



**Administration of the  
Union Territory of Lakshadweep**

**SPEECH  
Of**

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**57<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
MEETING**

**At**

**NEW DELHI**

**On 27th December, 2012**

**Hon'ble Prime Minister, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, Members of 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 57<sup>th</sup> National Development Council (NDC) meeting chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister to consider and approve the Approach for Twelfth Five Year Plan prepared by the Planning Commission.

2. I am here to represent the tiniest as well as one of the remotest territory of India, the Union Territory of Lakshadweep. At the outset itself, I would like to convey the sincere gratitude on behalf of the people of Lakshadweep to various Ministries and Departments of the Government of India for the firm and liberal support given for Lakshadweep. I expect continued support in future also.

3. Lakshadweep is a group of 36 coral islands & islets randomly scattered in the Arabian Sea at a distance of about 287 to 483 km off the west coast of Kerala. These islands are geographically isolated from mainland as well as from each other. Total land area of Lakshadweep is 32 Sq.Km. Out of 36 islands, ten islands are inhabited and one island is developed exclusively as a tourist island. Land area of the largest inhabited island, Andrott is 4.90 Sq.Km., whereas land area of smallest inhabited island, Bitra is merely 0.10 Sq.Km. The Northern most island is Bitra and Southern most Island is Minicoy having a distance of 376 Km in-between.

4. The history of these Islands linked back to earlier colonizers like Dutch, Portuguese, British etc. It is also observed that these islands were originally ruled by Cheraman Perumal, Arakkal Beebi of Malabar Coast in Kerala, Tippu Sultan of Mysore and came under the British rule in 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

5. Because of its small size and geographical isolation, people living here depend on mainland for all their basic needs. All the food items (except fish & coconut), consumables, household items, construction materials, petroleum products, etc. are required to be transported from mainland. Further, islanders depend on mainland for specialized medical treatment and higher education, etc.

6. Amidst the above limitations, Lakshadweep is blessed with unexcelled natural beauty & serenity and vast marine resources. White sandy beaches and crystal clear shallow lagoons are the peculiarity of these islands. Though Lakshadweep is very small in terms of land area; it has vast lagoon of about 4,200 Sq.Km. and large territorial waters of about 20,000 Sq.Km. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Lakshadweep is about 4,00,000 Sq.Km., which accounts for nearly 20% EEZ of our country. Coconut cultivation and fishing are the main sources of income for the people of Lakshadweep from ancient times. Inorganic manure, Pesticide free Coconut Cultivation and the Pole and Line method of fishing are unique methods of cultivation in these islands. The Canned, dried tuna fish (Mass) and Dweep Copra of Lakshadweep are very famous. Since becoming a Union Territory in 1956, employment under the Government has also become a source of income. Various developmental projects undertaken by the UTL Administration with the sole support of the Union Government over the years, through Five Year and Annual Plans, have made considerable changes in the life of the people of Lakshadweep

7. The Island Development Authority (IDA) under the Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Prime Minister discusses and decides the policies and programmes for

integrated development of the Islands, and reviews the progress of implementation and impact of the programmes of the development. The Standing Committee of the IDA with Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission as the Chairman; advises on Planning priorities / programmes and helps in the formulation Five Year/ Annual Plans. It facilitates interaction with Central Ministries, Agencies and monitors the progress of developmental initiatives.

**8.** Planned Development in U.T Of Lakshadweep may be stated to have begun with effect from 1956, Lakshadweep became a Union Territory. An integrated short-term plan was implemented in this U.T for the first time in the middle of the Second Five Year Plan. All through the Five Year Plans, a major thrust was given to build transport and communication facilities, health and education, cooperative movement to eliminate the middlemen who used to exploit the natives, supply of electricity, fisheries development and to create infrastructure for sustained economic development and generate employment opportunities to the locals in the various sectors of development. The Administration has been able to utilize the allocation provided during the Five Year Plans.

**9.** The approach to achieve “Faster, Sustainable and More Inclusive Growth’ set by the Planning Commission for 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan is laudable. The approach has more relevance in the present scenario. Faster and Sustainable Growth is essential as we have to bring fruits of development to all our citizens as quickly as possible.

**10.** Lakshadweep and its unique features may be in a position to implement the vision of faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth outlined in the Approach to 12th Five Year Plan by the Planning Commission. An overview of the development programmes of this U.T over the different plan periods will reveal that a lion’s share of the outlay was earmarked to meet the expenditure on creation of transport and communication facilities, followed by improvement of education, fisheries and health activities. Concerted and coordinated efforts of the Administration, coupled with the cooperation of the people have brought visible and spectacular changes in the overall scenario and economic status of the people.

