to 200 kilometers. The total population of these islands is 60650 (as per 2001 census). Though the land area of this Coral paradise is only 32 Sq.km. the inclusion of about 4200 Sq.Kms. of its lagoon area 20,000 Sq.km. of its territorial waters and almost 4,00,000 Sq.km. Exclusive Economic Zone makes it one of the largest territories of the country. The lagoons and the economic zone teeming with marine life and mineral resources enhance the economic importance of Lakshadweep. Because of the economic and social backwardness and the remoteness of these islands from the mainland, the entire indigenous population is classified as Scheduled Tribe.

The history of Planning in the U.T. of Lakshadweep can be traced to the Middle of the Second Five Year Plan when for the first time an integrated short-term Plan was implemented. All through the Five Year plans, major thrust was given to build transport and communication facilities, health and education, co-operative movement to eliminate middlemen exploiting the locals, supply of electricity, fisheries and to create infrastructure for sustained economic development and generate employment opportunities for the locals in the various sectors of development. We have been able to utilize the entire funds provided by the Planning Commission during the Third, the Sixth the Seventh, the Eighth and the Ninth Five Year Plans.

The focus of the Lakshadweep Administration in the Xth Five Year Plan is to reduce poverty, provide gainful employment to educated unemployed, achieve 100% literacy, create awareness for adoption of family planning measures, achieve 100% immunization, provide potable drinking water to all, strengthening and improvement of infrastructural facilities, reduction of subsidy on a tapering basis.

The character of these islands has decided the main occupations of the people, which are **Coconut farming and Fishing**. The pristine beauty of the white beaches and the clear lagoons as well as the colorful underwater life has a great potential for a thriving **tourism** industry.

The annual production of **Coconut** is around 53 million nuts. These are converted into copra and marketed in the mainland. Market intervention by the Administration often becomes necessary due to fall in prices of copra, when the farmers do not get remunerative prices for their produce. This is achieved through procurement of copra from the farmers in the islands through a network of Primary Co-operative Societies at the declared support prices and marketing through an apex body, the Lakshadweep Cooperative Marketing Federation. While a record production of 4244 metric Tonnes copra worth Rs.13.77 crores was achieved during 2001-02, the production declined subsequently. In 2003-04 the production fell to 651 metric Tonnes (worth Rs.2.8 crores) because of Mandary pest (coconut mite) attack. In 2004-05 the "Lakshadweep Super Cyclone" took the toll with production stagnating at 1012 metric Tonne (worth Rs.4.78 crores). One of the objectives of the Tenth Five Year Plan is, therefore to strengthen the Co-operative structure in the islands to undertake such socially beneficial programmes as recommended by the Plan Monitoring Group which visited Lakshadweep during 12000-2001, by providing a capital of Rs. 5 crores to the LCMF to procure copra from the islands. Efforts have also to be made to improve productivity of coconuts by introducing scientific farming methods. Major initiatives in the agricultural sector in the last one year includes Community approach to High Value Agriculture, diversification of Nutritional Home Gardening with I the proactive support of the PRIs and introduction of Group Janata Personal Accident Policy (1 lakh rupees insurance scheme for coconut climbers). Value addition to other coconut-based products like coir, coir fibre, desiccated coconut powder units can be achieved by modernization of these units. Establishing more co-operative industrial societies, organizing entrepreneurship development training programmes and promotion of self-employment programmes can ensure people's participation. All these have been the thrust areas in the Tenth Five Year Plan.

In the **fisheries sector**, modern mechanized fishing has replaced the laborious and uneconomical traditional fishing methods done with locally made wooden crafts and crude implements. 'Tuna pole and line fishing' using mechanized boat is now the commonly used fishing method in the islands. Mechanized fishing boats, fishing implements and fishing gear are issued on subsidy to local fishermen. There is however tremendous scope for improving the fish catch. Bigger refrigerated mother vessels are required so that the fishermen can explore newer fishing grounds

for longer time and their catch can be taken to the mainland for marketing and value addition. Larger boats of varying capacities have to be constructed and distributed to the fishermen for deep-sea fishing. Cold storage facilities have to be established in more islands and joint ventures with Indian and foreign entrepreneurs have also to be explored in order to exploit the fishing potential to the maximum. Improvement of quality of the local dried tuna called mas is another concern. To augment the catch of the local fishermen more than 40 Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) are being installed around Lakshadweep waters. In order to prevent poaching in the vast Lakshadweep waters by foreign fishing vessels and to provide security to this strategically located territory, a Police Marine Force is being established.

