

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **India's AI-led development innovations take centre stage at the fifth 'India Day' during the UNGA week**

***'India Day @ UNGA' organised by Reliance Foundation, the United Nations in India  
and the Observer Research Foundation during the week of the UN General Assembly***

- The fifth edition of 'India Day' explored AI, digital public infrastructure, women-led development, health, and inclusive growth
- A high-level ministerial conversation examined new models of global development cooperation amid geopolitical, climate, and technological disruption
- Special publication on lessons from India's AI ecosystem launched

**New York / Mumbai, September 29, 2026:** As world leaders gathered for the 81<sup>st</sup> United Nations General Assembly and the international community entered the final stretch to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals deadline, 'India Day' @ UNGA shone the spotlight on how development innovations from India can be adapted, scaled, and shared across the Global South and beyond.

Reliance Foundation, the United Nations in India and the Observer Research Foundation, convened the fifth edition of India Day @ UNGA on Thursday, September 24, 2026, with two sessions exploring ideas to accelerate the global sustainable development agenda, and to make AI work to solve problems at scale. The sessions **'From India to the World: Scaling Development Innovations for Global Impact'** brought together governments, multilateral institutions, civil society, and private sector innovations to ensure resilience and prosperity for all. The evening high-level ministerial session **'Ruptures & Ramparts: Building Bridges for a Changing World'** focused on AI, climate action, and innovative partnerships to redefine the global development agenda.

Since 2022, the India Day @ UNGA events have become an opportunity to focus conversations on accelerating development pathways, and looking at innovations that lead to equity, scalable models and the *India story* of resolving complex problems with ingenious solutions. Held at the juncture of climate, geopolitical and technological transformation reshaping development, the 2026 sessions focused on governance, collaborations and models to accelerate resolutions from local contexts to population-scale solutions.

The session, 'Ruptures & Ramparts', featuring S Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, India; Kamina Johnson Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Jamaica; Melvin Bouva, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and Cooperation, Suriname; Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ghana; and Celeste Connors, President and Chief Executive, East-West Center, USA explored how emerging challenges will require a new development compact around innovation, technology, finance, and partnerships.

**S Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, Government of India**, said: *"The UN is central to the international system – BRICS is supportive to the UN system. The issues that were highlighted by BRICS are the key issues today – sustainability, co-operation which issues for the United Nations as well...What did the BRICS do to strengthen the UN cause? It nudged it a bit and exerted pressure on the bottom line."*

**Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ghana**, said: *"We have had many generations of exploitation and being taken for granted. We need to come to the table as equal partners. We don't have to be in a binary arrangement. We don't have to show our hands and put ourselves on a position that disadvantages. Welcome everybody to the party – at the end of the day, get the best out of it."*

Speaking at the India Day event, **Rohit Kansal, Secretary, Department of Rural Development, Government of India**, said: *“The real message is not in the numbers, it’s the kind of infrastructure that we’ve built. India’s message is at population scale; we democratize access, we build the architecture, and we leave the ecosystem to do the rest...Humans need not learn the language of AI, but AI should learn the language of human.”*

**Punya Salila Srivastava, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India**, who presented at the India Day event, said: *“Infrastructure and technology need to work together to achieve what we want it to achieve. We will need to have the infrastructure, but we will also have to have AI and digital technology to build a healthier future for others.”*

**Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, India**, said: *“Energy for AI will not be a problem, but a solution once we have addressed AI for energy. If you look at India’s energy potential, there is no issue. But the requirement is for AI to make energy infrastructure more resilient, and for distribution companies to increase efficiency.”*

In a statement, **B Srinivasan, Executive Lead, Reliance Foundation**, said: *“In the changing world scenario today, AI and development is beyond individuals, institutions and nations. The challenges are complex, but the solution is in a new world, driven by humanity. We need co-operation and collaboration on a scale larger than ever before, where empathy and soft power redefine the way we deliver development, and that is the core message that India Day brings to the world.”*

**Stefan Priesner, United Nations Resident Co-Ordinator, India**, delivering remarks at the events, said: *“Four years remain until 2030. That is not long, but it is long enough if the solutions India has proven at home can travel the world. That is what today is about: taking what works from India to the world, and turning innovation to opportunity for every household and every person.”*

