



PRESS RELEASE

'Passion for science needs to be married with compassion for people'

CSTEP Discussion Series on the Role of Science and Technology in Society

Bengaluru, 14-15 December 2020

“Passion for science needs to be married with compassion for people”. That’s how Mr Kiran Karnik, former President of NASSCOM, summarised his talk at the discussion titled “Role of Science and Technology in Society”, organised by a city-based think tank, Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP). Earlier, Mr Karnik said, “Few things are more important than science and technology to solve developmental issues in a country like India. And just as important is scientific thinking—to question, to ask, to differ”.

The two-day virtual flagship discussion series from CSTEP on December 14 and 15 was aimed at facilitating vibrant conversations on the need for scientific discourse to evolve and influence citizen behaviour.

Speaking at the [inaugural session](#), Shri Suresh Prabhu, Member of Parliament and PM’s Sherpa to G7 and G20, highlighted the need for ethics in science. “We must encourage science but also build precautions and protocols so that science does not threaten the existence of any species”, he said. Emphasising that technology needs to be inclusive, he said, “There is innovation happening in rural areas out of necessity. Our public policy needs to look at building and strengthening such alliances”.

Dr V K Aatre, Former Head of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), emphasised on the interplay between science and society. “Society needs to think about the role it can play in people’s lives. Science and technology should not be confined to the ivory towers of laboratories and research organisations, but interact with society”, he said.

Prof. Dr Sheila Jasanoff, Pforzheimer Professor of Science and Technology Studies, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and Mr Sashi Kumar, Founder, Asianet, and Chairman, Asian College of Journalism, were part of the panel discussion titled ‘Science and the Citizen’. Highlighting how technology has impacted media, Mr Kumar said, “The writing on the wall is clear. Media is increasingly being considered redundant and therefore needs to be reimagined”.

On day two, the discussions covered specific areas such as climate, energy, and digital technologies. Dr Arabinda Mitra, Scientific Secretary, Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, Government of India, highlighted how the pandemic was shaping new policies on resolving challenges. “We need to put people at the centre of solutions and emphasise working with vulnerable communities. Science with a human face is the need of the hour”, he said, adding, “Think tanks like CSTEP play a big role in building this ecosystem of science, technology, and



innovation in policy. The pandemic has shown that complementing each other's strengths is the only way ahead".

Dr Mukund Rajan, Chairman, ECube Investment Advisors, and Chairman, Environment Committee, FICCI, addressed the impact of ESG (environmental, social, governance) on investment in businesses. He emphasised the need for an increased focus on innovation so India can progress at a faster pace and benefit its citizens.

Ms Uma Mahadevan, IAS, Principal Secretary for Rural Development & Panchayat Raj Department, Government of Karnataka, explained how technology can help solve stubborn problems and improve governance in rural areas. "Technology is not a panacea for the problems of various sectors. But it has the potential to solve some intractable problems in social welfare programmes by enabling convergent action on the ground and addressing the problem of exclusion".

Shri T Vijay Kumar, Advisor to Government of Andhra Pradesh and Co-Vice Chairman, Zero-Budget Natural Farming Programme, RYSS, spoke on the [impact of climate change on agriculture](#). "There are multiple emergencies in agriculture—from soil degradation and market uncertainties, to extreme weather events. Our way of farming and managing the food system is causing climate change", he said. "If we do nothing, we are failing our future generations. I believe the most important agency we have is changing our land management practices, and this can have a significant impact on the climate crisis".

Mr Anil Sardana, MD and CEO, Adani Transmission Ltd, highlighted current trends and issues in the energy sector.

The panel discussion titled 'Directions for the Future' saw Dr Veena Srinivasan, Director, Centre for Social and Environmental Innovation, ATREE; Mr Atul Kunwar, Chair of the Board of Directors, Hygge Energy Inc., Former President, Tech Mahindra; and Mr Hrishikesh Parthasarthy, Chief Strategy and Programs Officer, Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives, discussing the way forward for scientists, scientific research, and communication.

CSTEP, through this forum, aims to bring together stakeholders and enablers, and make student bodies, citizen groups, and social innovators realise the potential of applying science and technology in people's lives. This will enable an ecosystem that values and uses scientific evidence in decision-making.

The recordings of the event will be on [CSTEP's YouTube channel](#) soon. Glimpses of the discussion are visible in these [tweets](#).

For more details on the event, please write to cpe@cstep.in

About CSTEP



The Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) is one of India's leading think tanks, with a mission to enrich policymaking with innovative approaches using science and technology for a sustainable, secure and inclusive society.