

**We need to convert Swarajya in to Surajya by empowering women, youth, poor and by making Agriculture viable and sustainable: Vice President**

Vice President's Secretariat

## **We need to convert Swarajya in to Surajya by empowering women, youth, poor and by making Agriculture viable and sustainable: Vice President**

**Concerted efforts needed to bring the urban and rural divide;**

**There is a need to provide urban facilities in rural areas;**

## **Addresses second anniversary celebrations of Chennai International Centre**

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that we need to convert Swarajya in to Surajya by empowering women, youth, poor and by making Agriculture viable and sustainable. He was addressing the gathering at the second anniversary celebrations of Chennai International Centre, in Chennai today. The Minister for Fisheries, Tamil Nadu, Shri D. Jayakumar and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that the country is striving for inclusive development after 70 years of independence and continues to grapple with many challenges like poverty, illiteracy and urban-rural divide. He further said that even as India transits from a developing to a developed nation, one of the major challenges the country has to address and overcome is this urban-rural divide. This gap, if it is not bridged, can hamper the country's progress, he added.

The Vice President called for tweaking of certain policies with a rural bias so that the benefits of development and growth reach all citizens and he also stressed on the need to create opportunities at rural areas to mitigate migration. He further said that lack of job opportunities, inadequate medical and educational facilities are among the main reasons for driving people from villages to urban areas. Erratic power supply, lack of potable drinking water and inadequate sanitation are the major challenges faced by people living in villages, he added.

Expressing concern over the state of agriculture, the Vice President said that non-remunerative farming and the availability of better educational facilities in urban areas are forcing the rural youth to move out of their villages. He further said that diversification of crops, value addition through food processing, better infrastructure and enabling a better marketing system are the need of the

hour. There has to be concerted efforts from all stakeholders in this direction so that it will be a win-win situation for all, he added.

The Vice President said that we need to adopt multi-pronged strategy to address the concerns of farmers. He further said that the Government is doing its best and the recent hike in MSP is a welcome move. But more needs to be done to sustain agriculture. Farm loan waiver is not a permanent solution, he added.

The Vice President asked authorities to provide facilities available in the cities in rural areas. The potential for promoting cottage unit suitable to the respective areas has to be fully tapped, he added.

The Vice President suggested few measures to bridge the urban-rural divide. Promoting digital connectivity in rural areas, connecting villages to electricity grids, ensuring quality supply of power and potable drinking water are among them, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"More than 70 years ago, we gave ourselves a Constitution with a commitment to secure justice social, social, economic and political to all the citizens as also equality of status and opportunity. However, even today, we are striving for inclusive development and the country continues to grapple with many challenges like poverty, illiteracy and urban-rural divide.

Even as India transits from a developing to a developed nation, one of the major challenges the country has to address and overcome is this urban-rural divide. This gap, if it is not bridged, can hamper the country's progress.

Undoubtedly, India has made impressive strides in various sectors since Independence and has become the fastest growing large economy. The country is poised to become the third largest economy in the next 10-15 years. One of the key drivers in this growth narrative is urbanization. With thousands of people migrating from rural areas to cities and big towns, urbanization has become an irreversible phenomenon. It is estimated that 50 per cent of India's population will live in urban areas by 2030.

An important hallmark of good governance is to reduce inequities and ensure inclusive development. This becomes all the more necessary when we are dealing with a widening gap between the urban and rural areas in terms of development and reaching out various benefits. I

feel certain policies must be tweaked with a rural bias so that the benefits of development and growth reach all citizens.

We are all aware that the lack of job opportunities, inadequate medical and educational facilities are among the main reasons for driving people from villages to urban areas. Erratic power supply, lack of potable drinking water and inadequate sanitation are the major challenges faced by people living in villages.

Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's three-word mantra for 'Reform, Perform and Transform' has to be implemented in letter and spirit by all the stakeholders—government, local bodies, educational and medical institutions, NGOs and the private sector to bring about a complete transformation in the lives of the rural people and rural economy in general.

The country can achieve rapid progress and bring about a transformation in the lives of both urban and rural people only when we collectively strive to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, caste and gender discrimination as also the twin menaces of black money and terrorism.

It should be noted that rural people are gravitating to urban areas in search of greener pastures in spite of the difficulties in the initial stages to get adjusted to an urban lifestyle. Non-remunerative farming and the availability of better educational facilities in urban areas are forcing the rural youth to move out of their villages.

The downside of the phenomenon of migration is that it makes the families to live apart—while the young and able-bodied move out, the older people or the elderly remain in the villages and very often fend for themselves. Also, in many cases, the children are left behind to be raised by grandparents. It is also fact that not all migrants enjoy reasonable quality of life because of subsistence jobs.

Another downside of rapid urbanization is the haphazard, unregulated growth of cities and towns with pollution, housing shortage, traffic congestion and slums increasing day-by-day. The unregulated growth is also leading to breakdown of civic amenities.