**Vishal Harsh, Deputy Consul General, Consulate General of India**, in his inaugural remarks, said: *“Countries are looking for development solutions and India’s experience offers an important perspective. As a major economy and with over 1.4 billion people, any successful project in India must reach the world. Development and innovation matter most when they reach the last person. AI is the next major opportunity. Solutions developed at scale in India can support countries across the Global South.”*

**Samir Saran, President, ORF**, placed the events in context. *“India Day is now a day-long affair with one primary purpose: people. The purpose of these conversations is service—serving humans—and to do that we explore how technology, innovation, partnerships, philanthropies, and international institutions can collaborate to serve humans. AI is not just a passion project of “tech bros” but a broader human project that can change how societies prosper and service each other.”*

Through the day, four thematic sessions spanned artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure, women-led development, health, and the future of inclusive growth.

AI emerged as a connecting thread across conversations, reflecting its increasing urgency in approaching how development challenges are addressed from enabling scale through digital public infrastructure to strengthening health and education systems increasingly AI for solutions that are more accessible, responsive and impactful.

The session, ‘Beyond 2030: Rewiring Development for an Age of Intelligence, Inclusion and Instability’, examined geopolitical, climate, demographic, and technological shifts in development while ‘Women, Children and Youth: Building Healthier Futures for the Next Billion’ delved into public systems, community-led delivery, technology and partnerships for health, education, and economic opportunity.

'The AI Promise: Diffusion at Population Scale' probed the role of AI across languages, sectors, institutions, and public service delivery systems in India and the Global South, while 'Rules of Engagement: AI Governance for a Changing World' explored approaches to AI regulation, data governance, institutional capacity, and responsible deployment.

The programme also launched the fifth in the series of publications of India Day @ UNGA. **When Silicon Meets the Soil: India's AI Revolution**, brings India's experience in making artificial intelligence work, and positioning the country as the world's AI use-case capital across 18 chapters.

Beyond conversations, India Day @ UNGA 2026 aimed to present an architecture for models of cooperation that could the social development agenda for the global south and the world.

**About the publication: When Silicon Meets the Soil India's AI Revolution:** India's AI ecosystem is entering a defining decade - marked by impactful solutions, wide diffusion, and a growing ambition to lead the Global South. This publication presents 12 mature case studies and 6 emerging innovations showing how India is putting artificial intelligence to work - reaching farmers, health workers, and communities at population scale, responsibly and in context - positioning India as the world's AI use-case capital. Publication link: <https://www.reliancefoundation.org/insights/publications/when-silicon-meets-the-soil>

**About Reliance Foundation:** Reliance Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Reliance Industries Limited, aims to play a catalytic role in addressing India's development challenges through innovative and sustainable solutions. Led by Smt. Nita M Ambani, Founder and Chairperson, Reliance Foundation is relentlessly working for the overall well-being and enhanced quality of life for all, focusing on rural transformation, education, health, sports for development, disaster management, women empowerment, urban renewal and arts, culture and heritage, and has touched the lives of over 100 million people across India, in over 98,500 villages and urban locations. More on [www.reliancefoundation.org](http://www.reliancefoundation.org).

**About Observer Research Foundation (ORF):** ORF is a leading multidisciplinary think tank with centres in New Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata and an overseas affiliate in Washington DC. It helps discover and inform India's choices and carries Indian voices and ideas to forums shaping global debates. It provides non-partisan, independent, well-researched analyses and inputs to diverse decision-makers in governments, business communities, and academia and to civil society around the world. For more information, visit: [www.orfonline.org](http://www.orfonline.org)

**About United Nations in India:** The United Nations system in India includes 26 organizations that serve in India. The UN provides strategic support to India to help the country achieve its aspirations to end poverty and inequality and to promote sustainable development in line with the globally agreed SDGs. The UN also supports India, as the world's largest democracy, in the country's ambitious commitments to rapid change and development priorities. For more information, visit: <http://india.un.org/>