

A P J Abdul Kalam Departing speech

Friends, I am delighted to address you all, in the country and those living abroad, after working with you and completing five beautiful and eventful years in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Today, it is indeed a thanks giving occasion. I would like to narrate, how I enjoyed every minute of my tenure enriched by the wonderful association from each one of you, hailing from different walks of life, be it politics, science and technology, academics, arts, literature, business, judiciary, administration, local bodies, farming, home makers, special children, media and above all from the youth and student community who are the future wealth of our country. During my interaction at Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi and at every state and union territory as well as through my online interactions, I have many unique experiences to share with you, which signify the following important messages:

1. Accelerate development : Aspiration of the youth,
2. Empower villages,
3. Mobilize rural core competence for competitiveness,
4. Seed to Food: Backbone for agricultural growth
5. Defeat problems and succeed,
6. Overcome problems through partnership,
7. Courage in combating calamities,
8. Connectivity for societal transformation,
9. Defending the nation: Our pride and
10. Youth movement for Developed India 2020.

Now let me share with you each of the messages.

Accelerate Development: Aspiration of the youth

While there were many significant events during my tenure, a question from a little girl Anukriti of Sri Sathya Sai Jagriti Vidya Mandir School, of Darwa village from Haryana, during children's visit to Rashtrapati Bhavan on May 22, 2006, rings in my mind ever after.

Anukriti asked me "why India cannot become a developed nation before the year 2020". I appreciated the question and said it was indeed a thoughtful question and assured her that that her dream would be taken to the highest institution of the nation and we would work

for it to achieve before 2020. This question reflects how the desire to live in developed India has entered into the minds of the youth. The same feelings are echoed by over fifteen lakh youth, whom I have met so far and who represent the dream of the 540 million youth of the nation. The aspirations of the young to live in a prosperous, safe and proud India should be the guiding factor in whatever profession we contribute.

Empower Villages

Friends, I recall my visit to Nagaland on 26th October 2002, soon after my assuming office as President. It was a unique experience for me at Khuzama village to meet tribal village council members and discuss with them the village progress and the dream of village citizens. I was very happy to see the empowered village council functioning with financial powers and taking decisions. I saw a prosperous village with fruits and vegetables production. However, there is a need for providing physical connectivity in Nagaland through quality roads for enabling faster movement of products from villages to the market. That meeting gave me a powerful message about the transformation which can take place to the 600,000 villages of India, if all the villages are empowered to deal with their development and are well connected among themselves and with the urban societies.

Mobilizing rural core competence for competitiveness

Now I would like to talk about the initiative of Periyar Maniammai College of Technology for Women, Vallam, Tanjore of Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) complex involving 65 villages with a population of 3 lakhs. This includes provision of three connectivities - physical, electronic and knowledge - leading to economic connectivity. Periyar PURA has health care centers, primary to post graduate level education and vocational training centers. This has resulted in large-scale employment generation and creation of number of entrepreneurs with the active support of 1000 self-help groups. Two hundred acres of waste land has been developed into a cultivable land. The villagers are busy in cultivation, planting Jatropha, herbal and medicinal plants, power generation using bio-mass, food processing and above all running marketing centers. It provides a sustainable economic development model for the whole region.

During the last eight months, people of Periyar PURA villages technologically supported by Periyar Maniammai College of Engineering for Women have worked with experts from Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) on various products, for which core competence and raw material are available in Thanjavur district. They developed internationally competitive prototypes for 55 life style products with support of JETRO specialists and feedback from exhibitions at Delhi and Tokyo. This co-operative venture has enhanced the innovative ability of the people of all the 65 villages enabling them to develop and produce internationally acceptable products. I have seen similar type of PURA being established in many states. The whole country needs 7000 PURA to bridging the rural – urban divide.

Seed to Food: Backbone for agricultural growth

Let me now share with you, the enriching experience I had, while meeting more than 6000 farmers from different States and Union Territories visiting Rashtrapati Bhavan. They evinced keen interest in the Mughal Gardens, the Herbal Gardens, the Spiritual Garden, the Musical Garden, the Bio-diesel garden and the Nutrition Garden and interact with the Horticultural specialists. Recently, during my address to the agricultural scientists while participating in a National Symposium on “Agriculture Cannot Wait”, I summarized the many practical suggestions given by farmers. We have to double the agricultural production with reduced land, reduced water resources and reduced manpower and improve the economic conditions of the nation through the principle of “Seed to Food” since agriculture is the backbone of the nation. We should empower the farmers to protect and nurture the fertile land for second green revolution. Meeting the Scientists and the Farmers has given me the confidence that the nation is poised to increase the agricultural GDP growth by at least 4% per annum through the partnership of farmers and agricultural scientists and industries particularly for value addition.

