

**‘Rural Development and Connectivity’:
Need solutions to empower rural communities,
create sustainable growth: KU VC**

‘Need to address rural-urban challenges, community-specific issues’



Srinagar, Nov 13: To explore sustainable solutions for pressing issues and challenges of rural development in India with a special focus on rural connectivity through the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), the University of Kashmir (KU), Wednesday inaugurated a two-day national conference here.

Titled, ‘Rural Development in India: Issues and Challenges’ and supported by the Public Works Department (PWD) Roads and Buildings (R&B), Government of J&K, the conference organised by the varsity’s Department of Social Work, brings together eminent academicians, researchers and students from within and outside the university.

On the occasion, KU Vice Chancellor, Prof Nilofer Khan, emphasised the importance of impact-driven research in rural development initiatives and urged stakeholders to work in collaboration for community empowerment.

"KU is conducting assessment research that evaluates rural development programmes like PMGSY. We need a collaborative approach to develop solutions empowering rural

communities and create sustainable growth," she said, adding that rural communities are the backbone of the nation.

"Such conferences provide a crucial platform for generating actionable recommendations to explore innovative pathways towards sustainable development that benefit the rural population and help frame policies," she maintained.

Dean, Academic Affairs, KU, Prof Shariefuddin Pirzada, encouraged the participants to find relevant strategies supporting the rural sector.

"It is essential to bridge gaps between urban and rural areas by understanding and addressing their unique challenges," he said, adding that academic institutions must lead the way in understanding and resolving the complex issues that impact rural India.

KU Registrar, Prof Naseer Iqbal, highlighted the importance of applying developmental models to rural areas and assessing the impact of various government initiatives.

"Rural development is integral to achieving the vision of 'Viksit Bharat@2047'. A well-drafted policy framework coming out from the conference would be valuable that will be shared with the government for recommendation," he reiterated.

Highlighting the rural development strategies and the necessity of sustainable and inclusive growth, keynote speaker, Prof Zubair Meenai, Department of Social Work, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, provided insights into the various challenges facing rural India.

"Addressing rural issues like stagnating incomes and limited infrastructure, require sustainable and inclusive solutions that cater to the specific needs of rural communities," he said, urging the need to address social, economic and environmental challenges.

Highlighting the relevance of rural development to national progress, Head, Department of Social Work and Conference Convener, Prof Shazia Manzoor, said: "The aim is to examine rural issues from diverse perspectives, striving to meet rural India's needs in a sustainable and inclusive way."

She highlighted the department's contributions to rural development through social audits, programme evaluations and assessments of schemes like PMGSY and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) for policy and planning in the region.

Faculty at the department and Organising Secretary, Dr Sarfaraz Ahmad, conducted the proceedings of the inaugural session, while Dr Javaid Rashid, faculty at the department, proposed the formal vote of thanks.