

Consider the world as a family: Joshi

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, Jan. 27.

The Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, today stressed the need to evolve a technology that is "human friendly" with values of life that were as highly respected as functional aspects of technology.

In the inaugural address at a three-day international symposium on "Science in Society: A new social contract," here, which was read out in his absence, Dr. Joshi said science and technology should be harmonious with the needs of society.

The symposium was organised preparatory to the UNESCO World Conference on Science, 1999, scheduled to be held in June in Budapest. It was organised by UNESCO, the Government of India and the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS).

Dr. Joshi was not present as he had to leave for Orissa as per the Union Cabinet's decision last night and his address was read out by Dr. V.S. Ramamurthy, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology.

Joshi said "techno-economic regimes" that had emerged due to the rapid development of science and technology had created a paradigm in which families were breaking and new social tensions created. He said the health of society was being ignored while its functional aspects were being promoted, and in individuals the "gap between the inner and outer space" was widening.

Dr. Joshi said to ensure effective use of science and technology to promote human goals, it was necessary that all nations united to share a vision of the future of the globe.

The breathtaking developments in Information Technology and aviation had rendered the world a smaller place and placed before the world the vision of a global village, a vision entirely consistent with the ancient Indian view of the world as a family expressed in the well-known phrase "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," Dr. Joshi said.

He said the technological vision of the global village needed to be supplemented, if not replaced by this concept of the "world as a family."

Dr. Joshi said the "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" conveyed the necessity to reduce inequalities that now haunted the world in terms of wealth, health, education and so on. A heavy responsibility rested on the developed world, which accounted for the bulk of the global consumption of natural resources. The Minister called upon "scientists to ensure sustainable consumption in the developed world while promoting sustainable development in the Third World."

Dr. Joshi said scientists should ensure that Information Technology did not create a new class of "digital haves and have-nots" and "new inequities between the information-rich and information-poor." It was the duty of scientists to ensure that Intellectual Property Rights did not end up as a mechanism for building newer forms of "knowledge monopolies".

"How do we ensure that while the most re-



Dr. Ali Kazancigil (left), Principal Director, UNESCO, France, addressing the international symposium on 'Science in society: a new social contract' in Bangalore on Wednesday. Also seen to his left are Prof. Moegiade, Director, UNESCO, Delhi and Dr. D.M.Nanjundappa, Chairman, Indian Council for Scientific Research.

cent knowledge is legally protected, the humble folk, who created and preserved various forms of traditional knowledge so faithfully over centuries are not exploited, that their resources, both biological and intellectual are not pirated by new and subtle forms of espionage?" Dr. Joshi asked.

He appealed to scientists to evolve methodologies to ensure that developments in science and technology served the true interests of society.

Dr. Ali Kazancigil Principal Director of UNESCO in France said the recommendations of the symposium would be discussed at the UNESCO world conference on science in Budapest. Path-breaking discoveries in science and rapid advances made in technology had resulted in a number of problems that required to be tackled. Many inequities in respect of colour, gender and occupation needed urgent solutions. It was the responsibility of "intellectual communities" to find solutions.

He said bio-medical research involving human subjects was another area, which required to be discussed. He appealed to scientists to formulate ethical guidelines required in this regard.

The NIAS Director, Prof. Roddam Narasimha said the symposium would draw up two documents: While the "Bangalore Communique" would summarise the perspectives of distinguished scientists, who were participating in the current symposium, the second document would be a "Declaration on science and the use of scientific knowledge."

Scientists participating in the meet included Prof. Moegiadi, Director, UNESCO, Delhi, Prof. G.Mehta, President, Indian National Science Academy, Dr. Anil Kakodkar, President, Indian National Academy of Engineering, Dr. M.S.Swaminathan, Director, Centre for Research on Sustainable Agricultural and Rural

Development, Chennai, Dr. D.M.Nanjundappa, Chairman, Indian Council for Scientific Research, Dr. Susanath Goonatilake (Sri Lanka), Prof. Zeqi Qiu from Peking University.

A session on "Beyond Science: Other forms of knowledge" was also on the agenda.