



REPORT: AIU 2nd NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF WOMEN VICE CHANCELLORS'

on

PROMOTING WOMEN LED DEVELOPMENT FOR VIKSIT BHARAT

Hosted By

Jharkhand Rai University, Ranchi, Jharkhand

Organized By

**Association of Indian Universities (AIU)
G100- Universities & Thought Leadership Wing
Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, Delhi &
Jharkhand Rai University, Ranchi, Jharkhand**

at

**Country Inn Nature Resort, Bhimtal, Bhowali-Bhimtal-Haldwani Rd,
Mehragaon, Bhimtal, Bhagtpura, Uttarakhand-263136**

on

August 21-22, 2025

Day 1 Proceedings

The AIU 2nd National Conference of Women Vice Chancellors, organized by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) in collaboration with G100 - Universities & Thought Leadership Wing and Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, Delhi, was splendidly hosted by Jharkhand Rai University, Ranchi at the enchanting Country Inn Nature Resort in Bhimtal, Uttarakhand, from August 21-22, 2025. The overarching theme of this significant conference was 'Promoting Women Led Development for Viksit Bharat'.

This theme captures the essence of a vision for a developed India where women's leadership and participation are pivotal. By focusing on women-led development, the conference sought to highlight the critical role that women play in every sphere of society, from education and

governance to the economy and beyond. During the entire conference, the prime emphasis was on empowering women, which is not merely a matter of social justice, but a necessary path to achieving holistic national development.

The notion of Viksit Bharat signifies a vision of a prosperous, inclusive, and equitable India, where every citizen has the opportunity to thrive. Through this conference, the participants engaged in meaningful dialogue to explore strategies for fostering women's leadership, sharing best practices, and addressing the systemic barriers that hinder women's advancement. By promoting policies that support women's education, entrepreneurship, and leadership roles, the conference aimed to inspire collective action that aligns with this national aspiration.

In dedicating two days to this transformative theme, the conference provided a platform for women Vice Chancellors and other leaders to exchange ideas, showcase initiatives, and commit to creating environments where women can lead effectively. This shared objective highlighted that the journey towards a Viksit Bharat is intricately linked to the empowerment of women, underscoring the belief that a nation's progress is deeply rooted in the strength and potential of its women. Thus, the conference served as a clarion call for collaboration, innovation, and renewed commitment to unlocking the vast potential of women for the nation's development.

Inaugural Session

The Inaugural Session of the conference commenced on Day 1, August 21, 2025, from 10:30 AM. The session unfolded with the esteemed presence of the Chief Guest, Shri Atul Kothari, National Secretary, Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, symbolizing the illumination of knowledge and the eternal quest for wisdom. The illustrious dignitaries gracing the dais included Prof. Vinay Kumar Pathak, President, AIU & VC, CSJMU, Kanpur, Dr. (Mrs.) Pankaj Mittal, Secretary General, AIU, Dr. Harbeen Arora Rai, Founder, G100 ALL Ladies League, Women Economic Forum, Women's Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WICCI), SHEconomy, Ms. Marie-Paule Niat, Cameroonian entrepreneur & CEO, Vatis Travel Industry Services; Prof. (Dr.) Savita Sengar, Chancellor, Jharkhand Rai University; and Prof. (Dr.) Piyush Ranjan, Vice Chancellor, Jharkhand Rai University.

The Welcome Address was delivered by Prof. (Dr.) Savita Sengar, Chancellor, Jharkhand Rai University, who extended a heartfelt welcome to all distinguished guests, speakers, and delegates. She reflected upon the two-day Conference as not merely an academic gathering but as a true

retreat, a collective pause for introspection, dialogue, and the rejuvenation of ideas, emphasizing the profound significance of promoting women-led development for a 'Viksit Bharat'.

Following this, Dr. Harbeen Arora Rai brought to the forefront the transformative power of 'samadhan ki shakti,' emphasizing the oneness of women and the inherent strength that lies within this unity. She articulated how this collective empowerment fosters resilience and innovation, urging participants to adopt a positive perspective on women-led development as a powerful catalyst for societal change and progress.

