

Office of the Chief Public Relations Officer  
Jamia Millia Islamia

Press Release

**Two-Day International Conference on “Reimagining Higher Education for Sustainability: Quality and Innovative Financing Practices in India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries” Concludes at Jamia Millia Islamia**

New Delhi, 30 July 2026

A two-day international conference on “**Reimagining Higher Education for Sustainability: Quality and Innovative Financing Practices in India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries**” was organised by the **Centre for West Asian Studies (CWAS), Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI)**, on **23–24 July 2026**. The conference brought together eminent academicians, researchers, scholars, educationists and experts from India and abroad to deliberate on contemporary challenges and emerging opportunities in higher education, with special focus on sustainability, quality assurance, innovative financing, internationalisation and India–GCC academic cooperation.

The conference was held under the leadership of **Prof. Mazhar Asif, Vice Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia**, as Chief Patron, and **Prof. Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, Registrar, JMI**, as Patron. **Prof. Anisur Rahman, Professor, CWAS, JMI and former Director, HRDC, JMI**, served as the Conference Convener, while **Prof. Hemayun Akhtar Nazmi, Director, CWAS, JMI**, was associated with the organisation of the conference. The conference programme reflected a strong academic and international orientation, with participation from scholars and experts representing institutions in India and overseas.

**Inaugural Session Highlights Importance of India–GCC Higher Education Cooperation**

The conference commenced on **23 July 2026** with an inaugural session at the **FTK-Centre for Information Technology, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi**. The session was chaired by **Prof. Zubair Meenai, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, JMI**. The programme included Quran recitation, JMI Tarana, a sapling presentation symbolising sustainability, the welcome address, introductory remarks, the Chief Guest's address, keynote address, chair's remarks and vote of thanks.

Welcoming the distinguished gathering, **Prof. H. A. Nazmi, Director, Centre for West Asian Studies, JMI**, highlighted the significance of strengthening academic engagement between India and the GCC countries. He emphasised the need for greater representation and interaction between the two regions, particularly in the social

sciences, and underlined the valuable contribution of Indian researchers and scholars working on West Asian affairs.

In his introductory remarks, **Prof. Anisur Rahman, Conference Convener**, emphasised the role of higher education in strengthening India–GCC relations. He argued that bilateral relations should extend beyond conventional geopolitics and diplomacy and place higher education, institutional partnerships and policy frameworks at the centre of engagement. He also highlighted the importance of initiatives such as the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and **Viksit Bharat @2047** in advancing educational quality, sustainability and international cooperation.

The **Chief Guest, Prof. Syed Ehtesham Hasnain**, National Science Chair–SERB, IIT Delhi and former Vice Chancellor of the University of Hyderabad and Jamia Hamdard, spoke on the transformative role of universities and higher education as an “engine of growth.” Congratulating Jamia Millia Islamia on its growing national standing, he stressed the need for meaningful reforms, quality development and sustainability in higher education. He called for stronger India–GCC cooperation in areas including **student mobility, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, technology, research, innovation and commercialisation**. He also emphasised the importance of international collaboration, public funding and a stronger culture of patents and innovation.

The **Keynote Speaker, Prof. C. B. Sharma, Vice Chancellor, Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribagh, Jharkhand**, underlined the social responsibility of higher education and called for restoring the true purpose and character of universities as spaces for reason, enquiry and intellectual exploration. He stressed institutional autonomy, academic freedom, adequate resources, quality research, responsible funding and effective policy implementation to ensure the production and accessibility of quality knowledge.

In his chair's remarks, **Prof. Zubair Meenai** highlighted the need to promote knowledge beyond mere skills and competencies and emphasised the importance of specialisation, sustainable funding and deeper collaboration between India and the GCC countries.

### **Academic Deliberations and International Participation**

The conference featured a series of plenary, technical and roundtable sessions addressing a wide range of issues, including quality assurance, sustainability, innovative financing, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, governance, internationalisation, gender equity, cross-border education and academic diplomacy. The first plenary session, titled “**Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Issues, Challenges and Way Forward,**” brought together experts to discuss institutional quality, leadership, funding, sustainability, gender equality and India–GCC cooperation in higher education.

The conference had a distinctly international character, with participation from scholars and delegates from **Fiji, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Qatar,**

**Uzbekistan and the United Arab Emirates**, alongside scholars from leading Indian institutions. Among the international delegates specifically associated with the conference were **Dr. Ansari Pulical Abdul Azeez, PMU (University), UK, Northampton; Dr. Sakul Kundra, Fiji National University; Jasmine Rehman, USA; Hasan Khan, Qatar; and Prof. Nilufar Khodjaeva, Tashkent, Uzbekistan**. Their participation enriched the academic exchange and strengthened the conference's emphasis on international cooperation and global knowledge sharing.

The second day of the conference continued with discussions on **quality assurance and governance in the GCC, contemporary challenges in higher education, gender perspectives, globalisation of higher education, internationalisation, cross-border academic mobility and knowledge diplomacy**. The plenary session on **"Globalisation of Higher Education"** featured **Prof. Mohammad Suhail of Samarkand State University, Uzbekistan**, along with Prof. Brinda Bazeley, Prof. Aslam Khan and Dr. Amba Pande, and focused on internationalisation, academic mobility and the changing role of higher education in global soft power.

### **Valedictory Session Marks Successful Conclusion**

The conference concluded on **24 July 2026** with a distinguished **Valedictory Session**, marking the successful completion of two days of intensive academic deliberations. The closing programme included a welcome address by **Prof. Sebastian N., Centre for West Asian Studies, JMI**, a brief conference report presented by **Arshpreet Kaur, Tammana Khan and Anand Mishra of CWAS, JMI**, an address by the Guest of Honour, **Prof. Sheetal Sharma, Centre for European Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University**, and a keynote address by **Dr. Chandrashekhar Jayvantrao Rawandale, Director, Symbiosis Law School, Noida**. The **Valedictory Address was delivered by Prof. Tanuja, Dean, Academic Affairs, JMI**, followed by concluding remarks by **Prof. Anisur Rahman, Conference Convener and Professor, Centre for West Asian Studies, JMI**.

The Valedictory Session provided an opportunity to reflect on the key outcomes of the conference and the need to translate academic dialogue into sustained institutional cooperation. The discussions throughout the conference reaffirmed that higher education can serve as a powerful bridge between India and the GCC countries by promoting student and faculty mobility, collaborative research, knowledge diplomacy, innovation, quality assurance and sustainable development.

The conference also underscored the importance of developing **long-term academic partnerships between Indian and international institutions**, particularly in areas of mutual interest such as digital education, artificial intelligence, sustainable financing, gender inclusion, cross-border education and international academic collaboration.

The successful conclusion of the conference marked an important step towards creating a sustained platform for dialogue and cooperation among scholars, policymakers and academic institutions in India and abroad. The organisers expressed their gratitude to the distinguished guests, international delegates, speakers, chairs, discussants, presenters, participants and the organising and technical teams whose collective efforts contributed to the success of the international conference.

The conference concluded with a renewed commitment to strengthening **India–GCC higher education cooperation** and fostering a more inclusive, sustainable, innovative and globally connected higher education ecosystem.

Prof. Saima Saeed  
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