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jobs and land-intensive and low-yield agriculture. Two areas that can create large-scale employment, self-employment and business opportunities are development of fisheries and high-value horticulture and plantation crops appropriate to the agro-climate conditions here. For this, suitable human resource development strategies will have to be worked out.

I am happy to note that the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Department of Space have taken important decisions to improve these Islands' connectivity, both internally and with the mainland. Pawan Hans Helicopter Service between Port Blair and other islands will be introduced shortly. For this, 90% subsidy on the fare will be given to islanders. Secondly, ISRO has established telemedicine connectivity to the Islands of Lakshadweep and Car Nicobar with the mainland. Telemedicine connectivity between Port Blair and the mainland is already in successful operation.

Many issues of an administrative nature, which are of utmost concern to the islanders, but which the IDA meetings cannot obviously accommodate, have been resolved in the Standing Committee meetings. Further, the multi-pronged development thrust given in the Tenth Plan through higher outlays, closer interaction and regular monitoring is welcome.

Both the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands have made considerable progress in democratic decentralization. This is both useful and necessary, given the wide geographical dispersion of the population residing in these Territories. All steps in this regard deserve to be encouraged. At the same time, in any democratic set up, Constitutional jurisdictions need to be respected, and the various wings of governance have to work together harmoniously for the common good.

The Island Development Authority is a very special arrangement that has been put together considering the special problems that the Islands are faced with. The convening of an IDA meeting is an occasion that reinforces the intention of the Government in working for improvement of the lives of the people resident here. The institution of IDA is intended to enable integrated high-level decisions to be taken on issues of concern. I trust that it will be so in this meeting as well.

I view this as an opportunity of renewing our commitment to the rapid and peaceful development of these territories and I expect the whole-hearted cooperation of those who have assembled here in undertaking this challenging task.