**11.** The lagoons and economic zone teeming with marine life and mineral resources enhance the economic importance of Lakshadweep The people of Lakshadweep have utilized the fisheries potential on a sustainable basis and they never over-exploited the fisheries.

**12.** As mentioned earlier, the unique pole-and-line method followed by the people of Lakshadweep for fishing is highly sustainable form of fishing. People have followed this method till now. However, large scale exploitation of fisheries on industrial scale by larger boats from mainland has resulted in exploitation of fisheries near the Lakshadweep islands. In this process the local fishermen, who are mostly marginal farmers are, deprived. Therefore, Lakshadweep islands may be developed as ideal resource for sustainable fishing practices.

**13.** The Lakshadweep islands are essentially coral islands, however, there is lack of research in this area and a national level institute should be set up in Lakshadweep to study and conduct research on climate change and its impact on corals.

**14.** As these Islands are Isolated and situated far from the mainland, these islands have inherent difficulties of transportation and communication. A slightly different approach for their development than mainland territory is required.

**15.** By keeping in view of aspiration of the people of Lakshadweep and taking inspiration from Approach to the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan “Faster, Sustainable and More Inclusive Growth” of Planning Commission, UTL has taken a major shift in the formulation of 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. The Annual Plan 12-13 and 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan 2012-17 has been prepared on Island Specific basis. This is necessary to ensure balanced growth among the islands. Instead of having a stereotype UT level Plan for all islands together, this time every sector and departments will have Island Plan for each inhabited Islands. Funds are distributed to the islands according to Area, Population, Fish landing, Coastal length, etc. Village (Dweep) Panchayat in the islands prepared the Plan in consultation with all the stakeholders in their respective islands. This has been now brought to sectoral Plan, providing allocation for each island by the department.

**16.** Intensive consultations have been made with the Panchayat Raj Institutions; viz. all the Village (Dweep) Panchayat and Lakshadweep District Panchayat; ensuring grassroots level participatory planning before formulating the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan and Annual Plan. Series of meetings were held with Panchayat functionaries, Sub Divisional Officers of Islands, public representatives, both at Island’s and UT level. Outreach programmes were organized in every Island; staying the head of UT with senior officers for days together. Finally the people’s aspirations were transformed in to programmes and schemes and spelt in to figures; limiting to the capacity to implement and resource availability.

### **Devolution of Powers to Panchayats**

**17.** For the development of the islands, well-being of the islanders and Strengthening the Financial Management system in the Panchayat Raj Institutions, five major departments viz. Education, Medical and Public Health, Fisheries, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry have transferred to the PRI (District Panchayath) in the 5<sup>th</sup> phase of devolution which came into effect from 1st April 2012

### **I. Shipping & Civil Aviation**

**18.** As the islands have to depend on mainland for all their basic needs, frequent travel is required between island-mainland and also between the islands and hence shipping is the lifeline of the people of Lakshadweep. Transportation of men and materials between the islands and island-mainland sector throughout the year especially in Monsoon/rainy season is still a Herculean task for the Administration, in spite of the fact that shipping sector has recorded considerable improvement in the last one decade.

**19.** At present UTL Administration have four all weather ships viz. MV Kavaratti (700 pax), MV Arabian Sea (250 pax), MV Lakshadweep Sea (250 pax) and MV Bharat Seema (386 pax). MV Bharatseema, which is now in operation will need to be withdrawn within a short time as this ship is also too old, outlived and its retrofitting may not be economical. In addition we have two 150 pax ships, three 150 pax High Speed Vessels, three 50 pax, one each 20 pax and 15 pax and two Inter-Island Ferry Vessels each of 100 pax capacity. As these vessels cannot sail during rough weather, connectivity between the islands is difficult as and when sea becomes rough. As a matter of fact, during the months of May to September, regular transport of men and material is extremely difficult affecting not only normal

life but also slowing down developmental projects. Some of the Major Projects under shipping sector are.

