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Stella students sample large repertoire of biz speak

OUR BUREAU

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It is users who should determine a product's quality. Quality standards are usually set by the producers but we should have the courage to throw them out, said L. Kannan, Founder & CEO, Fractal Foundation, delivering the keynote address at a management conference at Stella Maris College here.

The two-day event, Management Beyond Repertoire, is being organised by the college's Commerce Department in association with the Madras Management Association. To illustrate his point, Kannan spoke of the ATM he built at Vortex Engineering to enable financial inclusion of rural people.

The ATM could not afford not to work for want of power as its users are usually daily-wage workers who would have made a big effort to get to it.

Standards such as its speed or dispensing six or eight pieces of currency per second, were irrelevant to them.

Solar power is used as the back-up in these ATMs and 60 per cent of them are solar-powered, he explained.

Traditional values

Corporate advisor S. Gurumurthy highlighted the traditional values of frugality and the savings habit entrenched in Indian families, especially among the women.

He said these attributes were largely responsible for protecting the Indian economy against the onslaught of the Western model of consumerism.

It was the same mindset that led to a sustained inflow of remittances from abroad intended to support families back home.

This has, to an extent, been responsible for mitigating the effects of unbridled imports on the current account deficit, he said.

Aarati Krishnan, Head of Research, *Business Line*, discussed the pros and cons of investing in various financial instruments. Investors have to take a macro view of the local and global economy.



S. Gurumurthy

While investing, the goals should be to beat inflation and volatility.

It is also vital to build a retirement fund early on in one's career, she added.

In a session on 'The New Workplace - Flexible Working Methods,' Saun-

darya Rajesh of Avtar Career Creators, spoke of how flexibility at work improved productivity and made businesses more agile.

The majority of Indian women professionals are keen on having the best of home and work in their lives and many employers are waking up to smoothing the path for them, she said. However, she pointed out, in the last 15 years, 1.5 million Indian women have left the workforce. Half of these women quit before they reached the age of 30, she added.

Anu Oza, Principal Consultant, Innobridge Consulting, advised the students not to undervalue themselves. Tasks that seem basic, such as shopping, cooking or taking care of family members, called for a lot of skills such as planning, adapting and negotiating, and were valued highly in the workplace.

"Believe there is a path for you, try another strategy if one does not work, and respect and recognise your fears but take manageable risks," she said.