

Universal AI Awards Debuts in India

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping economies, institutions, and societies faster than the governance frameworks meant to keep it accountable. Hundreds of awards celebrate innovation, yet very few recognize whether that innovation is responsible, well governed, and genuinely impactful. It is against this backdrop that the Universal AI Awards, an initiative of Knowledge Networks, will hold its inaugural India Chapter on 17 September, at the Hyatt Regency in New Delhi, establishing the world's premier AI governance recognition platform on Indian soil.

India stands at a defining inflection point in the global AI story, with one of the world's largest developer ecosystems and a government committed to positioning the country as an AI first economy. The India Chapter unfolds as a full day leadership summit followed by the awards ceremony. The summit convenes policymakers, enterprise leaders, academics, and innovators for keynote conversations and panel discussions on responsible AI, governance, and enterprise adoption, while the ceremony that follows honors those who are not merely deploying AI, but governing it responsibly, scaling it ethically, and applying it for genuine public good. It is the first of two global chapters in 2026, followed by the second chapter in Miami this December.

“The decisions we make today about AI governance will define the trajectory of human progress for generations. With the India Chapter, we are recognizing the leaders proving that innovation and accountability belong together,” said Sanjay K. Puri, Founder and Chairman, Knowledge Networks.

The recognition spans four pillars: Enterprise and Industry Transformation, Innovation and Technology, Leadership, and Social Impact, each further divided into a range of sub awards that together cover the full spectrum of AI leadership, from enterprise scale deployment and breakthrough technology to responsible governance and societal impact.

The India Chapter is guided by a distinguished Advisory Board that shapes the platform’s governance, jury composition, and global positioning: Dr. Ashish Jha, Co-Founder of BioRadar; Vivek Lall, Chief Executive of General Atomics Global Corporation; Toby Walsh, Laureate Fellow and Scientia Professor of Artificial Intelligence at the University of New South Wales; Ms. María Elena Agüero, Secretary General of Club de Madrid; Nenad Mijatovic, Vice President of Digital Technology at Alstom; and Dr. Aminata Toure, Former Prime Minister of Senegal.

Summit Speakers

The leadership summit features a distinguished lineup of speakers from across industry, government, and research, including:

Sandeep Saini, Sovereign AI Business, HCLTech

Sudhanshu Mittal, Head of CoE Gurugram and Director, Technical Solutions, NASSCOM

Ramesh Narayanaswamy, Group President, Digital and Data Intelligence, Hinduja Group

Raul John Aju, Founder, ThinkCraft Academy, and Chief Technology Officer, Airealm Technologies

Shakti Goel, Chief Architect and Data Scientist, Yatra Online

Alok Shankar, Group General Manager (Information Technology) and Chief Information Security Officer, Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India

Awards Jury

Entries are evaluated by an independent jury of policy, technology, and governance experts, including:

Avik Sarkar, AI and Data Policy Expert, Indian School of Business

Sujeet Kumar, Member of Parliament, Parliament of India

L. Venkata Subramaniam, CEO, Qbit Force, and former lead of IBM Quantum India

Nemesisa Ujjain, Vice President and Head, The Circle Founder’s Club

Major Vineet Kumar, Founder and Global President, CyberPeace

How to Nominate

Nominations for the India Chapter are open and free of charge, with both self-nominations and third-party nominations accepted. Organizations and individuals can submit their entries, including self-nominations, at awards.knowledgenetworks.org/region/india. Every entry is evaluated by a distinguished jury across five dimensions: scale and measurable impact, innovation and originality, ethics and transparency, inclusive governance, and contribution to global knowledge.