

Report on
AIMA GLOBAL PROCUREMENT SUMMIT 2026
From Vision to Value: Operationalizing Strategic Procurement for Impact, February 2026
3-4 February 2026

ALL INDIA MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|--|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| AICTE | All India Council for Technical Education |
| AIMA | All India Management Association |
| API | Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient |
| AV | Audio-Visual |
| CBPR | Cross Border Privacy Rules |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CIPS | Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply |
| CME | Centre of Management education |
| CPPP | Central Public Procurement Portal |
| EQ | Emotional Quotient |
| ESG | Environmental, Social and Governance |
| EU | European Union |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GFR | General Financial Rules |
| GMV | Gross Merchandise Value |
| IAAS | Indian Audit and Accounts Service |
| IAS | Indian Administrative Service |
| ICRC | India Case Research Centre |
| LCC | Life Cycle Cost |
| MPC | Merit Point Criteria |
| MSME | Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises |
| NASSCOM | National Association of Software and Service Companies |
| QCBS | Quality and Cost Based Selection |
| SCM | Supply Chain Management |
| TERI | The Energy and Resources Institute |
| ULIP | Unified Logistics Interface Platform |

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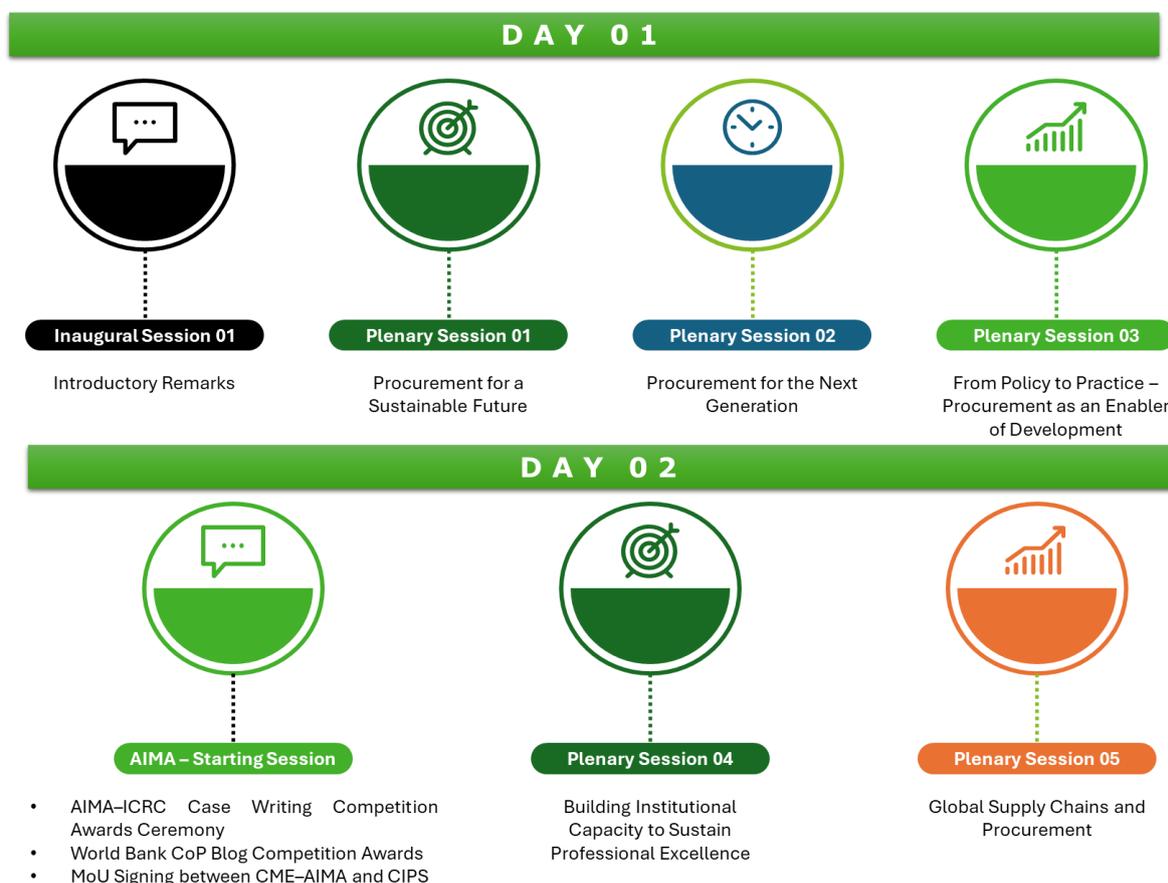
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The Summit – At a Glance

The **Global Procurement Summit (GPS)** has emerged as one of India’s foremost platforms for thought leadership, policy exchange, and professional collaboration in public procurement. Hosted annually by the **All-India Management Association (AIMA)** in partnership with the **Ministry of Finance (Department of Expenditure)** and the **World Bank**, the Summit brings together global and national leaders to deliberate on procurement’s expanding role in governance, public investment, market shaping, and development outcomes. Over the years, GPS has evolved into a convening space where practitioners, policymakers, development experts, and industry stakeholders come together to address emerging challenges, share innovations, and outline the future direction of procurement systems.

Against this backdrop, the **Global Procurement Summit 2026** was held on **3–4 February 2026 at Le Meridien, New Delhi**, convening more than **500 delegates** representing governments, multilateral institutions, public-sector enterprises, private industry, academia, and the wider procurement community. Anchored on the theme **“From Vision to Value – Operationalizing Strategic Procurement for Impact”**, GPS 2026 focused on how countries—particularly India—can translate procurement reforms, digital innovations, and evolving policy priorities into **tangible, high-impact development results**. The Summit examined procurement’s expanding mandate in advancing sustainability, institutional strengthening, infrastructure delivery, social equity, and economic competitiveness.

A Brief overview of the sessions conducted in the two days of the summit have been illustrated below:



Across the two days of deliberations, the Summit moved from foundational themes to forward-looking strategies, offering a comprehensive view of how procurement can drive national development. **Day 1** set the strategic direction by examining sustainability, digital transformation, and the operational realities of translating procurement policy into practice. Discussions highlighted the increasing expectation for procurement systems to deliver environmental stewardship, social inclusion, risk-responsive decision-making, and outcome-oriented project execution. The sessions also emphasized the need for capable institutions, skilled professionals, and adaptive frameworks that can respond to rapidly evolving market and technological landscapes.

Day 2 built on these themes by showcasing India's growing procurement knowledge ecosystem. The **AIMA-ICRC Case Writing Awards** demonstrated how public and private sector organizations are solving procurement challenges through innovation, data-led decision-making, and improved contract strategies. The **World Bank CoP Blog Awards** further enriched the narrative by spotlighting forward-thinking perspectives on AI-enabled, sustainable, and integrity-driven procurement. A major milestone was the signing of the **AIMA-CIPS Memorandum of Understanding**, which underscored a long-term commitment to strengthening professional standards, capability-building pathways, and alignment with global best practices. The final plenary discussions shifted the focus to institutional readiness and global competitiveness, particularly India's evolving role within international supply chains and its ambition to build resilient, high-performing procurement and logistics systems.

Together, these sessions reinforced the Summit's overarching message: that procurement must evolve into a **strategic, value-driven, digitally enabled, and institutionally grounded** function—central to India's aspirations for sustainable development, competitiveness, and inclusive growth.

Day 1

Inaugural session

The Global Procurement Summit (GPS), 2026 commenced on 3rd February 2026, bringing together national and international procurement leaders to discuss the theme **"From Vision to Value: Operationalizing Strategic Procurement for Impact."** Building on a decade of successful editions, the summit aims to strengthen procurement systems, so they remain resilient, transparent, and aligned with emerging development priorities.

With this vision, the inaugural session of the Global Procurement Summit 2026 began with a warm and gracious welcome by **Ms. Rekha Sethi, Director General, AIMA**, who expressed her delight at hosting distinguished leaders from the Government of India, multilateral development banks, and the global procurement community. She highlighted the evolving role of procurement, emphasizing that while procurement often remains behind the scenes, it is central to organizational outcomes, public value creation, and national progress. She noted that the summit is convened at a crucial moment when the world faces slowing private investment, fragile supply chains, environmental pressures, and social disparities, making strategic procurement essential for broader development impact. Ms. Sethi underscored that public procurement has the power to influence social and economic behaviors, shaping ethics, standards, and sustainability across markets. She reaffirmed AIMA's decades-long commitment to procurement capacity-building and stressed the importance of integrating sustainability criteria—such as local employment, responsible sourcing, and climate-conscious materials—into procurement decision-making. Welcoming all dignitaries and participants, she expressed confidence that the summit's discussions would inspire new approaches to strengthen procurement performance nationwide.

