

# 'Higher education is key to eliminating inequality and powering economy'

At the inaugural session of *The Hindu* Tech Summit 2026, jointly organised by The Hindu Group, VIT, and Sify Technologies, VIT Founder and Chancellor G. Viswanathan points out that as India's economy grew, inequality widened. Only education can help to curb this situation, he says

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

The Hindu ,dt:13.02.26 pg.no:16

**P**roviding quality education and increasing college and university enrolment hold the key to improving the economy of the country and curailing inequality, G. Viswanathan, Founder and Chancellor, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), said in Chennai on Thursday.

At the inaugural session of *The Hindu* Tech Summit 2026, organised by The Hindu Group, Vellore Institute of Technology, and Sify Technologies, he said that in the past 20 years or so, India had grown to become the fourth largest economy, overtaking Japan in 2025. Inequality had grown too, with only about 70 lakh people declaring themselves as belonging to the higher income group.

## 'Policy needed'

"They say India is the most unequal country in the world, next only to Russia. Unless we provide education, this cannot be curtailed. It requires government policy," Dr. Viswanathan said. For this, education should reach all children belonging to poor families and the middle class.

He said Japan's per capi-

ta income was 12 times that of India. While India's per capita income stood at \$2,900, Japan's was \$36,000. While some government officials exuded confidence that India could overtake Germany in a few years, it should be borne in mind that Germany's per capita income was \$58,000, 20 times that of India.

"In the year 2000, there were only nine billionaires in the country. Now, we have grown beyond 300," he said.

The National Education Policy's thrust on improv-

**'Owing to the lack of spending, only four crore children out of 14 crore eligible for higher education are at colleges and universities'**

ing the gross enrolment ratio from the present 28% to 50% in the next 15 years would mean the number of students in colleges and universities must be doubled. This, Dr. Viswanathan said, meant someone had to pay for them. In the present scenario, the bur-



**Tech focus:** G. Viswanathan, Founder and Chancellor, Vellore Institute of Technology; N. Ram, Director, The Hindu Group; Suresh Nambath, Editor, *The Hindu*; L.V. Navaneeth, CEO, The Hindu Group; and Raju Vegesna, chairman and managing director, Sify Technologies, at the inauguration of *The Hindu* Tech Summit 2026 in Chennai on Thursday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ.

lakh students from all Indian States and 75 other countries.

## Role of AI

"AI is not a disruptor; AI is an evolution," said Raju Vegesna, chairman and managing director, Sify Technologies, in his keynote address. "Just as the Internet enabled us to reach places and share knowledge, we will get all those benefits from AI," he added. While India could be lagging behind in higher education, Mr. Vegesna exuded confidence that the country would have its unique way to address the transformations and the market. Giving an example, he said AI was like giving bicycle-riders a motorcycle; it ensured that they reached more places faster, though the tech would have to be adopted with caution. India's chances in the game were on how to adopt AI technology for the benefit of enterprises.

Among those present at the inaugural session were Santhosh T.G., Chief Digital Officer, Switch Mobility; N. Ram, Director, The Hindu Group; Suresh Nambath, Editor, *The Hindu*; L.V. Navaneeth, Chief Executive Officer, The Hindu Group; and Suresh Balakrishna, Chief Revenue Officer, The Hindu Group.

mission in the 1960s had recommended an expenditure of at least 6% of the GDP. Owing to the lack of spending, only four crore children out of 14 crore eligible for higher education were in colleges and universities. Similarly, if India were to compete with developed countries, the spending on research and development should be increased manifold from the present 0.7%.

Tracing the history of VIT, Dr. Viswanathan said that what started in 1984 with 180 students had grown to accommodate 1



den of higher education was mostly on the learner; the government spent barely 3% to 4% of the GDP, though the Kothari Com-