

A National Vision Is A Must to Generate Ideas: APJ Abdul Kalam

Dr Kalam Proposes National Prosperity Index to Measure Nation's Progress



L-R: Gautam Thapar, Vice Chairman, Aspen Institute India; Chairman and CEO Avantha Group; Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, Former President of India; Jamshyd Godrej, Chairman, Aspen Institute India; Chairman and Managing Director, Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Co.Ltd.; Tarun Das, President, Aspen Institute India and Chief Mentor, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

A nation should first have a vision, for it is this vision that will help generate the ideas that will propel its growth. **Former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam**, said this at the special plenary session on 'Ideas Shaping India' during the first day of the three-day 'Ideas India 2008', being organized in New Delhi by Aspen Institute India.

"Vision 2020 envisages economic development of India by year 2020 by achieving 10 per cent Gross Domestic Produce (GDP) growth maintained at least for a decade," Dr Kalam said while acknowledging that the global financial meltdown, or "economic turbulence" as he termed it, has put an obstacle in achieving this aim within time.

Looking at the positives from India's point of view, Dr Kalam said, "we are slightly safe from economic turbulence because we did not go for complete reforms and Indians have a mind for saving." The negative, according to him was that sales of

products have come down. To overcome this, he said, "we have to pump money into the rural economy and fuel prosperity there."

In this context, he stressed on giving impetus to PURA (Providing Urban amenities to Rural Areas) movement. PURA will help in thinning the urban-rural divide and thus help in equitable spread of economic progress in the country, he said. "For me, GDP is an urban notion," Dr Kalam said adding, "and sooner it is translated into what we propose to be a National Prosperity Index, it is better for us." The National Prosperity Index, he said, means GDP rate plus rate of bringing people above the poverty line plus improving the value system of the country. "This would be a true indicator of progress in whole of the country," he said.

Answering a question on spurt in terrorism activities and Mumbai terrorism strike, Dr Kalam said that "strength respects strength. I am of a strong view that we need a UN force for counter-terrorism so that we can react multilaterally to this threat." When evil minds combine, good minds can't be watching, he said adding, "they have to come together."

The former president pointed out three things that people can do to fight the menace of terrorism. "Education to young minds about dynamics of terrorism, bringing elders together irrespective of their religion and being righteous in the heart will go a long way in this direction," he said.

On the front of education, Dr Kalam stressed on giving focus to primary education. "We absolutely need to change the syllabus and system of primary education in our country," he said. "Primary classes should be turned into creative laboratories as that is the time to make change," Dr Kalam said adding, "for this to happen, it is important to train primary school teachers in such a way that they can tap the talent and imagination of children at that level."

When asked by **Chairman of Aspen Institute India and CMD of Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Co. Ltd., Mr Jamshyd Godrej**, on how to improve the state of agriculture in the country, Dr Kalam said the "way forward is cooperative farming, better technology, multi-crop system and better marketing." Agreeing that the agricultural sector needs to improve to fulfill the needs of the country, he said that there is an urgent need to go for better soil management, seed management, water management and pre- and post-harvest management. "All have to go hand in hand for things to improve," he pointed out.

On being asked by **Vice-Chairman of Aspen Institute India and Chairman and CEO Avantha Group, Mr Gautam Thapar** about his experiences as the President of India, Dr Kalam said that he realized that "under the Constitution, the President of India has tremendous amount of accountability and unlimited latent powers." Rashtrapati Bhavan for me, he pointed out, is the People's Bhavan.

New Delhi
December 18, 2008