

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF INAUGURATION OF  
BEACH FESTIVAL “FESTA DE DIU”**

Diu, India: Dec 01, 2015

Dear Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a matter of joy for me to be present amongst you for the inauguration of “Festa de Diu”. It is really a festival time here. Arriving in Diu, I could feel the festive mood of the people, tourists and the City. Winters in Diu, I am told, are very pleasant and enjoyable. With clear and blue sea on one side, the setting is perfect for the festival. I must compliment the Administration for conceptualizing this unique beach festival, one of its kind in India and Asia. This is my first visit to this Union Territory and I must admit that this pristine island destination presents a serene spectacle, inspiring a profound sense of calmness. Diu may be geographically small, but it holds immense possibilities to draw tourists from all parts of India and indeed the world. I must congratulate the UT Administration and the residents of Diu for their efforts to make the city clean and ready for the grand beach festival.

Dear Friends,

India is known world over for the richness and diversity of its culture. Each part of India has a distinct cultural milieu which has evolved over centuries. Today, as I was watching the fascinating Siddhi Dhamal dance, I could not help but reflect on the manner in which civilizations have mingled over millennia. The dance of this

special tribe is the perfect manifestation of the confluence of cultures which binds the people of India and Africa together. Those were the days when sailors would set out from the Eastern seashore of Africa, across the Indian Ocean and reach the western shores of India. Diu was once a thriving port and traders from Gujarat would carry textiles to Africa and return with Gold and Ivory. In that age, our people were not connected with internet but were bound by ideas, culture and trade. Historically Diu also has a special significance for the Parsis as it was in Diu that they first landed in India. Even today, the Agyari and Dakhma bear testimony to the historical journey of the Parsi Community in India. This ethos of acceptance and assimilation has defined the Indian civilization and made it a melting pot of the world. We must nurture and preserve this spirit which has made our country a rich amalgam of multiple cultures.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Union Territory of Daman & Diu has a distinct heritage which makes it special part of India. I recall that in 1961 Operation Vijay was launched by the Indian Army to liberate this territory from the colonial rule. The whole nation felt a sense of pride as the people of this territory became part of the Indian Union along with Goa. The journey of the people of Daman & Diu in the last five decades has seen much progress and development. It's advancement in Infrastructure and Industrialization is noteworthy. It is heartening to learn that the UT Administration has taken concrete measures in the area of solar power generation in Diu. I am informed that Diu is striving to become the first city in the country to be completely run on solar energy. This would be a model which

other cities in the country could aspire for. A modern cycle track which has been constructed in Diu is also a positive step towards green mobility.

Being a small island territory which is blessed with such a beauty, tourism has to be a key driver of the economy and a source of livelihood. I am happy to note the concrete measures taken by the Administration to give a boost to tourism. I am told that the enhanced air connectivity, with Air India commencing its operations, will give a major boost to tourism opportunities in the territory. I feel that Diu can become a tourism gateway for southern Gujarat and Diu-Somnath-Gir are a natural tourism circuit. Better connectivity and collaboration with Gujarat tourism will provide a greater fillip to the immense opportunities in this sector. The Saurashtra region of Gujarat is also full of vibrant cultural and folk traditions and a boost to Diu tourism will also have a multiplier effect for development of tourism in the Saurashtra region. Organizing special cultural festivals such as these would be a source of encouragement for the Indian folk and classical artists and ensure that our youth stay connected with our cultural traditions. I am informed that last year nearly 17 lakh tourists visited Diu and with the consistent efforts of administration, this is likely to touch 25 lakh this year.

Dear Friends,

Diu has a unique locational advantage, blessed as it is with the bounty of nature. Thousands of small fishermen depend on the ocean for their livelihood. I am informed that the administration is taking measures for modernizing the fishing harbor at Diu. I would

also suggest that we explore the possibilities of greater value addition so that they get a better value for their catch. I'm told that the Ministry of Earth Sciences plans to set up a world class oceanarium at Diu. This will boost the two primary sectors of local economy – fisheries and tourism. While planning for the development of the region, the aspirations of the youth will also have to be taken care of. Providing modern education, skill development and adequate and decent job opportunities should be one of the goals of the administration.

In the end, I would once again welcome everybody to the start of the Festa de Diu and wish the festival a grand success.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

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