Dr. (Mrs.) Pankaj Mittal, Secretary General, AIU, then shared insights that underscored the favorable impact of a robust work culture fostered by women vice chancellors. She provided a compelling rationale for convening this conference, reiterating AIU's unwavering commitment to nurturing women's leadership within the higher education landscape, an endeavor that necessitates leadership development and astute measures to bridge the gender divide.

In his Presidential Address, Prof. Vinay Kumar Pathak emphasized that inclusivity and coexistence are foundational to creating an empowered nation, envisioning a future where women's contributions are central to national progress.

The session featured Ms. Marie-Paule Niat, the Cameroonian entrepreneur & CEO, Vatis Travel Industry Services, as the Guest of Honor, whose address enriched the discourse with valuable international perspectives on women's leadership and entrepreneurship, underscoring that solidarity simplifies the pursuit of solutions.

The Chief Guest, Shri Atul Kothari, delivered a pivotal address, accentuating the urgent necessity for gender-sensitive policies within educational institutions to cultivate a nurturing environment. He linked education to the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' through women's leadership, cultural upliftment, and the strengthening of family systems grounded in Indian values, while advocating for the self-reliance of women and the creation of safe, healthy environments.

The Inaugural Session concluded with a heartfelt Vote of Thanks delivered by Prof. (Dr.) Piyush Ranjan, VC, Jharkhand Rai University, who expressed profound gratitude to all participants and dignitaries for their esteemed presence and invaluable contributions.

This session beautifully set an inspiring tone for the two-day deliberations, fostering dialogue and collaboration towards achieving the conference's objectives. The session was masterfully

orchestrated by Dr. Amrita Majumdar, Registrar, Jharkhand Rai University. A group photograph of the dignitaries and participants was taken shortly after the session. The session concluded with a sense of purpose and unity, leaving participants invigorated and ready to embark on the journey of promoting women-led development.

Technical session 1: Balancing Leadership & Wellbeing Mental Health & Work life Synergy

This innovative conference gathered distinguished leaders from various institutions, coming together to address essential issues and promote the vital balance between leadership and well-being in the workplace. A compelling theme emerged, reverberating with transformative significance, titled “Balancing Leadership & Well-Being: Mental Health & Work-Life Synergy.”

The session was adeptly presided over by the esteemed Prof. (Dr.) Uma Bhardwaj, Vice Chancellor, NOIDA International University, with the able co-chairmanship of Prof. (Dr.) Mrs. Neelam Vedprakash Mishra, Vice Chancellor, Krishna Vishwa Vidyapeeth, Karad, Maharashtra. Both distinguished leaders played pivotal roles in steering the discussions and nurturing innovative ideas that promise to illuminate the path forward.

In this session, we delved into the critical issue of mental health in the workplace, highlighting the growing concerns surrounding employee anxiety and its detrimental impact on both individuals and the Indian economy. The discussion emphasized the alarming rise in mental health challenges among employees, exploring how these issues lead to significant consequences for both individuals and organizations. As anxiety levels increase, organizations experience decreased efficiency, higher rates of absenteeism, and a dip in overall workplace morale. Employees grappling with anxiety often find it difficult to focus, which results in slower work rates and errors that further compound their stress. Additionally, the increased absenteeism disrupts workflow, placing extra strain on colleagues and undermining team dynamics.

To address these pressing issues, the session proposed a shift towards integrating personal and professional lives, recognizing that employee well-being is deeply interconnected with job satisfaction. The traditional view of work as separate from personal fulfillment is outdated; instead, fostering work-life synergy allows employees to blend their personal and professional lives in a harmonious manner. Emphasis was given on the flexible work arrangements, such as remote working options and personalized schedules, which can help employees manage their

workloads alongside personal responsibilities, thereby alleviating stress and improving satisfaction.