Following the welcome, **Ms. Aarti Mehra, Deputy Country Director, Asian Development Bank (ADB)** delivered the keynote address. She began by acknowledging AIMA's efforts in curating a platform of global relevance and expressed that the summit's theme- "From Vision to Value"- deeply resonates with ADB's mission of fostering a prosperous, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient Asia. Ms. Mehra highlighted that ADB committed USD 4.26 billion to India in 2025 across renewable energy, skills development, urban infrastructure, and healthcare projects, made possible by strong procurement readiness. She stressed that early procurement planning, market assessments, and risk identification were essential for ensuring smooth project execution. She noted that ADB has been consistently strengthening procurement capacity in India, conducting training for over 500 officials in the past year alone on advanced procurement models, merit-point evaluation, contract management, and sustainable procurement. She also presented ADB's new procurement directive, which promotes early market engagement, collaborative contracting, mandatory merit-point criteria for internationally advertised contracts, and integration of local labor requirements to enhance development impact. She reiterated that upholding sustainability and innovation through procurement is critical for advancing India's long-term development goals.

In his special address, **Mr. Mihir Kumar, Chief Executive Officer, Government e-Marketplace (GeM)**, applauded AIMA and the World Bank for advancing procurement professionalism through the summit. As a public procurement practitioner, he offered a practitioner's perspective on the multidimensional objectives of procurement—fiscal savings, elimination of corruption, support for economic growth, and ensuring inclusive and sustainable development. He revisited foundational principles from the Ministry of Finance procurement manuals, emphasizing right quality, right quantity, right price, right time, right place, and right source as cornerstones of effective procurement. Mr. Kumar elaborated on GeM's journey since 2016, noting that it is among the world's few fully end-to-end digital procurement ecosystems enabling seller onboarding, tendering, ordering, fulfillment, and payment—all online and entirely contactless. He highlighted that

GeM's category-based procurement design, continuous category refinement, and adherence to brand-agnostic specifications have created a fair and competitive environment for suppliers. He shared the platform's remarkable impact: cumulative procurement exceeding ₹17.33 trillion, with nearly 45% of purchases from MSMEs—far above the mandated national target. He mentioned that while these achievements are commendable, there are challenges around pricing intelligence, quality assurance, and behavioral compliance, noting that GeM is deploying AI/ML tools to identify anomalies and strengthen trust. He announced upcoming efforts to enhance scalability, ease of buying/selling, and integration of advanced digital public infrastructure and data-driven intelligence.

Delivering the theme address, **Mr. Shankar Lal, Lead Procurement Specialist, The World Bank**, emphasized India's central importance to the World Bank's mission, noting that India is now supported with a commitment of USD 10 billion annually across IBRD, IFC, and MIGA interventions. He stated that the summit's theme is timely, as procurement must evolve from a rule-driven administrative function to a strategic enabler that helps institutions achieve their vision—whether in clean energy, transportation, healthcare, or social development. Mr. Lal highlighted key reforms such as the introduction of rated criteria and sustainability-linked procurement, illustrating how procurement processes can now directly promote cleaner energy, women's participation, local development, and improved resilience. He reaffirmed the Bank's full reliance on electronic procurement systems in India, including CPPP, GeM, and state-level platforms, and noted ongoing work to incorporate AI-based market intelligence into complex procurement decisions. He also highlighted the World Bank's strong commitment to capacity building, sharing that more than 10,000 participants benefitted from training programs last year through partnerships with Indian institutions including AIMA. Mr. Lal emphasized the growing importance of country procurement systems and public-private partnerships (PPP), particularly in mobilizing private capital to address developmental challenges. He concluded by encouraging practitioners to move from "buying products" to "buying outcomes," ensuring value for money over the asset life cycle.

Inaugural Address – Mr. V. Vualnam – Secretary, Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, Government of India

Mr. V. Vualnam, Secretary, Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, Government of India delivered a thoughtful and forward-looking address, expressing his pleasure at being present for the Global Procurement Summit 2026. He commended AIMA, the World Bank, and the Ministry of Finance for convening a platform that brings together procurement leaders, practitioners, and policymakers under the theme "From Vision to Value", a theme he noted was highly relevant as India continues to translate strategic intentions into implementable, outcome-driven procurement reforms.

He began his remarks by offering the first key point—the importance of fiscal strength and macroeconomic stability in supporting effective procurement. Referring to the recently announced Union Budget, he highlighted the Government of India's commitment to fiscal prudence, a controlled deficit trajectory, and strong macroeconomic fundamentals. These priorities, he noted, directly influence the procurement ecosystem by ensuring predictable fund availability and reducing the financial uncertainties often faced by procuring entities and bidders. Addressing a common industry concern, he assured participants that the government remains deeply focused on maintaining timely, smooth, and reliable fund flows. He elaborated further by explaining how the shift towards fully digital public financial management—particularly online fund-flow mechanisms—has eliminated payment delays, reduced idle funds, and brought greater transparency and speed to vendor and beneficiary payments.

Transitioning to his second major point, Mr. Vualnam spoke about the sustained modernization of India's procurement framework led by the Ministry of Finance. He emphasized that the continuous refinement of the General Financial Rules (GFR) and

regular updates to procurement manuals—covering goods, works, consultancy, and non-consultancy services—reflect the government’s commitment to adopt global best practices and respond to emerging procurement needs. He acknowledged the significant contributions of the Procurement Policy Division (PPD), appreciating the rigorous efforts of officers who have worked to institutionalize reforms that strengthen transparency, efficiency, and accountability across public procurement. He also highlighted the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) as a transformative reform, noting its success in promoting transparency, enhancing equal opportunity, and enabling micro and small enterprises to participate meaningfully in government procurement. While appreciating GeM’s progress over the past nine years, he underscored the ministry’s dedication to continuous enhancement through quarterly reviews and a feedback-driven improvement approach. He encouraged stakeholders—including buyers, sellers, and OEMs—to share suggestions that could strengthen the platform further and ensure user convenience.

Mr. Vualnam then moved to his third key point, which centered on strengthening procurement practice through simplification and improved contract management. He stressed that as procurement becomes more sophisticated, documentation must not become unnecessarily lengthy or complex. Over-detailed and voluminous bid documents, he observed, often confuse bidders, slow evaluation processes, and hinder the effective achievement of procurement outcomes. He urged procurement professionals to prioritize clarity, simplicity, and essential content when preparing tender documents. In addition, he highlighted that contract management remains a critical but under-developed area in the procurement cycle. Awarding a contract, he emphasized, is only the beginning of a long-term partnership that requires systematic monitoring, regular follow-up, and consistent commitment from both the procuring entity and the contractor. Strengthening contract management practices, he said, would significantly reduce disputes, arbitration cases, and project delays. He encouraged AIMA and procurement professionals across sectors to intensify capacity-building efforts in this area, ensuring smoother project execution and better outcomes.

In conclusion, Mr. Vualnam reiterated the Government of India’s commitment to maintaining transparent, timely, and predictable financing to support procurement activities across the country. He expressed confidence that platforms like the Global Procurement Summit would continue to foster meaningful discussions, cross-learning, and collective progress toward a stronger, more resilient national procurement system.

Conclusion

Prof. (Dr.) Rohit Singh, Director, All India Management Association (AIMA) offered a brief yet heartfelt vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to Mr. V. Vualnam for his insightful guidance and to Mr. Mihir Kumar, Ms. Aarti Mehra, and Mr. Shankar Lal for their valuable contributions to the inaugural session. He acknowledged AIMA’s Director General, Ms. Rekha Sethi, for her leadership, and extended appreciation to the Ministry of Finance, the World Bank, and all partner organizations for their support. He also thanked the speakers, panelists, and delegates for their participation, noting that their engagement added meaning to the summit. He concluded by wishing everyone a productive and enriching two days ahead.

Plenary Session 1

Procurement for a Sustainable Future

Plenary Session 1, titled “**Procurement for a Sustainable Future**,” convened a distinguished panel of leaders representing government, global development institutions, and the sustainability-focused private sector. The session explored how procurement can evolve into a strategic enabler of sustainable development, shaping markets and supply chains that are environmentally responsible, socially equitable, and economically resilient.

