

(PHOTO ATTACHED)

## **KU VC inaugurates breast cancer screening-cum-awareness programme**

**Srinagar, Nov 3:** Vice-Chancellor University of Kashmir Prof Nilofer Khan Thursday inaugurated a free breast cancer awareness-cum-screening programme.

The programme was organised by the Department of Bioresources in association with Indian Cancer Society and J&K Science Technology and Innovation Council (JKSTIC) in continuation with the month-long breast cancer awareness programme held in 15 degree colleges across Kashmir Valley.

Commending the Bioresources Department and its collaborating institutions for organising the important programme, Prof Nilofer underlined the need for academic and medical institutions in the UT to collaborate in raising awareness on breast cancer which is "rising alarmingly" in the country.

She said young minds who were educated during the month-long programme about breast cancer must become ambassadors in the community to spread their learning in the society.

"The twin cause of advocacy and awareness is our responsibility towards our society and we at the University will do our best to collaborate with other local and national institutions to make this process a continuous one," she said.

Mr Saurabh Bhagat, IAS, Commissioner/Secretary JKSTIC, who was a guest of honour, said screening mechanisms are fewer in rural areas compared to urban belts and it is therefore important to step up awareness campaigns to save people from falling victims to breast cancer. He advocated for doing away with "shyness" associated with discussing breast cancers openly so that the message of early diagnosis is carried far and wide.

VC Central University of Kashmir Prof Farooq A Shah, also a guest of honour, said breast cancer is coming up as a "health crisis" with an ever-increasing number of cases. One study says that one person every four minutes is diagnosed with breast cancer in the country and every 10 to 12 minutes a person dies of this fatal disease, he said. He said lack of awareness leads to late detection and consequently delayed treatment.

Director SKIMS Prof Pervez Koul, a special guest at the inaugural session, said that Breast Self Examination (BSE) clinics have to come up in "every home" so that vulnerable people are able to detect any abnormality on their own to reduce the risk of catching up with breast cancers.

He said while genetic factors cannot be avoided, appropriate interventions related to environmental and other factors can be made to reduce the breast cancer risk.

Head Department of Bioresources Dr Manzoor A Mir said the department aims to link its research on cancer with the society and the current month-long programme is a step in that direction. He also called for linking academic and medical

institutions and developing a comprehensive strategy on raising awareness on breast cancer. “Earlier we used to see that people aged above 50 were vulnerable to breast cancers, but today we see victims in the age group of 20 to 30 and 30 to 40,” he said.

On the occasion, Prof Nilofer and other dignitaries released a dedicated web-portal of the Bioresources Department on breast cancers, carrying all related academic and research information. A book authored by Dr Manzoor titled ‘Combinational Therapy in Triple Negative Breast Cancer’ was also released.

Registrar Dr Nisar A Mir gave the concluding remarks at the inaugural session, which was attended by senior academicians including Prof Irshad A Nawchoo, Dean Research KU and Prof Naseer Iqbal, Registrar IUST.

A team of 10 medicos coordinated by Dr Natasha Thakur (SKIMS), Dr Sheikh Zahoor (SKIMS) and Dr Shameema (GMC Srinagar) conducted the screening camp. KU Health Centre provided support to the programme.