Central to this integrated approach are employee-friendly HR policies that prioritize mental health and well-being. It was also deliberated that organizations should provide access to mental health support programs, including counseling services and workshops, and create open communication channels that encourage discussions about mental health to reduce stigma. Regular wellness initiatives, such as mindfulness sessions and stress management workshops, can equip employees with necessary tools to manage their mental well-being proactively.

Overall, the session concluded with a resounding call for leaders to prioritize employee well-being as a fundamental aspect of organizational success. By championing mental health initiatives and nurturing a culture of work-life synergy, organizations can ensure a healthier, more productive future for their employees and the economy at large. Leaders are encouraged to take proactive steps in reshaping workplace dynamics to center around mental health, as building a supportive infrastructure is not just a moral obligation but a strategic imperative for thriving in today's competitive landscape.

The key recommendations of the session were:

1. Transitioning to a 5-day work week can promote better work-life balance for both faculty and students, reducing stress and enhancing overall wellbeing.
2. Introduction of menstrual leave as a formal policy can support the health and comfort of female students and staff, acknowledging the physical and psychological challenges associated with menstruation.
3. Regulatory bodies should mandate universities to establish dedicated mental health and wellbeing centres, providing support services, resources, and workshops for mental health awareness and resilience.
4. Incorporating self-defence training into university curricula can empower students, particularly women, enhancing their confidence and sense of security on campus.
5. Establishing child care centres within universities can support students and faculty with children, enabling them to balance parenting responsibilities alongside academic and professional commitments.

Technical session 2: Women in Academic Leadership & Role of Women Vice Chancellors in Shaping Institutional Culture

The session commenced with a profound exploration of the theme "Women in Academic Leadership: The Role of Women Vice Chancellors in Shaping Institutional Culture." Guided by the insightful leadership of Dr. Shubhini A. Saraf, Director, NIPER, Raebareli, and Prof. Jayanti Rajan, Vice Chancellor, Sharda University, Agra, U.P., who served as Co-Chair, the dialogue unfolded with remarkable depth and nuance. Together, they adeptly navigated the discourse on the pivotal roles that women occupy in academic leadership, emphasizing the significant impact they have on cultivating a supportive and vibrant institutional culture.

The session shed light on the critical position of women vice chancellors in transforming leadership dynamics within academic institutions. It illuminated how women's leadership prioritizes essential areas such as mental health, community outreach, and inclusive decision-making dimensions often marginalized in traditional leadership paradigms. In the Indian context, where women face considerable obstacles in ascending to senior leadership roles, the visibility of women in such positions conveys a powerful message: leadership can harmonize strength with compassion, affirming that women rightfully belong in every arena where significant decisions are made.

Key takeaways from this enlightening session included the vital need for established women leaders to actively mentor and empower the next generation, fostering a supportive network that encourages growth and ambition. Moreover, there was strong emphasis on embracing inclusivity and diversity to ensure that all voices are represented in decision-making processes, thus enriching the institutional environment. The contributions of women leaders in nurturing positive organizational values and fostering a collaborative culture were also highlighted as vital for institutional success.

In conclusion, the session underscored the transformative impact of women vice chancellors in academic leadership. They not only inspire future generations of leaders but also promote equity and inclusivity, paving the way for a more balanced and just academic landscape.

The key recommendations of the session were:

1. Establish targeted programs for women to develop leadership skills, focusing on decision-making, mental health advocacy, and community outreach.

2. Create formal mentorship initiatives, pairing established women leaders with emerging female leaders to foster professional growth and support.
3. Advocate for policies that prioritize inclusivity and diversity in hiring and decision-making processes within academic institutions.
4. Facilitate networking platforms for women leaders to connect, share experiences, and collaborate on initiatives.

By adopting these recommendations, educational institutions can cultivate an environment where women leaders thrive, ultimately transforming the academic landscape for future generations.