During the different Plan periods, infrastructure facilities have been developed for promotion of **tourism** in Lakshadweep.

A full-fledged water sports institute at Kadmat Island, tourist cafeteria, glass bottom boats to view marine life, scuba dive centers and facilities for other water sports like snorkeling, kayaking, etc. has already been set up. Bangaram Island is a well-known international tourist resort close to the airport at Agatti. The Society for Promotion of Recreational tourism and Sports (SPORTS), an autonomous society, is operating tourist packages. Considering the smallness and the ecological fragility of the islands, the objective is to promote low volume but high quality tourism. To provide a big boost to the tourism industry a dedicated tourist ship is being planned. However rapid growth of tourism industry can be achieved by permitting private cruise liners, opening up of more uninhabited islands for tourism, establishing resorts with attractive facilities like scuba dive centers and other water sports equipments. Recently the GOI has given permission to two private cruise liners namely Star cruise & Ocean cruises India Pvt. Ltd (OCI) to operate in Laskhadweep.

The development of dependable transport **system** between the mainland and the island and the inter-island sectors is the key to the socio-economic development of the territory. The Perspective Plan (2000- 2015) for 15 years on shipping requirement of the Union Territory is being implemented. The plan envisages acquisition of 22 new vessels of different categories including a dedicated tourist ship and a collector mother vessel for fisheries. Consequent upon the approval of GOI, one 250 passenger cum 100MT cargo ship , two 150 passenger inter island high speed vessel, one 150 MT oil barge, two landing barges and a bullard tug are at

various stages of acquisition. Sea lanes being the connecting arteries between various islands, PMGSY funds are being utilized to acquire three 50 passenger and one 15 passenger inter island high speed vessels.

Lakshadweep was lucky to have escaped from the Tsunami Disaster though 2 islands, Andrott and Minicoy, were visited by the surging waves. Since 26 Dec, 2004 **Disaster Management & Preparedness** Strategy in the islands needs a re-look. Better air, sea and communication connectivity, installation of cyclone warning devices in all the islands, expansion and modernization of Fire Department, sea shore protection and setting up of **Administrator's Relief Fund** forms the essential component of such a strategy. The Administration proposes to set up airstrips at Andrott & Minicoy to start with, followed by Kalpeni & Kadmat. Extension of Agatti airstrips towards Kalpitti to facilitate landing of larger aircrafts, acquisition of at least two big helicopters and faster ships should be put on faster track. The security of the islands and the Lakshadweep waters has been an area of concern for the GOI considering the high volume of international shipping, strategic location, isolation and remoteness of the islands. Consequent upon the approval of GOI, Police Marine Force is being established in the UT of Lakshadweep. Modernization of Police Force, Fire force, setting up of Coastal Police stations, commissioning of criminal investigation systems (CIS) and modernization of communication equipments are the other focus areas. Construction of the eastern side jetties in the four islands of Amini, Minicoy, Agatti and Kavaratti has been put on fast track.

For ensuring availability of 'Potable Drinking Water to All' the UTL Administration is engaged in the setting up of **Desalination Plant** with the help of National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai. A 100 cubic meter Desalination Plant, only one of its kind in India and in fact the whole world, has been set up at Kavaratti with the financial and technical assistance of NIOT. This desalination plant uses a new technology called "**Low Temperature Thermal Desalination**" based upon the temperature difference between the surface (28-30° C) and deep sea water (7-15° C) at a depth of around 300-400 meters. With its successful launch on 23rd May, 2005, the UTL Administration proposes to replicate the plant on all islands. The NIOT has estimated that the total cost for installing such plants in 9 other islands will be around Rs. 40.00 crore to Rs.45.00 crore. The NIOT has expressed its willingness to install these Plants in all the islands within one year of awarding of contract. This will help in solving the long pending,

widely felt problem of non availability of potable drinking water in the islands. Moreover the UTL Administration is also pursuing a proposal to set up 300 cubic meter experimental Desalination Plant with the assistance of Department of Atomic Energy, Ministry of Urban Development and Department of Drinking Water Supply.

