IIT Delhi alumnus wins 5th Rohini Nayyar Prize for taking coding to rural students

Prashant Chaudhary, who founded the CodeYogi Foundation, was on Saturday announced as the winner of the 5th Rohini Nayyar Prize for outstanding contribution to rural development in India



Shubhangi Shah

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CodeYogi founder and the winner of the 5th Rohini Nayyar Prize, Prashant Chaudhary | Kritajna Naik

Highlights

- Prashant Chaudhary won the 5th Rohini Nayyar Prize for his contributions to rural development in India
- He founded the CodeYogi Foundation to provide a smartphone-first learning model for rural students
- The organisation teaches coding and artificial intelligence to young people in rural areas who lack computer access

At a time when artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping work in the most fundamental ways, Prashant Chaudhary is taking the technology to rural students who may not even have access to a computer.

Chaudhary, the founder of the CodeYogi Foundation, was on Saturday announced as the winner of the 5th Rohini Nayyar Prize for outstanding contribution to rural development in India. The award, presented in New Delhi in the presence of Chief Guest Amitabh Kant, recognises individuals below 40 years of age whose work has made a difference to rural communities.

For millions of young people in rural India, access to technology remains limited. Chaudhary's intervention here begins with a smartphone—a device that is increasingly commonplace.

Through the CodeYogi Foundation, he has developed a smartphone-first learning model in Indian languages, enabling students to learn coding and build real-world applications. He has now expanded that to include AI.

"In advance, I started preparing for a situation where AI agents would do most of the coding. Then, in November 2025, it became clear that human coders might no longer be needed in the same way," Chaudhary said, on what was the response when AI platforms like ChatGPT were launched.

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CodeYogi subsequently began teaching students how to use AI effectively and develop software with it, he said.

Speaking at the ceremony, Kant said that “rural India should not be treated as a residual category in the country’s development story, but as central to it".

“The people who live in villages, farm its land, staff its schools and health centres, build its roads, care for its children and hold its panchayats together are not waiting at the edge of India’s future. They are making that future, often with limited resources and little public attention,” he added.

The award is instituted in memory of economist and former Planning Commission member Rohini Nayyar, whose work focused on rural poverty.

Recalling her contribution, her husband, economist professor Deepak Nayyar, said she looked beyond conventional economic measures such as income levels, economic growth and national wealth to focus on people’s well-being.

“She believed that poverty was not simply about empty pockets. It was just as much about bad stomachs, lack of food, minds without learning and lives without choices,” he said.