



Media for Billion People

Address during the inauguration of Press Club Chennai

By Dr.APJ AbdulKalam [Chennai, 14/Apr/2009]

Media is a partner in National development

I am delighted to participate in the inauguration of Press Club of Chennai. My greetings to all the members assembled here. As the premier professional association of journalists in Chennai, the Press Club can facilitate the dissemination of the knowledge and create "Consilience" process among various segments of the society, be it scientific, technical, political or journalistic. It involves synthesis of knowledge from different specialized fields of human endeavor for human progress. In a mature democracy, different views are essential to move towards citizen-centric, constitution guided policy directions.

I commend the contributions of The Chennai Press Club and wish them well in their future endeavours in the in aesthetically designed new premises. I hope you will ensure a good web site of the Press Club which could serve as a good reference for the journalists, researchers, students and general public alike. For me personally it will be a great joy to visit such a website. When I am with you, I would like to talk on the topic **Media for Billion People**.

Contributions of the Indian media and challenges

Over the years the Indian media has shown remarkable progress in news content, technological enhancements, citizen interface and innovative methods to motivate people and organizations, who contribute to society. India is a country of diversity. We have some of the richest persons in the world; at the same time we have to uplift 220 million people who are living below poverty line. We have realized the Chandrayaan mission; at the same we have yet to make everyone literate in our country. We have outstanding women who have shown their capabilities in many fields; At the same time it pains every right thinking citizen about the violence against women, which we come across sometimes. We have the best of aircraft ferrying across metropolitan cities; at the same time we have villages still to be connected by roads.

So the priority is, how to bring an inclusive growth and for realizing this, we have to strengthen the multiple organs of governance. Our legislature, our executive, our judiciary and our media should be transformed for the billion.

Positive journalism

I have always believed that the first loyalty of a journalist must be to the people. A journalist should be independent from any individuals, parties and organizations. While there should be no compromise on truth-telling, media organizations should exercise restraint when it comes to reporting news that may affect national interest, social fabric and peace in the society.

Media for billion people

In a billion people of our country, seven hundred million people are living in six hundred thousand villages. The events and news have to be unique and large when compared to other countries. Hence our print media has got a great challenge. Our news reporting has to be rural urban based in all our states. I consider the newspapers or media are indeed a partner in our national development. A partner means "somewhere an innovative use of organic cultivation is taking place are the productivity of wheat or rice is increased by two times by the initiative of the farmers using scientific methods". This indeed is a very important news. This news must be studied, analyzed and propagated to many places in the country. Similarly, a water pond which for years were remained unused and the farmers or social organizations have collectively worked together and make it operational, this indeed a big news and must be reported. Such reporting will enable desilting and rejuvenation of lakhs of water bodies which are non-operational today in many of the States. Similarly, a constructive criticism of how the Panchayat is working, how the flow of funds from the Government is reaching the required development project must also be reported so that necessary

corrective measures can emanate.

I would like to give two examples which I have seen in the rural setting.

Rural BPO and its socio-economic objectives

On 4 April 2009, I launched a rural BPO at Sanasandiram, Chennathur Panchayat, Hosur Block, Krishnagiri District. The objectives of the Rural BPO are to train and employ rural youth (from very poor socio-economic backgrounds), infuse confidence in them, and transform them in line with the other international BPO workers. This has prevented migration of youth to the cities from that area and promoted reverse migration and wean away the youth from extremist tendencies. With national and state level plans for e-Governance, Rural BPO could become a value added employment opportunity for the rural youth. At Sanasandiram, I found that through this initiative income of the youth has tripled and the youth are able to earn in the range Rs.5000 to Rs.12,000 per month. They are doing international BPO work from a rural area and are able to compete with their counterparts working in the metropolitan cities. I have suggested replication of this model in many parts of the states and country. This type of event has to become important for media analysis and reporting.

Garment industry supported by rural women

On 15 October 2008, I had visited Iledu Village in Kancheepuram district where National Agro Foundation has been working on improving the agricultural productivity of the village and also simultaneously finding out non-farm avenues of value added work to the rural community. They had created a linkage between the rural women and garment export company operating from Chennai. The design and raw material is provided to the workers at Iledu and finished products are sent to Chennai for export. This brings out the need for export quality packaging for the product. Ideally, it will be useful to execute final packaging at the rural level itself which will enhance the income potential of rural citizens and prevent migration to the cities. I had suggested to the students and faculty members of Indian Institute of Packaging, Mumbai during their convocation, to come up with innovative packaging system production establishments in the rural areas itself. This also I consider as a valuable information for rural citizens in many districts. I visualize media has a liking for reporting such type of events.

