Inaugural Address
By
H.E. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam*

I am delighted to participate in the National Press Day. I would like to greet all of you on this great occasion. Forty year is indeed a big period and definitely Indian Press would have grown in many spheres of reporting. From now, to the year 2020, is a very important period for the nation. National Press definitely has to get transformed into media of billion people and above all they have to play a vital role as a partner of India's economic development. The combination of economic development and preservation of values system drawn from our civilizational heritage will transform India into a happy, prosperous and safe nation.

Friends, when I see you all, you are very important component of the society, I recall my experiences of visiting all the States and Union Territories, and witnessing the unique ambience of the seven hundred million people living in 600,000 villages equivalent to 200,000 Panchayat's. What is that ambience? I call that ambience as, "A scene of sweat". It is the farmers in the agricultural field, it is the fishermen in the rough seas, it is the worker in the industries, teachers in the schools, knowledge workers in the laboratories, knowledge and Pharma industries, health workers removing the pain at all times in healthcare institutions and many other people, who have to be always remembered by this great media community. In politics, there are two components: political politics and the other important element development politics. Most of you give importance to political politics. The nation's important need is development politics. Your reporting in this area is essential. That is how I have selected the topic for discussion today as "Press a partner in National Missions".

Media as a partner in national development.

Friends, I would like to share with you a few experiences that are relevant to the media today.

***Hon'ble President of India on November 16, 2006 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi**

(a) **Fellows of NVA: M.S.** Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) is engaged in the capacity building activity for rural development through rural youth. The Foundation had organized a meet of the national fellows some time back. The title of "Fellow" is normally attached with the academicians, intellectuals, scientists, historians and economists. Here, the fellows I am talking about are the farmers, fishermen or craftsmen drawn from various walks of life, who can make a difference to people living in the rural ambience. Their only potential is experience and enthusiasm to serve society.

I had met and interacted with over 140 fellows coming from different rural parts of the country. It is indeed a celebration of our rural core competence. The Foundation has really thought of an innovative scheme to recognize and train the people who are wedded to rural development and empowering them to promote rural transformation in certain areas. Particularly, I was impressed by the choice of fellows such as Mr. Anwarji of Balipara, Assam who has core competence in education, suitable for local people in areas such as literacy, sanitation and the use of ICT. Ms. Pushpa Ben of Village Sokhada, Gujarat who has the core competence in water conservation and vegetable vending; Ms. Vijyantha Raut of Nimgoan Bhogi, Maharastra who has the core competence of social work particularly in micro credit movement, Mr. Narsingh Singh from Charanwala Bajju village of Rajasthan who has the core competence in Computer education in rural areas; Mr. V. Deenadhayalan from Umbalchery village, Tamil Nadu with core competence in indigenous live stock keeping and also practicing animal healing using herbal plants. This clearly indicates the spectrum of experience of the fellows selected. I would recommend that journalists should interact with such grassroot social reformers and bring out their core competence, dedication and experience in serving rural communities, which can become a model for our youth to follow.

Friends, after I took over as President, apart from visiting States for participating in various functions, I also have interacted with students and people from rural areas wherever possible. I have also addressed the State Legislatures wherever possible. So far I have addressed 12 State Legislatures. In my addresses, the central message has been

how the State can be economically developed with high Human Development Index, and how to increase the per capita income of the State? I normally give 8 to 10 missions. These missions have been developed based on the inputs from the Planning Commission, consultation with State ministries, the core competence of the State and the rural development profile of the State which are mapped to Vision 2020 targets. I would suggest that the media personnel should study, research and analyze these missions and put forth the actions and suggestions to the executives, leaders contribute to the development of the corresponding States.

