First-ever Investors' Meet organized in Lakshadweep Islands to unlock Fisheries and aquaculture potential

"Fishery resources in India's EEZ will now be recognized as Indian Origin, empowering Fishers and opening doors to international trade" – Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh

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The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying (MoFAHD), Government of India, in collaboration with the U.T. Administration of Lakshadweep, successfully organized the Investors' Meet on "Investment Opportunities in Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector of Lakshadweep Islands" at Bangaram Island, UT of Lakshadweep today. This was a first-of-its-kind Investors' Meet in the Island wherein various Investors from across the Country participated. So far, approximately, **Rs. 519 crore worth of investment has been envisaged.**

The event was graced by Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying and Ministry of Panchayati Raj; Ministers of State Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel, MoFAH&D and Panchayati Raj; and Shri George Kurian, MoFAH&D and Minority Affairs; and Shri Praful Patel, Hon'ble Administrator of Lakshadweep.

During the Meet, **an Interactive session** was held to provide platforms to the Investors to share experiences and highlight challenges. The Investors outlined several issues including transportation of the production to the mainland, cold storage requirement, ice plants, and development of chilled fish handling centres for post-harvest management. The Investors called for value addition facilities for sashimi-grade tuna, fish oil refining capacities, requirement of skilled labour, ornamental fish brood banks for the strategic utilization of Lakshadweep's EEZ to drive sustainable growth.

In his keynote address, **Union Minister FAHD&PR Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh** said that the Government of India issued fishing rules for the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) therefore the Fishermen operating in India's EEZ can now legally fish with an authorized "Access Pass," enabling them to export high-value tuna and other fish products to international markets. As per international law, fishery resources present in India's EEZ will now be recognized as "Indian Origin," which will further facilitate the export of fish products, he added.

He added that Government of India issued the 'High Seas Fishing Guidelines' granting fishing vessels flying the Indian flag the legal right to operate in these waters. He urged investors to come forward and seize the vast investment opportunities in the Islands, which have immense potential for high-value species such as tuna, in strong global demand.

Minister of State, FAHD&PR Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel in his address highlighted Lakshadweep's untapped fisheries potential, called for the need to bridge the gap between Lakshadweep's current production of 14,000 tonnes and its potential of 1 lakh tonnes. He emphasized that the islands are naturally suited for premium-quality tuna fishing using pole-and-line and handline methods are globally recognized for their clean and sustainable practices. With proper branding, certification, and modern value-chain development, Lakshadweep tuna can access high-end international markets. He urged exporters to explore newer markets and leverage existing Government welfare schemes to strengthen the fisheries value chain.

Minister of State, FAHD&MA Shri George Kurian focused on emerging investment domains such as seaweed farming and ornamental fisheries, which offer high returns and diversification opportunities. Lakshadweep's lagoons provide ideal conditions for seaweed cultivation, and ornamental fish enterprises can tap into the global aquarium trade through hatcheries and broodstock development he added. He emphasized that India must harness its vast EEZ to boost production, strengthen deep-sea fishing, and create value-added seafood products, driving the Blue Economy forward.

Administrator, UT of Lakshadweep, Shri Praful Patel affirmed the collective commitment to realize PM Modi's vision of leading the Blue Revolution and urged stakeholders to share sector-wise and policy-related suggestions to help frame Lakshadweep's first fishing policy. Highlighting upcoming initiatives such as the Minicoy airport development and cooperative society strengthening, Shri Patel assured full support to the Investors, with plans for a follow-up meeting in Delhi to accelerate progress.

Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, Secretary, Department of Fisheries, GoI in his address emphasized the need for collective efforts to accelerate Fisheries development in the Islands and assured that Investors' suggestions would be given due consideration. He also highlighted the importance of a single-window system to promote ease of doing business in the fisheries and aquaculture sector of Lakshadweep Islands.

Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, Secretary, Department of Fisheries, Government of India, in hos address underscored the adoption of traceability framework covering fish origin, source, and tracking, and mentioned that this should be ideated in close collaboration with State Governments and UTs. He added that value chains need to be developed to strengthen market linkages and urged the administration of Lakshadweep to reinforce the single-window clearance system for investor facilitation. He also underlined the need for modernization of fishing vessels with sustainability considerations to ensure responsible growth in the sector. These measures aim to unlock the immense potential of Lakshadweep's Blue Economy, ensuring growth that is sustainable, traceable, and investor-friendly.

Ms. Neetu Kumari Prasad, Joint Secretary (MF), Department of Fisheries, GoI delivered the welcome address and presented key initiatives for sectoral development in Lakshadweep. She highlighted the Department's infrastructure push like modernization of fishing fleets, strengthening cold chain systems, and development of fishing harbours, alongside policy interventions under various welfare schemes. These measures, she said collectively create a conducive and investor-friendly ecosystem for private participation. She emphasized on empowering cooperatives in close collaboration with NCDC, adopting a Whole-of-Government approach.

Dr. Bijay Kumar Behera, Chief Executive, NFDB, in his address emphasized the need for a cage culture leasing policy, and technology-driven facilities for seaweed farming, including cell culture and biosecurity. He highlighted financing options under FIDF and NCDC, interest subvention benefits, and invited Investors to explore various business and entrepreneurship models.

Shri Rajthilak S, Secretary (Fisheries), U.T. of Lakshadweep Administration, delivered a detailed presentation and noted that pole-and-line fishing practice is recognized globally as a sustainable method. He mentioned that a Maritime Lease Policy to facilitate sustainable mariculture investments is being developed.

Dr. S.B. Deepak Kumar, Advisor to the Administrator, Lakshadweep, delivered the vote of thanks, and expressed hope that this historic first Investors' Meet will pave the way for similar initiatives across other sectors.

The Investors' Meet brought together 22 key investors from various parts of the country. During the Investors Meet, more than 200 participants joined in hybrid mode. The event was attended by Senior officials from the Department of Fisheries, GoI; UT of Lakshadweep, Officials from line Ministries/Agencies namely MoFPI, NCDC, EIC, MPEDA, NCEL, FSI, CIFT, CMFRI, NFDB, Invest India, along with local fishermen societies.

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