

**Special Session addressed by Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam,  
Former President of India and an Eminent Scientist.**

The Chamber organised a Special Session on 'India : Enlightened and United - The Road Ahead' addressed by Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, former President of India and an eminent scientist on 26<sup>th</sup> August, 2012 at 5:15 p.m. at Hotel Hindustan International, Kolkata.

In the course of his Welcome Address, Shri Ashok Aikat, President observed that Dr. Kalam is the only scientist in the history of Indian politics who has been appointed as the first citizen of India. He also stated that Dr. Kalam has been conferred with India's three most coveted civilian honours — Padma Bhushan in 1981, Padma Vibushan in 1990 and the highest civilian award — Bharat Ratna in 1997 for his great contribution to science and technology in India. He has received honorary doctorates from 43 Universities and Institutions in India and around the world for his distinguished and path breaking contribution to space science and development of satellite programmes for India, Shri Aikat stated.

Shri Aikat observed that development of 'Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme' culminating in the creation of the Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-3) has been the brainchild of Dr. Kalam. He has injected the Rohini satellite into space, through this launch vehicle and has made India an exclusive member of the Space Club as early as in 1980. He was also responsible for the successful launching of Agni and Prithvi Missiles. Not only did Dr. Kalam achieve milestones in missile technology and space science, he has been one of the principal architects of India's achievements in the nuclear field during his tenure as the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India in the rank of a Cabinet Minister.

Being the founding father of Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC), Dr. Kalam has boosted the scope for critical technologies and has increased its applicability in the industrial and agricultural sectors of India. Dr. Kalam with his able leadership, has devised a long term perspective for India's economic growth through the compilation of the growth programme under 'Vision-2020'. The provisions for growth compiled in the book raised the growth rate of GDP in the first decade of the present millennium. Despite an effective implementation of the provisions laid down in Vision 2020, Shri Aikat requested Dr. Kalam to elaborate on the causes for slow growth and income inequality especially in the western, north eastern and southern India and also the Gangetic belt of the country. He emphasised, that under such conditions of inequality prevailing in the various parts of the economy, especially in the rural areas there is an imperative need to adopt the strategies under Providing Urban Amenities to Rural Areas (PURA) envisaged by Dr. Kalam himself.

Shri Aikat observed that Indian industry has been building up its technological capabilities at a steady pace. The country has also witnessed a steady growth in the fronts of Information Technology, Biotechnology and Pharma sectors. However, a threat to the long term growth prospects has been posed by the gap in technology adoption. In this regard, Shri Aikat felt that a greater emphasis on application based R&D as envisaged by Dr. Kalam for ISRO and DRDO is a necessity.

Since there is also an increasing need for the adoption of application based research on agriculture, post-harvest and processing, Shri Aikat urged Dr. Kalam to throw some

light upon the various scientific methods that can be adopted in achieving a sustainable growth in agriculture and at the same time, cater to the problem of uneconomic holdings of land.

Shri Aikat stated that skill can be developed by motivating education. The establishment of the National Skill Development Corporation has been an important achievement in this regard. It encourages the generation of skill among the young workforce of India. India has been surrounded by the impacts of global uncertainties, and having an open economy it is susceptible to external ill-effects. In this regard Shri Aikat believed that the advice of visionaries like Dr. Kalam would help India to remain immuned from such down turns.

Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, former President of India and an eminent Scientist greeting the members of the Chamber observed that being amidst the representatives of small, medium and large industries in West Bengal he feels that discussion on the topic of 'Sustainable Development Profile in West Bengal' needs emphasis. Dr. Kalam stated that the attainment of independence was an outcome of the vision of freedom fighters and the makers of our nation. Their vision towards attaining a higher standard of life was reflected in the rapid development of politics, philosophy, judiciary, science and technology and industry in India. Despite milestone achievements in literacy, agriculture, industrial production and strategic development, the country's still isolated from the G-8 Group and is categorised among developing nations. The reasons ruling such happenings lie on nearly 340 million people living below poverty line, insufficient literacy, healthcare facilities and lack of a developed value system. The inability of India to have strategically linked industry with academia is also a cause of its sluggish pace of growth, Dr. Kalam stated.

