



Union Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw Launches World Bank Group's 'World Development Report 2026: The Promise of Artificial Intelligence' in New Delhi

Report sets out a framework for developing economies to harness AI for development through adoption, adaptation and advancement

IndiaAI Mission, MeitY and the World Bank Group jointly host the India launch; policymakers, development experts and technology leaders deliberate on scaling AI for inclusive development

High-level panel and State AI Showcase examine how India can move from isolated AI pilots to evidence-based scale-up across sectors

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Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, the Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology, Railways, and Information and Broadcasting, today launched the World Bank Group's **World Development Report 2026: The Promise of Artificial Intelligence** at an event held at The Oberoi, New Delhi. The Report examines the opportunities and challenges that Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents for developing economies, and sets out a framework for countries to harness AI for development through adoption, adaptation and advancement.



The launch was organised by the IndiaAI Mission, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, in collaboration with the World Bank Group. It brought together senior policymakers, global development experts, technology leaders and practitioners to deliberate on how India can maximise, and safely sustain, the development gains from AI. The programme also featured a State AI Showcase, in which States and innovators presented AI-enabled solutions from across the country.

The Report notes that AI can widen access to expertise, raise productivity and improve the delivery of services in developing economies. AI-enabled tools are already being deployed in medical screening, agricultural decision-making and education, extending scarce expertise to larger sections of the population. The Report further emphasises that these gains rest on strong foundations, including reliable electricity and connectivity, computing infrastructure, quality data, skills, education systems and capable institutions.

Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister of Electronics and IT delivered the keynote address and formally presented the Report. The Union Minister underlined India's approach of democratising technology, so that the benefits of Artificial Intelligence reach citizens, enterprises and institutions across the country.



“AI is changing the lives of ordinary people. In Baramati, sugarcane yields rose by 40 per cent with 30 per cent less water and fertiliser, for farmers who have never used a computer simply through voice on a phone. In healthcare, TB detection has increased by 35 per cent. Examples like these can change lives across the Global South and the world,” said Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw.

The Union Minister added that the Baramati initiative draws on satellite, IoT and weather data and has also lowered labour costs. In Gujarat, AgriStack is being used by 5 lakh farmers, and AI for animal health through Sarlaben is benefiting 3 crore cattle and their farmers.

India has emerged as a significant ecosystem for the development and deployment of AI, with applications in healthcare, agriculture, education, governance, financial services and other sectors of public and economic importance. Through the IndiaAI Mission, the Government of India is building a comprehensive AI ecosystem across seven pillars: IndiaAI Compute Capacity, IndiaAI Innovation Centre for indigenous foundation models, IndiaAI Datasets Platform (AIKosh), IndiaAI Application Development Initiative, IndiaAI FutureSkills, IndiaAI Startup Financing, and Safe & Trusted AI.

The Mission seeks to strengthen India’s capabilities across the AI value chain, while ensuring that AI development remains inclusive, responsible and suited to India’s scale, diversity and multilingual context. The Government’s approach focuses on democratising access to compute, data and models, addressing India-specific challenges, and creating economic and employment opportunities. Under the Safe & Trusted AI pillar, the Government is supporting the development of indigenous tools and frameworks for responsible AI, including AI bias mitigation, algorithm auditing, explainable AI, privacy-preserving AI and deepfake detection, and has put in place institutional mechanisms for AI governance and safety.

The India launch provided a platform for policymakers and practitioners to examine how successful AI pilots can be identified, evaluated and scaled to deliver measurable development outcomes, and how the risks from AI can be safeguarded against.

The event commenced with welcome remarks by Shri Sudeep Srivastava, Chief Operating Officer, IndiaAI Mission and Joint Secretary, MeitY, and Dr. Somik Lall, Director of Strategy, Development Economics, World Bank Group.

“One of the key messages of the World Development Report is not about creating artificial intelligence but deploying it. India has a unique opportunity to bring together institutions, markets and AI to transform millions of lives,” said Dr. Somik Lall.

Delivering the keynote lecture on “From AI Pilots to Scale: The Promise of AI in India”, Dr. Michael Kremer, Chief Economist and Senior Vice President, World Bank Group, highlighted that India’s progress in AI holds lessons for the wider developing world. “India’s huge strides in AI is not just addressing its own problems but broader development challenges for the world,” he said.

Illustrating examples from weather advisory for farmers and EdTech solutions in Andhra Pradesh, he said, “For the scale up of AI solutions, we need a full stack approach - not just elements of the software but humans and institutional elements that come along with it.”

