

Agriculture should be on top of the agenda of the Government: Vice President

Vice President's Secretariat

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Encourage farmers to take up allied activities like poultry, horticulture to improve income;

Need to bridge urban-rural divide at the earliest;

Inaugurates New India Conclave

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy and it should be on the top of the agenda of the Government. He was addressing the gathering after inaugurating the New India Conclave being organised by Y4D Foundation, here today.

The Vice President said that there is a need to make agriculture remunerative and farmers must be encouraged to take up allied activities like poultry, horticulture, sericulture, bee keeping, dairy and others to improve income. He further said that there is a need to put in place for easy availability on loan at an affordable price and assured power must be supplied to farmers living in villages. He said that schemes like loan waivers and free power may not provide lasting solutions to agriculture distress in the country, he added.

The Vice President said that the as country we have failed to translate Gandhiji's dreams into reality even 70 years after attaining Independence. There has been uneven and lopsided development with urban areas witnessing rapid growth and the rural areas remaining backward, he added.

The Vice President stressed on the need to bridge urban-rural divide at the earliest so that India's progress towards becoming the third largest economy in the world in the next 10-15 years is not hampered. The rural areas have to become thriving hubs of economic activities with the agriculture playing an important role in the overall prosperity of the rural people, he added.

The Vice President called on the youth to be in the forefront of freeing India from the clutches of poverty, illiteracy and other social evils like gender and caste discrimination, particularly in the rural areas. Youth of our country need to acquire the right mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to overcome the 21st century challenges and reap the demographic dividend for the country's growth and development, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am extremely pleased to inaugurate the New India Conclave which has brought together rural youth from across the country to brainstorm and come out with innovative ideas for transforming the lives of people in villages by empowering them economically.

The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi had long back given "Back to Villages" call as he was convinced that for India to become prosperous, the rural areas have to become thriving hubs of economic activities with the agriculture playing an important role in the overall prosperity of the rural people.

Unfortunately, we have failed to translate Gandhiji's dreams into reality even 70 years after attaining Independence. There has been uneven and lopsided development with urban areas witnessing rapid growth and the rural areas remaining backward.

We need to bridge this urban-rural divide at the earliest so that India's progress towards becoming the third largest economy in the world in the next 10-15 years is not hampered.

The youth of the country, particularly from the rural areas, have a defining and game-changing role to play in transforming the lives of the people and building a New India, which envisages to fulfil the dreams of our national icons and valiant freedom fighters.

While the Union Government and the State Governments have been implementing various rural development schemes, the youth need to become change agents and supplement the efforts of the governments in empowering the rural people. In this context, I appreciate the Young Team of 4D Foundation for taking the initiative to bring together rural youth from across the country and make them to listen to the ideas of the country's top leaders.

Such deliberations will not only help in exchanging ideas but also enable them to adopt the best practices.

Y4D, Youth for Development—is indeed an apt title as youth play will be playing a monumental role building the New India in which inclusive development will transform the quality of life of all people. It will be an India where social problems like poverty and illiteracy will be a thing of the past and where every citizen becomes a part of India's growth narrative without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, sex, region and religion.

By complementing the efforts of the governments NGOs like Y4D will have to play pioneering role in bridging the urban-rural divide, removing agrarian distress and transforming the landscape of rural India.

I think the time has come for the citizens of the country to be socially more conscious and play a pro-active role in the development missions of our country, particularly the youth. Lack of social empathy and a tendency to look up to the government for everything is not good.

Dear brothers and sisters,

India is transiting from a developing nation to a developed one. With about 65 per cent of the country's population below 65 years of age, we need to convert this huge human capital into nation-builders and accelerate the pace of development. In fact, youth played an invaluable role and contributed immensely during India's freedom movement. Once again, the youth should be in the forefront of freeing India from the clutches of poverty, illiteracy and other social evils like gender and caste discrimination, particularly in the rural areas.

I am confident that youth in our country, who have time and again risen to the occasion, will again act as the torch bearers in scripting the country's growth narrative. The manner in which the youth protested in one voice during the Emergency is a testimony to the commitment of the people of India to protect democracy, irrespective of the hardships faced by them.

The energetic and dynamic qualities of the youth need to be fully tapped.

I am happy to know that many rural youth from different corners of the country are attending this "NEW India conclave". With about 70 per cent population of the country living in rural areas, you are the true representatives of our country. Rural youth with their understanding of the ground realities can articulate better the real challenges faced by people in villages and provide valuable insights for realizing the vision of New India.

I am happy that the Government is according top priority to rural development. Various initiatives like improving rural road connectivity, electrification and steeply increasing the MSP are aimed at doubling the farmers' income and improving lives of rural people.

I would like the youth to focus on the following areas to realise the dream of New India.

Education:

Of course, the first and foremost is education. The country not only has to harness the demographic dividend by empowering the youth through education, but also involve them in educating and empowering the unlettered. They can be engaged in adult literacy campaigns in rural areas.

Vocation Education/ Skill development:

With about two-thirds of our country's population below the age of 35 years, the youth of our country need to acquire the right mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to overcome the 21st century challenges and reap the demographic dividend for the country's growth and development.

Sky is the limit for exploring various vocational opportunities. Keeping this in view, the government has launched a massive mission for skill development. Government and NGOs should work collaboratively with youth in the region to advance these programmes.

Research and development:

The new India we are collectively dreaming of will be possible only if the children and youth of our country develop the scientific temper and attitude. Young scientists should focus on innovations to solve societal problems. We have to collectively strive and ensure that various research outcomes reach the needy. These kind of conclaves should be utilised to share the best practices.

Technology Usage:

Thanks to the revolution of Information Technology, the world is changing like never before. The need of the hour is to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas and ensure that every citizen becomes digitally literate. Already, many apps are being used to impart education and this must be accelerated to reach out to sizable youth population living in rural and remote areas of our nation.

Entrepreneurial spirit:

Rural India is rapidly changing. Many of the rural youth are well informed, eager to learn and have an entrepreneurial spirit. We need to create the eco-system for rural entrepreneurship to take off and flourish.

Promotion of Indigenous crafts:

A crucial and important aspect in uplifting the rural economy is promotion of indigenous crafts. People who make indigenous crafts are enormously gifted and talented and we need to tap their talent optimally and empower them economically by providing marketing facilities.

Fostering Peace:

India is a vibrant, multi-cultural, pluralistic country where people of all faiths and religions have been living in peace and perfect harmony for centuries. All of us should strive to preserve our age-old cultural heritage, practices, values and customs. India always believed in the philosophy of "Vasudhiava Kutumbakam", and treat the whole universe as one family. We need to not only uphold our culture, but also protect nature for a better future.

Social responsibility:

It is a matter of concern that the values in the society are deteriorating day-by-day. The attitude of sharing and caring has to be inculcated among children and the youth. As Mahatma Gandhi Ji had said "The best way to lose yourself is to find in the service of others". Do whatever little you can. These tiny actions collectively make a substantial difference in improving the lives of the people.

Here, I would like to recall our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's three-word mantra 'Reform, Perform and Transform' to realise the dream of New India. This 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 every Indian.

Women empowerment:

No Nation can progress without the contribution of women. Women should be respected and given their due rights. More than legislations, social movements will bring the real changes in the society. I would urge the youth present today to be in the forefront in empowering women and curbing atrocities against women.

Finally, I would like to conclude by recalling what Swami Vivekananda had said: “If the mind is intensely eager, everything can be accomplished...Mountains can be crumbled into atoms”.

JAI HIND!”

AKT/BK/RK

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