Defeat the problems and succeed

On the evening of February 24, 2007, at Coimbatore, I had a very beautiful experience. As I got ready for meeting the first person out of twenty appointments, a wheel chair was in sight with a smiling person probably in his late fifties; unfortunately he has no hands and legs. His radiant face was revealing his happy state of mind. He introduced himself as Vidwan Coimbatore SR Krishna Murthy. I greeted him and asked him how this had happened. He smilingly said that it was from birth. He thanked God, his parents, teachers and many others for giving him confidence, training and help. I asked him, what I could do for him? He said, “I don’t need anything from you. I would like to sing in front of you”. I readily agreed. He sang melodiously the Saint Thyagraja’s pancha ratna kriti entharo mahanubavulu in Sriragam giving me a glimpse of his talent. I was quite touched. What is the message? Despite being physically challenged, the latent talent of music could blossom in this person with his positive attitude and perseverance, encouraged by the parents, teachers, academics and rasikas. Now he wants to give, give and give his art to inspire others. Of course, by his merit of music, in July 2007, he performed in the Rashtrapati Bhavan art theatre.

Overcome the impact of disaster through partnership

I had the opportunity to experience the Indomitable Spirit of the people and children of Jammu & Kashmir even as they were just recovering from the devastating earthquake in 2005. I visited Urusa village on 26th November 2005 which has been adopted by the Western Air Command, Air Force for providing relief and medical aid to the residents of that area. When I went there, I found that the school building had been severely damaged. I met all the school children and the village citizen of Urusa. The villagers apprised me of their losses and had all praise for Army and Air Force role in rescue and relief operations along with state government. I appreciate the courage of the people of Urusa in defeating their problems. They have actually become the master of the problem rather than allowing problems to become their master. Despite the severe loss due to the earthquake,

the children and the members of the village participated in the relief operation with the Armed Forces

bravely and were smiling when I went to meet them. They interacted with me and said that the school was functional in the temporary tents. Here, I also witnessed the participation of acting Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir along with State Government authorities in on-the-spot settlement of relief grants to be provided to the victims whose houses had been damaged in the earth quake. I have experienced many such acts of courage from our citizens when faced with severe challenges.

Courage in combating calamities

In 2005, I met the Tribal Council Leaders, Students, Children of Chuckchucha village during my visit to Car Nicobar Islands. While various reconstruction and rehabilitation activities were in progress, during the discussions with the members of tribal council, I realized the unique trait among the Car-Nicobar islanders. Even though there were many human losses due to the Tsunami of 26 Dec 2004, the tribal islanders had taken possession of affected victims as their children and there is nothing like orphanage in Car-Nicobar Islands. Touched by their courage, I composed few verses called “Sea Waves” which reads as follows:

Sea Waves

We are the children of Sea waves,
Sea waves are my friends.
When they become angry,
Sea waves give the challenges.
God has given the courage,
To challenge the sea waves.
And we will succeed,
We will succeed
With Almighty’s grace.

All the members who were gathered in the village sang the poem with me and exhibited lots of courage and enthusiasm even though they had gone through severe suffering during the Tsunami.

Connectivity for societal transformation

I addressed the Pan African Parliament on 16 September 2004, at Johannesburg, South Africa. This was attended by 53 member countries of the African Union, where I proposed the concept of Pan African e-Network for providing seamless and integrated satellite, fiber optics and wireless network connecting 53 African countries at an estimated cost of US \$ 100 million.

As part of the project 12 universities (7 from India and 5 from Africa), 17 Super Specialty Hospitals (12 from India and 5 from Africa), 53 tele-medicine centers and 53 tele-education centres in Africa will be connected. The pilot project on tele-education and tele-medicine in Ethiopia has already been commissioned. Indira Gandhi National Open University has taken up the MBA Course for 34 Ethiopian students of Addis Ababa and Harmaya Universities. As regards, tele-medicine, the specialists from CARE Hospital,

Hyderabad are providing one-hour live tele-consultation to doctors in Black Lion Hospital, Addis Ababa in Cardiology and Radiology since November 2006. Using the Pan African network the Heads of the State in all the 53 countries will be connected for instant communication. I am extremely happy that Indian experience in bringing the benefits of technology to the people has enabled us to work with Africa to bring societal transformation in the African continent.

