National Health Authority Organizes Federated Intelligence Hackathon for Healthcare at IIT Kanpur

Initiative aims at advancing secure and scalable artificial intelligence solutions for India’s healthcare ecosystem

Day 1 Focuses on Data, Regulation and Clinical Readiness of Health AI

प्रविष्टि तिथि: 23 JAN 2026 5:43PM by PIB Delhi

The National Health Authority (NHA), in collaboration with the ICMR–National Institute for Research in Digital Health and Data Science (ICMR–NIRDHDS) and Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur organized the Federated Intelligence Hackathon for Healthcare at the IIT Kanpur campus. The national-level initiative aims to advance secure and scalable artificial intelligence solutions for India’s healthcare ecosystem.

The Federated Intelligence Hackathon for Healthcare commenced on 19 January 2026, with Hackathon Week (19–23 January 2026) featuring intensive technical development, mentoring and evaluations at IIT Kanpur. The two-day on-site programme, beginning on 23 January 2026, brought together policymakers, clinicians, researchers, start-ups and industry experts for expert sessions, technical presentations and panel discussions.

Prof. Sandeep Verma, Head of the Gangwal School of Medical Sciences and Technology

The sessions commenced with a keynote address by Prof. Sandeep Verma, Head of the Gangwal School of Medical Sciences and Technology. He highlighted the pivotal role of interdisciplinary research in driving AI-enabled healthcare innovation. Prof. Verma underscored the necessity of cross-domain collaboration, emphasizing that meaningful progress in Health AI can only be achieved through the integration of medicine, engineering, data science, and policy. He noted that such convergence is essential to building sustainable and impactful healthcare systems for the future.

Prof. Phaneendra Kumar Yalavarthy, Chief PM, TANUH, IISc Bengaluru

This was followed by technical sessions by Prof. Phaneendra Kumar Yalavarthy, Chief PM, TANUH, IISc Bengaluru, covering traditional machine learning methods, clinical evaluation of AI systems and regulatory considerations for healthcare deployment. He opined that, “AI in healthcare has evolved from rule-based systems to data-driven learning, where deep learning enables autonomous feature discovery for complex tasks like medical image segmentation. By balancing bias–variance, applying methods such as regression, SVMs, and regularization, we can build robust, reliable, and clinically sustainable digital health solutions.”

The programme also featured a live Health AI demonstration by Google Health AI and the Wadhwani Foundation, presented by Manish Kumar, Vice President – AI Platform, Wadhwani Foundation. Panel discussions on Health Technology Assessment (HTA) for algorithms and data sourcing for Health AI in India brought together experts from government, industry and academia, including representatives from Samsung India, Google Health AI, CoRover.ai, ArtPark@IISc and NITI Aayog. The discussions focused on validation pathways, regulatory readiness, data standardisation and large-scale deployment of AI tools within public health systems.

Domain-specific sessions showcased datasets and AI use cases in ophthalmology, bone age detection and computational pathology, highlighting emerging opportunities for population-scale screening and diagnostics. The technical programme concluded with remarks on responsible AI deployment in healthcare by Prof. Nisheeth Srivastava, IIT Kanpur.

The hackathon has received 191 registrations, comprising 76 individual participants and 115 teams, reflecting strong nationwide participation from health-tech start-ups, AI/ML researchers and developers, clinicians, and medical institutions. The collaboration brings together NHA's digital health and governance perspective through initiatives such as the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, ICMR–NIRDHDS's clinical research and data science expertise, and IIT Kanpur's advanced capabilities in artificial intelligence and federated systems, with a shared objective of strengthening data readiness, validation frameworks and clinical applicability of Health AI tools.

The hackathon carries a total prize pool of ₹12 lakh, with post-hackathon assessment and award ceremonies scheduled on 23–24 January 2026, respectively. Discussions on 23rd January 2026 highlighted the need to address foundational challenges in validating Health AI at scale. Programmes scheduled for

24th January 2026 will focus on policy-level deliberations, responsible AI frameworks, presentations by top-performing teams of the hackathon across priority healthcare use cases, announcement of hackathon prize winners, certificate handover, and the valedictory session.

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