Dr. Kremer cited India’s AI-based monsoon forecasting as an example for the world. The Government of India, through its meteorological agencies and the Ministry of Agriculture, tested and combined multiple AI models, including open-access models, and delivered the forecasts to millions of farmers through text, voice and AI-powered advisories. The model predicted the unusual 2025 monsoon, and Ethiopia is now following India’s lead. He said the case shows that where commercial incentives are weak but the social potential is high, government has an important role to play.

This was followed by a presentation of the key findings of the Report by Dr. Gaurav Nayyar, Director, World Development Report 2026.

“India is already approaching the path of AI for development by adapting tools to local contexts with the government playing the role of an enabler, user and regulator of this new technology. AI can solve for developing countries like India in decades, what could not have been done in a century,” said Dr. Nayyar.

The presentation set out the Report’s core messages for developing countries: be optimistic, be strategic and be pragmatic. Countries should adopt and adapt AI, then advance; focus on adapting AI tools to local contexts rather than spending billions of dollars building advanced systems from scratch; and make cost-conscious choices as enablers, users and regulators of AI. It also noted that the risk of job disruption is less imminent in developing countries, and that the countries with the most to gain from AI may be the least prepared, with only one of the world’s 25 low-income countries having published a national AI strategy.



Special remarks were delivered by Shri Neelkanth Mishra, Executive Director, World Bank Group, and Shri S. Krishnan, Secretary, MeitY.

“The World Development Report aligns closely with India’s AI roadmap compute, data and models and sets out a sensible approach to regulation: rely on existing laws and voluntary compliance, and revisit regulation as the technology evolves,” said Shri S. Krishnan.

Shri Krishnan said that human capabilities matter most, and that, in line with the Prime Minister’s vision, work is under way on an AI Talent Mission. He added that, with among the highest AI skill penetration in the world, India can support the Global South, while enterprise adoption of AI at home must expand, and that government must remain nimble and flexible.

A high-level panel discussion on “Making AI Work for Development in India” followed. It addressed three questions: the challenges of AI adoption in India, how India can leverage AI and adapt it to local contexts and needs, and the policies required to contain the risks arising from AI. The discussion emphasised that realising the benefits of AI will require policies that ensure its gains are widely shared and its risks are tightly contained.

The panel comprised Shri Neelkanth Mishra, Executive Director, World Bank Group; Dr. Somik Lall, Director of Strategy, Development Economics, World Bank Group; Dr. Vivek Raghavan, Co-Founder, Sarvam AI; Dr. Neeraj Agrawal, Chief Program Officer, Wadhvani AI; Shri Maneesh Singh, Vice President, BharatGen; and Shri Shankar Maruwada, Co-Founder and CEO, EkStep Foundation. The session was moderated by Ms. Shereen Bhan, Managing Editor, CNBC-TV18. The panellists stressed the need to move beyond isolated pilots towards evidence-based scale-up, strengthen local capabilities, improve access to data and compute, put in place appropriate institutional frameworks, and keep AI solutions relevant to India’s diverse social and economic contexts.

The panel discussion was followed by the State AI Showcase, “AI Innovations from Across India”, which offered a pan-India perspective on how States are deploying scalable AI applications across sectors to address local and development challenges. Each presenter highlighted one key AI-enabled solution, its implementation journey and measurable impact. The presentations were:

- **Navachetana**, an AI-enabled early screening initiative for children aged 0 to 6 years to detect developmental delays, presented by Shri M. Venugopal Reddy, Director, Women Development & Child Welfare Department, Andhra Pradesh;
- **MahaVISTAAR AI**, a connected platform for personalised advisories, digital services and farmer engagement, presented by Shri Fahim Shaikh, PoCRA Project, Maharashtra;
- **EdskGrid**, a GeoAI governance intelligence solution for education, presented by Ms. Richa Kulkarni, State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan and Director, School Education & Literacy, Meghalaya;
- **Vyuhaa-Cerviai**, a cervical cancer screening solution for the point of care, presented by Shri Dhritiman Mallick, Co-Founder and CEO, Vyuhaa Med Data, a winner of the NCG Catch Grant; and

The showcase highlighted diverse approaches, emerging models and solutions with potential for adaptation across geographies.

The deliberations underscored the importance of building public trust in AI, and of ensuring that the technology develops in a manner that is safe, responsible and inclusive. The India launch of the *World Development Report 2026: The Promise of Artificial Intelligence* adds an important voice to the global dialogue on harnessing AI as an enabler of development, and reinforced the need for countries to build the foundational capabilities, institutions and policy frameworks required to translate advances in AI into broad-based and sustainable development outcomes.

The event concluded with closing remarks by Shri Md. Y. Safirulla K., IAS, Director, IndiaAI Mission.

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