The session was moderated by **Dr. Shailly Kedia**, Director and Senior Fellow at TERI, a seasoned expert with two decades of experience in sustainable consumption and production, green public procurement, and policy innovation. Joining her were three eminent panelists:

- ✓ **Ms. Mercy Epao**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of MSME, Government of India—leading national initiatives to strengthen MSME competitiveness, formalization, SC/ST entrepreneurship, and gender-responsive procurement.
- ✓ **Mr. Sanjay Kumar**, Founder, NEXGEN Procurement Solutions—widely regarded as a pioneering practitioner of Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) in India, with deep experience across procurement-intensive public systems and international advisory roles.
- ✓ **Ms. Anne-Claire Howard**, Director of Procurement, UNOPS—bringing extensive global experience in responsible supply chains, ESG leadership, and procurement in fragile and high-risk contexts across multiple developing regions.

Together, this panel provided a rich, multi-dimensional exploration of how sustainable procurement can drive inclusive growth, strengthen environmental responsibility, and transform public and private supply chains.

Dr. Shailly Kedia- Director & Senior Fellow, TERI (Moderator)

Dr. Kedia opened the session by positioning procurement as a powerful lever for achieving sustainable development outcomes. She emphasized the need to integrate the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainability in procurement strategies, as procurement decisions directly shape market conduct, supply-chain resilience, and long-term developmental impacts.

She noted that sustainable procurement is no longer an advanced or optional practice; rather, it has become an essential approach for governments aiming to build resilient, future-ready systems. With this, she framed the session as a platform for deep, multi-stakeholder dialogue on embedding sustainability across procurement functions.

Ms. Mercy Epao- Joint Secretary, Ministry of MSME, Government of India

Sustainable & Inclusive Procurement for MSME Empowerment

Ms. Mercy Epao delivered an extensive overview of India’s strategy for embedding inclusion and sustainability within public procurement through the lens of MSME development. She highlighted that **7.5 crore enterprises are formalized on the Udyam portal**, with **39% women-owned units**, underscoring the scale and diversity of the MSME ecosystem.

Key Government Interventions

She detailed the Government of India’s mandatory procurement norms:

- **25% of public procurement from MSMEs,**
- **3% from women-owned enterprises,** and
- **4% from SC/ST enterprises.**

Compliance is monitored through the **MSME Sambandh portal**, supported by vendor development programs that build tender-readiness.

Ms. Epao highlighted a broad suite of support mechanisms—**National SC/ST Hub, Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) certification, cluster development programs**, partnerships with **ONDC** and **NITI Aayog**, and collaborations with **IITs/NITs** for design and innovation. These interventions strengthen MSME capabilities across the value chain: **formalization → capacity building → certification → market access.**

Driving Inclusive Growth

She emphasized that sustainable and inclusive procurement relies on awareness-building, regional capacity strengthening, and deliberate integration of disadvantaged groups—especially women and SC/ST entrepreneurs—into procurement systems.

Mr. Sanjay Kumar- Founder, NEXGEN Procurement Solutions

Moving Beyond L1: Mainstreaming Sustainable Public Procurement

Mr. Sanjay Kumar presented a compelling case for shifting procurement practices away from traditional L1 (lowest cost) evaluation. He argued that the lowest price often conceals **significant hidden costs**—environmental damage, unethical labor practices, unsafe waste disposal—that are ultimately borne by society.

Core Ideas

He stressed that sustainable procurement reveals these hidden externalities and ensures that public spending delivers **long-term, multi-dimensional value**. To drive this shift, he advocated for:

- Adoption of **Life-Cycle Costing (LCC)** to evaluate total cost of ownership.
- Systematic **integration of ESG criteria** into tender evaluation.
- **Cross-ministerial collaboration** to align procurement with national development goals.
- Applying enhanced **emission tracking and automated evaluation systems** to improve procurement transparency and performance.

Professionalizing Procurement

Mr. Kumar highlighted gaps in skill development, tools, guidelines, recognition systems, and advisory support for procurement officials. He urged the establishment of:

- A **National Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) Policy**,
- Revival of India's **SPP Task Force**, and
- Structured help desks and knowledge-sharing platforms.

He underscored that professionalization is essential if procurement is to evolve into a strategic, future-oriented function rather than remain procedural and compliance-driven.

Ms. Anne Claire Howard- Director of Procurement, UNOPS

Global Framework for Sustainable Procurement in High-Risk Contexts

Ms. Anne-Claire Howard brought a global perspective, explaining how UNOPS integrates sustainability even in fragile, high-risk environments where speed and compliance pressures are extreme. She framed sustainable procurement as a **risk-mitigation strategy**, essential for ensuring continuity, resilience, and long-term value.

UNOPS' Three-Pillar Approach

1. Sustainable Procurement Framework

- Adaptable criteria tailored to local market maturity.
- Encourages sustainability without excluding local suppliers.

2. Localization of Supply Chains

- Reduces cross-border risk, accelerates delivery, and strengthens national economic empowerment.

3. Supplier Development Programs

- Digital self-assessment tools, corrective action plans, and capability-building support.

Real-World Examples

She shared successful implementations including:

- Increasing female participation in demining operations in **South Sudan**.
- Procuring hybrid energy systems in **Ukraine** using life cycle costing to justify long-term savings.

Ms. Howard emphasized that despite fiscal constraints in the UN system, sustainability remains non-negotiable because it is core to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and meets donor expectations.

Panel Discussion and Closing Insights

During the interactive dialogue, panelists examined practical challenges such as delayed MSME payments, supply-chain readiness for sustainable materials, complexities of Lifecycle Cost (LCC) adoption, and balancing open competition with inclusive procurement goals.

Key Takeaways

- **Awareness and ecosystem support** are foundational to MSME enablement.
 - Procurement must be positioned as an **engine for innovation and competitiveness**, not mere compliance.
 - **Early involvement of procurement teams** in project design ensures integration of sustainability criteria.
 - Scaling sustainable procurement requires **capacity-building for both buyers and suppliers**.
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The session concluded with a shared perspective that procurement must advance beyond transactional processes to become a **strategic lever for sustainable development, climate action, and inclusive growth**. Panelists called for collaborative action across government, industry, and international agencies to strengthen procurement ecosystems that are resilient, equitable, and future-ready.

Session Theme Essence- Procurement for a Sustainable Future

Public procurement is increasingly recognized as a strategic lever for advancing sustainable development. The session highlighted how procurement can shift from a cost-centric exercise to a value-driven function that internalizes environmental and social externalities. Sustainable procurement enables governments to deliver not only goods and services, but also broader developmental outcomes—such as climate action, gender equity, and local economic empowerment. Inclusive procurement was positioned as essential for strengthening the participation of women-owned enterprises, SC/ST entrepreneurs, and MSMEs, supported by structured formalization, capacity-building, and market access. Technology, life-cycle costing, and professionalization of procurement were identified as critical enablers for this transition. The long-term vision emphasized by the panel was clear: sustainability should become an intrinsic, default principle of public procurement rather than an additional layer.

Plenary Session 2

Procurement for the Next Generation

Plenary Session 2, titled “Procurement for the Next Generation,” explored how rapidly evolving technologies, emerging risks, shifting market dynamics, and new skill demands are reshaping the procurement function across public and private sectors. The session convened an expert panel representing technology, public policy, global procurement capability development, digital marketplaces, and large-scale corporate procurement, offering a unified and forward-looking perspective on the systems, skills, governance mechanisms, and innovations that will define next-generation procurement.

The session was moderated by **Mr. Brish Bhan Vaidya**, Strategic Procurement & Supply Chain Leader at Uber, a seasoned professional with over two decades of experience in transforming procurement and supply chain operations across multinational organizations. He framed the discussion by highlighting how the expectations from procurement have shifted dramatically moving from a transactional function to a strategic, risk-focused, technology-enabled discipline that must deliver error-free, resilient, and future-oriented outcomes.

The distinguished panel included:

- ✓ **Ms. Satya Narayan Meena**, Additional CEO, Government e-Marketplace (GeM)
- ✓ **Mr. Jonathan Cheung**, General Manager, Asia, Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS)
- ✓ **Mr. Anil Kumar Garg**, Senior Executive Vice President, Reliance Industries Limited
- ✓ **Mr. Ashish Aggarwal**, Vice President & Head of Government Policy & Engagements, NASSCOM

Together, they offered deep insights into how procurement is transforming and what organizations must do to remain competitive in the next decade.