(b) Pro-active Media: I would like to share with you an out-of-the box solution. After my address to the Kerala Legislative Assembly on the "Missions for Kerala's prosperity", there was a detailed discussion in the Kerala Assembly amongst all political parties. As you know, the media in Kerala is very alert and dynamic. They took up the mission and extended the discussion to the people and all the political leaders, inviting suggestions from all of them. I would like to share with you how Malayala Manoroma contributed to the document which I presented to the Kerala Assembly. Malayala Manoroma translated this document "Missions for Kerala's prosperity" and ensured that it reached all the readers and various active development groups. Also the media organized six workshops, in different places in the State for discussing all the ten missions and seeking the operational problems and their solutions. In this workshop, ministers, political leaders, government functionaries and media personal participated. I also interacted with them during the concluding session through video conferencing. The media finally submitted their recommendations to the Government for implementation. This proactive step undertaken by the media shows how the media can be an effective partner in the national development.

Friends, I am sharing this experience with you, which is very important for the media to be a partner in national missions, such as Developed India 2020, PURA and the recently sanctioned "Bharat Nirman" programme with an investment of Rs. 1,74,000 Crore to be executed in 4 years by the Government. There is another important programme, called the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme covering 200 districts. In addition, the Government has also passed an act called the "Right to Education Act' for

providing compulsory and free education to all children between 5 to 13 years. All these programmes are very important national programmes and particularly the media should take interest, highlight the positive aspects and provide solutions to difficult aspects through nationwide consultations. This will certainly make a difference in the implementation of the programme and bring smiles to the faces of our billion people.

The economic development has got a tremendous link with the standards of ethics in the country and dynamics of globalization. Hence I will be discussing certain development goals in our country.

Now, I would like to discuss some of the innovative development programmes that need media attention, which I have come across in different parts of the country.

(c) PURA (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas): The integrated method which will bring prosperity to rural India is called PURA, which envisages four connectivities: the physical connectivity of village clusters through quality roads and transport; electronic connectivity through tele-communication with high bandwidth fiber optic cables reaching the rural areas from urban cities and through internet kiosks; knowledge connectivity through education, skill training for farmers, artisans and crafts persons and entrepreneurship programmes. These three connectives will lead to economic connectivity through the establishment of enterprises with the help of banks, micro credit and marketing of products. We need to establish approximately 7000 PURA Complexes in the country encompassing over 2 lakh Village Panchayats.

(d) Operational PURA: There are already four operational PURAs in the country pioneered by private institutions independent of Government efforts. They are the Periyar PURA in Vallam, Tamil Nadu, Loni Pura in Loni, Maharastra, Chitrakoot PURA in Madhya Pradesh and Byrraju PURA in Andhra Pradesh. Now I would like to share the experiences of my recent visit to Byyraju PURA in Bhimavaram, Andra Pradesh. Byrraju Foundation of Satyam Computer Services has undertaken the mission of establishing 32 Ashwini centers benefiting 116 villages with a population of around 500,000 people. It has provided electronic connectivity through wireless (512 kbps to 2 mbps), knowledge

connectivity in cooperation with the National Academy of Construction, Hyderabad and other domain experts, thereby creating economic connectivity in these villages.

(e) Economic Connectivity:During the last 4 years of its operations, it has skill enabled and knowledge enabled people in areas such as construction, tailoring, garment production, IT and spoken English. This programme has resulted in the creation of 3000 jobs with the minimum earning of Rs. 3000 per month, which is 3 times that of the earlier earning potential. A rural BPO Gram IT, established in Jallikakinada center has trained unemployed graduates in IT skills and spoken English and employed one hundred people to do BPO operations such as transaction processing of Human Resource data of Satyam Computers as back office processing; data processing of one million self-help-group members of Andhra Pradesh such as financial data, accounting data, spending patterns and cultural aspects under the programme "Mapping the bottom of the Pyramid". This Gram IT BPO has led to the 10% reverse migration from Hyderabad to Bhimavaram. I am sure this Model can be replicated by many of our IT companies in the rural sector to create PURA clusters and bring rural transformation. Journalists assembled here today can definitely study this PURA and analyze the impact it has made in improving the quality of life for the people living in this cluster. Based on this study, they can spread the message of the benefits of PURA to different regions in the country. Now I would like to talk about the important facility established by the Ministry of Agriculture which should be brought to the notice of all rural people in the country for deriving maximum benefits.