Technical session 3: Integrating Gender Sensitization in Curriculum and Pedagogy

Amidst a rich tapestry of insightful dialogue, Session 3 of the 2nd National Vice Chancellor's Conference convened under the illuminating theme "Integrating Gender Sensitization in Curriculum and Pedagogy." Skillfully led by the esteemed Dr. Deepti Dharmani, Vice Chancellor, Chaudhary Bansi Lal University, and co-chaired by the distinguished Prof. Madhulika Kaushik, Vice Chancellor, Usha Martin University, Ranchi, this pivotal session embarked on a transformative exploration of the necessity of embedding gender sensitization within educational frameworks.

With eloquence and authority, both the Chairperson and Co-Chair delivered inspiring addresses that underscored the crucial significance of integrating gender perspectives into academic curricula and teaching methodologies. Their insights shed light on the urgent need to cultivate inclusive educational environments that promote equity, understanding, and respect across genders. This session not only served as a forum for sharing innovative practices and strategies but also facilitated dynamic discussions that encouraged participants to embrace a comprehensive approach to gender sensitization in higher education.

Key themes discussed included the imperative of creating a supportive atmosphere for women in academic settings and the importance of utilizing gender-responsive pedagogical techniques. This encompasses the adoption of gender-neutral language, thoughtful content delivery, and intentional recognition of women's accomplishments across various fields during class deliberations and within the curriculum. It was emphasized that acknowledging the contributions of women achievers not only honors their efforts but also serves as crucial role models for students.

Moreover, participants agreed on the necessity of addressing gender biases openly within educational discussions, creating a safe space for dialogue around these issues.

Additionally, the introduction of a mandatory course on Gender Sensitivity was proposed to foster awareness and promote a deeper understanding of gender-related issues among students. By implementing these essential practices, universities can transform the educational landscape into one that is more inclusive and equitable for all students.

The collective commitment expressed in the session resonated deeply within the audience, inspiring a collaborative resolve to reshape educational paradigms and drive forward a movement toward a more just and equitable future. The discourse served as a catalyst for greater engagement and accountability in integrating these crucial elements into academia, ultimately aspiring to create a society where equality is not just an ideal but a lived reality.

The key recommendations of the session were:

1. Highlighted the need for creating a supportive academic atmosphere for women to enhance equity and respect.
2. Employing gender-responsive pedagogical strategies, such as gender-neutral language and inclusive content delivery.
3. Emphasized the importance of recognizing women's accomplishments as role models during discussions and in the curriculum.
4. Encouraged open discussions about gender biases to create safe spaces for dialogue.
5. Proposed a mandatory course on Gender Sensitivity to deepen understanding of gender-related issues among students.

Technical Session 4: Empowering Women through Digital Economy, AI, Robotics, and New Age Technologies for Realizing Goals of SDG 4 & Viksit Bharat

Session 4 centered on the transformative potential of new age technologies, focusing on their critical role in empowering women and achieving the ambitious goals of Viksit Bharat as well as Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). Chaired by the dynamic Ms. Sreerupa Mitra Chaudhury, Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of West Bengal, and co-chaired by the esteemed Dr. (Ms.) Alicia Gatphoh, Vice Chancellor of The ICFAI University, Meghalaya, the session fostered rich discussions that highlighted the pressing need to adapt to emerging

technologies in order to create inclusive opportunities for women across all socio-economic segments.

A major theme of the session was the integration of women into the mainstream knowledge of artificial intelligence (AI) and other advanced technologies. This need was significantly underscored by the alarming statistic that only 33% of women have engaged with AI, compared to 77% of men. Redressing this imbalance is essential for fostering gender equality in the digital economy.

The session elaborated on the government's initiative AI-Kiran, which aims to integrate women from all segments into the mainstream knowledge of AI and mitigate existing inequalities in their lives. Chairperson of the session, Ms. Sreerupa Mitra Chaudhury shared inspiring success stories, serving as powerful examples of what can be achieved when women are empowered with the right tools and knowledge. Among those highlighted were:

Priyanka Kamath, co-founder and CEO of “100 GIGA”, designed to encourage young women to explore and excel in AI.