Lakshadweep has achieved near 100% electrification of households and connection is available on demand. The T&D losses have been reduced to 10.8 % which is the lowest in the country and the target is to bring it down to 8% by the end of Xth Five Year Plan. The billing in Lakshadweep has been computerised and consumers themselves read the meter and pay the charges monthly. However, the generation cost is quite high as electricity is predominantly produced from Diesel Generators. . There is a need to supplement the Diesel Generator Sets with Non Conventional Sources of Energy such as solar, Biomass Gasifiers, Wind, Tidal Energy, Fuel Cell etc. Moreover there is a need to install 1405 KW DG capacity as replacement to meet the growing demand of electricity. The Administration is also involved in the modernization of power sector such as replacement of inefficient outlived DG sets with new generation, high efficiency silent generating sets, sound proofing of generators, installation of data logger to all DG sets, automation of power houses etc.

Education is provided to all free of cost. Free midday meals are provided in the primary schools. Free boarding and lodging facilities are provided to island students residing in hostels. Student desirous of going for higher education are sent to the mainland for professional courses. As a result, the literacy rate in the island has gone up to 87.52% (2001 Census). Development of infrastructure for promotion of quality education and Sport and Youth Services has been our priority. Up-gradation of 3 High Schools of Amini, Kalpeni & Agatti islands into Senior Secondary School, Computerization of all the schools- Primary, Middle and High School in all the islands, opening up of University Extension Center (Calicut University) at 3 islands of Kadmat, Andrott & Kavaratti and setting up of Indoor Stadium with Multi gym, badminton and table tennis facilities in all the islands is being undertaken in the current academic year. However, much more needs to be done in this field.

Lakshadweep has the distinctions of being the first in the country to achieve 100% coverage in the universal immunization programmes. Two Hospitals, three

Community Health Centres, four Primary Health Centres, 14 Sub Centers and a First Aid Center are meeting the prime health needs of the people. However, the main problem is absence of **Specialist doctors** for providing secondary health care. Through the GOI has sanctioned 12 specialist posts including Surgeon(2), Gynaecologist (2), Anaesthetist (2), Paediatrician(I), Pathologist(I), Eye Specialist(I), Public Health Specialist(2) and Physician(I), most of them, except Physician, have been lying vacant for the last 10 years. With the intervention of Island Development Authority, Specialist Doctors in four stream of Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Surgery and Anaesthesia are being sent on rotation basis, on a temporary deputation for a period of 90 days from Jan, 2004 onwards. This has helped in improving the health indicators. However, to achieve National Common Minimum Programme and Millennium Development Goals there is a felt need for creating more posts like Radiologist, Microbiologist etc apart from filling up all the 12 specialist posts. Considering the various infrastructural and logistic problem in providing these doctors, the Administration proposes to enter into a **medical contract** with a mainland Hospital (like Amritha Institute of Medical Sciences & Research Centre, Cochin). This will also help in achieving the thrust objectives of the Tenth Plan including strengthening the primary health care facilities, carry out national health programmes to prevent all communicable diseases including HIV / AIDS and stabilizing the population growth rate.

Unemployment is increasing in the islands. There are opportunities for self-employment in the islands and therefore, the emphasis in the Tenth Plan has been on making use of human resource available in the islands by providing adequate training and also creating an awareness among the educated unemployed to form co-operatives or to join the private sector.

There is a two tier system of Panchayati Raj institutions, namely Village (Dweep) Panchayat and District Panchayat functioning in the territory. The role of the Panchayati Raj Institutions particularly in the field of poverty alleviation programmes for the benefit of the deserving section of the society, is gaining momentum. A number of schemes have been transferred by the Administration to the Panchayats for implementation.

The Xth Plan outlay for the territory is fixed at Rs. 43 7 crores, which is expected to be fully utilized by the end of the Plan period. The plan outlay for the FY

2004-05 was Rs. 69.95 crore. The target achieved was 65.76 crore (ie 94%). The Plan Outlay of UT of Lakshadweep for the FY 2005- 06 has been fixed at Rs. 82.95 crore.

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