With about 65 per cent of the Indian population living in villages, greater thrust and focus is needed on comprehensive rural development—from providing basic amenities like roads, schools, hospitals to ensuring digital connectivity and industrial development. In a nutshell, all the facilities available in the cities must be provided in rural areas. Given the vast variations in the availability of natural resources in rural areas, the potential for promoting cottage unit suitable to the respective areas has to be fully tapped.

In fact, former President A P J Abdul Kalam had spoken of the concept of PURA (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) as a means of bringing villages on par with the well developed urban cities.

It is indeed a matter of serious concern that people, who had been dependent on agriculture for decades, do not want to continue the same occupation now. The need of the hour is to make them diversify to allied activities like poultry and dairy to earn their livelihood and prevent their migration to cities. There has to be concerted efforts from all stakeholders in this direction so that it will be a win-win situation for all.

Diversification of crops, value addition through food processing, better infrastructure and enabling a better marketing system are the need of the hour.

We need to adopt multi-pronged strategy to address the concerns of farmers. The Government is doing its best. The recent hike in MSP is a welcome move. But more needs to be done to sustain agriculture. Farm loan waiver is not a permanent solution. We always tried to address the concerns of consumers, but we need to take a balanced and holistic view and protect the producers.

In recent times, the agrarian crisis has driven farmers to commit suicide in different parts of the country. Low incomes, less purchasing power and absence of a secondary source of income for farmers are some of the major issues that need to be addressed to prevent suicides and migration from rural areas. Thus, urban development and rural progress have to go hand-in-hand to rectify the imbalance between the two regions.

Of course, integrated urban-rural development is quite a challenge around the world. India is no exception in this sphere.

While the urban-rural divide can be witnessed in a range of areas, the concentration of economic activities in urban areas naturally leads to higher incomes in urban areas while the rural areas are caught in extreme poverty. According to a recent socioeconomic and caste census data, about 30 per cent of India's rural households are landless and dependent on manual labor for an income.

With internet becoming ubiquitous, I had mentioned earlier that there is a need to promote digital connectivity in rural areas. As per a survey, internet penetration in urban India was at 64.84 per cent as against 20.26 per cent in rural areas in 2017. Less internet penetration deprives the rural areas of harnessing the benefits of internet.

The urban- rural divide is not desirable and has to be bridged by a careful, coordinated and concerted effort by policy makers, bureaucracy, think tanks,

civil society organizations and private organizations. We the people of India have successfully overcome many challenges and this can also be addressed successfully with political will and administrative skill.

Dear sisters and brothers,

I would like you to focus on innovations that will serve the needs of the vulnerable and those at the bottom of economic pyramid. Here, I would like to recollect what we may describe as Gandhi Ji's talisman: "Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man /woman whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him/her. Will he [she] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [her] to a control over his /her own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?"

Our aim eventually is to help in achieving inclusive development and fulfilling the needs of the people at the bottom of economic pyramid. That indeed was the vision of Gandhiji, Dr.Ambedkar and Deendayal Upadhyay, all of whom wanted the development of an inclusive society and removal of every type of inequity.

Some of the important measures to bridge the urban-rural divide include connecting villages to electricity grids, ensuring quality supply of power and potable drinking water. Lack of adequate power has been the bane of rural India and this has to be addressed on a war footing. Rural electrification needs to be accorded top priority. The Government is moving in that direction.

Various Government schemes such as Swachh Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak yojana, Digital India, Bharat Net Project, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana are the steps in right direction and have to be implemented with greater vigor.

Former President, Dr. Abdul Kalam had said :“Smart habitation is an integrated area of villages and a city working in harmony and where the rural and urban divide has reduced to a thin line”. I feel that Smart Cities can be sustainable only when they co-exist with smart villages. Moving businesses to smart villages will create more jobs in rural India, decongest urban areas, raise rural incomes and strengthen rural economy.

For businesses and enterprises to thrive in rural areas, there is a need to ensure well connected, affordable transport systems, uninterrupted power supply, education and health facilities. Providing skills to rural youth, affordable credit and market connectivity are also essential to transform villages into economic hubs. Industries or businesses that do not require location-advantage need to be encouraged to move to rural areas by offering incentives.

Shifting excess workforce from agriculture to other remunerative areas is need of the hour. Rural entrepreneurship revolution will transform the rural economy and the living standards of the rural people.

Our commitment to the Constitution must ensure that we bridge every type of divide to ensure a rapid and unhindered progress of the country and harmonious co-existence of the people.

I wish to see that Gandhi ji's call of "back to villages" becomes a reality soon and the rural India and clusters of villages transform themselves into thriving economic and business hubs. We should make all efforts to convert Swarajya to Surajya. That is the purpose of Transformation for a New India. Adhaar, JAM (Janadhana-Aadhaar-Mobile) and DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) are the way forward.

JAI HIND!"

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