Ritika Choudhry, the CEO of “Unscript AI”, who has been instrumental in leveraging digital platforms to enhance women's visibility in entrepreneurship.

-Kausambi Manjita, CEO of “Mason”, whose innovative approach in tech has opened pathways for women in traditionally male-dominated industries.

These narratives illustrated how integrating women into advanced technological fields not only empowers individuals but also drives broader societal change, fostering equality and opportunity.

The discussions emphasized leveraging AI and digital tools to enhance women's empowerment significantly, advocating for proactive measures that would bridge the gender gap in technology and innovation. It was suggested that educational institutions collaborate with tech companies to develop mentorship programs aimed at equipping women with the skills needed to thrive in the digital economy.

In conclusion, the session served as a call to action, urging participants and stakeholders to prioritize efforts that empower women through technology. By harnessing the potential of AI and new age technologies, we can create an inclusive and equitable environment that ultimately

contributes to a more developed society, aligned with the goals of Viksit Bharat and SDG 4. The commitment to fostering women's participation in the digital economy stands not just as an aspiration but as a necessity for achieving gender equality and sustainable development in the years to come.

The key recommendations of the session were:

1. Advocated for partnerships between educational institutions and tech companies to create mentorship programs that equip women with essential digital skills.
2. Develop comprehensive training programs focused on AI and emerging technologies specifically designed for women, ensuring accessibility across various socio-economic segments.
3. Organize networking events and conferences that facilitate connections among women in technology, allowing them to share knowledge, experiences, and resources.
4. Encourage educational institutions to integrate technology-focused curricula that promote digital literacy and independent learning among female students from an early age.

Day 2 Proceedings

The second day of the 2nd National Conference of Women Vice Chancellors on “Promoting Women-Led Development for Viksit Bharat” commenced with great enthusiasm. Building upon the insightful deliberations of Day 1, which focused on leadership, wellbeing, gender sensitization, and the role of technology in women’s empowerment, Day 2 shifted attention to policy reforms, governance, and socio-cultural transformation as crucial drivers for creating gender-inclusive institutions and realizing the vision of *Viksit Bharat*.

Technical Session V: Policy and Governance Reforms for Gender-Inclusive Institutions to Realize SDG 5 (Gender Equality)

This insightful conference session brought together eminent academic leaders to deliberate on the critical issues of inclusivity and governance, with a focus on advancing gender equality in higher education institutions. A transformative theme emerged, carrying profound relevance, titled “*Policy and Governance Reforms for Gender-Inclusive Institutions to Realize SDG 5 (Gender Equality)*.”

The session was skillfully chaired by the distinguished Dr. Hemlata Bagla, Vice Chancellor, Hyderabad (Sind) National Collegiate University, Mumbai, with the able co-chairmanship of Prof. K. Ruckhmani, Director, NIPER, Hajipur, Bihar. Both leaders guided the discussions with remarkable clarity and vision, ensuring that the deliberations translated into practical recommendations aimed at embedding inclusivity within the fabric of academic governance.

The deliberations during the session brought forward the urgent need for higher education institutions to adopt structural and policy reforms to ensure inclusivity and accountability. It was observed with concern that the number of women in academic leadership positions remains limited, making it imperative to launch targeted mentoring programs and capacity-building initiatives to develop more women leaders. The participants emphasized that inclusivity must extend beyond the gender binary by recognizing and prioritizing the concerns of transgender individuals as well, while infrastructural inclusivity, such as adequate provision of toilets for women and transgenders, was also strongly advocated. The discussions highlighted that the inclusivity matrix of institutions should reflect equal opportunities across gender identities, and policies on admissions should be reframed to ensure greater diversity and access, particularly for underrepresented groups. Special recognition and felicitation of first-generation girl students was suggested as a way to both encourage and inspire others. The session also called for policies to be made more accountable with clear implementation mechanisms, measurable outcomes, and periodic reviews to assess effectiveness. Overall, the need to reimagine governance through equitable policies, targeted support, and recognition of diverse groups was stressed as essential to realizing SDG 5 within the higher education ecosystem.