Mr. Brish Bhan Vaidya- Strategic Procurement & Supply Chain Leader, Uber, – Moderator

Mr. Vaidya opened the session by acknowledging the dramatic shift in how organizations perceive procurement, especially after COVID-19. The pandemic elevated procurement and supply chain functions to mission-critical status, spotlighting their role in business continuity and crisis response. He emphasized that procurement can no longer be defined by the number of steps in a sourcing process; instead, organizations expect **risk-free, resilient, efficient, and value-driven outcomes**.

He highlighted three major shifts driving next-generation procurement:

1. **Outcome Orientation** – Moving beyond procedural compliance to delivering measurable business value.
2. **Technology as a Foundation** – AI, automation, digitization, and blockchain are no longer optional; scaling them is essential.
3. **Talent Evolution** – Procurement professionals must understand upstream and downstream business dynamics, manage risk proactively, and partner more strategically with business stakeholders.

This framing set the stage for a rich discussion with leaders representing policymaking, capability-building, digital public infrastructure, and large corporate procurement.

Mr. Satya Narayan Meena- Additional CEO, Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

Digital Transformation & Public Procurement Modernization

Mr. Meena highlighted the radical transformation brought by GeM since its introduction in 2016. Prior to GeM, public procurement was characterized by **manual processes, low transparency, information asymmetry, geographical limitations, and limited market access**. GeM was conceptualized around three pillars — **Efficiency, Transparency, and Inclusivity** — and has since become one of the world's largest digital procurement platforms.

Impact & Scale

- GeM recorded a **GMV of ₹5.43 trillion (approx. USD 64 billion)** in the last financial year.
- Over **7.2 million orders** were processed.
- Of all registered sellers, **65–70% are MSMEs**.
- Although the national mandate requires **25% procurement from MSMEs**, GeM has enabled **42–48%** MSME participation—significantly exceeding the target.

Technology & Innovation

He emphasized GeM's adoption of:

- AI-enabled chatbots
- Smart search and analytics
- Automated bid evaluation and ranking tools
- Cloud-native infrastructure
- Market analysis and price reasonability tools

He announced the upcoming launch of an enhanced "**GeM Avatar**", featuring advanced analytics, cloud technologies, and expanded AI capabilities.

Mr. Meena also encouraged **startups and young entrepreneurs** to contribute innovative AI and blockchain-based solutions to strengthen GeM's ecosystem. With over **36,000 startups** already onboarded through the *Startup Runway Program*, he stressed the platform's openness to emerging technologies and new service models.

Mr. Jonathan Cheung- General Manager, Asia – CIPS

Evolving Competencies for the Future Procurement Professional

Mr. Cheung provided a global perspective on how procurement roles are shifting and what skills will define the next generation of procurement leaders.

Key Transformations

- Procurement professionals must **embrace AI as an enabler**, not a threat.
- The focus is shifting from **category management** to **risk-based sourcing**, where procurement acts as the organization's first line of defense against supply disruptions.
- Boards now expect procurement to function as **ESG custodians, risk managers, and strategic advisors**.

Core Competencies for the Future

He highlighted four essential competency pillars:

1. **AI & Data Intelligence**

- Procurement must learn prompt engineering and leverage AI for decision support, negotiation preparation, market analysis, and forecasting.

2. **Storytelling & Executive Communication**

- Procurement must articulate value, risk scenarios, and business impact to CEOs, boards, and cross-functional stakeholders.

3. **Emotional Intelligence**

- Balancing supplier realities (especially MSMEs) with organizational interests requires empathy, sensitivity, and adaptive communication.

4. **Deep ESG Knowledge**

- Procurement leaders must understand sustainability frameworks, supplier due diligence, and regulatory expectations.

He emphasized that professional bodies like CIPS can help standardize competency frameworks and support public-private collaboration for scaling procurement capability development in India.

Mr. Anil Kumar Garg- Senior Executive VP, Reliance Industries Limited

Governance, Digitalization & High-Velocity Projects

Mr. Garg offered the private-sector perspective, drawing on Reliance's experience in executing **mega, fast-track infrastructure projects** across refineries, petrochemicals, green energy, and complex supply chains.

Building Governance Through Digitalization

He described Reliance's journey from traditional procurement to integrated, digital workflows:

- Standardizing processes with global consultants
- Cross-functional integration via digital platforms
- Embedding governance, workflows, and risk controls directly into system design
- Creating **deviation modules** that maintain creativity while ensuring transparency and accountability

AI Adoption at Scale

Reliance is progressively deploying AI for:

- Autonomous decision-making in **tail-spend procurement**
- Supplier selection based on historical performance
- Online negotiation bots for low-risk categories
- Market intelligence tools such as Procol and Sirion

He emphasized that while AI will accelerate workflows and insights, **accountability must remain with humans** until trust in AI-driven decision-making matures.

Risk, Speed & Outcome-Focused Procurement

In large-scale projects, **time is the most critical factor**. Mr. Garg noted:

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- Competitive bidding alone does not guarantee success
- Procurement must partner closely with project execution teams to deliver outcomes
- Performance-based contracts and dynamic cost models ensure value for money
- Reliance is now moving toward **masked bidding** to enhance fairness and reduce bias

Mr. Ashish Aggarwal- Vice President & Head of Government Policy & Engagements, NASSCOM

Policy, Technology Adoption & Managing Emerging Risks

Mr. Aggarwal outlined how technology, particularly AI, is transforming procurement, but emphasized that **policy enablement and risk mitigation** must evolve alongside.

Key Themes of the Technology Ecosystem

- India's tech services industry is nearing **USD 300 billion**, with domestic digitalization growing faster than exports.
- Procurement of technology solutions is fundamentally different due to rapidly evolving tools, cloud-first models, AI ecosystems, and interoperability challenges.
- Problem-statement-based procurement (rather than solution-prescription) is essential for tech categories. *Examples: Railways' track-fracture detection challenge; Vande Bharat's proof-of-concept-first model.*
- Startups are being enabled via relaxation of turnover and experience norms.

AI & Regulatory Considerations

He highlighted:

- The need for globally interoperable certifications (e.g., CBPR) for privacy and data governance
- Opportunities for AI in national systems such as the **National Single Window System**
- The importance of cybersecurity procurement as India faces increasingly sophisticated cyber threats during major events (e.g., G20)

Mr. Aggarwal emphasized that India must not reject frontier technologies due to capacity gaps; instead, **policy and ecosystem enablers must accelerate their mainstream adoption.**

Panel Discussion & Key Insights

The discussion converged on the following insights about **next-generation procurement**:

Key Takeaways

- **Procurement is shifting to a value-creation function**, not a support function.
 - **AI is an enabler** — success depends on thoughtful adoption, not blind reliance.
 - **Talent remains the ultimate differentiator**; technical skills must be paired with storytelling, EQ, and business acumen.
 - **Public and private procurement are converging** in practices, expectations, and technology adoption.
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- **Risk-based sourcing, predictive analysis, and resilient supply chains** are the new imperatives.
- **Policy enablement is critical** to ensure frontier technologies like AI, blockchain, and advanced analytics are adopted safely and effectively.

Session Theme Essence- Procurement for the Next Generation

Next-generation procurement is shifting decisively from transactional processes to a strategic, value-driven function. The session emphasized that technology—AI, automation, analytics, and digital platforms—will act as a powerful enabler, but human judgment, capability, and cross-functional collaboration will remain central to outcomes. Procurement’s future depends on its ability to manage risk proactively, drive innovation, and support business continuity in a fast-changing environment. Talent, policy support, and ecosystem readiness will be key differentiators. Ultimately, next-generation procurement will be defined by agility, intelligence, and integration—where people, processes, technology, and policy work together to deliver resilient and future-ready supply systems.

Plenary Session 3

From Policy to Practice – Procurement as an Enabler of Development

Plenary Session 3 explored one of the most critical dimensions of public procurement—its transition from policy frameworks to real-world execution. Titled “**From Policy to Practice: Procurement as an Enabler of Development**,” the session examined how procurement can strengthen performance, probity, and public value, particularly in the context of India’s growing infrastructure ambition and evolving governance landscape.

