

152

connectivity and communication links, and noted that progress in these as well as many other areas provided a foundation for accelerating the pace of development during the Tenth Plan. The financial and technical support given by the Planning Commission to the development of these islands was mentioned, in particular, the preparation of State Development Reports for setting out medium term strategies for accelerating the development of the islands. A full text of the Opening Remarks of Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission is given at Annexure-II.

Inaugural Address by Hon'ble Prime Minister

7. The Prime Minister in his Inaugural Address noted that the holding of this meeting soon after the adoption of the Tenth Five Year Plan was symbolic of the special attention being accorded to the development of the islands as an integral part of India's all-sided development. He noted that the Standing Committee of the IDA had been meeting regularly and expressed the desire that the IDA itself meet more regularly in the future.

8. The Prime Minister outlined the historical significance and natural strengths of the islands. These natural strengths would be the bedrock of the development strategy for these islands. In particular, ecologically sustainable ways of promoting island tourism and development of fisheries and high value horticulture and plantation crops appropriate to agro-climatic conditions were necessary. The Prime Minister also indicated that the Pawan Hans Helicopter service between Port Blair and other islands would be introduced shortly. Further, tele-medicine connectivity to the islands of Kavaratti and Car Nicobar with the mainland had been established by ISRO. The full text of the Prime Minister's Inaugural Address is given at Annexure-III.

Brief Statement by Member of Parliament, A&N Islands

9. Shri Bishnu Pada Ray, MP, A&N Islands welcomed the participants and expressed hope that from now onwards IDA meetings could be held regularly to solve the problems of Islands. He felt that effective monitoring of decisions was needed, and requested that rapid action be taken on the suggestions made in the 57 agenda items proposed by him for this meeting. He expressed concern about the problem of unemployment faced by the residents of A&N Islands after the Supreme Court Judgment of May 2002. Related to this was his concern about the need for proper rehabilitation package for settlers and encroachers. He also highlighted the need to have eco-friendly construction in the A & N Islands, being an earthquake prone zone. He pointed out that the UT of A & N Islands is a mini-India where people of diverse regions, castes and religions live in complete harmony, and this example of national integration needs to be preserved and replicated.