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### **Anna Hazare conscience-keeper of nation, says Swaminathan**

Staff Reporter



M.S. Swaminathan.

Driving home the importance of a “corruption-free” environment for the practice of science, M.S. Swaminathan, chairperson of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), praised the efforts of veteran social activist Anna Hazare. He was delivering the convocation address at the Central Institute of Fisheries Education here on Saturday.

“Today is a happy day for our country. Some days ago, cricketers won the World Cup. Today, some of the leading newspapers say is another victory for India, mainly the ending of the fast of Anna Hazare, who is not merely an individual, but who has become an embodiment of a cause. He has worked for a corruption-free India,” Professor Swaminathan said.

### **Search for truth**

“Science and corruption are the opposite of each other. In an atmosphere of corruption, you can't perform good science. Science is a search for the truth. When you find observations, do not change them for convenience. It is important to maintain a very high degree of scientific integrity and probity. On this occasion, I would like to express, on behalf of all of us, our gratitude to him for becoming the conscience-keeper of our country. Let his few days of fast not go in vain,” the renowned agriculture scientist told the audience.

### **Lessons from Japan**

The recent catastrophe in Japan had lessons for us. Technology being no match for nature's fury, Professor Swaminathan called for a review of regulatory mechanisms and a collective effort towards adaptation and mitigation measures.

“I have suggested to the Ministry of Environment and Forests that wherever there is a nuclear power plant, it should be declared as Coastal Regulation Zone I. There should be mangrove bio-shields. It cannot completely save you, but it minimises the fury of the waves. We should be humbled by the Japanese experience. Nature will always be one step ahead of us. Technology cannot match the power of nature. Don't think you can conquer nature. Our attitude should be of living in harmony with nature rather than trying to be on top. If you do not consider environment concerns, there will be lot of problems. We must review our reactors, the design of the reactors. There is always a question of how safe is safe.”

Pointing to the resilience of the Japanese people, Professor Swaminathan said the Japanese system of education was geared towards fostering social synergies.

To a question on Jaitapur nuclear plant during the press interaction, he said, "I would say undue risk should not be taken. We need power. Nuclear power is known to be environmentally benign. Coal increases the carbon content. Hydro power entails destruction of forests. As Americans say, there is no free lunch. You have to study the risks and benefits. But it should come from public understanding and discussion. Consensus should be built like it is happening now in the case of corruption."

## Regulatory system

With respect to genetically modified foods and Bt. Brinjal in particular, Professor Swaminathan said there was a need to create a "National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority by Parliament, and not by administrative order, which should have its own resources and methods for testing. Work in biotechnology or nuclear technology should be based on the precautionary principle. Whether bio or nuclear technology, we must have regulatory mechanisms which inspire confidence among the public, political establishment, field professionals and the media."

He said ecological security could not be separated from the well-being of local communities and the underprivileged. In the time of global warming, he cautioned about the likelihood of extreme environment events occurring frequently. This called for an "advance strategy."

"Let us not be complacent and prepare for contingencies. Social synergy where people work together is very important for coping mechanism. Every coastal State should prepare a location-specific strategy for climate risk management. The fishing community represents some of the deprived sections. If you are going to work in aqua culture and coastal regions, care has to be taken about the livelihood of the fishing community," he said.

He stressed on ensuring food security through "home-grown food."

"Post-harvest management of crops has not received much attention. Assured and remunerative markets are key to sustaining interest in agriculture. In our country, agriculture is not a food-producing machine, it is the backbone for 70 crore of the population," Professor Swaminathan said.

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