

KU holds National conference on rural development with special reference to Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan



Srinagar, Nov 29: The Department of Social Work, University of Kashmir (KU), organised a two-day national conference on “Rural Development in India with Special Reference to Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)” at the Main Campus.

The conference aimed to examine the functioning of local governance structures, assess the role of capacity-building initiatives under RGSA, and discussed pathways to strengthen community participation in rural development.

In her presidential address Vice-Chancellor KU, Prof. Nilofer Khan noted the importance of connecting academic work with on-ground realities, stating, “Strengthening grassroots institutions is essential for ensuring that development reaches people in a meaningful way. Universities must support this process through research that speaks of the realities of rural governance.”

Dean Academic Affairs KU, Prof. Shariefuddin Pirzada, said that discussions on RGSA help build clearer academic insights into the evolving needs of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

In his keynote address, Prof. Bipin Jojo, Dean, School of Social Work, TISS Mumbai, highlighted the importance of linking rural development programmes with community-led approaches, highlighting the need for sustained institutional support.

Shabir Hussain Bhat (JKAS), Director, Rural Development Department, Kashmir, said that RGSA has played an important role in enhancing the capacities of local bodies in the region.

A report on RGSA, prepared by the Department of Social Work KU, was also released during the conference.

Head, Department of Social Work KU, Prof. Shazia Manzoor, and conference convener Dr. Adil Bashir said that the conference was designed to bring together practitioners, researchers, and students to reflect on policy implementation and field-level experiences linked to rural development in India.

The two-day conference included paper presentations, panel discussions, and interactive Q&A sessions on themes related to Panchayati Raj, rural governance mechanisms, capacity-building models, and community-centric interventions.

Prior to the conference, the Department had also conducted a training programme under the RGSA initiative led by Dheeraj, Lead Programmes at Praxis, New Delhi.

It aimed at familiarising participants with key components of rural governance, PRA tools and capacity-building frameworks.

The conference was attended by heads of departments, faculty members, scholars, students, and participants from various higher educational institutions.

Earlier the proceedings of the inaugural session were conducted by Dr. Sarafraz Ahmad and vote of thanks was delivered by Dr. Javaid Rashid, faculty at Department of Social Work KU.