Dr. Kalam emphasised that India has sustained global turbulence and has shown a positive growth even during times of recession in 2008. The fact that India continued to grow at the rate of 5.3 per cent per annum even when the US economy and the Euro Zone suffered the brunt of economic downturn proves the growing economic strength of our country. The immediate need for the country according to Dr. Kalam, to attain a growth trajectory of 10 per cent per annum by 2020 would be to utilise its five core strengths. These include continued liberalization, modernization of banking sector, a change in orientation from savings to investment, a fillip to the middle class structure and bringing innovation to villages.

India being an agrarian economy, the agricultural sector needs rejuvenation, Dr. Kalam proposed. Value additions to agricultural outputs and creation of rural markets through Public-Private-Citizen partnership and through international partnership would add dynamism to the agricultural sector, he felt. In spite of having attained benchmark developments in IT, pharma, small scale and infrastructure industries and also having attained a fully controlled credit market, the Indian economy has to compete a competitive world order and thus requires re-energisation.

Dr. Kalam felt that India's vision to attain sustainable development would be well supplemented by its 65 years of experience in managing a democratic order in a multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-religious environment. India, according to Dr. Kalam has 5 areas of core competence, pursuing which it can attain the status of a developed country. The five areas outlined by Dr. Kalam are:

- Agriculture and food processing
- Education and healthcare
- Information and communication technology
- Infrastructure with special emphasis on power and transport
- Self- reliance in critical technologies.

Innovations according to Dr. Kalam should be boosted in co-operation with countries which have already become competent in the field of science and technology. Research, development and operationalisation are the only factors which could resolve problems of water, energy independence, environment protection etc. With the growing incidence of natural calamity such as cyclones, earthquakes, flood, famine etc., there is an ardent need for developing a protection mechanism which would help save loss of life and property. This way, Dr. Kalam stated, a resilient economy can be created, immuned to terrorism and corruption, by upgrading the skills of the youth by giving them higher educational facilities and opportunities to boost educational skills. Such a resilient economy would be integrated through the encouragement of art, music and sports which would unify the minds of every Indian.

Dr. Kalam felt that West Bengal with a rich political history is the birth place of modern Indian industry. He set before West Bengal a plethora of goals that it needs to achieve so as to boost its development. These include:

- Tripling of the per capita income from Rs. 33000 to over Rs. 120,000
- Attain 100 per cent literacy ratio.
- Reduce IMR from the current 35 to 10 per 1000.
- Free West Bengal from diseases like malaria, leprosy and TB.
- Minimise the rate of unemployment through value added employment generation.

The above goals can be achieved by the people, Government and organisations in West Bengal by taking into account the areas of core competence in West Bengal, Dr. Kalam felt. The measures suggested by him include the following:

- The imbibition of the under developed villages of West Bengal under the ambits of PURA.
- Reducing the number of school drop outs and ensuring equality in educational through promotion of tele-education and computerized primary education.
- Reinforcing healthcare through reinforcing tele-medicine and mobile medical vans and boats.
- Boost the agricultural sector through the boosting of the food processing sector.
- De-silting of rivers and linking them to create smart waterways within the state.

- Transforming IT into knowledge products and encouraging the establishment of BPO, KPO and outsourcing industries.
- Rejuvenation and modernization of the small and medium industries through adoption of modern technologies of production.
- Creation of connectivity through the building of all weathered roads and connecting ring roads.

Urging the Chamber to turn the above measures and vision into reality, Dr. Kalam suggested the following Missions that the Chamber could adopt to boost economic activity of West Bengal.

- Encourage industrial undertakings in the infrastructural sector which would in long run make West Bengal an attractive investment destination for industrial undertakings in all sectors.
- Use PURA as a tool to promote business for livelihood especially in the rural areas.
- Facilitate partnership between industry and academia to promote innovative technology in the production process.
- Employment can be generated in areas such as forestry, tourism, agro-processing by encouraging industrial investments in these unrecognised areas.
- Encourage industries to take up the cause of skill development which in turn would cater to both national and international demands for skills.

Shri Sajjan Bhajanka, Senior Vice- President of the Chamber offered a hearty Vote of Thanks to Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, former President of India and an eminent Scientist.

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