

# Universities provide the foundation students need in the age of AI: experts

Discussing the future of academia, they say students get only 40% of their education in the classroom and gain equally from peer-to-peer learning and interactions with professors and industry leaders; urging universities to 'rethink', they say mass hiring will be replaced by 'value' hiring in future

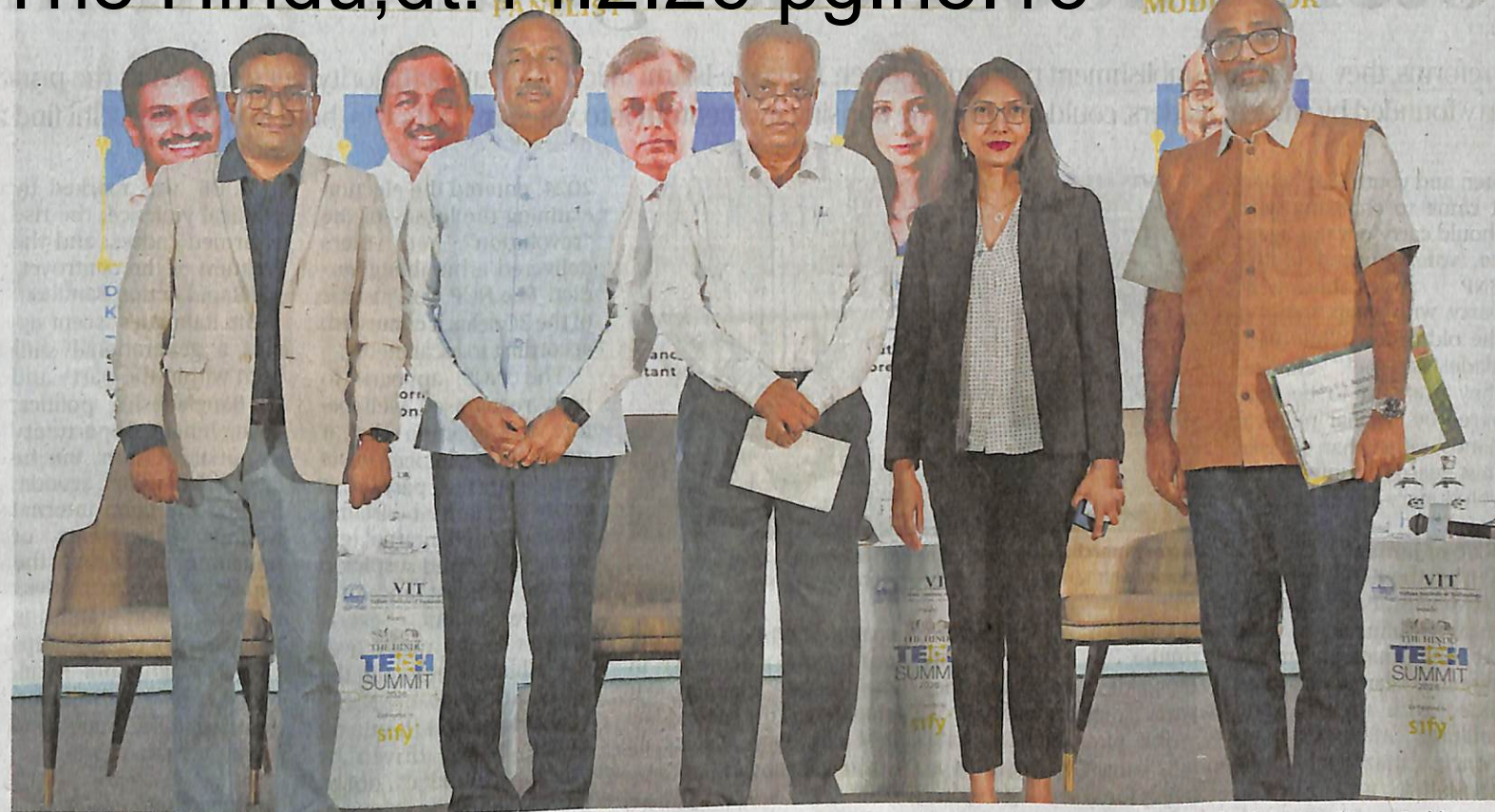
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**A**rtificial Intelligence experts, industry leaders, and educationists on Friday discussed the future of academia and university education with the growing importance and usage of AI globally at *The Hindu* Tech Summit 2026, hosted by *The Hindu*, presented by the Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), and co-presented Sify Technologies, in Chennai.

The session, 'AI, Academia and Resilience: Building Institution and Talent for an Uncertain Future', featured Dr. Sandhya Pentareddy, Executive Director, Vellore Institute of Technology; Jagdish Ramaswamy, Board of Advisors and Advisor, Digital Transformation, Jayam SCM Consultants Pvt. Ltd.; V. Kumaraswamy, author and independent consultant; and Dr. Ashwin Sadasiva Kumar, Senior Vice-President, Learning and Campus Head, Virtusa. It was moderated by Nagaraj Nagabushanam, Vice-President, Data and Analytics, *The Hindu*.

Speaking about the unique value offered by formal university education, Dr. Pentareddy said, "We produce intelligent, inquisitive, and adaptable human beings who shape future societies. The value of university education is more than a course you can learn online. I always say that people learn only 40% in their classroom. Students gain from peer-to-peer learning - interacting with other students



**Past and present:** Ashwin Sadasiva Kumar, Jagdish Ramaswamy, V. Kumaraswamy, and Sandhya Pentareddy during the session titled 'AI, Academia and Resilience: Building Institution and Talent for an Uncertain Future', moderated by Nagaraj Nagabushanam. M. SRINATH

## **The experts also spoke on the need to remove negative attitudes towards AI**

and professors - and when they meet industrialists. Research is the backbone of the country, and we need to do a lot more of it."

On the need for removing negative attitudes towards AI and the presumed loss of jobs that its adoption would likely cause, Mr. Kumaraswamy said, "We need to get out of the mindset of... experience and step-by-step progression. You are used to seeing your seniors and

general managers at 45 [years of age]. We need to see more 25-year-old general managers. The negative connotation regarding job losses is really overdone. I think the NITI Aayog has estimated that 1.5 million jobs will be lost, primarily at the base level. But look at the opportunity. They are projecting \$1.5 trillion worth of opportunity."

Mr. Kumaraswamy further said, "AI has been there for much longer, but it has been making noise only in the past two years. We must move towards something [a concept of a university] which is not a



'place constant'."

Answering a question on AI's impact on students pursuing liberal arts, he added, "No field is going to be exempt. AI is in the preliminary stages... in the de-

velopmental stage. But everybody has to be on alert."

**On formal education**  
Reiterating the importance of formal university and college education, Dr. Kumar said, "The fundamental language on which AI exists is still Python. The foundation is what the university gives... and that is not going to go away. Yes, the volume will go down; mass hiring will not happen. There will be 'value' hiring. Universities have to rethink. Micro-learning through certification might help us solve one issue, one problem. What univer-

sity education gives is... solving problems. Degrees are not going to go away, but universities have to start thinking. AI will never replace a human. People who don't know AI will be replaced by those who know AI. Certification courses cannot create engineers, only universities can create engineers."

Mr. Ramaswamy said, "We lack the ecosystem. The AI revolution should be led by the government and corporates. We need to look at using AI not just in a service economy but in a product economy. Only in the product economy do you create IPs."