Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

Event
Exploring Global AI Policy Priorities Ahead of the India AI Impact Summit
"Remarks by Ajay Sood"

DATE

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FEATURING

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Ajay K. Sood: Can you hear me, please?

Richard M. Rossow: Yes, we hear you just fine.

Dr. Sood: Hello?

Mr. Rossow Sorry. Can you hear me on the microphone up here, Dr. Sood?

Dr. Sood: Yeah.

Mr. Rossow Yeah. We hear you just fine.

Dr. Sood: Yes, I can hear you. So if you can share my screen, that will be nice.

Mr. Rossow Yeah.

Dr. Sood: Then I can – if I can also see what is being projected, that would be great.

Mr. Rossow: Yeah.

Just for the audience edification, so Dr. Sood, of course, is principal scientific advisor to the government of India. Held a range of important posts, but of course most notably for his time at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore. And really so very much a critical figure in a lot of India's work as a physicist – some of his groundbreaking research, holder of a number of patents. But his office, of course, also has been driving a lot of India's big think on AI, including a paper that came out less than a week ago that looks at legal governance framework as well. So as you're thinking about India hosting the summit – some of it his own thinking – of course, Dr. Sood's office has been driving a lot of that knowledge development.

So, Dr. Sood, appreciate you joining us so late in the evening Delhi time. And the floor is yours, sir.

Dr. Sood: Thank you so much for having me. It's really a pleasure.

OK. So let me just start by again noticing that AI is scaling rapidly, so it is no longer confined to isolated enterprise use cases. As we know, it is embedded across different sectors – be it health, financial services, mobility, and so on – and the broader digital backbone of economies, essentially.

So if we look at – oh, I'm not able to change my screen. Just one second. Oh, yeah. Can you see the screen change, please? Are you able to see the second slide?

Mr. Rossow: Yes, we can. Yeah.

Dr. Sood: OK, great. So it is moving. Thank you.

So the 2025 Stanford AI Index notes that 78 percent of organizations are now using AI in business applications, up from 55 percent the previous year; and that private investment in generative AI reached almost $34 billion, an increase of almost 19 percent from 2023. It highlights this rapid growth and momentum.

Now, this expansion is also shaping the national framework of different countries. AI capability is now linked with competitiveness in compute and data access, advanced semiconductors, cyber resilience, knowledge infrastructure, and critical supply chains.

At the same time, its infrastructure footprint is also rising very sharply. The International Energy Agency estimates that in 2024 itself datacenters consumed 415 terawatt-hours of electricity, almost like 1.5 percent of global electricity, and project that this demand will rise to 945 terawatt-hours by 2030.

Now, these trends make clear that AI governance is no longer yet another niche policy area; it is a core element of economic strategy, public trust, and sustainable development.

Now, if we look at what it means to have safe, secure, and trustworthy AI system, what we require is safety, which is risk management and protection, accountability, transparency, inclusion. All these are the foundation principle – foundational principle respecting sovereign legal and regulatory norms.

The objective is actually interoperability around shared outcomes around all the points which are mentioned on this slide. So in this context, India frames AI as a core national capability to advance inclusive growth and improve public service, supported by an enabling trust-based governance approach.

Now, this policy position is being operationalized through India AI mission, which you all know, which was launched in March 2024. Now, India's national AI mission sets a coordinated national pathway for building capability, widening access, and strengthening safeguards.

Within this framework, India's AI policy priorities are organized around seven priorities, which are on the screen.

First, inclusive AI. Number two, global AI governance. Three, a techno-legal framework for AI regulation. Fourth, digital public infrastructure – DPI – for AI. Number five, sovereignty in data and models. Number six is sustainable AI, and number seven, AI workforce and skilling.

So if we look at progress and advancement through AI mission, I will look at all these aspects in the next few slides. First is the shared compute access, unified data ecosystem, developing indigenous models, future-ready human capital, and global standard settings. It will be difficult to read this slide so let me go one by one.

Around – first, around shared compute access. Now, India is utilizing this framework to accelerate AI ecosystem building across data, compute, models, and talent. Now, shared subsidized compute right now is being provided through an India AI compute portal to startups, researchers, MSMEs, and universities, enabling them to access high-end compute without needing to own it.

The compute capacity now has crossed 38,000 GPUs by this 2025 year end, with only 50 percent cost of global average, like 2.5 dollar as was mentioned per GPU, facilitated by up to 40 percent government subsidy.

Now, if you look at this cost efficiency versus the global average, it is significantly lower than the – you know, whatever is available outside.

Now, another very important aspect of this mission is the unified data ecosystem. This is the AIKosh platform. Now, we all know that data is a critical component for training AI models, and under the national AI mission this AIKosh pillar provides high-quality nonpersonal data sets to Indian startups and the research ecosystem.

As of today, the platform hosts over 7,000 datasets and 264 models across 20 sectors. The next one is the indigenous model development. So with public support, Indian companies and startups are developing indigenous foundation models and sector-specific small language models aligned with Indian languages and the real-world public and economic use cases.

