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Researchers must try to solve problems ailing society, says NIE varsity chancellor

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Mysuru: Warning researchers against insulating themselves to problems afflicting society, chancellor of NIE University DA Prasanna on Saturday said, "Research must help solve problems of society."

Prasanna, who delivered the keynote address at CSIR-Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) which hosted National Technology Day, warned researchers that staying cloistered in an ivory tower, blind to the realities of the world would reduce such institutions to irrelevance. "If researchers do not engage with the problems of society, then people are bound to question their value, and relevance. If research helps in solving a real problem, such a contribution to society will be invaluable," he added.

A research institution, Prasanna opined, must focus on basic, applied and research that would have a discernible social impact. "Basic research requires working through a network comprising other centres of academic excellence both in India and across the globe. One of the enduring challenges for CSIR has been its inability to expand its market," said the NIE varsity's chancellor.

Against a backdrop of proliferation of startups, and youngsters increasingly taking to entrepreneurship, Prasanna sounded sceptical about the phenomenon. "Most entrepreneurs do not have an idea on the sort of problems they aim to tackle. Institutions such as CFTRI must provide budding entrepreneurs a course either for three or six months to help youngsters identify the right problems that require solutions," he said.

Earlier on Saturday, CFTRI signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT) on flour fortification technology. Flour fortification is the process of increasing the content of an essential micronutrient in a food product such as wheat.

CFTRI's technology transfer and business development head BV Sathyendra Rao emphasised the need to take technology to the people in order to solve real-time problems. "Hunger, malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency are some of the major issues in the country. CFTRI's MoU with KHPT will help battle malnutrition. Under the terms of the MoU, CFTRI is transferring technology required for wheat fortification in around 20 mills," Rao said.

Awards were distributed to the chiefs of various departments at CFTRI for their success in several research endeavours. Among those whose efforts were recognised included the head of the spice and flavour science department.

Managing director of Sri Sri Tattva Arvind Varchaswi and CFTRI director KSMS Raghava Rao were among those present at the event.