The session was moderated by **Mr. Ajit Mishra**, Director, IRCON International Limited, a seasoned public procurement and contract management expert with extensive experience across large-scale, externally funded infrastructure programs. Setting the tone, he emphasized that procurement lies at the intersection of three core imperatives: **performance, probity, and public value**—and that delivering on development goals requires procurement systems that are transparent, efficient, and strategically aligned to outcomes rather than process formalities.

The distinguished panel featured leaders representing government policy, multilateral financing institutions, and national oversight authorities:

- ✓ **Ms. Padma Jaiswal (IAS)**, Secretary, Government of NCT Delhi
- ✓ **Mr. Jesper Pedersen**, Director, Procurement Division, Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- ✓ **Mr. K. Subramaniam (IAAS)**, Director General (Procurement Audit), Comptroller and Auditor General of India

Together, they provided a comprehensive 360-degree view—how procurement policies are implemented across states, how multilateral agencies drive quality and sustainability, and how oversight institutions identify and bridge gaps between policy and practice.

Ms. Padma Jaiswal (IAS) - Secretary, Government of GNCT Delhi

Implementing Procurement Reforms Across Divergent State Systems

Drawing on her diverse administrative experience across Delhi, Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, Puducherry and the Union Government, Ms. Jaiswal highlighted the **variation in procurement maturity across Indian states**. While central policies such as the General Financial Rules (GFR) offer a uniform baseline, sector-specific needs often require **flexible and context-sensitive procurement approaches**.

She emphasized that while routine, repetitive purchases may follow traditional L1 methods, **innovation-heavy sectors such as IT or strategic procurement in defense demand value-based selection**, lifecycle costing, and qualitative evaluation. Different procurement strategies are essential when technology transfer is limited or domestic manufacturing capacity is insufficient.

Ms. Jaiswal underscored India’s growing infrastructure pipeline—roads, ports, airports, railway corridors—and the need for procurement policies that can support the scale and speed required under flagship programs such as *Gati Shakti*, *Sagarmala*, *Bharatmala*, and *freight corridors*. As India aspires toward a **\$30 trillion Viksit Bharat economy by**

2047, procurement becomes a direct instrument to support domestic manufacturing, MSMEs, social equity, and strategic national capability.

She highlighted the government's push toward **value-based procurement**, integration with global standards, and the use of AI and data analytics through platforms like GeM to strengthen evaluation, vendor credibility checks, and lifecycle value assessment.

Mr. Jesper Pedersen - Director, Procurement Division, Procurement, Portfolio and Financial Management Department, Asian Development Bank

Procurement as a Driver of Development Outcomes – The ADB Perspective

Mr. Pedersen provided a comprehensive multilateral lens, outlining how ADB positions procurement as a **strategic enabler of development**, not merely a compliance function. He articulated three core pillars of ADB's procurement philosophy:

1. **Quality Infrastructure** – ensuring projects incorporate innovation, resilience, and performance excellence.
2. **Sustainability** – integrating carbon management, circular materials, community benefits, and health and safety.
3. **Capacity Development** – strengthening government systems and stakeholders through global best practices.

He stressed that **L1 alone cannot deliver complex infrastructure outcomes**, especially in sectors where construction delays, safety risks, and outdated technical specifications can significantly erode developmental value. ADB promotes **Merit Point Criteria (MPC)**—a structured technical-plus-price evaluation model that enables balanced and transparent scoring.

Mr. Pedersen highlighted concrete examples across Asia where MPC has improved implementation timelines, quality of delivery, and community benefits, including early adoption in the Philippines and Bangladesh. He also reaffirmed that **value-for-money does not disregard price**—but balances it with technical robustness, lifecycle performance, sustainability, and safe project execution.

He encouraged early market engagement, clear scoring methodologies, and transparent bid evaluation reports to ensure credibility, reduce disputes, and support innovation. He emphasized that quality-focused procurement strengthens domestic industry competitiveness and helps India align with global trade expectations, including emerging carbon-border adjustment mechanisms.

Mr. K. Subramaniam - IAAS, Director General (Procurement Audit), Comptroller and Auditor General of India

Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Practice: The Oversight Perspective

Mr. Subramaniam delivered a candid and deeply insightful critique of the **persistent gap between procurement policy and on-ground execution**. He stressed that procurement reforms often fail not due to inadequate rules, but due to **misinterpretation, lack of capacity, and process-driven mindsets**.

He clarified misconceptions around L1, noting that the correct interpretation is **Least Price, Technically Acceptable (LPTA)**—not lowest cost alone. Many procurement failures arise when technical acceptability is neglected or quality specifications are poorly drafted.

He identified key systemic gaps:

- **Misuse of reverse auctions**, even for critical or non-standard items
- **Indiscriminate re-tendering**, which increases collusion risk and inflates prices
- **Weak specification drafting**, with excessive technical detail instead of functional or performance-based requirements
- **Underuse of alternative procurement methods**, including single-source selection where justified
- **Fear-based decision-making**, driven by concerns about audit or vigilance repercussions

Mr. Subramaniam emphasized that **accountability should focus on outcomes**, not just procedural compliance. Manuals issued in 2017 were deliberately reframed to be enabling rather than restrictive, but require stronger adoption, training, and interpretation.

He highlighted QCBS and value-based procurement as essential tools to avoid abnormally low bids and ensure quality outcomes. Oversight bodies, he noted, are increasingly moving from fault-finding to **constructive, enabling guidance**, advising procurement entities on prudent, principle-based decision-making.

Panel Discussion & Key Insights

The panel discussion offered a rich and multidimensional exploration of how procurement can more effectively transition from policy frameworks to real-world execution, particularly in the context of India's growing infrastructure and development agenda. Panelists underscored that while India has made significant progress in modernizing procurement systems, the real challenge lies in ensuring consistent, high-quality implementation, supported by strong technical capacity, value-based evaluation, and responsible use of technology

Key Discussion Points

- **Performance metrics are essential** for large and strategic projects; structured matrices improve monitoring, accountability, and delivery timelines.
 - **Value-based procurement methods**—including Merit Point Criteria (MPC) and QCBS—help address limitations of L1 evaluation and prevent abnormally low bids.
 - **AI, analytics, and digital tools** strengthen vendor assessments, price reasonability checks, and transparency, provided they are used correctly and not applied to unsuitable categories.
 - **Procurement maturity varies across states**, highlighting the need for tailored reforms and capacity-building at state and local levels.
 - **Continuous revision of procurement manuals and methodologies** is required to stay aligned with evolving technologies and global best practices.
 - **Functional, performance-based specifications** are critical to achieving quality outcomes and reducing delays and retendering.
 - **Outcome-based procurement models** help align procurement decisions with broader social, environmental, and economic development goals.
-

 **Session Theme Essence- From Policy to Practice – Procurement as an Enabler of Development**

This session highlighted that procurement can only enable development when policies translate into consistent, outcome-driven implementation. Speakers emphasized the need to move beyond procedural compliance toward value-based, quality-focused procurement supported by clear specifications, sound evaluation methods, and responsible use of digital tools.

Strengthening state-level capacity, improving procurement maturity, and bridging gaps between policy and practice emerged as key priorities. The session concluded with a shared view that procurement must function as a strategic driver of public value, delivering timely, sustainable, and high-quality outcomes aligned with national development goals.

Day 2

AIMA–ICRC Case Writing Competition Awards Ceremony

Day 2 of the Global Procurement Summit 2026 commenced with the **AIMA–ICRC Case Writing Competition Awards Ceremony**, celebrating some of the most insightful and practice-oriented case studies developed by procurement and contract management professionals across India. The ceremony opened with warm remarks from **Dr. Anuja Pandey**, who introduced the origins and purpose of the **AIMA India Case Research Centre (ICRC)**. She explained that the Centre, established in 2018 with the support of the Government of India, AICTE, AIU, and various academic bodies, aims to document India-centric management cases that mirror the country’s unique operational challenges, institutional realities, and contextual problem-solving approaches. She noted that the ICRC repository now hosts nearly **180 cases**, representing both private and public sector innovations.

Dr. Pandey highlighted that the procurement and contract management case competition—now in its third edition—was conceptualized to capture the real experiences of practitioners who manage complex procurement challenges on the ground. These cases are later refined into teaching and training material for national capacity-building platforms such as the Karmayogi Mission. She thanked the jury for their rigorous review and invited dignitaries from AIMA, the World Bank, and AIB to the stage for the award presentations.