The blank models are also expected to be made available through the AIKosh platform. It further enables – sorry, there's a call coming. I have to disconnect. The models are expected to be made available during the – through the AIKosh platform. It further enables startups and research institutions to access and build upon them. This is intended to

strengthen the open ecosystem and accelerate innovation across India's AI community.

The next one, equally important, is the future ready human capital. At the same time we are – India is investing large – in its large young talent by expanding AI education and research pathways, through India's AI Missions future skill pillar and by establishing data and AI labs across the country to broaden access and deepen regional capabilities. The next one is the global standard setting. In the context of standard development for AI, India has strengthened engagement in international AI standardization to support interoperability and shared assurance practices. In April 2025, the Bureau of Indian Standard hosted the 15th plenary and subgroup meetings of ISO/IEC JTC in New Delhi, with more than 350 global experts from 70 countries. They reflected the growing importance of standard operation in AI governance.

The meeting advanced the global AI Standard Work Program through technical discussions on foundational models, data governance, trustworthiness, and quality assurance for generative AI. And it further progressed work streams where India is contributing, including on resilience assessment standards for AI systems. So now India's AI governance principles are laid out for global synergy. The India AI governance principles are laid out recently. In November 2025 we released National AI Governance Report. It signals importance to strengthen AI governance in a way that support innovation by building trust and accountability in the ecosystem, which was mentioned a few minutes back during the discussion. It emphasizes practical measures across the AI life cycle, including responsible design, robust testing, and evaluation before deployment, transparency, privacy, and security protections. And institutional responsibility so that accountability is well defined.

So in this direction the guidelines – the National AI Governance Framework Guidelines also proposes a techno-legal approach for AI governance. It positions techno-legal solutions as effective tools of governance to mitigate the unknown or futuristic risk associated with advanced AI systems. So while traditional approaches to governance focus primarily on regulatory instruments, techno-legal solutions could benefit from technology-enabled solutions with regulatory legal oversight. It enables innovation at scale, while mitigating risks to individuals and society.

Now, to expand this understanding, because it's not fully clear in a few words, we have recently brought out – our office has developed a white paper, which is on our website, titled Strengthening of AI Governance through Techno-Legal Approach, a few days back. This paper, I hope you

will be able to go through it, aims to stimulate more stakeholder-driven deliberations on implementing modalities of this governance approach. So we feel techno-legal framework could also help in the global data governance structure. So this is something I will request all of you to look at it and see what learnings it could have.

Now coming to the AI Impact Summit in India, now India, as we all know, is hosting this summit on 19th and 20th February in New Delhi. And this is the fourth global summit on AI, after U.K., South Korea, and Paris, as was mentioned in the earlier discussion. Along with France, the most – India chaired the last summit in Paris along with France, demonstrating India's growing position in the global policy disclosure related to emerging and frontier technologies. Now the expectation from the upcoming AI Summit is to establish a shared vision where AI services – serves, rather – as a universal enabler for development. So the focus will be on democratizing access to core AI resources, such as compute, data, and foundational models, so that these resources are not concentrated in a few geographies or companies, and countries can build context-specific solutions for their societies, languages, and public systems.

Now, beyond setting the vision, the summit also aims to achieve some progress in terms of global governance guidelines, standards, sustainability and safety related to AI development and deployment. The summit represents, as we all would agree, a historic milestone as the first major global AI multilateral, intergovernmental convening to be hosted in the Global South. This is something which I thought all of you appreciate. And the summit is expected to encourage mechanisms for equitable access that expand participation, build capacity, and ensure that developing nations are not only consumers of AI, but also active creators and beneficiaries of inclusive context-aware solutions. And that is what this summit, we hope, will achieve.

So as a closing remark, as AI becomes a foundational layer for economies and society, the measure of success will not be capability alone, but whether the capability translates into widely shared public value. The priority therefore is to shape a future where AI is developed and deployed in an equitable, safe, and trustworthy way, and where access to core resources and opportunities is not limited to a few countries or a few industries, or firms. India's approach is anchored in the belief that innovation and equitable benefit must move together. So with this, I thank you once again for having me this evening for me, and morning for you, to share our thoughts. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Mr. Rossow: Yeah, thank you so much for that, Dr. Sood. I don't think that any of us dream we're going to spend our Friday evenings speaking to foreign think tanks, but you've certainly done that. We know you have a lot of competition for your time, so, sir, I can't thank you enough. And, of course, many people in this audience – we've got more than 100 people here, we've got several other 100 watching online, and several thousand will see it in the coming days. But a lot of them, I know, are going to be coming through Delhi for the Impact Summit. And those that aren't will certainly be there in spirit. So thank you, again, for that tour de force, both on terms of India's own views, but also how you're looking at the summit. Can't thank you enough, sir, for giving up so much time on your Friday evening.

Dr. Sood: Thank you so much. Thank you for having me. (Applause.)

Mr. Rossow: Well, for people – for people here in the audience, we do have a bit of time for a coffee break as we set up the next panel. So about 10 minutes. So if you want to head back up on the platform there, grab a cup of coffee, check your emails, and then come back in, in about 10 minutes, we'll reconvene for the next panel. Thank you.

(END).