

Ensure equitable growth for all: President Patil

Even as the Indian economy is surging in strength and resilience and being watched by the world with singular interest, growth must be inclusive and touch all sections, President Pratibha Patil said in her maiden address to the nation on the eve of India's 60th Independence Day.

"Growth, when unevenly spread, dwarfs overall prosperity," the President said.

"We have to ensure equitable growth for all. The fruits of economic development must necessarily touch, especially, the living and working conditions of our toiling masses and people below the poverty line," Patil added, echoing a constant refrain of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Stating that the 60-year-old democracy, the largest in the world, was today set to take off, the newly elected woman president reminded fellow citizens of their duty to ensure that this unprecedented moment did not go unutilised. "We have to take special care to bring in egalitarian reforms to ensure that the full benefit of economic liberalisation reaches people at all levels," she said.

"For our nation to rise and claim its glorious destiny, we must realise that it is our billion hands that can shape it and, in the immortal clarion call of Swami Vivekananda, I ask my fellow citizens to 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached'."

Besides delving on the economy, Patil also focused on the other challenges before the country including the status of women,



poverty, health and agriculture. Quoting Mahatma Gandhi as saying that "salvation of India lies in the elevation of her women", the new president said history bore sufficient proof that women excelled not only as able homemakers but also in the task of nation building.

"Let us resolve that they are not left marginalised in our society. Let us also resolve to expand opportunities for their wholesome participation in every field of activity and make them harbingers of sustainable development," said Patil.

"For any nation and its people to become great, there is a need to pursue the path of

collective vision. The more developed amongst us should inspire and enthuse the less developed to race ahead on the road to development," she said. Pointing out that agriculture played a critical role for balanced development, Patil said besides attaining the goal of food security, "a strong and robust growth in agriculture can help reduce rural poverty".

Alluding to India's young demographic profile, Patil maintained it was imperative to bring the needs, rights and expectations of the youth to the centre of development concerns.

For the text of President's speech click on www.presidentofindia.com ■

Inauguration of India-funded electricity project in Faryab

Against the backdrop of giant posters proclaiming "India-Afghanistan: Partners for Peace, Progress and Stability" and a 1,000-strong cheering crowd, Ismail Khan, Afghan Minister for Energy and Water, and Ambassador Rakesh Sood formally inaugurated the two 110/20 KV electricity sub-stations at Faizabad and Juma Bazar in the North-Western province of Faryab on July 29.

With the commissioning of these two sub-stations, which are part of the Indian government-assisted Faryab Electricity Transmission project, aimed at bringing electricity from Andkhoy to Maimana, the project was formally handed over by Sood to the Government of Afghanistan. Water & Power Consultancy Services Ltd (WAPCOS), a Government of India undertaking, was the main contractor for the project.

Inaugurating the sub-stations, Khan lauded the contribution of the Government of India in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.



Afghan Minister for Water and Energy Ismail Khan (left) with Ambassador Rakesh Sood (right) at the inauguration of an electricity sub-station at Faizabad.

Ambassador Sood expressed the hope that with the provision of electricity to Faryab, the province should see a spurt in economic activity and development.

As part of its assistance, the Indian Government has supplied the entire equipment worth \$7.8 million for the Faryab project

and provided manpower for supervision of construction and commissioning of the project. The project envisaged construction of three main 110/20 KV sub-stations at Maimana, Faizabad and Juma Bazar, laying of a 130 km-long 110 KV electricity transmission line from Andkhoy to Maimana, 15 km-long 20 KV transmission line from Faizabad to Dawlatabad, as well as construction of several distribution stations.

Earlier, President Hamid Karzai had inaugurated the Maimana sub-station on November 28, 2006, bringing electricity to the capital of the province.

With the completion of the Faryab project, about 10,000 households and commercial establishments will be getting electricity in the four major districts of Maimana, Juma Bazar, Faizabad and Dawlatabad in Faryab province. In the context of Afghanistan's crippled electricity sector, Faryab province at least, will be less bleak and dark this coming winter. ■