The Chair and Co-Chair concluded that higher education institutions must go beyond symbolic inclusivity and translate reforms into measurable outcomes. They called for creating policy frameworks that are transparent, accountable, and action-oriented, thereby embedding gender inclusivity into the governance fabric of Indian higher education.

The key recommendations of the session were:

1. Increase the representation of women in academic leadership positions by creating clear pathways for their advancement.
2. Ensure inclusivity beyond the gender binary, giving priority to transgender individuals in policies and leadership opportunities.

3. Launch targeted mentoring and capacity-building programs to prepare women for governance roles.
4. Reframe admission policies to prioritize diversity and equal opportunity. Felicitate first-generation girl students to encourage greater participation of marginalized groups.
5. Make policies more accountable with clear implementation frameworks and measurable outcomes.
5. Conduct capacity-building programs for women faculty and administrators at regular intervals.

Technical Session VI: Women as Agents of Socio-Cultural Transformation in Higher Education as Envisaged in Bhartiya Gyan Parampara

This engaging session convened distinguished leaders to explore the pivotal role of women in shaping the cultural and ethical dimensions of higher education. A resonant theme guided the discussions, titled “*Women as Agents of Socio-Cultural Transformation in Higher Education as Envisaged in Bhartiya Gyan Parampara.*”

The session was ably presided over by the esteemed Prof. Sangeeta Shukla, Vice Chancellor, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, with the capable co-chairmanship of Dr. Uma Ananda Dagnino G, Vice Chancellor, Woxsen University, Hyderabad. Both eminent leaders played instrumental roles in steering the discourse, fostering thoughtful insights on the integration of Indian ethos with modern academia, and highlighting the transformative leadership of women in socio-cultural development.

The deliberations highlighted the unique role of women in promoting socio-cultural change within higher education by drawing inspiration from *Bhartiya Gyan Parampara* while simultaneously addressing the needs of modern academia. It was emphasized that institutions must focus on the holistic development of individuals, nurturing them not only in terms of intellectual growth but also through the cultivation of seva, values, and life skills. The participants underscored the importance of integrating Indian ethos into modern systems of education, ensuring that the moral, cultural, and spiritual fabric of society is preserved even while adopting global academic standards. A key point of discussion revolved around the alignment of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) with modern frameworks, enabling a synergistic blend that strengthens the foundation of higher education while retaining cultural identity. Innovative practices such as recognizing and

awarding women for their contributions in adopted villages were proposed as ways to encourage women leaders to engage with communities and extend their impact beyond the campus. Furthermore, the inclusion of Sanskrit-speaking women leaders was suggested to strengthen cultural continuity and highlight the enduring relevance of traditional languages in academia.

The Chair and Co-Chair concluded that women must be positioned not only as leaders in academia but also as cultural custodians who bridge tradition and modernity. By embedding values, inclusivity, and indigenous wisdom in higher education, women leaders can play a transformative role in shaping institutions that are both globally relevant and deeply rooted in Indian knowledge traditions.

The key recommendations of the session were:

1. Promote the holistic development of individuals, emphasizing seva, values, and life skills alongside academic excellence.
2. Embed Indian ethos and Bhartiya Gyan Parampara into modern higher education systems.
3. Align Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) with contemporary academic frameworks to ensure relevance and applicability.
4. Recognize women's contributions to society by instituting awards for women leaders engaged in adopted villages.
5. Include Sanskrit-speaking women leaders in academic initiatives to preserve cultural continuity and highlight traditional knowledge.

