

**ADDRESS BY HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT FOUNDATION STONE LAYING FUNCTION OF MULTI SPECIALITY
HOSPITAL KAVARATTI**

Kavaratti, January 7, 2020

1. I thank you for your warm, special and traditional welcome that I received today. This is my first visit to Lakshadweep since assuming office as the President of India and I am very happy to be here in these beautiful islands, amongst you at the beginning of the New Year. I wish that the new year brings joy and happiness to all the people of Lakshadweep.

2. When I was the Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha, I had the good fortune of knowing the late Shri P.M. Sayeed, who was a popular parliamentarian from here. He also distinguished himself as a Union Minister and as the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha. He used to tell me about the beauty of these islands and it was on his invitation that I had visited Lakshadweep when I was a Member of Parliament. Indeed, this a special place, blessed with unparalleled natural beauty. However, the clear blue waters of Lakshadweep reflect not just the magic of nature. It also testifies to the wisdom of all of the people of these islands, and their love and concern for environment. Lakshadweep presents itself as a mesmerizing eco-system made up of its under-water life, pristine lagoons, coral reefs, warm waters and its people.

3. The islands here are like the little pearls of India scattered in the vast Arabian Sea and they possess a unique glow. For tourists, both domestic and overseas, this place is like no other. The potential for tourism here, in particular for eco-tourism, is immense. Expanding sustainable tourism can provide more and more people an

opportunity to experience this place without compromising its fragile bio-diversity.

4. All of you here and your culture is a living example both of India's diversity and its unity at the same time. Even though you live far away from the mainland, you are connected to the country by our strong bonds of fraternity. I am aware that living here comes with some unique challenges, such as maintaining connectivity with the mainland and among islands, and harsh weather conditions particularly during monsoons. Nothing though has prevented Lakshadweep's onward march and progress.
5. There are several reasons to admire and compliment the people of Lakshadweep. I am told that Lakshadweep has become Open Defecation Free with effect from January 2018 and there is complete ban on single use of plastic throughout the islands here. I also learnt that Lakshadweep has achieved 100% institutional delivery and immunization. Further it is second only to Kerala as far as literacy is concerned. These are impressive achievements that make every Indian proud of all of you.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. Healthcare is a priority area for all of us and thus I was happy to lay the foundation stone of the super-specialty Hospital here at Kavaratti. I am sure that this hospital will address many of the health related issues of people living here in Kavaratti as well as those living in other islands. I am told that this hospital will have a range of medical facilities in the same compound, and it will provide both therapeutic services and preventive care. More importantly, when this hospital comes up and becomes fully functional, it would significantly reduce the need for patients to go to Kochi for treatment. I am sure that the

Lakshadweep Administrator would give his personal attention to ensure that the hospital becomes operational at the earliest possible.

7. Today, present among us is Lakshadweep's very own Dr. S. Rahmath Beegum, who was conferred with Padmashree for her contribution to the field of medicine. I understand there are also other doctors and medical professionals present here. In our country, doctors are considered next only to Gods. This is because you have now gathered the knowledge and skills that can save lives. You provide care, you heal wounds. In today's world full of distress you embody an extraordinary virtue- that is compassion. I urge you to remain full of empathy and continue to use your knowledge to save or improve lives.
8. I am told that the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Hospital here provides AYUSH service along with 14 other AYUSH Dispensaries. Thus, you have access to the Indian traditional systems of medicine too. Both the medical fraternity and the people should utilise our traditional systems of medicine, whenever possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. There is no doubt that Lakshadweep is amongst the most beautiful gifts of nature and the people here have done a lot to preserve its beauty and eco-system. Yet there are issues that confront us for solutions. For instance, I am told that all islands in Lakshadweep are totally dependent for electricity on diesel generators. We need to explore ways to reduce the dependence on diesel generated power. I am told that the National Fisheries Development Board has installed and succeeded with pilot projects of micro power units that run on wind and solar energy. We should look to expand the use of renewable energy in Lakshadweep, given that both wind and sun is available here in abundance. I also understand that Lakshadweep

has scarcity of potable water. This is another area where innovative solutions need to be found and adopted. I am sure that people of Lakshadweep and the authorities concerned will work together to address all such issues.

10. Before I end, I have a request for each one of you. The request is that whenever you come to Delhi, please do come and visit Rashtrapati Bhavan. It may be my office and home, but it belongs to all of you and to all Indians. Once again, I extend my best wishes to all of you present here and to all the people of Lakshadweep.

Thank you all.
Jai Hind!