

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Chosen by Children as India's First "Paryavaran Ambassador"

New Delhi: 09 Dec 2009: Dr APJ Abdul Kalam has been chosen the "Bharat ka Paryavaran Ambassador" in a campaign conducted in 2 00,000 schools in India. This poll was part of the *CO₂ Pick Right- Kaun Banega Bharat Ka Paryavaran Ambassador Programme* conducted by the Centre for Environment Education in partnership with ArcelorMittal, for the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

In this nation-wide campaign conducted over a period of 18 months, over 70,000 schools have sent in their votes. Children had voted for their teachers, environmentalists, and celebrities. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam emerged as the most popular choice of the children.

Dr. Kalam was felicitated by Shri Jairam Ramesh, Hon'ble Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Government of India at a function in the capital today. This is perhaps the first unique election ever conducted in India where children have been asked to choose an ambassador who would be a spokesperson on sustainable choices that we all need to make. It is also interesting to note how children voted for a leader after coming to a consensus on the choice at their schools.

The Pick Right campaign was originally conceptualized to be conducted in 100,000 schools which were already a part of the MoEF's National Green Corps Programme. This was later extended to reach to 200,000 schools. This was possible with the partnership and support of ArcelorMittal which is supporting the CEE's work in the area of climate change and sustainability issues for the next three years. *"We are delighted to be part of an awareness campaign that will help prepare and build over 20 million future 'green leaders' in India. Environmental sustainability is a key value to ArcelorMittal. This unique project that connects our board room to classrooms all over India will strengthen our commitment to a better tomorrow"* said, **Mr.Vijay Bhatnagar, CEO India & China, ArcelorMittal.**

The campaign was launched on World Environment Day (WED) last year by Hon'ble President of India, Smt Pratibha Devisingh Patil. The campaign was conducted in 15 languages. It involved preparation of educational material to spread awareness about climate change, its causes and effects and individuals choosing the best options for sustainable development.

Over 200 meetings, training and workshops were held in various locations of the country. This involved one to one interaction and discussions with teachers, representatives of non governmental organizations associated with schools and children themselves followed by voting. CEE's 7 regional cells and the UNDP-Global Environment Facility- Small grants programme network of over 100 NGOs made this large-scale implementation possible.

Notes to the editor:

About Centre for Environment Education (CEE)

Centre for Environment Education, CEE was created in recognition of the importance of environmental education in India's overall environment and development strategy. The result of a unique partnership between government and a non-governmental institution, CEE was established as a Centre of Excellence in 1984, supported by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India. CEE has been promoting environmental educational efforts since 1966 in the areas of science, nature study, health, development, and environment. For more details www.ceeindia.org

About ArcelorMittal

ArcelorMittal is the world's leading steel company, with operations in more than 60 countries.

ArcelorMittal is the leader in all major global steel markets, including automotive, construction, household appliances and packaging, with leading R&D and technology, as well as sizeable captive supplies of raw materials and outstanding distribution networks. With an industrial presence in over 20 countries spanning four continents, the Company covers all of the key steel markets, from emerging to mature.

Through its core values of Sustainability, Quality and Leadership, ArcelorMittal commits to operating in a responsible way with respect to the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees, contractors and the communities in which it operates. It is also committed to the sustainable management of the environment and of finite resources. ArcelorMittal recognises that it has a significant responsibility to tackle the global climate change challenge; it takes a leading role in the industry's efforts to develop breakthrough steelmaking technologies and is actively researching and developing steel-based technologies and solutions that contribute to combat climate change.

In 2008, ArcelorMittal had revenues of \$124.9 billion and crude steel production of 103.3 million tonnes, representing approximately 10 per cent of world steel output.

ArcelorMittal is listed on the stock exchanges of New York (MT), Amsterdam (MT), Paris (MT), Brussels (MT), Luxembourg (MT) and on the Spanish stock exchanges of Barcelona, Bilbao, Madrid and Valencia (MTS).

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Remarks made by Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister of State for Environment & Forests, Govt. of India:

My faith in the future generation is renewed today – they have made the right choice in choosing Dr Kalam as the Paryavaran Ambassador - a person who has been an inspiration to my generation and who inspires the future generation too. The other reason why Dr. Kalam is the fitting choice is that going forward science and technology will play a critical role in helping us maintain the ideal balance between economic development and ecological preservation – who better than Dr. Kalam to guide the youth who have the enthusiasm and exuberance to work for protection of the environment.

Remarks by Dr. Kalam:

Delighted to having been chosen as the Paryavarn Ambassador by the Children of India, over the last 8 years I have met over 5 million children and made them take a oath – today too I want the children present to take a oath to plant and nurture atleast 10 trees each.

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam administered a 5 point oath the participating children and launched a global mission to plant 10 billion trees. Of this, 1 billion trees much be planted in India, then each of us can claim to have done our best for protecting the environment and bring about “good weather”.

Dr Kalam has always been a great believer of plating trees as they actively help counter the adverse affects of carbon emission – and shared that as a prize for successful launch of AGNI missile, he had asked for a 100,000 trees to be planted at Chandipur.

Dr, Kalam called for a youth movement to save the world and said that India should strive for energy independence by relying more on renewable energy like solar, wind and hydro and bio-fuels.

Remarks by Shri Kartikey Sarabhai, Founder Director of CEE:

Today is only the beginning of the 3 year campaign – I hope that this movement, under the guidance of Dr. Kalam will create a unique Indian model for sustainable development with growth.