

PM's closing remarks

We have had a very full and long day of deliberations. I thank all Chief Ministers for complying with the electronically imposed time limit. Had they not complied with the limit, we would not have been able to accommodate 40 speakers even in this long session.

I assure all Chief Ministers that we have taken note of the points raised by them, including those in the written speeches. All these points will be carefully considered by the Planning Commission.

Many of the points are broadly in conformity with what has been said in the Plan document. There are also some points which suggest a different emphasis.

A Plan is not a rigid blue print. It is a broad "directional" and "aspirational" document, which must allow for modification on the basis of experience. We will keep this in mind as we implement the Plan, and make improvements and modifications in consultation with the States as we go along.

The lowering of the growth target to 8 percent has been commented on by some CMs. Several CMs have recognized that this is only a realistic reflection of the external constraints on growth.

Some CMs have asserted that they will aim for a higher growth rate. I welcome this determination to do better. Some states will indeed do better than the average, and I commend their effort.

Several Chief Ministers emphasized the importance of sectors such as Agriculture, Power, Other Infrastructure, Health, Education and Skill development. The Twelfth Five Year Plan document reflects these priorities.

Several CMs also focused on the need for special consideration for backward States, and also for backward areas within States. I fully share this concern. States with low-income levels already get more resources under the formula used by the Finance Commission, and also the Gadgil-Mukherjee formula, which is used by the Planning Commission to distribute Normal Central Assistance.

In addition, we have the modality of the Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF). Under the BRGF, a large number of Districts received special assistance in the Eleventh Plan. There are also State Specific Packages for Bihar, KBK Districts of Orissa, Bundelkhand Districts of MP & UP, and most recently West Bengal.

The Planning Commission is currently working on a restructured design of BRGF, which will come into effect from next year. We will try to reflect the concern of CMs by recognizing the special needs of the extremely backward areas. The restructured BRGF will provide substantial additional funds to make an impact.

Several Chief Ministers have drawn attention to the problem of fuel availability affecting power plants. This is indeed an urgent problem, which needs to be tackled. I am requesting the Planning Commission to make a quick review of the situation and submit a report to me within three weeks. I would request all CMs to write

to the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission giving details of Plants, which they feel are adversely affected.

I was happy to hear of initiatives in solar energy in some States. I have asked the Planning Commission to review the innovative steps under consideration in various States to see how we can give greater momentum to this area.

With these words, I thank all participants for their contribution. We must now devote all our energies to implementing the Plan.

Thank you.