

PRESS RELEASE

“Viksit Bharat can only be achieved through jan bhagidari.”- Smt Anupriya Patel, Hon’ble Minister of State, Health & Family Welfare, Government of India

Varanasi, 21 November 2025: “Viksit Bharat can only be achieved through jan bhagidari. No nation can fulfil big aspirations without people’s participation, and our governance model is rooted in this belief”, said Smt Anupriya Patel, Hon’ble Minister of State, Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, addressing the first edition of Kashi Samvaad 2025. The Kashi Samvaad 2025 marks the first national dialogue on innovation, inclusion, and equity in India’s journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047. Organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in partnership with the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), and the CII Foundation, and affiliated with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)’s India – AI Impact Summit 2026, the summit opened today at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, convening a two-day exchange of ideas and insights.

Bringing together government leaders, industry experts, academicians, development practitioners, and civil society representatives, the summit aims to promote collaborative action across critical areas including healthcare, education, technology, sustainability, and rural prosperity.

Sharing his perspective on the evolving landscape of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Chief Guest, Shri Asim Arun, Hon’ble Minister of State (Independent Charge), Social Welfare, Scheduled Caste & Tribal Welfare, Government of Uttar Pradesh said, “CSR is not charity—it is an obligation to society. Its true power lies in piloting bold ideas that governments can later scale for the nation.”

Reflecting on the role and potential of Kashi Samvaad as a platform for collective action and knowledge exchange, Prof Ajit Kumar Chaturvedi, Vice Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University remarked: “We believe that educational institutions can be engines of growth for social and economic indicators and that while India is making progress across all dimensions, we need to think if it is equitable. Kashi Samvad is an excellent platform, and I am sure after the two days of discussions we will have salient points and recommendations for India’s inclusive growth.”

Highlighting the importance of youth in India’s development journey, Shri Awanish Awasthi, Chief Advisor to the Hon’ble Chief Minister, Government of Uttar Pradesh noted, “The dream of Viksit Bharat 2047 rests on the resolve of our youth—their learning, their skills, and their determination to shape the nation’s future.”

Adding to the conversation on the future of CSR in India, Mr B Thiagarajan, Chairman, CII National Committee on CSR & Managing Director, Blue Star Ltd. shared, “India Inc’s CSR spend has been growing and is expected to touch 1 Lakh crore by 2030. While the spend is growing, it needs to be deployed in a manner that is equitable - reaching out to underserved geographies and communities.”

Speaking about the aspirations behind the initiative, Dr Upasana Arora, Chairperson, CII Uttar Pradesh and Managing Director, Yashoda Super Speciality Hospital, stated, “Kashi Samvad is a new platform and has the potential to become the guiding light for the future development of the nation.”

Adding to the discussion on the strategic use of CSR, Mr Umang Sah, CII Chairman-Varanasi Zone & Managing Director, UP National Manufacture said, “CSR has been an integral part of our lives for decades. We need to change with time and ascertain where and how to best utilise CSR spends for greatest impact now and Kashi Samvaad is an excellent platform for this discussion.”

The inaugural session was also graced by distinguished speakers including Ms Smita Vaish Agarwal, Co-Chairperson, CII National Committee on CSR & Director & CFO, PTC Industries Ltd.; Ms Swati Agarwal, Partner & Leader - Social, Skilling & Entrepreneurship, Deloitte and other and delegates from CII, CII Foundation, BHU, industry, academia, and civil society.

Delegates were then invited to experience a vibrant cultural showcase honouring the artistic and spiritual legacy of Varanasi.

The opening day of the first edition of Kashi Samvaad set an impactful tone for the summit, bringing forward diverse perspectives on governance, social inclusion, healthcare, skills, sustainability, digital transformation, and rural development. Discussions today have laid the foundation for deeper thematic engagements scheduled for 22 November.

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