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# ICON 2024 equips students with industry-ready skills to pursue their passion

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**CHENNAI:** With an aspiration to empower students to pursue their passions while equipping them with industry-relevant knowledge and skills, and as the world is evolving rapidly, ICON 2024 strives to keep our students at the forefront of this transformation. The connect aims to strengthen industry-academia ties, identify opportunities for internship and placement of students, promote faculty and department engagement in consultancy services, upskilling of faculty and students through industry collaborations and enrich syllabus based on industry needs. As the architect and brainchild of ICON 2024, Dr. Sr. Stella Mary fmm, Principal i/c, Stella Maris College stated, "This novel, collaborative endeavour promises to rejig the approaches of both higher educational institutions and industry in knowledge creation, skills development, and enhancement of competencies.

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ICON goes beyond the two-day event and the outcomes mark the beginning of transformative education. Dr. Rebecca Devaprasad, Assistant Professor Department of Economics, IQAC Coordinator and Core Committee Member ICON stated, "ICON has primarily four verticals – (1) Initiating collaborative activity with industry through MoUs, (2) sessions by industry experts on 'The Next Big Thing' covering emerging aspects in different domains, (3) a curated Corporate Networking Zone and (4) Planet Pitch wherein students pitch their innovative business ideas in the area of sustainability."



The Chief Guest of the event Arun Mammen, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, MRF Ltd., in his address mentioned the ground breaking discoveries, technological advancements and development of new products and services that could benefit society could be some of the endless possibilities when organisations and academia tie-up. He also emphasised on the need for interdisciplinary research and work-study opportunity, where students will gain industry insights and real-world experience. Key takeaway from Mr. Suresh Kalpathi, CEO Veranda Learning, Co-Founder Kalpathi Investments, AGS Cinemas, AGS Entertainments and Angel Investor, our guest of honour, highlighted the importance of integrating organisation partnership in college syllabus so that students get groomed and industry prepared at college level. It is profitable for the companies as the training is already given at college as well as an advantage to the students as they are job ready.

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Vanitha Venugopal, CEO Tamil Nadu Technology (iTNT) Hub, our guest of honour in her address highlighted the impact of the 'Nan Mudhalvan' scheme created by the Government of Tamil Nadu by offering skill development and employment opportunities. She also encouraged students to keep themselves updated with the new trends in technology, especially AI.

Day one featured Corporate Networking Zone that showcased participating companies like Verizon, Kauvery Hospitals, IDBI Bank, DBS Bank among 40 other companies across different verticals to provide a platform for students from Stella Maris and other city colleges to interact with industry members for enhancing awareness and exploring job/ internship prospects.

As a culmination, 18 MoUs with various organisations, 5 MoUs were signed live at the inaugural to welcome the transformational phase of university institution linkages – Veranda Learning Solutions Limited, Sunbright Industries Pvt Ltd, Aban Offshore Group of Companies, Daystar Solar and Grand Alliance for Management Excellence and Consulting.

The second day witnessed a consortium of heads of various national level institutions, providing a platform for the exchange of ideas and best practices. Dr. Vidya Srinivasan, Associate Professor Department of Commerce, Former Vice Principal and Core Committee Member ICON stated, “The tripartite Conclave hosts pan Indian representatives from the government, industry and heads of institutions of higher learning who will deliberate on best practices and measures to enhance and strengthen industry academia ties and how government can be a catalyst for the same.” Innocent Divya IAS, Managing Director Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation will represent the Government and the discussion will be moderated by Dr Nagarajan R, Alumni Community Chair Professor, IIT Madras. Planet Pitch, an inter collegiate competition is a platform for students to present their entrepreneurial ideas that resonate with the sustainable development goals of the United Nations. The winners will be mentored by CII YI for an incubation centre.