

### **Following is the full text of the speech –**

“Dear sisters and brothers,

I am pleased to be with you all to release the book, “40 Years with Abdul Kalam-- Untold Stories” written by his long-time close associate Dr. Sivathanu Pillai.

Dr. Kalam was a true karma yogi and an inspiration to every Indian. He was truly a “People’s President”, who endeared himself to every Indian, particularly the youth. He was an epitome of simplicity, honesty and wisdom. His contribution to strengthening India’s defence and space capabilities is invaluable.

I had many occasions to interact with Dr. Kalam when he was in DRDO and later as the President of India and every time I was struck by the depth of his knowledge and his sincere desire to transform the lives of the common people.

I would like to quote Shri AB Vajpayee ji on Dr. Kalam, when they were Prime Minister and President respectively: “After his election to the President of India, Dr. Kalam has brought immense grace to it, and also a new sense of purpose that is all his own. Place and position do not make a man. A man is made of samskaras. Besides discharging his constitutional responsibilities with dignified quietude, Dr. Kalam made Rashtrapati Bhavan the karmabhoomi for his pet concerns, which are also the Nation’s major concerns-- issues such as education, development of Science and Technology, rural development, and all-round development of our children, who are the most precious asset. From there he has been transmitting the dream of how to make India a Developed Nation”.

As President, Dr Kalam personified dignity and optimism throughout India and abroad. He was regarded in every country as a strong promoter of friendship and knowledge. In recognition of his contributions, NASA had named a newly discovered organism found on the International Space Station after Dr. Kalam in 2017.

At Rashtrapati Bhavan, Dr. Kalam had encouraged bio-diversity in the garden, nurtured medicinal plants and created an herbal and "spiritual" garden, which attracted thousands of visitors, especially school children.

The former President always spoke of the need for India to become a developed nation given the vast natural resources and the talented pool of human resources in diverse fields. He was convinced that India has the potential as well as the capability to become a developed nation in the near future.

In fact, Dr. Kalam generated Vision for each State in the form of Display Charts. He invited the MPs to the Rashtrapati Bhavan and explained to them the value, core competence and development schemes of their States. His biggest passion was to motivate and inspire school and college students to work with a passion for nation-building activities.

With a median age of less than 30 years, India is among the youngest nations in an aging world. This youth energy should be channelized positively for nation-building. I am sure that the recently launched New Education Policy is a step in the right direction and will help India train its students to meet the 21st century needs.

Another area that Dr. Kalam passionately advocated is the need to bridge the rural and urban divide. His PURA model - Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas – laid emphasis on enhancing connectivity and building village clusters to spur economic development. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana launched during then Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure and Bharat Net project being steered under the leadership of current Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi are two visionary programs aimed at connecting our villages with the mainstream.

The pain of the exodus of migrant workers due to Covid-19 pandemic reminds us of the need to create employment and economic opportunities in villages and small towns. For this, we will have to focus on decentralized planning, capacity building of local bodies and large scale promotion of cottage industries so that our villages and towns emerge as growth centers.

Dr. Kalam established a unique place in the hearts of Indians as the People's President. He was a staunch nationalist, an inspiring orator and a prolific writer. What made him an inspiring and much-loved leader was the human side of Kalam's personality which touched so many lives.

I strongly believe that the ultimate aim of science and technology is to make people's lives better. Once, during his visit to NIMS in Hyderabad, Dr. Kalam was moved to see polio-stricken children facing difficulty in walking with heavy calipers made of leather, wood and steel. Space scientist in him could instantly visualize how to cut the weight and make those prosthetic legs lighter. Soon his team was able to reduce the weight of the caliper from 3 kilogram to 300 grams by using advanced composite material used in rockets.

Later on, Dr Kalam had commented, "When I see children run around and cycle with the artificial limbs we designed, it is sheer bliss."

Not only this, he also worked with cardiologist Soma Raju, and developed a low-cost coronary stent - the 'Kalam-Raju Stent'. He always wanted society to benefit from the spinoffs of defence and space technologies.

I am happy to note that during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic our scientific community has come up with many innovations. India had zero production capacity for PPEs at the onset of the pandemic, but today we have emerged as the second-largest producer of PPE kits in the world. Challenges were many, but with a sustained push by the government, businesses and other stakeholders were able to produce over 5 lakh PPE kits per day. Today, we are in a position to export them to several countries.

This story needs to be replicated in other fields to create a truly 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. This was Dr. Kalam's dream and he dedicated his entire life to make India self-reliant in defence and space technologies.

Similar were his concerns for the environment. He repeatedly said that we have only one livable planet in our solar system. It is our duty to protect the earth and leave a livable planet for our future generations. Even on his last day, while delivering his lecture — "Creating a Livable Planet Earth" at IIM, Shillong, he cautioned humanity of the harm we have inflicted on nature in our blind quest for development.

This is the time to seriously follow Dr. Kalam's sagacious advice and adopt a path of development that is sustainable and environment friendly. Our scientists and engineers should come out with innovative technological solutions that are energy efficient, clean and affordable.

I am happy that Dr. Pillai has come out with the book '40 Years with Abdul Kalam' providing a gripping, first-hand account of Dr. Kalam.

The life of Dr. Kalam sends a powerful message about how difficulties and setbacks when taken in the right spirit, serve as the key ingredients in making us robust in character and mindset. Today's generation should draw inspiration from him and dedicatedly work towards building a strong, self-reliant and inclusive India.

Like Dr. Kalam the youth should think out of the box and use technology for providing solutions to the various economic and societal challenges that impact large sections of India's population.

It is also important as a Nation to be self-reliant in strategic industries. The book describes how Atmanirbhar Bharat can be realized in the industrial sector.

I am very happy to note that the late Shri Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India wrote the Foreword of this book. Dr. Pillai as the architect of India's Supersonic Cruise Missile Program – BrahMos has himself made immense contributions to India's Defence and Aerospace capability. I wish him all the very best in his future endeavors.

Thank you.

Jai Hind!"

\*\*\*\*\*

MS/DP