

International statesman supports Spirit of Ireland project - energy independence within five years.

The Spirit of Ireland project has received public endorsement from a great statesman of modern times, Dr Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam, the 11th President of India.

Dr. Kalam visited Trinity College Dublin on Friday 12 June 2009 to deliver a lecture on a vision for transforming India into a developed nation entitled, 'The Vision Elevates the Nation'.



Former India president Dr APJ Abdul Kalam at Trinity College Dublin with Provost Dr John Hegarty (photo Irish Times, Saturday 13 June 2009 – photographer Matt Kavanagh)

In the introduction to his lecture Dr Kalam mentioned that he is promoting “Energy Independence” in India through a three pronged approach using Solar, Wind and Thorium based nuclear reactors and Bio-fuels. It is his hope and aspiration that India will be free from the grasp of fossil fuels within the next few decades. Dr Kalam also noted that “Spirit of Ireland” is pursuing a similar goal for Ireland and commented that he had been inspired by this “futuristic programme”. This is one area Dr Kalam identified as having potential for Irish – Indian cooperation.

This tremendous honour came as a welcome surprise to the Spirit of Ireland team who were not aware of Dr. Kalam’s high level of interest in and support for the project.

Dr Kalam’s philosophy for turning India into a developed nation is based on his belief that it is the duty of nations “to give a better quality of life to all their citizens and to ensure that citizen’s aspirations to live in a prosperous, peaceful environment are fulfilled”. He further identified a nation’s responsibility “to sustain and protect the planet earth for current and future generations”. All of these aspirations are shared by the Spirit of Ireland project.

However, arguably of most relevance to the Spirit of Ireland project is Dr Kalam’s assertion that “There is also a need to ensure that even with the growing overall global population and dwindling resources, there is an equitable growth and that humanity is protected against shortages in resources like energy and water through innovative technologies”.

Dr Kalam's great interest in the Spirit of Ireland project was demonstrated through an invitation extended to Prof Shvets to join him and the TCD Provost, Dr John Hegarty, for a working lunch on Friday 12 June 2009. During the lunch Dr Kalam was eager to learn as much as possible about the Spirit of Ireland project and questioned Prof Shvets at length about all aspects of the project.

The meeting proved to be a very successful and informative exchange of ideas. Dr. Kalam had excellent knowledge of the project, very high levels of technical understanding and remarkable curiosity. The Indian ambassador to Ireland, His Excellency Mr. P.S. Raghavan took part in the discussion. The Provost, Dr. Kalam, Prof. Shvets and His Excellence Mr. Raghavan agreed that the Spirit of Ireland project may become an interesting pivotal element to widen collaboration between Indian and Irish scientists.

About Dr. Kalam

Dr. Kalam is a non-political figure who has earned enormous respect in India for his contribution to science, technology and the development of the Indian defence industry.

Dr Kalam initially trained as an aeronautical engineer. Before becoming president in July 2002 to July 2007, he contributed significantly to India's space programme and has been acting as principal scientific adviser to the government on many projects. He is one of the chief architects of India's policies on innovation through technology and education, and his visions for India's future have inspired and encouraged people all over India and beyond. As India's 11th president, he is remembered as one of the country's most popular presidents and the Indian community in Ireland will be in attendance at the public lecture to welcome him to the country for the first time.

Dr Kalam's career began with his involvement in the successful development of India's first indigenous Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-III), which propelled India into membership of the Space Club.

Dr Kalam served as the Principal Science Advisor to the government of India. As an eminent scientist and Chairman of Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) he lead India, with the help of 500 experts, to develop Technology Vision 2020 - a roadmap for transforming India from its present status as a developing nation to that of a developed one.

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