

Shri Rahul Bajaj's speech...

My esteemed friend and today's chief guest Kailash Satyarthiji, my colleagues on the Board of the Jamnalal Bajaj foundation, the exemplars, the recipients of the award this year, ladies and gentlemen.

My apologies for not being physically present. I have not been in the best of health and this is the best I could do. I seek your indulgence. At the same time it is the magic of technology that one can be virtually present anywhere.

It is my privilege to welcome all of you today. Especially, because we are gathering today after a gap of a year. Hopefully, we are out of the shadow of the epidemic. It has been a trying time for all of us and the world. And a timely reminder that we live in a fragile, inter connected world. I also remember the prescience of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, when over 60 years ago, he coined the 'Jai Jagat' greeting. There is but one world. How I wish we showed greater awareness of this fact in our behavior.

I also remember my dear friend Shri Subba Rao who contributed so much to the youth of the country and as an Adviser to the foundation. Though he died recently at the ripe age of 92, he was energetic to the end. I pay my homage to his memory, his endless positive energy, work.

I am thankful to Satyarthiji for agreeing to preside over the function today. We all know of his continuing, commendable work. And if he is feeling awkward at being both a Trustee of the Foundation and a Chief Guest, then I would like to assure him that he is not the first. The Late Justice Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari created the precedent in 2012 .

I would have liked to introduce the recipients of the awards, the heart of today's function, but indifferent health forces me to be

brief. So, I will let others do this key honor. But my salutations to all of you. You give us hope and courage.

COP26 highlights the danger human civilisation faces in the not so distant future. It will of course need a major reworking of policies and initiatives and I commend the public commitment the Indian government has made of being carbon neutral by 2070. This will require big changes in many areas.

But our work in our development organisations and others whom we support tells us that with clarity of purpose and some resources much can be achieved through private effort, in coordination with people and local government. Unless employment, temporary support for the poor, education, health and protection of the environment are addressed it is likely that big objectives and plans will fall short in delivering the desired outcomes. As is said, poverty is the biggest polluter. There are 748 districts in our country. I enjoin business of all sizes, especially big business to cater to the public needs and public purpose of each of these districts. We are committed to make a difference in 5 of them.

A major reason for our lack of development has been our best and brightest wanting to run away. This has been going on since 1960s. Since liberalisation, India is the best country for Indians, all things considered. There is a Marathi exhortation. “Baghta kaay, saamil vha” , “Why watch, join in”. This is what I would recommend to the better off sections of our country. We must take inspiration from the work of the awardees today. See, what joining in. delivers.

Once again thank you for being a part of this event. The loss of not being there is all mine.

Jai Hind