

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Grassroots innovation, environmental stewardship, and equitable education together will determine India's journey towards 2047.**

**Varanasi, 22 November 2025:** Building on the momentum of the inaugural day, Kashi Samvaad today brought together different stakeholders for deliberations on India's inclusive development.

Kashi Samvaad is 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 aligned with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)'s India-AI Impact Summit 2026.

The day opened with the session 'From Infrastructure to Impact: Redefining Access to Quality Healthcare,' moderated by Shri Mathew Cherian, Ambassador, HelpAge International, where experts examined India's rural healthcare gap and the need for community-centred approaches. Dr Upasana Arora, Chairperson, CII Uttar Pradesh and Managing Director, Yashoda Super Speciality Hospital; Dr Saptagirish R, Head, Department of Orbit & Oculoplastics and Dean, Sankara Eye Care Institutions India; Dr Vivek Virendra Singh, Health Specialist, UNICEF India; and Shri Sandeep Kumar, Founder, DigiSwasthya, discussed strengthening Primary Health Centres, ensuring efficient supply chains, and scaling mobile health units.

The conversation then shifted to learning and employability through the session 'Powering the Futures – Pathways through Education & Skills,' moderated by Ms Swati Agarwal, Partner & Leader – Social, Skilling & Entrepreneurship, Deloitte. Smt Amrita Patwardhan, Head of Education, Tata Trusts; Prof Manisha Priyam, Professor, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration and Sir Louis Matheson Chair, Monash University; Shri Ajit Solanki, Regional Head, Pratham Education Foundation; Dr Arvind Mohan, Dean, Faculty of Arts, Lucknow University and Prof Mona Gupta, CEO, Sector Skill Council on Home Management and Care Givers, highlighted the importance of 21st-century skills, scalable public-private learning models, and aligning skilling programmes with dignified livelihood opportunities, especially in rural areas.

In the session 'Clean India, Green India & Waste Management,' moderated by Shri Sudhir Mishra, Resident Editor, Navbharat Times, Lucknow, the spotlight moved to sustainability and India's transition towards a circular economy. Prof Jitendra Pandey, Professor, Banaras Hindu University; Dr Ruby Makhija, Founder & Director, Why Waste Wednesdays Foundation; Shri Srinivas Krishnaswamy, Chief Executive Officer, Vasudha Foundation; and Smt Rajni Pandey, Deputy General Manager, Bankers Institute of Rural Development (BIRD), discussed advancements in waste-to-energy, composting, plastic recycling, and Extended Producer Responsibility. The conversation highlighted the need for integrated systems that include the informal sector and encourage community-led waste solutions.

A markedly future-looking discourse unfolded in 'Technology / AI for Social Transformation: Bridging Innovation and Inclusion'. The session was moderated by Shri Sumit Das Gupta, Founder, Allcap Communications, and distinguished panellists including Professor Amit Patra, Director, IIT BHU; Shri Kishore Balaji, Executive Director – Government & Regulatory Affairs, IBM; Smt Aslesha Khandeparkar, Country Head – Corporate Affairs & Government Affairs, Oracle Corporation; Shri Amitabh Tiwari, Principal Consultant & Centre Head, TCS Lucknow; and Shri Keshri Kumar Asthana, Chief Technology Officer, Public Sector, Microsoft, discussed AI-enabled advancements in agriculture, manufacturing, predictive maintenance, weather forecasting, and public service delivery. Speakers emphasised the need for digital safeguards, inclusive design, and ensuring technology benefits marginalised communities rather than widening digital divides.

The concluding thematic session, 'Grassroots to Greatness: Collaborative Innovation for Rural Prosperity,' moderated by Mr Vinamra Agarwal, Vice-Chair, CII Varanasi Zone & Managing Director, Brijlax Engineering, shifted attention to rural India's expanding role in national development.

Mr Srijnan Sanyal, Founding Trustee, Shoshan Surin Foundation; Dr Arvind Mohan, Dean, Faculty of Arts, Lucknow University; Ms Anagha Mahajani, Chief Impact Officer, Ambuja Foundation; Prof B.V. Singh, Department of Economics, Banaras Hindu University; and Dr Neerja Sharma, Assistant Vice President, Utkarsh Bank, highlighted the need for inclusive infrastructure, equitable resource distribution, rural entrepreneurship, women's participation, and innovations rooted in India's cultural and agricultural strengths. The session underscored that capacity building, local knowledge systems, and multi-sector collaboration are key to rural prosperity.

The two-day summit concluded with a valedictory session addressed by Shri B Thiagarajan, Chairman, CII National Committee on CSR & Managing Director, Blue Star Ltd.; Ms Swati Agarwal, Partner & Leader – Social, Skilling & Entrepreneurship, Deloitte; Prof Ajit Kumar Chaturvedi, Vice Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University; and Mr Sunil Misra, Principal Advisor, CII & CEO, CII Foundation. The speakers emphasised the importance of sustained collaboration, evidence-based policymaking, and cross-sector innovation in accelerating India's progress toward Viksit Bharat 2047.

A key highlight of the Kashi Samvaad was the release of the Kashi Declaration which is a set of recommendations for social development. Further strengthening this commitment, CII and Banaras Hindu University formalised their partnership through an MoU to collaborate on future initiatives that support India's inclusive development.

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**For media queries, contact:**

**Harshit Pandey**

**harshit.pandey@cii.in | 8272880330**