(f) Chhattisgarh Bhaktara PURA: Recently, I was in Chhattisgarh, where I inaugurated a PURA complex at Baktara village in Arang Tehsil of Raipur District. This PURA complex covering 22 villages with a population of 36,000 people is coming up and very soon it will be a vibrant PURA with high quality 4 lane roads with Battery operated and Bio-diesel buses, 1000 modern dwelling units, quality health care facility with 250 bed hospital and a state-of-the-art school by DAV Institution and paramedical and nursing training institutions. The Corporate have committed to establish these facilities linked to the schedule of commission of the PURA within next 5 years. I thought of sharing this experience with you to give an idea how the areas are fast developing in different parts of our country. Central Government is planning to create 2 PURA clusters in each district

across the country as a part of the 11th plan programme. Media's interest in PURA is indeed will be the interest of village development of the country and there by economic development of the nation.

Media Research

I have a suggestion particularly to the members of the media consisting of editors, journalists, correspondents and reporters. In our country, it is essential to have research wings in academic institutions developing media personnel in reporting news, event analysis and highlights. This will enable our journalists to carry out original research on topics of national interest and provide solutions to medium and long term problems. The owners of newspapers should encourage research being carried out by experienced and young reporters for acquiring post-graduate qualifications which will improve the quality of content of the print media. Participating media members must realize that continuous updating of knowledge in research environment is essential for all media personnel. For example, before any issue is discussed in foreign newspapers, they send it to an internal research group where data is studied; verified and factual news is generated and sent for publication. When there was a critical comment about outsourcing to India, a US journalist stayed in India and studied the issue and found out that the companies engaged in Business Process Outsourcing (BPOs) were carrying out business using imported equipment from USA and Europe. Thus, they found that the BPO industries provided an indirect market for the hardware industries of the USA and Europe. Immediately this was reported in the Indian media in a big way. Similarly a Discovery Channel media person wanted to study India's growth in Information Technology; Thomas Friedman came to India and stayed for a month and visited Bangalore and other places. Based on his news analysis he wrote a book titled "The World is Flat". Such is the power of research. I would suggest our Indian newspaper agencies should encourage research being carried out by our correspondents and journalists within India in academic research institutions, which will definitely improve the quality of our reporting and enhance the participation of journalists in national development missions.

Missions for media

In the present development context of the nation, I would like the media to take up the following missions for immediate implementation.

1. A media movement: Developed India before 2020.

2. Media becoming a development partner in the programme of PURA (Providing Urban amenities in Rural Area) – connectivity is the focus.

3. Celebrating every aspect of the success of the people of the State and the Nation particularly in rural areas.

4. Evolution of corruption free India before 2015.

5. Promoting an enlightened society, which means education with value system, transforming religion into a spiritual force and building economic prosperity of the nations based on their core competence. For this mission, a unique world body is essential.

6. Print media and electronic media should bring honor to the womanhood.
7. Scanning and digitizing all old issues of the print media since its establishment and store in a digital library to preserve our national heritage and make it available for research.

8. Media should evolve a code of conduct among themselves for ensuring that all reporting is analyzed, evaluated, and researched prior to publication. This is essential for peace, prosperity and safety of the nation.

Conclusion

Friends while I am discussing the necessity of having the code of conduct for the media, I would like to share with you a healthy practice being evolved and followed by a newspaper which is published all over the country. They have appointed a consultant exclusively for maintaining the standard of the newspaper reporting and nurture the name of the paper, thereby ensuring that all the guidelines are adhered to by the reporters.

There is a constant review of the quality of reporting and improvement in the guidelines. This may be followed by the media organizations all over the country to continuously improve the quality and maintain the consistency of news reporting.

The Members of Press council of India may undertake the task of motivating every citizens of the nation to work towards transforming India into a developed nation well before 2020. This is the mission which has to be done unitedly by all the media organizations. Once again let me greet you all on the occasion of the 40th National Press Day and wish you success in your mission of igniting the minds of our youth for making positive contribution towards the development of our nation.

May God bless you.