

Staff Reporter

Former Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam on Saturday stressed improving physical, electronic and knowledge connectivity in rural areas for a poverty-free Saarc region.

Physical, electronic and knowledge connectivity can prove to be effective to prevent the flow of rural people into cities as these will facilitate earning capacity leading to economic connectivity, he noted, expounding his development concept of 'Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas' (PURA).

Abdul Kalam came up with the recommendations while delivering his lecture at the 110th founding anniversary of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC).

Kalam, the 11th Indian President, said when urban amenities to rural areas are provided, the investors of small scale industries can be attracted and effective financing systems like microfinance can also be introduced there.

He said rural areas must have other infrastructures like schools, hospitals and amenities for local populations.

Kalam added that women education should get the highest priority as they would play a vital role in reducing population growth.

The former Indian President made his deliberation as the keynote speaker in the second session of the function while the inaugural session, held with MCCI president Rokia Afzal Rahman in the chair, was addressed by Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed and Prime Minister's foreign affairs adviser Dr Gowher Rizvi.

In his long lecture, Abdul Kalam focused on creating an honest, transparent leadership who will have qualities of 'vision, mission and realization'.

He said a leader must have a vision, a passion to accomplish the mission and must be able to travel into unexplored path. "Leader must know how to manage a success and failure."

About the Bangladesh-India multidimensional relations, Abdul Kalam said both countries have long-shared history and culture. Focusing on the trade relations between the two neighboring nations, he said Bangladesh and India shared significant natural resources, including 54 rivers. He proposed to replicate his PURA program in the development of Khulna region where one of the primary agro-product is jute, and said new technologies can help jute manufacturers under a cooperative structure aligned with the concept PURA to make them independent enterprises. The former President said a private company in Kolkata developed the Jute-thermoplastic composite based shoe components with the help of Indian Jute Industries Research Association. Bangladesh and India can reap the advantage of such new technology for mutual benefits.

He also said it is a great opportunity for the two nations to take a visionary action to replace and eliminate plastic products throughout the world by technology, development and marketing.

Kalam put in place the idea of developing ecotourism and forest products in the mangrove forest-based Khulna region which can generate multiple employment opportunities.

Sharing his experience on globalization, the former Indian President said: "When I walked into a multinational software company in Bangalore, I was fascinated to find that it truly presented a multicultural environment. A software developer from China, working under project leader from Korea, working with a software engineer from India and a hardware architect from the US and communication expert from Germany, were all working together to solve the banking problem in

Australia.”

“When I see all of them working together like one family forgetting about the culture from which they come or the language they speak, I feel that only the hope for such borderless interaction to continue is to inculcate the spirit of borderlessness in every human activity on our planet Earth.”

In delineating his vision about the world in 2030, Abdul Kalam wants to see a world of nations where the divide between rural and urban, rich and the poor, developed and the developing is narrowed down and all can enjoy an equitable distribution and adequate access to energy and quality water.