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REPORTS OF EVENTS

Report of IIPA-KRB Prelude Conference

JAIN (Deemed-to-be) University and the Karnataka Regional Branch of the Indian Institute of Public Administration came together to organise a Virtual Prelude Conference on the theme of the IIPA Annual Conference-2021, “*Atmanirbhar Bharat – Opportunities and Challenges*” on 29th September 2021. Prof. (Dr.) Raj Singh, Vice-Chancellor of JAIN University made the Lead Presentation, where he referred to the various dimensions of the *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan* of the GOI, the evolving eco-system under which it is operating and the need for developing a Skill-Entrepreneurship-Innovation Zone (SEIZ) in every University. He identified five current issues that needed to be addressed: Governance and Policy; Cost Competitiveness; Skill Upgradation; Lack of Research Focus; and Financing. Quoting Maharishi Patanjali, Dr. Singh said that the lofty objectives behind the programme do provide the inspiration to galvanize the eco-system.

Dr. Sowmya Prashanth from the Faculty of Economics of Karnataka State Rural Development and Panchayat Raj University, Gadag looked at the concepts of *Swadeshi* and *Self-Reliance* in *Atmanirbhar Bharat*. Her major findings were as follows: *Atmanirbhar Bharat* is akin to ‘*Poorna Swaraj*’; the five pillars of *Atmanirbhar Bharat* are in tune with Gandhi’s Constructive Programme; the scheme comes within the ambit of Gandhi’s vision; strengthening of the Indian economy would simultaneously strengthen the Gandhian village economy; the scheme focuses on technology-driven and not technology-dependent systems; and there is a co-existence of cottage industries with big industries. However, its success would depend on factors like ensuring self-reliant, holistic and sustainable development; creating a conducive environment for *Ease of Doing Business*; focusing on bilateral trade agreements; stimulating innovation, research and development; respecting competitive federalism; creation of infrastructure; and by ensuring the required cultural shift.

Dr. Pawan Kumar Taneja, Faculty at the IIPA, New Delhi, and the author of the Theme Paper on the subject, was the Guest of Honour at the Prelude Conference. He said the *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan* has been announced at a time when the world is talking of self-reliance, against the background of the backlash of China’s model and hyper-globalization hurting domestic economies. The scheme needs to be understood in terms of the concentric circles of *Reform – Perform – Transform – Zero Defect – Zero Effect*. The government has a big role to play in terms of regulating market failure and maintaining the macro-economic balance. Two big challenges were those of employability and skill development, he concluded.

In the discussion which followed, Dr. A. Ravindra, IAS (Retd.), former Chief Secretary of Karnataka referred to a few Big Questions that needed to be addressed: Can globalization be wished away? How easy is it to restrict consumption in a market economy? And can rural-urban migration be prevented?

Mr. S. Ramanathan, IAS (Retd.), Chairman of the Karnataka Regional Branch of the IIPA presided over the deliberations. Dr. Priyanca Mathur, Associate Professor, CeRSSE, at JAIN

(Deemed-to-be University) welcomed and introduced the speakers, and ably anchored the event. Dr. D. Jeevan Kumar, Secretary of IIPA-KRB and Dr. K.C. Smitha, Assistant Professor, CeRSSE, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) proposed a vote of thanks.