

‘ICOLSI-46’:

Languages crucial in retaining, reclaiming peoples’ shared identities: KU VC

Language gives identity to people, nations: Expert



Srinagar, October 3: To exchange ideas and perspectives reinforcing the importance of linguistics in today’s technology-driven, interconnected world, the Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir (KU), in collaboration with the the Linguistic Society of India, Pune and Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysuru, Thursday inaugurated the 46th International Conference of the Linguistic Society of India (ICOLSI-46) here.

Themed ‘Linguistics in 21t Century: Challenges and Opportunities’, the conference runs through October 5 and is being attended by scholars and linguists from around the globe to discuss advancements in the field of linguistics.

On the occasion, KU Vice Chancellor, Prof Nilofer Khan, highlighted the challenges being faced in preserving and promoting the linguistic diversity of the country , reiterating that languages play a crucial role in retaining and reclaiming the shared identities of people and communities.

“Numerous languages are on the verge of extinction that is an immediate threat to peoples’ identities. Once we lose a language, we lose our identity,” she said, adding that the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020, however,

ensures that languages receive due attention in promoting our shared cultural and linguistic legacy.

She said technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) can facilitate further development of languages that in turn will contribute towards their preservation and promotion.

“I urge the youth to speak their mother tongue (Kashmiri) and remain rooted to their cultural and linguistic legacies,” she said.

Vice Chancellor, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj University, Navi Mumbai, Prof Keshari Lal Verma, stated that no language is big or small, it is but language that gives identity to people and nations.

Underlining the scenario of languages and their role in education in India, he said: “The Indian knowledge system will grow and make a mark globally only when linguists collaborate and work towards their (languages’) preservation and promotion.”

President, Linguistic Society of India (LSI) and professor at Aligarh Muslim University, Prof Mohammad Jahangir Warsi, explored the critical intersection of language, technology and society.

“Diversity comes with challenges and linguists have a critical role to balance the challenges by blending technology and sociology. The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning offers exciting opportunities for linguistic study, but these technologies pose risks, such as the potential to widen the digital divide and marginalise indigenous and minority languages,” he maintained, while pitching for integrating linguistics in public education system.

Keynote Speaker, Prof R C Sharma from the University of Delhi, a long-time collaborator with the department, thanked KU for its support and expressed his appreciation for the department’s efforts over the past two decades, particularly during challenging times.

Highlighting the rich history of LSI Director, ICOLSI-46 and Head Department of Linguistics, Prof Aejaz Mohammed Sheikh, underscored the society’s commitment to promoting linguistic diversity and research and detailed the department’s significant efforts in that direction.

‘The Book of Abstracts’ from the conference; ‘The 16th edition of the Indian Journal of Linguistics (IJL)’ and ‘Bridging Boundaries in Language Innovation: A Festschrift for Vijay Kumar Kaul in Language and Engineering’ were also released on the occasion.