- A. 2 x 400 Pax ships** are under construction in the Colombo Dock Yard for a total cost of approximately Rs.280 Crs. As per the agreement, the first vessel will be delivered by 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2013 and second vessel by 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2013.
- B. 2000 LPG carrier** – One 2000 LPG Cylinder Carrier has been acquired and commissioned during November 2012.
- C. 150T oil barge** – The Ship building Contract for acquisition of one 150 MT Oil Barge was signed on 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2011 with M/s.Modest Infrastructure Limited, Mumbai for a Contract Price of Rs.13.50 Cr the Keel has been laid on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2011. As per the contract, the vessel is for delivery on or before the end of Fifteen (15) months from the date of the contract. The Yard is yet to achieve 50% hull construction stage, and as by SCI indicated the ship will be delivered by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013.
- D. 40 Knots speed vessel** - In the first round, the Administration received only one bid and thus it was re-tendered. In the second round four bids have been received. SCI is to obtain financial bids from the eligible four bidders. SCI has informed that availability of 40 knots HSCs(High Speed Crafts) in the Market for chartering is very slim and hence suggested to go for acquisition of 30-35 Knots HSCs. The proposal is being examined by UTL
- E. 2 Nos. 800 MT Multipurpose Cargo Vessels** to meet the growing demand of cargo transportation. The estimated cost for two vessels is Rs. 36.00 crores and accordingly an EFC proposal for the approval of the project was submitted to the Ministry of Shipping in June, 2011. SFC has approved the proposal on July 2012. SCI has floated Technical bids and 8 shipyards have submitted their bids. Evaluation of bids are in progress.
- F. One 1000 MT Oil Barge (Bulk Carrier)** in order to overcome the problem of transportation and storage of HSD fuel oil especially for electricity generation in the islands and to setup floating storage tanks of adequate capacity in all islands.The floating storage tanks are proposed considering limited land availability in the islands and also for easy discharge of bulk fuel oil from the Bulk Carrier in the outer deep sea and the same can be safely moored inside the lagoon in islands. Accordingly, EFC proposal was submitted to the Ministry of Shipping for approval of acquisition of subject vessel at an estimated cost of Rs.22.00 crores in August, 2011. The Ministry has examined the proposal and asked the UTL administration to re submit the revised SFC memorandum based on 12<sup>th</sup> FYP including recurring expenditure of the project for 5 years. Accordingly the Proposal submitted to Ministry.
- G. Construction of Greenfield airstrip at Androth.** Necessary surveys of the identified land conducted and earmarked 141.42 acres of land for Greenfield Airport. The survey report and the Survey of India Map marked with total area identified have been furnished to AAI. Now AAI has prepared a Master Plan for the Air Port and had projected additional requirement of land of 111007 Sqm. The UTL is in the process of surveying additional Land as per the Dimension and Orientation projected by AAI. However, considering huge deficit of land in Lakshadweep AAI may be instructed to workout the plan considering the Land availability without any compromise on the safety aspects

**H. Construction of an airport at Minicoy Island** The matter is with defense Ministry and the rate of land compensation is being worked out

**I. Extension of runway at Agatti** Considering the difficulty in operating bigger aircrafts, UTL Administration proposed extension of Agatti airport for operation of ATR flights with full payload. AAI has prepared the Master plan for the extension of airport for a total length of 1420 mtrs with 80 mtrs over runway at both ends. AAI is required to obtain environment clearance for the extension. Accordingly, the 115<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Expert Appraisal Committee for Building Construction, Coastal Regulation Zone, Infrastructure Development and Miscellaneous projects held on 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2012 at New Delhi has recommended the proposal for environmental and CRZ clearance. In view of above AAI has been requested to take up the proposal as recommended by the Committee. AAI is yet to commence the extension works at Agatti Airport.

## **II. Harbour and Port**

**20.** Eastern side embarkation jetties constructed in 4 islands viz. Kavaratti, Minicoy, Agatti & Amini. The Jetties at Minicoy and Agatti has made operational under moderate sea condition only due to its defective design. The construction of Jetty at Amini and Kavaratti are expected to be completed by December 2012 and March 2013 respectively. In pursuance of the decision taken in Island Development Authority meetings, various studies have been made by Expert Committees to review the defective design of eastern side jetties. As Eastern side jetties are very much essential for the safe embarkation/ disembarkation of passengers and hence in the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan Period we will try to make the remaining jetties operational and construct suitable models of eastern side jetties in the remaining islands also.

**21.** A Proposal for construction of breakwater at Amini, Kadmat, Kiltan, Chetlath and Bitra has been included in the 12<sup>th</sup> 5 year plan. Techno economic studies and survey investigations are to be taken up by Ministry of Shipping for analyzing the viability of the project.

**22.** Need for wharf facility for our ships at mainland ports is a long standing demand of people of UTL and appreciated by Govt. of India. Having our own berthing facilities at various ports in the mainland, will reduce waiting time of our vessels and ensure easy movement of men and material. The work of dedicated Berth at Kochi has already been completed. As regard to berth at Mangalore, Series of discussions were made with various officials at Mangalore and secretary (Ports), Bangalore for providing space for establishing dedicated berth, Govt of Karnataka has agreed to provide adequate space, 200 x 20 Mtr at North wharf and 90 x 20 Mtr at salt wharf. Draft MoU has been prepared and submitted to the Govt of Karnataka for vetting. Further response from Govt. of Karnataka is awaited.