Valedictory Session

The Valedictory Session of the AIU 2nd National Conference of Women Vice Chancellors, held August 21-22, 2025, at Country Inn Nature Resort, Bhimtal, Uttarakhand, concluded two days of discussions on 'Promoting Women Led Development for Viksit Bharat'. Organized by AIU with G100- Universities & Thought Leadership Wing, Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, and hosted by Jharkhand Rai University, it took place on Day 2, August 22, 2025. It marked a moment of reflection and vision-charting.

Following the Welcome of Guests on the Dais, Prof. (Dr.) Savita Sengar, Chancellor, Jharkhand Rai University, delivered the Valedictory Address. She viewed the conference as a "true retreat" for introspection and rejuvenation. Dr. Sengar stressed promoting women-led development without gender bias or victimization, focusing on creating enabling environments for opportunity

and accountability. She emphasized inclusive, collaborative leadership with male allies to realize Viksit Bharat. She concluded by noting the insights would guide policy and strengthen women's academic leadership.

Dr. Harmeet Kaur, Dean, IQAC, Jharkhand Rai University, presented the Conference Report. She noted the conference was a dynamic forum for deliberating women leaders' roles in higher education. Day 1 focused on leadership, wellbeing, gender sensitization, and technology for women's empowerment, stressing capacity, emotional resilience, and digital preparedness. Day 2 covered policy and governance reforms for gender-inclusive institutions (SDG 5), including increased women's representation, transgender inclusivity, mentoring, and accountability. It also discussed women as agents of socio-cultural transformation via Bhartiya Gyan Parampara, emphasizing value-based holistic development and community engagement. Dr. Kaur affirmed the conference provided a blueprint for inclusive academic leadership for a gender-just Viksit Bharat, stressing collaboration with male allies.

Dr. (Mrs.) Pankaj Mittal, Secretary General, AIU, gave a Special Address. She thanked Jharkhand Rai University, calling the conference a retreat for women leaders' reflection and strength. Dr. Mittal presented the "Saptapadi of the Conference": seven steps for gender-inclusive academic leadership, including addressing underrepresentation, inclusivity for all genders, integrating Indian Knowledge Systems, mentoring, recognizing community engagement, accountability, and collaboration with male allies. She urged implementing these recommendations, emphasizing that women-led development requires partnership with men.

While mentioning key takeaways from the conference, she highlighted the urgent need to enhance women's representation in leadership positions, as current figures remain low across sectors i.e., only 10% of Vice Chancellors, 11.7% of High Court Judges, 18% of Supreme Court Judges, 15% of Members of Parliament in the Lok Sabha, and less than 10% in the Rajya Sabha, with state-level variations such as 18% in Chhattisgarh and 14% in Rajasthan. She emphasized that ensuring women's presence on boards is equally critical, as it leads to better governance, empathetic leadership, reduction in indiscipline, and the creation of value-driven, socially responsible institutions. She cited another important takeaway, integration of gender-sensitive curriculum and pedagogy that avoids stereotypes, promotes gender neutrality, includes transgenders, and encourages collaborative group projects with balanced participation of both boys and girls. She stated that digital empowerment of women must be prioritized by providing free laptops with relevant software, offering counseling support to reduce dropouts, and ensuring gender audits

alongside zero-tolerance policies to make campuses safe and inclusive. She highlighted that the conference also underscored the need to leverage government schemes, such as those supporting women in AI, to foster female technology leaders and bridge digital gaps and mentioned that learning from global practices, many advanced nations provide preference to women in appointments when qualifications are equal and mandate women's representation on high-powered committees such as Boards of Studies and Selection Committees. Finally, she stated that the Indian Knowledge Tradition (Bharatiya Gyan Parampara) reminds us that women have historically been at the center of knowledge and societal development, with examples such as Gargi, Maitreyi, Lopamudra, Apala, and Savitribai Phule. In continuation of this legacy, AIU can recognize and honor women who act as agents of social change, including Sanskrit-speaking women in rural areas, thereby strengthening community engagement and empowering women as true change-makers for the nation.