Grass root innovation

While participating in the Award ceremony for the winners declared by National Innovation Foundation (NIF), I have found that during the last 9 years NIF has identified 80,000 innovative practices which have lead to 100s of patents including 20 international patents. Now, we are ripe to see that the benefits of innovation reach the community in large number for which an integrated action is needed. This action will enable creation of number of rural enterprises every year in our rural sector based on rural innovation driven projects in the PURA clusters. Such events in 100s will be taking placed in India. Media for billion people has to capture and propagate such rural happenings.

Constituency Database

In a months time, a new Lok Sabha with 543 new Lok Sabha Members will be in position. Now it is time, our media instead of waiting for five years and evaluating the performance should bring out the following data base in consultation with district collectors and panchayat boards. This data base will indeed lead to the constituency progress and economic development. Media indeed will become the partners in national development. Let us study, the data base which is required to be collected as on May 2009.

- o The present per-capita income of all the citizens
- o The data on literacy level of the people
- o The data on all the water bodies and their status in respect of de-silting and interconnection of inlets and outlets
- o The core-competence and resources of the villages which will enable taking up of rural development projects and provide value added employment to all the citizens of the villages.
- o The present IMR (infant mortality rate) and MMR (maternity mortality rate) of all villages.
- o The availability of safe drinking water and electricity to the number of families in the villages.

This data base could become the basis for planning and action of all the developmental tasks of the district, as soon as the MPs are elected with a five year target (2009-2014) in front of them. The type of performance people of particular constituency can ask from the elected representatives are: improving the per-capita income of the constituency by three times, increasing the literacy by at least 20% in respect of male and 30% in respect of female, making all the water bodies de-silted and connected.

Also I would suggest: reducing the IMR and MMR to be less than 10 per 1000 and generating value added employment opportunities to all the rural citizens and provision of safe drinking water and electricity reaching every home.

I am sure this will be a valuable input from the members of the media for providing focused performance of all the elected members of 543 constituencies of the country.

Now I would like to discuss the importance of media research.

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 every newspaper system for developing media personnel in reporting news, event analysis and highlights. This research wing has to be linked to media research in the academic institutions. 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 journalists. For example, before certain issues are 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 where 90% of the equipments were imported 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". This book has become famous not only in India but throughout the world. Such is the power of research.

I would suggest our Indian newspaper agencies should encourage research being carried out by our young correspondents and journalists within India and abroad in academic research institutions, which will definitely improve the excellence in reporting and enhance the participation of journalists in national development missions. Media of every nation has the responsibility of reporting the best of human accomplishments and progress made on important national events to the notice of the people.

Conclusion

Dear friends, during the last few years, I have seen, how India Vision 2020 has inspired the people particularly the youth of the nation, which has resulted in many taking up many missions directed towards Vision 2020. Now I recall a situation in 1990 beginning when I was interacting with the youth of Ahmedabad, one girl asked me a question "When can I sing a song of India?" At that time, her brother who was in United States was always talking about the best in the United States. This girl sitting in India was fed up about his brother's stories and in her quest to find an answer she asked me "When can I sing a song of India?" How do I answer, I have explained about the Developed India Vision 2020 and told her that have a confidence and certainly you can sing a song of India by 2020. The same spirit echoed everywhere during that time. But for the last few years, while interacting with the youth, I had seen a marked change in the thinking of the youth. They have always been asking me "What can I give to the nation?" That means youth are ready to contribute for the national development?

Recently during the last six months, I see a further a change, they tell me "**I can do it**", "**We can do it**" and the "**Nation can do it**". See the 540 million youth of the nation is ready to participate in the development process. They are aspiring to see the developed India before the year 2020. The members of the media can keep the motivation level of the youth by celebrating their success and become partners in the development of the nation.

With these words, I inaugurate the Press Club of Chennai. My best wishes to all the members of the Press Club success in their mission of becoming the media for the billion people.

May God bless you.

APJ Abdul Kalam,

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