**23.** With regard to berth at Beypore An MoU was signed with Kerala Government on 02.11.2010. As the MoU specifies to enter in to a lease agreement with Kerala Government accordingly, the same has been signed with Kerala Government, on 12.01.2011. CPWD has been asked to undertake the project. Querries have been raised by Ministry of Shipping for which. we had written to CPWD for clarification of points raised by the Ministry related to EFC approval. Reply from CPWD is awaited..

## **IV. Drinking Water**

**24.** In Lakshadweep the only natural resource of drinking water is groundwater (sub soil water), which is recharged during monsoon. As the soil is porous, only a

fraction of this rainfall is retained in the groundwater lens and more than 80% is estimated to percolate into the sea. In several islands, intrusion of saline water into groundwater lens in summer is a regular phenomenon. Due to pressure of population on land, the quality of groundwater has deteriorated a lot in the recent years. Total requirement of water to cater for present population is around 30 lakh litre per day @ 40 lpcd. As such, providing safe drinking water to the population is a major challenge.

**25.** To overcome the Issue, the Administration Proposed to install Low Temperature Thermal Desalination Plants of 1 Lakh liter capacity in all the Islands. Accordingly LTTD plants has been completed in three islands namely Kavaratti, Agatti and Minicoy. The Government of India has approved the project of setting up of LTTD Plants in 6 islands of Lakshadweep for a project cost of Rs. 99 Cr. A Technical Evaluation Committee has been constituted to resolve the issues with the contractor regarding the cost escalation/alternative proposal of the contractor. The committee met on 25.09.2012 at NIOT Chennai. M/S Kiriloskar Construction & Engineer Ltd has been asked to commence the work.

**26.** In the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan we have to set up distribution network of drinking water in all islands and to establish suitable capacity of Desalination Plants at Bitra, the baby island, which is the only left out inhabited island and in Bangaram, Tourist spot and Suhali, Fishing island.

#### **V. Fisheries**

**27.** Present level of annual fish landing is around 12,300 MT. It is estimated that this is only about 10% of the potential fishery resources available in the EEZ of Lakshadweep. With a view to optimize the fish catch, Administration is going to acquire a Mother Vessel. Now the Ministry of Agriculture has suggested for taking the vessel on short term lease, so as to evaluate the concept of and feasibility of Mother vessel before procurement of the proposed permanent one since the firm price offered for the vessel was double the estimated cost.

#### **VI. Tourism**

**28.** By virtue of its natural beauty with white sandy beaches and crystal clear shallow lagoon water, surrounded by waters ranging from palest aquamarine and turquoise to deepest sapphire, Lakshadweep has a great scope for tourism. Lakshadweep has remarkable place in international tourist map. Bangaram Island continues to be an International Tourist Spot. Tourism infrastructure to a lesser extent is also available in five more inhabited islands.

**29.** In the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan, we will explore the possibility for developing more uninhabited islands as international tourist spots on the lines of Bangaram island. Islands like Cheriya, Suhali, etc. will be considered for this.

**30.** In addition to our own budget allocation, funds from Centrally Sponsored Schemes will also be availed for tourism infrastructure development and Private participation will be explored. We are of the view that creation of more tourism infrastructure and further enhancing the connectivity by means of ships, flights and seaplanes, will increase tourist flow manifold. While developing the tourism infrastructure for attracting more tourists, the Administration is committed to preserve the ecological purity and cultural & social uniqueness of the islands, restricting to carrying capacity of each island.

## **VII. Education**

**31.** Major Indicators in Education Sector show that planned development in the Sector has made considerable impact. We have established Senior Secondary level education in all inhabited islands, except Bitra and three University Centres offering Graduate & Post Graduate Courses. Educational indicators reflect that the planned development has made considerable impact. In spite, no candidates from Lakshadweep had qualified for Civil Service Examinations; Candidates are deputed for better coaching to specialized institutions at mainland. One Polytechnic targeted in the 11th Plan is being established by utilizing the funds under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

**32.** Unemployment is continued to be a burning issue, as the job opportunities is minimum. Our representation in the public sector undertakings is negligible. In the coming years this unemployment will become more volatile; as more than 33% of population is below 20 years. Creation of job opportunities by virtue of development in fisheries, tourism and shipping sectors will resolve this issue to a great extent.

