

# Year-long centenary celebrations to honour R. Venkataraman

Kalam, Sheila to pay tributes to the former President

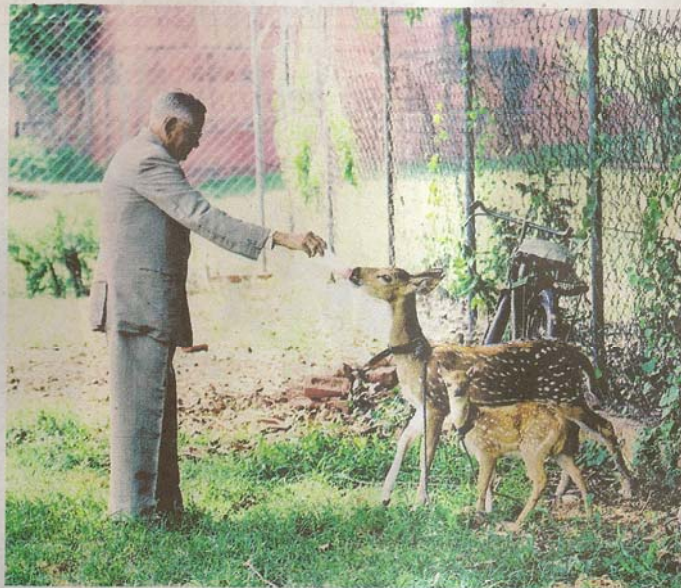
Madhur Tankha

**NEW DELHI:** As part of year-long birth centenary celebrations of former President R. Venkataraman, former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit will speak on "RV: The Multifaceted Man" at India International Centre (IIC) here on Tuesday.

The Delhi events are being organised jointly by Mr. Venkataraman's family, represented by his daughter Lakshmi Venkataraman Venkatesan and institutions such as the IIC, the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

"The credit for the multiple programmes goes to these institutions. The main idea to host the cultural events is to highlight Mr. Venkataraman's values. He was far-sighted on contemporary issues plaguing the country," says Ms. Venkatesan.

Describing her father as a scholar and a great social thinker, Ms. Venkatesan says he was known for his dignity and fair play. "He made a special mark on contemporary Indian history and set the stage for coalition governments. Having had the distinction of working with four Prime Ministers, appointing three of them — V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar and P.V. Narasimha Rao — during his five-year term as the country's eighth President, Mr. Venkataraman — popularly known as



**MULTIFACETED:** The former President R. Venkataraman.— FILE PHOTO

"RV" — represented a set of values and culture that were highly steeped in the Gandhi-Nehru tradition. It was in this tradition that the late leader had propounded the theory that the President in the Indian context was like the "emergency light" which automatically came on when the normal flow of power was broken and went out after normal working was restored."

The birth centenary celebrations include seminars, discourses, cultural events and a commemorative volume of articles published by Rupa Publications to highlight the late President's vision for

India and its great relevance for issues now facing the country.

On inclusive growth, Mr. Venkataraman had said way back in 1952 that unemployment was a scourge. "It is indeed a very unhappy situation that a man who is ready able and willing to work, should be denied work ....and unless we are able to combat mass retrenchment and unemployment, the very industrialisation [growth] which we welcome as a measure that is intended to benefit the lower classes will prove to be a measure of great harm to those classes".

On economic liberali-

sation, he said in 1969 that planning does not necessarily mean control.

It means having a vision of the future, having a well thought out approach for development of key sectors, a well articulated policy towards acquiring and developing technologies.

On the functioning of Parliament, Mr. Venkataraman as Rajya Sabha Chairman in 1987 said that what was happening was the negation of democracy. "Every member is entitled to express his opinion. You may agree, you may disagree, you cannot shout him down. Then there will be no Parliament."