

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