

## In Memoriam: Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Former President of India

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Former Indian President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, a renowned scientist nicknamed the “missile man,” and who was known as the “people’s president,” passed away on July 27 at the age of 83 after collapsing at an event at the Indian Institute of Management, Shillong in Meghalaya, India, where he was scheduled to deliver a lecture. According to reports, he suffered a cardiac arrest during the lecture and passed away after two hours of treatment in the intensive care unit at a nearby hospital. He became the most popular President of India as 11th head of the state of the country from 2002-2007.

Dr. Kalam received UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, at “Rashtrapati Bhavan,” the Presidential Palace, on June 2, 2006, during her 180-Nation Peace Tour. During this meeting, he asked Mrs. Moon and all UPF members present to share their personal experiences with Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who founded UPF with Mrs. Moon, one by one. In conclusion, he suggested UPF collect personal testimonies of leading world figures and Ambassadors for Peace who were touched by Rev. Moon’s vision and work for world peace. Six months later, UPF published the “Peace King” essays on the life and work of Rev. Moon.

Based on this relationship with him, UPF invited Dr. Kalam to Korea to attend the World Summit in 2013 and 2014; however, he could accept neither invitation due to important pre-commitments. This year, UPF invited him to attend the 3rd World Summit from August 27-31, 2015. As the event approached, UPF-International president Dr. Thomas G. Walsh and UPF-Asia regional chair Dr. Chung Sik Yong visited Dr. Kalam at his residence in New Delhi on April 13, 2015. Since he always kept himself busy with his

work, he had some engagements; yet he accepted UPF's invitation to go to Korea and address the World Summit on August 28, on the occasion of the third anniversary of Rev. Moon's passing.

UPF had just booked Dr. Kalam's flight tickets, and in the evening on the very same day, heard he had passed away.

As President, Dr. Kalam utilized any opportunity that came to him to address students, especially school children, to dream big so that they could achieve in life. A bachelor, the former President was a Veena player (a stringed instrument used mainly to play Indian classical music) and was deeply interested in Carnatic music, a system of music associated with southern India. He was a vegetarian throughout his life. Born into a poor family, Dr. Kalam became the President of India in the most unexpected manner and gave a clear roadmap to India to become a developed nation through his project, India Vision 2020. He believed India could become a developed, self-reliant nation by 2020 if it utilized all its national potentials. An aeronautics engineer, Dr. Kalam helped launch India's missile program, but his most passionate profession was teaching. He was a renowned educator to millions of students worldwide. On some occasions, he would say that if he had the chance, he would die in the midst of teaching to students. His dream to pass to another world exactly happened the way in which he dreamed. Like his quote, "Dream is not that which you see while sleeping, it is something that does not let you sleep," Dr. Kalam dedicated himself to the cause he loved the most, until his last breath. On the day he was on his way to address the students at Indian Institute of Management, he tweeted: "Going to Shillagong...to take a course on Livable Planet Earth at iim." Dr. Kalam was scheduled to address students at the school on "Creating a Liveable Planet Earth."

The entire country of India and people all over the world are mourning the loss of Dr. Kalam. The government of India has declared a seven-day state mourning in honor of the former President.

Leaders from India and around the world have started sending their condolence messages. In his message, President of India, Pranab Mukherjee said, "In his passing away, we have lost a great son of India who dedicated his entire life to the welfare of his motherland. Dr Kalam was a people's president during his lifetime and will remain so." Prime Minister Narendra Modi mourned by saying, "India mourns the loss of a great scientist, a wonderful President and above all, an inspiring individual. RIP Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. I got to work with him closely. I have lost an 'Excellent Guide'. The country has lost a son who worked for the strength of India. He had spent every moment for the youth of India. No person will be able to fill the gap left by him. His work will inspire us to work for the development of the nation."