**33.** In the 12th Plan we will try to establish a Marine Training Institute and give training to educated youth for participating in the National Level recruitment examinations. We will also consider, giving training & guidance to the educated youth for participating in National level recruitment examinations.

## **VIII. Sewerage Treatment**

**34.** Groundwater availability in Lakshadweep is just one meter below ground level and experience of intrusion of saline water into groundwater and thereby contamination is very high. Management of sewerage disposal is crucial in view of the fragile ecological condition of the islands. To tackle this issue, The Administration proposed for the Installation of Sewerage Treatment Plant in all 10 Inhabited Islands of Lakshadweep. The Lakshadweep group of islands is situated in an ecologically sensitive coral growth area. The issue of installation of sewage treatment plants in all the ten inhabited islands needs to be addressed expeditiously. It is also proposed to set up Bio-toilet complexes in all islands for common use, for which identification of suitable land is under process. The installation of Bio-Toilets has already started at Kavaratti, the Capital Island.

**35.** Though the level of production of solid waste is very low due to absence of industrial factories, peculiar geographical condition of the islands make it mandatory to establish proper system to treat the available solid waste and garbage from households. In the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan, we will consider to set up proper centralized Plants for every island to treat solid waste in a suitable way considering the island conditions.

## **IX. Health**

**36.** While sanctioned posts of Specialist Doctors are vacant, the patients in need of specialized treatments are being evacuated through helicopter incurring huge expenditure. People of Lakshadweep are thankful to the Island Development Authority for taking a policy decision to depute specialists on rotation basis after 90 days to Lakshadweep. But it is to point out that this arrangement is not a permanent solution as linguistic barrier and delay in posting or joining of Specialists occurs several times. UTL Administration has suggested to bring up our own Specialist



Doctors by reserving one each PG Medical seat in Medical Colleges of Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka & Andra Pradesh for qualified MBBS candidates belonging to local Scheduled Tribes from Lakshadweep.

**37.** CHC, Agatti has been up-graded as Rajiv Gandhi Specialty Hospital, Agatti under PPP mode after obtaining approval from the Ministry and signing of MOU between Amrutha Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS) and UTL Administration, the medical services of RGSB were begun on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2011. Due to absence of necessary infrastructure a full-fledged functioning was not made. Now around 90% works has been completed, required additional equipments made available and started functioning in a better condition.

#### **X. Information Technology**

**38.** As Lakshadweep islands are geographically isolated from each other and from the mainland, development of information technology can play a vital role in improving connectivity, thereby, improving the quality of life and administrative governance; bring the islanders closer to the mainstream. Also for security reasons, uninterrupted communication between the islands and mainland is inevitable. Increasing the Bandwidth in the islands still remains unresolved, as the sole service provider BSNL couldn't provide sufficient bandwidth due to satellite problems.

**39.** In the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan, we proposed for establishing a Submarine cable to ensure uninterrupted connectivity with all islands with the help of Satellite, OFC and combination of OFC with microwave in order to reduce the cost. Now the Administration is in the process of implementing e-office to make the UTL offices paper free during the Plan period.

#### **XI. Ecology & Environment**

**40.** There are four main natural ecosystems in the Islands the land, the lagoon, reef and the ocean. The islands are flat and scarcely rise more than one metre above the sea level. These islands are made up of fine coral sand and boulders which have been compacted into sand stone. Rivers and streams are absent. There are no declared forests in Lakshadweep; still about 80% of the land mass is covered by the green vegetation mainly with coconut palm. Rapid development is taking place in the islands of Lakshadweep; these developments sometimes become a cause of concern. One doubts whether one or other activity is in consonant with delicate ecological balance that sustains the islands. The changing demographic pattern and life styles with resource harvest from the reef at more than sustenance levels, have created very high stress in the islands. Any unscientific activity will adversely affect the very existence of pristine ecology. As was done in the formulation of previous Five Year Plans, 12<sup>th</sup> Plan proposals has been fine tuned through Environmental Impact Assessments for preserving the ecological purity of the islands.

**41.** As Lakshadweep islands are just one meter above the sea level, I am afraid that even a simple hike in sea level will cause huge disaster. Therefore, a proper observatory is required in the islands for early warning about any changes in sea level, or to gauge the speed of the ocean currents, etc., so as to take up any possible large-scale calamity prevention measures, including a possible evacuation, if necessary. The administration has already submitted a proposal in this regard to the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

**42.** Before concluding my speech, I would like to express my sincere thanks, on behalf of the people of Lakshadweep, to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India and various Ministries/ departments/ agencies of the Government of India for giving us utmost care and support.

**JAI HIND**