

Recommendations for Lakshadweep

6E.1 Rapid development of Lakshadweep depends upon providing good infrastructure and connectivity with the main land. For this purpose funds are required for investing in desalination plants, water supply, jetties, construction of airports, providing power from renewable energy sources (wind and solar power) and environment protection schemes. These will provide rapid economic growth and ease concerns of environmental damage.

6E.2 The local bodies are in a nascent stage and need to be nurtured to play a greater role in the development and growth of the island. While private investments in the economic activities are required, role of the government in the essential sectors of education, medical and healthcare, water supply and sanitation, besides transport to provide connectivity are vital. The strategic and ecological sensitive character of Lakshadweep calls for continued involvement of government.

6E.3 The UT administration should try to devolve all the schemes relating to the 29 subjects in a phased manner. The funds and staff for these should also be transferred. The Panchayats should be accountable to the people more than the administration.

6E.4 The Community assets built by the UT administration should be transferred to the District Panchayat which had been built earlier. This has not yet been done. For instance the Auditorium at Kavaratti is an example of an asset which can be transferred by the administration to the Panchayats along with staff and necessary funds.

6E.5 A common procurement cell at either Kavaratti or in Cochin may be set up for the Panchayats to cater to their requirement of stores and materials. This will facilitate in quick execution of various development schemes and programmes of the Panchayati Raj institutions.

6E.6 It appears to be a widespread perception that many of the development schemes which have been transferred to the Panchayats have little relevance for the islands. The Panchayats may be allowed to frame and execute their own schemes in the twenty nine devolved subjects. Another

concern voiced by the Panchayats was that they are not involved in the actual preparation of plans by the local administration. It needs to be appreciated that the plan should actually reflect what is required by the islanders and schemes should not be thrust upon them. In a small UT like Lakshadweep having a total population of barely 60,650, this intensive consultation should not be a difficult exercise for the local Administration to undertake.

6E.7 The UT administration should set up the District Planning Committees and make its working effective so that the needs of the people are articulated in the planning process.

6E.8 The Panchayat members also want their emoluments to be enhanced. They have backed their demand by quoting the example of Kerala where all members of Panchayat bodies are paid a higher honorarium.

6E.9 The exclusive economic zone of 4 lakh sq km that surrounds Lakshadweep provides ample opportunity for exploiting the fishery resources from the ocean. Tuna fishing is doing well and can be stepped up manifold. A well thought out strategy to periodically monitor the movement of the various varieties of fishes, prawns, shrimps, etc. needs to be developed. Simultaneously, sophisticated vessels equipped with the latest technology can help to step up production.

6E.10 Besides fisheries, Lakshadweep with its vast exclusive economic zone, offers considerable scope for ocean related economic development activities in a variety of ways. These include pearl culture, culture of seaweeds. These activities will not only promote the livelihood status of the community but also help preserve the flora, fauna including the coral reef ecosystem.

6E.11 Lakshadweep nestled in the Arabian Sea, away from the usual hustle and bustle, offers tremendous scope for development and promotion of tourism. Of course, one has to give due consideration to ecology related concerns and the danger of unbridled tourism. A perspective plan for tourism development of Lakshadweep needs to be worked out. Aqua sports centre, theme parks, a deep sea world can be started. They are capital intensive and require the latest technology to set

them up. They also need a lot of supporting infrastructure for attracting tourists. The experience of tourism promotion efforts in Mauritius and Maldives can also be made use of.

6E.12 The PRIs can be associated with many more developmental activities, such as watershed management, setting up of biogas plants, social forestry, systematic conservation and exploitation of the biodiversity resources including minor forest produce, fuel and development of non-conventional energy sources and various schemes for technological advancement of the village communities.

6E.13 Introduction of sea-planes would help as this will obviate the need for constructing more landing strips. The landing strip at Agatti has to be increased to enable larger aircraft to land. Airfare should be subsidized to promote travel and connectivity between the islands and the mainland.