

Monday, September 21, 2009

Indian leader Abdul Kalam speaks on global unity, education

By **Katie Land**, news editor

India's former president, Abdul Kalam spoke to a standing room only crowd of more than 1,000 people at Oakland University's O'rena Thursday night. His message: international cooperation can solve global problems.

Kalam stressed that youth and education are the most important factors in creating borderless cooperation between nations. International collaboration is the key to solving issues with climate change, energy, disease, economic turbulence and war.

"Every responsible global citizen should stand by the three billion youth of the world who are restless with the hope that youth can do it, nations can do it and the world can do it," Kalam said.

Kalam received an honorary degree from Oakland and took time to meet with faculty and students in smaller group settings to continue discussions on topics such as engineering science and the future of education.

"His visionary work and inspirational leadership has had a transformative impact on India's progress as a developing nation. His visit to Oakland University provided a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to the campus and the regional communities to experience the views and intellect of a respected world leader," said Virinder Moudgil, OU's provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. "We are fortunate that Dr. Kalam has generously given his time so our students, faculty and staff can interact with him, in addition to listening to his message in the scheduled public lecture."

Known as the "people's president," Kalam also is a noted aeronautical engineer popularly known as the Missile Man of India for his work on the development of ballistic missile and space rocket technology. His previous work includes positions with India's Defense Research and Development Organization and the Indian Space Research Organization.

"Dr. Kalam is an acknowledged international statesman, a distinguished scholar, a motivating professor, a genius engineer, a celebrated poet and song writer, and an author of noted books," Moudgil said.

While serving as its 11th president from 2002 to 2007, Kalam was dubbed "India's Best President" by a CNN-IBN poll.

As chairman of the Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council, Kalam utilized the talents of more than 500 colleagues to develop "Technology Vision 2020," a road map for transforming India into a developed nation.

Kalam already has been bestowed with many honors and awards from various countries and academic institutions, including more than 32 honorary degrees. Among these are the coveted Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan and the Bharat Ratna awards, which are the highest honors the Indian government presents to civilians and distinguished citizens.

The event was part of the Varner Vitality Lecture Series that is designed to sustain the scholarly aspirations of the university community while enhancing, invigorating and uniting university life.

SUMMARY

India's former president, Abdul Kalam discussed how international cooperation can solve global problems to a standing room only crowd at Oakland University.

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