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With women at helm, developed nation status not far away: Kalam

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CHENNAI: With women leading the nation, India can attain status of the developed nation even before 2020, former President APJ Abdul Kalam said on Thursday.

Participating in an interactive session with the students of the Stella Maris College, Mr. Kalam pointed out that President Pratibha Patil, Speaker of the Lok Sabha Meira Kumar and the Chairman of the UPA Sonia Gandhi were already leading the nation.

Expressing hope that the students of the college would one day lead the nation and the states, he called upon them to imbibe the indomitable spirit of the achievers in various fields while empowering themselves with a sense of purpose. He wanted the students to emulate the traits possessed by three women: Wangari Mathai, the winner of Nobel Prize for Peace in 2004 for sustainable development, Sister Antonia Brenner, who works among prisoners in Mexico and stopped the confrontation between prison guards and prisoners braving bullets, and Rohini Devi, a scientist working with the DRDO.

When a student wanted to know why not many students were not pursuing pure science, Dr. Kalam attributed the problem to the trend of parents deciding the course for their children. "You can get education loan and parents choose a course with job-potential," he explained.

On the question of Indian students leaving the country for greener pastures, he said earning was not a sin. He, however, felt with the creation of more IITs and other higher educational institutions more and more students would get opportunities to study in the country.

Dr. Kalam also advocated the concept of region-wise development where rivers, forests and natural resources would be shared by a region. But he pointed out that smaller states were being created with the objective of ensuring development.

He disagreed with the argument of a student from Manipur that subsequent governments had neglected her State. "There is no dearth of fund. What you needed is leadership. To get development peace has to be established there," he said.

Principal Sr. Jesintha Quadras, Vice-president Helen Vincent and many others participated.