



Union Home Minister concludes his three-day visit to Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Reiterates Commitment of Central Government for Development of Andaman & Nicobar Islands

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The Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh concludes his three-day visit to Andaman and Nicobar Islands today. During his tour to Andaman & Nicobar Islands he visited four islands including South Andaman, Car Nicobar, Ross Island, Havelock Island and did aerial survey of volcanic eruptions at Barren Island.

On the first day of his visit on April 06, 2017, Shri Rajnath Singh was accorded a warm welcome at Port Blair. On his arrival at the Veer Savarkar International Airport, the Home Minister was received by the Lt Governor A&N Islands Professor Jagdish Mukhi, Member of Parliament Shri Bishnu Pad Ray, Chief Secretary Shri Anindo Majumdar, Chairman Port Blair Municipal Council, senior officers of A&N Administration and general public. Soon after his arrival, the Union Home Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh visited the National Memorial, Cellular Jail and paid tributes to the freedom fighters by placing a wreath at the Martyrs' Column. The Home Minister also visited the Veer Savarkar Cell in the Cellular Jail.

Later on arrival at Raj Niwas, the Home Minister reviewed the progress of all important projects and schemes being implemented in these Islands. On account of very large distance from the mainland, he particularly held detailed discussion on the issues, which affect the life of people most, in these remotely located Islands, like transport including shipping and civil aviation, communication, power, tourism and fisheries. The review meeting was attended by Lt Governor Professor Jagdish Mukhi, Member of Parliament Shri Bishnupad Ray and the senior officers of the Union Territory and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Shri Rajnath Singh addressed 3 public meetings including the huge one that was held to accord him the civic reception by Port Blair Municipal Council at ITF ground. He reaffirmed the deep emotional connect of the Central government with the people of the islands and the strong commitment of the Government towards inclusive and all round development of the country with special focus on the outlying regions.

While addressing the public meeting, the Home Minister described the Andaman & Nicobar Islands as "Mini India" a unique example of Unity in Diversity and national integration. He acknowledged the historical significance and distinguished contribution of the islands in the national freedom struggle. The Home Minister also recollected the contribution of freedom fighter, Veer Savarkar towards the country's freedom struggle movement. He said that politics should be done with a motto of service to the humanity. "Politics should not be done merely for formation of Governments but it should be for creating a better society and development of a strong nation", he said. Shri Rajnath Singh outlined that fight against corruption is key for achieving the mandate of development. He mentioned that the decision of demonetization for eliminating the parallel economy of black money and fake currency thus blocking illegal sources of fund flow for terrorists, Maoists and Naxalites, has been a path breaking step towards curbing corruption. He added that all measures towards promoting a cashless economy are aimed at reducing corruption. Opening zero balance accounts under the Jan Dhan Yojana has successfully brought 99% of the population under the umbrella of banks. The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) from 1st of July, 2017 will be a game changer as there will be a single tax for the entire country, he added.

During his address, Shri Rajnath Singh made some important announcements like revolutionizing the telephone and internet connectivity by laying of submarine optical fibre cable between Chennai and Port Blair and other 5 islands (Havelock, Little Andaman, Car Nicobar, Kamorta and Campbell) by December, 2018 at an estimated cost of Rs 1102.38 Cr and adding 14 new ships to the fleet from May, 2017 and March, 2020 for the transport of passengers and Cargo from the mainland to islands and between different islands. A detailed plan for holistic development of 5 islands including Smith Island, Ross Island, Long Island, Avis Island and Little Andaman is being planned by NITI Aayog and that would be put into action for over all development of these islands, he added.

While speaking about welfare measures and steps being taken to remove unemployment by the Central government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Home Minister also underlined the resolve of the Government to attack and continue attacking corruption..

While laying the foundation stone of 25 MW Solar Power Plant integrated with battery energy storage at Guptapara Village in South Andaman, which is first of its kind in India, Shri Rajnath Singh said that the projects of solar energy parks of 100 MW have been sanctioned for the islands and all efforts would be made to commission all of them by 2018. As the total installed capacity of power generation in these islands is 109.45 MW of which 99.10 MW is from diesel, he announced that in order to save the beauty and pristine environment of these islands and to produce green and clean as well as comparatively cheaper energy highly polluting diesel generation would be replaced by solar, wind and sea-wave energy.

In Car Nicobar Island, he visited areas affected by Tsunami of 2004, talked to tribal people of a number of villages and enquired about their well-being and progress of rehabilitation. In one of these villages namely, Malacca, he inaugurated a newly constructed and furnished building of senior secondary school, which was totally damaged by tsunami. He laid wreath at the tsunami memorial built in the memory of those who lost their lives in the devastating catastrophe, visited the picture gallery of the disaster and met the Tribal Council Captains and other Tribal leaders at Malacca. In Mus village he laid wreath at the Memorial of Padma Shree, Padma Bhushan and Ex-Member of Parliament, late Bishop Richardson, who is credited for integrating these islands.

Today on the last day of his visit, the Home Minister visited the Barren Island. The island, located 137 km north east of Port Blair, is India's only active volcano. It was recently in news when researchers from the Goa based National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) reported the volcano to be active and spewing lava and smoke. The Union Home Minister also visited the famous Radha Nagar Beach at Havelock Islands. The beach has been rated as the best beach in Asia and seventh best in the world. On his return to Port Blair, Shri Rajnath Singh also met the representatives of the different sections of the civil society.

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