In her address as Guest of Honour, Ms. Marie-Paule Niat commended the women Vice Chancellors of India for their serious commitment and camaraderie in discussing the theme "Promoting Women-Led Development for Viksit Bharat." She noted that women-led leadership is rare in Cameroon and many parts of the world, emphasizing that India's progress reflects the transformative potential of women's leadership in academia. Ms. Niat praised AIU and Jharkhand Rai University for organizing this initiative, describing it as a retreat that fostered dialogue and renewal among women leaders. She encouraged participants to lead with courage, inclusivity, and resilience, believing that the collaborative spirit cultivated would inspire women leaders globally, extending the impact of the conference beyond its duration.

In her inspiring address as Chief Guest, Ms. Sreerupa Mitra Chaudhury, Hon'ble Member of Legislative Assembly, West Bengal, congratulated the organizers and participants of the AIU 2nd National Conference of Women Vice Chancellors on "Promoting Women-Led Development for Viksit Bharat." She commended the women Vice Chancellors for their significant contributions to academia and nation-building, highlighting that their leadership sets new benchmarks in governance and inclusivity.

Ms. Chaudhury advocated for "ageless consideration in academic leadership," emphasizing that leadership should be based on wisdom and vision rather than age. She concluded by lauding AIU and Jharkhand Rai University for hosting the conference, which provided an invaluable space for reflection and collaboration. She expressed confidence that the discussions would empower current and future women leaders, furthering the realization of Viksit Bharat.

In his Vote of Thanks, Prof. (Dr.) Piyush Ranjan, Vice Chancellor, Jharkhand Rai University, expressed heartfelt gratitude to all dignitaries and participants for their active engagement in the 2nd National Conference of Women Vice Chancellors on “Promoting Women-Led Development for Viksit Bharat.” He highlighted the conference as a forum that underscored the critical role of women in academic leadership as cultural custodians and role models. Prof. Ranjan commended the collaborative efforts of all involved in making the event successful and expressed confidence that the recommendations and “Saptapadi outcomes” would guide women-led initiatives toward inclusive academic governance. He concluded by wishing all participants continued success in their leadership journeys, affirming that empowering women in higher education is vital for achieving an equitable and empowered Viksit Bharat.

The session concluded with the National Anthem, followed by Lunch and Bid Adieu. The conference fostered lasting connections and a renewed commitment to gender equity in academia.

Conclusion

The AIU 2nd National Conference of Women Vice Chancellors on “Promoting Women-Led Development for Viksit Bharat” concluded as a landmark initiative that not only brought together eminent women academic leaders from across the country but also provided them with a unique retreat-like experience of reflection, dialogue, and solidarity. Over two days, the Conference became a vibrant platform for exchanging ideas, sharing experiences, and formulating concrete recommendations on how women can shape the future of higher education through inclusive governance, cultural transformation, and collaborative leadership.

The deliberations across sessions reaffirmed that women-led development is not about exclusion or victimhood but about creating enabling ecosystems where women and men work together as allies to achieve gender equity and institutional excellence. The discussions highlighted the need for policy reforms, infrastructural inclusivity, mentorship programs, capacity-building initiatives, and integration of Indian Knowledge Systems with global academic practices.

The presence of distinguished leaders, policymakers, and international voices enriched the dialogue, adding depth and perspective to the collective vision of the participants. The Saptapadi outcomes and the detailed recommendations that emerged from the sessions provide a clear roadmap for universities and higher education institutions to embed inclusivity, accountability, and value-based education in their governance and academic structures.

As the Conference drew to a close with the National Anthem, it left participants with a renewed sense of purpose and determination. The insights and commitments emerging from this two-day journey are expected to act as guiding principles for building gender-just, value-driven, and globally competitive academic institutions. The Conference thus stands as a testament to the transformative potential of women leaders in higher education, charting the path toward a more equitable, empowered, and visionary *Viksit Bharat*.