The ceremony began with the announcement of the **Best Case Study in the Public Sector**, awarded to **Neyveli Uttar Pradesh Power Limited (NUPPL)** for the case titled *"How NUPPL Overcame the Contractual Deadlock."* Authored by **Ms. Snigdha Shukla**, the case narrates how NUPPL navigated a severe crisis during the execution of the 3×660 MW Ghatampur Thermal Power Project when the Balance-of-Plant contractor entered insolvency. With critical works stalled—ranging from coal handling and ash systems to chimneys and cooling towers—the project faced escalating interest during construction and indefinite delays. The case documents how NUPPL exercised **step-in rights**, established **tripartite arrangements** with subcontractors, **re-scoped and re-awarded** stalled packages, and executed over **200 direct orders** to restore progress. These interventions enabled the commissioning of Unit 1 in December 2024 and Unit 2 in December 2025, setting a benchmark for crisis-led procurement leadership. Ms. Shukla received the trophy and certificate on stage amidst applause.

The **Best Case Study in the Private Sector** was awarded to **Mankind Pharma** for its case titled *"Project PACE: Procurement Automation & Cost Excellence at Mankind Pharma Ltd."* Authored by **Mr. Abhishek Anand and Mr. Mukesh Dalal**, the case examines how the organization initiated a comprehensive transformation program—Project PACE—against the backdrop of volatile API prices, geopolitical disruptions, compliance pressures, and expansion into regulated global markets. The case outlines how Mankind redesigned its procurement organization into category-focused structures, centralized spend, digitized processes, conducted value engineering workshops, adopted e-auctions, built analytics dashboards, and experimented with GenAI-driven use cases. By structuring the transformation into multiple waves covering nearly ₹4,000 crore of spend, the company enhanced governance, improved turnaround times, and achieved substantial cost efficiencies. The authors accepted their award and later presented their case to the audience.

The ceremony continued with the recognition and felicitation of the **Runners-Up in the Public Sector category**, awarded to **IRCON International Limited** for the case titled "*Engineering Integrity: Bridging Digital Innovation, Sustainable Growth, and Ethical Governance in Global Infrastructure.*" The case was authored by Mr. Ajit Kumar Mishra and Mr. Himanshu Sagar, who were felicitated for their exemplary contribution.

In the **Private Sector category**, the Runners-Up award was presented to **Intellect Design Arena Ltd.** for the case "*Operationalizing Purpose-Driven Procurement Outcomes in Mining, Alloys & Energy with an AI-Native Source-to-Pay Layer.*" Mr. Sunny Tikoo and Mr. Utkarsh Bali were felicitated in recognition of their outstanding work.

Following the distribution of the major awards, **Certificates of Participation** were presented to contributors whose cases were shortlisted for evaluation, acknowledging their effort in enriching India's growing body of procurement research. The ceremony concluded with appreciation for all winning teams, jury members, and participating organizations.

Immediately after the awards, the stage transitioned to the **case presentations** by the two Best Case Study winners—NUPPL (Public Sector) and Mankind Pharma (Private Sector). These presentations offered delegates a deeper understanding of the challenges, interventions, and outcomes captured in the award-winning cases, enabling the audience to reflect on actionable insights for procurement practice.

World Bank CoP Blog Competition Awards

Following the AIMA-ICRC Case Writing Awards, the Summit moved to recognize the winners of the **World Bank Community of Practice (CoP) Blog Competition 2025**—a special initiative designed to encourage thought leadership, innovation, and reflective practice in the domain of public procurement. To introduce the awards, an audiovisual presentation highlighted the evolution and purpose of the CoP, established in November 2022 as a collaborative platform to modernize public procurement in India. The AV underscored that the CoP, now comprising nearly **1,000 active members** from government, academia, development institutions, and industry, serves as a knowledge-sharing forum to promote efficiency, transparency, technological advancement, and sustainable procurement practices. The 2025 Blog Competition was conducted to mark the CoP's foundation day, inviting procurement professionals nationwide to contribute original perspectives under two thematic tracks.

Under **Theme 1: "Harnessing AI in Public Procurement – Current Applications and Future Horizons,"** the winning blog was authored by **Mr. Sagar Jadhav** for his entry titled "*The Digital Leap: Why AI is the Next Big Reform for Public Procurement.*" He was felicitated on stage by **Ms. Sizi Qolohle**, Chief Director – Governance, Monitoring & Compliance, National Treasury of South Africa, and **Mr. Shankar Lal**, Lead Procurement Specialist, The World Bank. Mr. Jadhav's blog offers a compelling narrative on how artificial intelligence is redefining India's public procurement ecosystem. It highlights the practical ways in which AI is already improving procurement outcomes—through anomaly and fraud detection, automated document processing using natural language processing (NLP) and optical character recognition (OCR), enhanced supplier data hygiene, and the introduction of generative-AI-enabled buyer-seller assistance on platforms such as GeM. The blog also presents a forward-looking vision where AI advances from process optimization to **predictive and proactive procurement**, capable of analyzing global events, climate risks, and market signals in real time, monitoring infrastructure execution through drones and sensors, and enabling contract governance with unprecedented accuracy and speed.

The **Runner-Up under Theme 1** was **Mr. Partha Pratim Sengupta** for "*The Ultimate Shield: Can AI Make Public Procurement CBI-Proof, CVC-Compliant & CAG-Ready?*". His piece highlights the intense scrutiny under which procurement officers operate and argues that AI offers an integrity shield by making procurement auditable, traceable, and defensible. Through features such as automated flagging of anomalies, fraud detection, missing-approval alerts, duplicate-invoice identification, collusion detection, and transparent digital trails, the blog illustrates how AI can help reduce the fear of oversight while empowering ethical decision-making.

Under **Theme 2: "Public Procurement for a Better Tomorrow – Integrating Sustainability and Innovation"**, the winning blog was authored by **Mr. Partha Prateem Sengupta** for "*What If Public Procurement Were Run Like a Startup?*" His blog calls for a shift from lowest-price selection to lifecycle-based, sustainability-driven, innovation-friendly procurement. Drawing comparisons with startup agility, he argues for greater use of prototypes, field trials, pilots, and performance-based evaluations supported by GFR provisions—to ensure long-term value and environmental performance. He cites practical cases, including municipalities achieving major savings and efficiency gains by adopting lifecycle costing and solar-enabled LED systems.

The **Runner-Up for Theme 2** was **Mr. Rahul Pachauri** for his blog "*Public Procurement for a Better Tomorrow: Integrating Sustainability and Innovation.*" His blog reflects on the remarkable evolution of India's procurement ecosystem—from paper-based processes to one of the world's most transparent digital procurement platforms—and argues that the next frontier lies in embedding sustainability, circularity, and innovation. The blog highlights future pathways such as blockchain-enabled transparency, AI-driven decision-making, circular procurement frameworks, green sourcing, and stronger alignment with national initiatives such as Make in India and Startup India.

The ceremony concluded with applause for all winners, acknowledging their intellectual contributions toward building a more transparent, sustainable, technologically advanced, and future-ready procurement ecosystem in India. Though some winners could not be present, their work was formally recognized, and the Summit thanked them for enriching the collective knowledge of the procurement community.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Signing between CME–AIMA and CIPS

A significant highlight of Day 2 of the Global Procurement Summit 2026 was the formal signing of the **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between the **All India Management Association (AIMA)** and the **Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS)**. The ceremony marked an important institutional milestone for the Summit, symbolizing a shared commitment to advancing procurement excellence and strengthening professional capability across India.

The MoU brings together two leading organizations with complementary strengths in procurement education, standards, and professional development. Through this partnership, AIMA and CIPS will collaborate on initiatives such as **capacity-building programs, joint certification pathways, knowledge exchange, research collaborations, and advisory support** aimed at improving procurement systems across public and private sectors. The agreement reinforces the role of the Global Procurement Summit as a platform that not only facilitates dialogue but also shapes long-term capacity-building infrastructure for India's procurement ecosystem.

The signing also reflects a broader strategic alignment between India and global procurement standards. By integrating CIPS' internationally recognized frameworks with AIMA's national presence and educational expertise, the MoU is expected to contribute meaningfully to **professionalizing procurement practices, enhancing institutional maturity, and promoting ethical, transparent, and efficient systems** nationwide.