Defending the nation: Our pride

I visited KUMAR in Siachen Glacier located at 17,000 feet altitude held by the Indian Army, had a memorable underwater journey in INS Sindhurakshak and flew in a Sukhoi-30 fighter experiencing 2.5 g. In these three experiences, I personally felt proud of our ever vigilant Soldiers, Sailors and Air Warriors performing their tasks beyond the call of their duty even in the most adverse circumstances natural and man made. During the last five years, I had an opportunity to present colours to many regiments, participate in number of passing out parades, meet the troops who were going to undertake peace missions and interact with the family members of our Defence Forces. Our Defence Forces are in a beautiful mission. When the nation sleeps during night, Members of our Defence teams are awake to guard us and remain vigilant to counter any threat. The Nation cherishes the valour, commitment and devotion to duty of our Defence Forces. Similarly, I had opportunities to interact with members of our para-military forces, central and state police personnel including internal security forces who are making immense contribution in augmenting the safety and security of our citizens under difficult conditions.

Youth movement for Developed India 2020

Recently, in Hyderabad, I met a group of citizens who are putting into practice the motto of transforming of our youth into enlightened citizen. The Lead India 2020 Foundation created by Dr. N.B. Sudershan at Hyderabad is training thousands of students in many districts of Andhra Pradesh in partnership with the District Administration. Particularly, I happened to know the transformation which has taken place among the students of Medak district. As per the district authorities the impact of the training on the students is visible in terms of self-discipline, love for their parents and teachers shedding of stage fear and recognition of their duties towards the nation. I talked to Ms. Padma, a student leader from Andhra Pradesh Tribal Welfare School, Nalgonda who related how she weaned her father away from smoking after imbibing the spirit of the 10 point oath from the Lead India Training Camp. This gives me an assurance that the youth of our country are on the right path through this mission oriented programme. With the ignited minds of the 540 million youth below the age of 25, which I consider is the most powerful resource on the earth, under the earth and above the earth, we have to empower the youth through value based education and leadership.

Conclusion

I was touched by the variety of Indian panorama, emotional content of the tune, cultural diversity and unity of minds in the vast land of ours. I have cited these examples just to give a glimpse of the richness of our tradition and effort being taken by different agencies

to preserve it. There are also many new adventures by institutions and individuals. I have experienced many of them and learnt a lot about my country and our people. Even while pursuing our economic growth, we need to do a lot to preserve the rich and diverse treasures of our culture and civilization. It is our duty for our future generations. This has to be done in a much larger scale through countrywide participation of multiple institutions. Our country is blessed with natural resources, has shown considerable progress in the last sixty years, and above all we have hard working people particularly the power of the 540 million youth of the country. Every sector of our country has given me the

confidence that India can become a developed nation well before 2020. Whomsoever, I met they constantly ask what they can give to the nation. We should constantly strive to empower such members of the society. With this spirit, I am extremely happy that we are on the right path. Here I am reminded of a famous poem:

"When you wish upon a star,
Makes no difference who you are,
Anything your heart desires,
Will come to you"

This poem is true to all of us, and particularly for our youth and if they aim great, I am sure they will reach close to the target or the target.

My dear citizens, let us resolve to continue to work for realizing the missions of developed India 2020 with the following distinctive profile.

1. A Nation where the rural and urban divide has reduced to a thin line.
2. A Nation where there is an equitable distribution and adequate access to energy and quality water.
3. A Nation where agriculture, industry and service sector work together in symphony.
4. A Nation where education with value system is not denied to any meritorious candidates because of societal or economic discrimination.
5. A Nation which is the best destination for the most talented scholars, scientists, and investors.
6. A Nation where the best of health care is available to all.
7. A Nation where the governance is responsive, transparent and corruption free.
8. A Nation where poverty has been totally eradicated, illiteracy removed and crimes against women and children are absent and none in the society feels alienated.
9. A Nation that is prosperous, healthy, secure, peaceful and happy and continues with a sustainable growth path.

10. A Nation that is one of the best places to live in and is proud of its leadership.

Finally let me thank each one of you for showering your love and affection on me throughout the last five years by your cooperation and support.

Dear Citizens, I conclude my address by sharing with you my mission in life which is to bring connectivity between billion hearts and minds of the people of India in our multicultural society and to embed the self confidence that "we can do it". I will be always with you, dear citizens, in the great mission of making India a developed nation before 2020.

May God bless you.

Jai hind.

Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

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