PRESS RELEASE

Third International Conference on Law, Public Policy and Governance hosted by Azim Premji University concluded

January 11, Bangalore: Azim Premji University hosted its third International conference on Law, Public Policy and Governance on 09th- 10th January, 2015 at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), Sadashivanagar, Bengaluru. The theme for this year's Conference was ‘Institutions, Public Policy & State Capacity: A Sub-National Approach to Governance in India’. This conference brought together new and original research on various issues employing rigorous comparative sub-national research to develop new insight and understanding into India’s governance and policy challenges.

“Urbanization and land management will emerge the most challenging areas for policy making and academic research in India”, said Prof Ashutosh Varshney, Sol Goldman Professor of International Studies and Social Sciences at the University of Brow, US. Prof Varshney was speaking at the concluding session of the Third Azim Premji University International Conference on Law, Public Policy and Governance in Bangalore today.

Prof Varshney said that the share of agriculture in GDP has decreased to around 12 to 14 per cent now from around 50 per cent in 1960s. At the same time around 60 per cent of people continue to derive their livelihood from agriculture. Therefore, diversion of land from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors whose contribution to GDP has been growing will be serious challenge to manage for policy makers and an exciting area for academic research. He the fast rise of service and manufacturing sector will put enormous pressure on urban areas which should be another area of concern for governance and academic research.

Prof. Nikita Sood of Oxford University based on her studies in the states of West Bengal, Gujarath and Tamil Nadu said that the state governments were making compromise with land regulation in the name of promoting pro-business industrial policies which demand liberal grant of land. The state governments were acting as brokers in land transfer to industries and the implications of this for politics and governance need to be studied.

Dr Rajesh Bhattacharya of Indian Institute of Management, Culcutta said that new laws and policies related to mining, land acquisition and internal security work against the autonomy and rights of people enshrined in the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Area Act and Forest Rights Act. He said the current state of affairs suggest no fundamental transformation in the relationship between tribals and the state.

Prof. Suhash Palshikar, Political Analyst and Chief Editor of Studies in Indian Politics Journal said that Indian politics is yet to be theorized properly. He said while there were multiple understanding of political issues, there is no good theory which captures the nature of politics in India. He said political
culture of different states, emerging forms of participation including increasing vigilantism, questions of caste and its continued relevance to politics and regionalization and localization of political economy could be some of themes for political science research with sub-national focus.

Around 20 scholars from India, US and the UK presented debated various aspects of governance and policy in the two day-conference which focused on institutions, public policy and state capacity. The participating scholars underlined the need for a sub-national focus for social science research in India for a better understanding of some of the emerging socio-political and economic issues in India.

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