The exchange of the signed MoU on stage was greeted with a warm round of applause, underscoring the community's recognition of its long-term significance.

Plenary Session 4

Building Institutional Capacity to Sustain Professional Excellence

Plenary Session 4 focused on an essential dimension of modern procurement, the transition from individual skill development to **institutional capacity that supports sustained professional excellence**. Titled "*Building Institutional Capacity to Sustain Professional Excellence*," the session assessed the organizational, structural, and systemic enablers required to strengthen procurement performance, especially in the face of complex and evolving public sector challenges.

Moderated by **Mr. Robin Kumar Thakur**, Senior Procurement Specialist, The World Bank, the session underscored that effective procurement institutions require three foundational pillars:

1. **Robust knowledge systems** that are not dependent on individual officials,
2. **Continuous improvement mechanisms** to adapt to rapid changes in markets, technology, and risks, and
3. **Balanced empowerment and accountability structures** that allow procurement professionals to exercise informed judgment confidently.

The distinguished panel featured perspectives from multilateral development banks, global professional bodies, and national government reform systems:

- ✓ **Mr. Stephane Y. Bessadi**, Senior Procurement Specialist, Asian Development Bank
- ✓ **Mr. Jonathan Cheung**, General Manager–Asia, CIPS
- ✓ **Ms. Sizi Qolohle**, Chief Director – Governance, Monitoring & Compliance, National Treasury, South Africa

Together, the panel provided a holistic view of how institutions can evolve to embed procurement excellence across functions, sectors, and administrative layers.

Mr. Stephane Y. Bessadi - Senior Procurement Specialist, ADB

Institutional Capabilities and Enablers for Procurement Excellence

Mr. Bessadi reflected on ADB's experience working with institutions at varying stages of procurement maturity across Asia. He underlined that while procurement was once considered a back-office function, it has now become a **strategic competency** central to development outcomes. Institutions that perform effectively—across sectors such as water, transport, energy, and health—display consistent features:

- Clearly articulated strategic principles,
 - Well-defined governance frameworks,
 - Early procurement planning integrated with project design,
 - Professional staffing with specialized roles, and
 - Independent procurement authority is supported by internal oversight.
-

He stressed that procurement cannot be treated as an afterthought—effective planning must begin at the conceptualization stage to ensure that project design, feasibility assessments, and risk mitigation integrate procurement considerations from the outset.

Additionally, he highlighted the need for **institutional adaptability**, especially as emerging technologies like artificial intelligence reshape documentation, monitoring, and decision-making systems. Institutions must develop mechanisms for continuous review, benchmarking, and updating procurement processes to remain responsive to new challenges.

Mr. Jonathan Cheung – General Manager, Asia, CIPS

Professional Standards, Digital Systems, and Governance Integration

Mr. Cheung elaborated on how **global professional standards** and **technology-driven procurement platforms** can jointly strengthen institutional capability. He emphasized that competence alone cannot ensure excellence; institutions must also deploy digital systems that allow procurement teams to track risks, analyze trends, forecast disruptions, and support real-time decision-making.

He highlighted the growing importance of **risk-based sourcing**, noting that procurement leaders now need dynamic visibility into supplier ESG performance, geopolitical risks, and global supply chain changes. This demands systems that go beyond transactional monitoring to support **strategic category management**, cost optimization, and resilience-building.

He noted that procurement leaders must act proactively anticipating market shifts, leveraging data-driven insights, and managing both human and digital workforces in a world increasingly shaped by **agentic AI**. Professionalization, governance, and digital systems must therefore converge to build a future-ready procurement ecosystem.

Ms. Sizi Qolohle – Chief Director, Governance, Monitoring & Compliance, National Treasury, South Africa

Embedding Professional Excellence Through Governance and Accountability

Ms. Qolohle presented a comprehensive view of South Africa's national approach to building institutional capacity through a coordinated policy, governance, and capability framework. She outlined the implementation of the **Public Procurement Act (2024)**, which harmonizes procurement rules across national departments, provinces, and municipalities, creating a unified, enabling system for public procurement.

She described the country's **SCM (Supply Chain Management) Professionalization Program**, which introduces:

- Competency frameworks for procurement officials,
- Formal learning pathways in partnership with Higher Education Institutions,
- Continuous development programs, coaching, and mentoring, and
- Accreditation systems to ensure consistent standards across tiers of government.

A central element of institutional strengthening is South Africa's **Compliance Risk Assessment and Monitoring (CRAM) tool**, designed to help organizations evaluate

their procurement maturity, identify compliance gaps, strengthen risk management, and embed accountability.

She underscored that leadership—at ministerial, treasury, and operational levels—plays a decisive role in sustaining professionalism. Strong oversight, regular audits, transparent decision-making, and consequence management are essential to ensuring procurement systems remain credible, compliant, and performance oriented.

Panel Discussion & Key Insights

The panel discussion reinforced that procurement excellence must be viewed as an **organizational capability**, not an individual skillset. While professional training is important, the panelists emphasized that long-term procurement performance depends on **institutional structures, governance systems, and technology-enabled processes** that together create resilience, consistency, and accountability in decision-making. They noted that procurement functions are increasingly expected to operate as strategic partners within organizations, requiring **visibility at senior leadership levels**, integration with technical and project teams, and the authority to guide critical sourcing and implementation decisions.

Panelists highlighted the growing importance of digital transformation in strengthening procurement institutions. **Real-time data systems, risk dashboards, and AI-enabled decision-support tools** were identified as essential for navigating global supply-chain disruptions and enabling proactive risk management—an imperative underscored by recent crises such as the pandemic and geopolitical shocks. The discussion also underscored that modern procurement systems must prioritize **contract management capacity**, given its centrality to long-term infrastructure performance, operational efficiency, and value delivery.

Another recurring theme was the need for institutions to cultivate a culture of **experimentation, learning, and continuous adaptation**. New methodologies—such as merit point criteria, risk-based sourcing, and compliance frameworks—must be both taught and practiced to achieve genuine institutional uptake. The panel agreed that institutional readiness is most visible during emergencies: organizations with strong governance, mature systems, and trained leadership are far better equipped to maintain service continuity, safeguard public value, and respond effectively to complex challenges.

Session Theme Essence - Building Institutional Capacity to Sustain Professional Excellence

Plenary Session 4 highlighted that procurement excellence is fundamentally rooted in **institutional strength**. The session underscored the need for robust governance frameworks, independent and professionally empowered procurement structures, and technology-driven systems that support informed and resilient decision-making. Building procurement capability at scale requires structured professionalization, enhanced contract management functions, risk-based analytical tools, and leadership commitment to continuous improvement. When these elements are embedded within organizational systems, procurement evolves from a transactional activity into a **strategic driver of performance, accountability, and long-term public value**.

Plenary Session 5

Global Supply Chains and Procurement

Plenary Session 5, the concluding session of the Global Procurement Summit 2026, brought together leaders from critical infrastructure, global manufacturing, exports, multimodal logistics, and large-scale procurement to reflect on India's evolving position in global supply chains. Moderated by **Mr. Krishnamani J**, Partner, Deloitte, the session provided a panoramic view of the opportunities and constraints shaping India's integration with global markets—particularly at a time when supply chains worldwide are being reconfigured due to geopolitical tensions, technological shifts, and emerging trade corridors.

Setting the context, Mr. Krishnamani noted that the panel collectively represented over **140 years of procurement and supply chain expertise**, emphasizing that the session would look ahead—toward the future of global supply networks, the structural reforms India needs, and the practical realities of operating in dynamic and disrupted global markets.

The distinguished panel included:

- ✓ **Mr. Praveen Kumar**, Managing Director, Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL)
- ✓ **Dr. Sanjay Gupta**, Chief Procurement Officer, Adani Cement
- ✓ **Mr. Pankaj Aggarwal**, Chief Operating Officer, UNIBUILD (Motherson Group)
- ✓ **Mr. Praveen Kumar**, Executive Director, Project Exports Promotion Council of India (PEPCIL)

Together, the panel provided an integrated perspective covering trade, transport corridors, policy evolution, export competitiveness, procurement capability, supply-chain sustainability, and industry readiness.

