Tech educator Prashant Chaudhary wins 5th Rohini Nayyar Prize for contribution to rural development

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New Delhi, Oct 31 (PTI) Prashant Chaudhary, a technology educator from Dehradun, was on Saturday awarded the fifth Rohini Nayyar Prize for his outstanding contribution to rural development.

Chaudhary, who became the first person from his village near Meerut to join an IIT in 2010, is the founder of the CodeYogi Foundation, which is working on equipping India's unreached youth with practical AI and technology skills.

The platform runs entirely on family smartphones, in Indian languages, with no dependence on computers, labs, English or trained teachers.

The prize, instituted in 2022 in memory of former economist and administrator Dr Rohini Nayyar, comes with a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh, a citation and a trophy.

Chaudhary received the prize from former Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant.

"The model has evolved into a 30-day applied AI fluency programme where students use real AI tools for tasks that matter in their studies and family lives.

"In the last three years, it has scaled to over 3.5 lakh students across nine states and 120 districts, which constitute 30 per cent of India's geographical area," Chaudhary said at the award ceremony.

The Rohini Nayyar Prize was instituted by the family of Rohini Nayyar, an eminent scholar-administrator who spent much of her professional life working on issues related to rural development in India.

The prize is given out annually by the Nayyar Foundation for Social and Economic Purpose, set up by her family, to contribute to social and economic development in the country.

The previous winners of the prize include Sethrichem Sangtam from Nagaland (2022), Dinanath Rajput from Chhattisgarh (2023), Anil Pradhan from Odisha (2024) and Vidhya Parshuramkar from Pune in 2025.

The directors of the Foundation are Deepak Nayyar, Emeritus Professor of Economics, JNU, and former vice-chancellor, Delhi University; Dhiraj Nayyar, Director, Economics and Policy and Senior Vice-President, Vedanta Resources; and Gaurav Nayyar, Lead Economist, World Bank.

"Among the students, 48.6 per cent are girls; 95 per cent are smartphone-only learners and 59 per cent are advanced learners from non-STEM backgrounds.

"The platform is on track to reach one million learners by March 2027. The students learn to use AI across the very domains the prize prioritises, replacing the missing infrastructure of rural India. AI is evolving faster than school systems," Chaudhary said.