Mr. Praveen Kumar - Executive Director, Project Exports Promotion Council of India

Budget Priorities, Trade Agreements, and India's Export Competitiveness

Opening the discussion, Mr. Kumar observed that the Union Budget must be seen not as a standalone policy document but as part of a **multi-year reform continuum**. The transformational logistics initiatives announced in recent budgets—ULIP, automated customs systems, and the creation of the Logistics Division—are the result of sustained institutional focus over several years. He noted that the current budget's emphasis on reducing India's logistics cost to **10% of GDP**, supported by an infrastructure outlay of **₹12.2 lakh crore**, would have a direct bearing on India's position in global supply chains.

He highlighted the budget's new focus on **container manufacturing**, which is critical after global disruptions such as the Red Sea crisis exposed India's dependence on foreign container supply. Similarly, liquidity support for MSMEs and export-focused initiatives—coupled with emerging FTAs, including the India-EU agreement—expand opportunities for Indian firms to participate in global construction, engineering, and infrastructure projects.

However, he stressed that Indian companies must understand the **requirements, standards, and environmental conditions** of target markets, as Africa, Europe, and

Southeast Asia have very different technical and commercial expectations. He noted that India's strength lies in its engineering capability, software expertise, and emerging hardware ecosystem—an advantage that could position India as a leader in smart infrastructure globally.

Mr. Praveen Kumar - Managing Director, DFCCIL

Railway Transformation, Freight Corridors, and Procurement Strategy

The DFCCIL Managing Director offered a detailed overview of the monumental scale of railway and logistics investments announced this year. The Union Budget includes **seven high-speed rail corridors** with a combined estimated cost approaching **₹18 lakh crore**, covering more than 4,000 km across India.

Equally significant is the newly announced **East-West Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC)** from Dankuni (West Bengal) to Surat (Gujarat), spanning over **2,000 km** at an estimated cost of **₹1.75 lakh crore**. This corridor will link eastern and western ports, enabling faster freight movement, reducing logistics costs, and improving India's competitiveness in global value chains.

Mr. Kumar shared several lessons from the construction of the Eastern and Western DFCs:

- Traditional segmented contracting—for civil works, electricals, and signaling—led to interface complications. Future corridors will adopt **integrated EPC contracting**, which proved highly successful on the Dadri–Rewari section.
- Large projects should be broken into **300 km blocks**, enabling broader contractor participation and better-quality execution.
- Procurement strategies must be redesigned to emphasize **quality-first contracting**, incorporating stricter technical prequalification and moving away from L1-driven distortions.
- Complexities such as land acquisition, environmental clearances, and geo-sensitive zones (e.g., Aravalli, Dahanu) require early planning and intensive coordination with state agencies.

He also highlighted the need to reduce dependence on imported machinery such as tunnel-boring machines and encouraged industry capability building to ensure long-term sustainability and readiness for future mega-projects.

Mr. Pankaj Aggarwal - COO, UNIBUILD (Motherson Group)

Leveraging FTAs, Global Competitiveness, and Supply Chain Reinvention

Mr. Aggarwal described the current moment as a rare opportunity: with FTAs expanding and India signaling ambition to become a global supply-chain hub, domestic firms must align themselves with global competitiveness demands.

He highlighted the following challenges that Indian exporters must address:

- **Understanding global quality expectations:** European OEMs expect consistent, non-negotiable levels of performance—far beyond mere specification compliance.
 - **Global presence:** Without overseas warehousing, service support, and delivery networks, Indian firms cannot operate as trusted suppliers.
-

From Vision to Value: Operationalizing Strategic Procurement for Impact, February 2026

- **Financial resilience:** Export payment cycles often stretch to 9–10 months, making working capital management a critical capability.
- **Macro-economic sourcing:** Procurement must shift from micro-level cost negotiations to global macro sourcing—leveraging price arbitrage across countries.
- **Manufacturing depth:** Many Tier-2 and Tier-3 suppliers lack world-class facilities and must upgrade their systems before entering export markets.

He cautioned that without readiness, Indian companies risk missing the benefits that FTAs open up—despite favorable policy conditions.

Dr. Sanjay Gupta - Chief Procurement Officer, Adani Cement

Integrated Global Supply Chains, Multi-modal Logistics, and Sustainability

Dr. Gupta presented an unusually holistic view of supply-chain integration, using Adani's operational model as an illustration of end-to-end control—from mining in Australia to ports, rail lines, power plants, and downstream manufacturing in India.

He highlighted that:

- Multimodal logistics innovations, including double-stack container movement and private freight rakes, have reduced cement logistics cost by **₹300/ton**, saving the economy more than **₹3,600 crore annually**.
- India's logistics cost, at **18%+ of GDP**, must be minimized through improved multimodal networks—and rail and coastal shipping must play a much larger role, given their superior cost efficiency.
- Adani is rapidly transitioning towards sustainability through large-scale afforestation, alternative fuel use (AFR), waste-heat recovery (WHRS), desalination systems, and green power adoption.
- Procurement transformation—using advanced analytics, intelligent automation, and generative AI—is reshaping demand planning, working-capital management, forecasting accuracy, and supplier performance.

He emphasized that procurement has evolved into a strategic, value-creating function that influences profitability, sustainability, and resilience across the enterprise.

Panel Discussion & Key Insights

The panel discussion provided a clear and strategic assessment of India's readiness to integrate with global supply chains at a time of intense geopolitical, economic, and technological shifts. Speakers agreed that global supply networks are becoming more complex and less predictable, making **resilient, agile, and strategically governed procurement systems** essential for India's competitiveness.

A central theme was that procurement must evolve beyond transactional activities to operate as a **strategic enterprise function**. With global disruptions—from Red Sea and Suez blockages to freight volatility—procurement teams need capabilities in risk anticipation, diversified sourcing, supplier development, and macroeconomic understanding. Panelists emphasized that India's recent FTAs create significant opportunities, but capturing them requires industry-wide strengthening of quality systems, export readiness, and global service capability.

The discussion highlighted the transformative impact of India's infrastructure expansion—high-speed rail corridors, the new East–West Dedicated Freight Corridor, and multimodal logistics investments. These projects can substantially reduce logistics costs and strengthen India's competitiveness, but their success depends on **integrated contracting models**, rigorous technical evaluation, and proactive planning to address land acquisition, environmental clearances, and contractor capacity constraints.

Digital transformation emerged as a critical enabler. Real-time data visibility, predictive analytics, and AI-driven procurement processes were identified as essential tools for managing global volatility. The integration of automation and generative AI within large enterprises—handling millions of transactions and enabling intelligent decision-making—was presented as a model for future-ready procurement systems.

Sustainability was positioned as a core strategic requirement, not an ancillary consideration. With global markets adopting carbon-border frameworks and ESG-based procurement, Indian companies will need to embed low-carbon materials, renewable energy, and circular resource use into procurement and supply-chain decisions. The panel underlined that sustainability must be built directly into tendering, vendor evaluation, and long-term contract management.

Finally, the discussion drew attention to persistent capability gaps—particularly in contract management, value engineering, quality assurance, and supplier competitiveness. Addressing these gaps is essential for India to match global manufacturing ecosystems and deliver complex infrastructure within time and cost targets.

Overall, the panel converged on a professional consensus: **India's ability to participate meaningfully in global supply chains will depend on the strength of its procurement institutions, the maturity of its digital and logistical systems, and the readiness of its industrial ecosystem to meet global standards.**

Session Theme Essence - Global Supply Chains and Procurement

Plenary Session 5 underscored that India stands at a defining moment in its global economic trajectory. With unprecedented infrastructure investment, growing FTAs, a strengthening logistics backbone, and a dynamic manufacturing ecosystem, the country has a historic opportunity to embed itself in global supply chains at scale.

The session made clear, however, that achieving this ambition requires procurement systems that are **strategic, technologically advanced, globally aligned, and institutionally strengthened**. India's competitiveness will hinge on its ability to integrate multimodal logistics, adopt global standards, build domestic manufacturing depth, foster sustainability, and professionalize procurement as a value-creating enterprise.

As the final session of the Summit, Plenary Session 5 reinforced the broader message of GPS 2026: **procurement is no longer a back-office function, but a national capability—central to growth, resilience, and India's emergence as a global economic force.**

Recommendations

Public procurement today stands at a pivotal moment—transitioning from a compliance-driven administrative function to a **strategic instrument for delivering public value, institutional performance, and national development outcomes**. The two-day deliberations at the Global Procurement Summit 2026 revealed that operationalizing “vision into value” requires systemic strengthening at the policy, institutional, digital, and ecosystem levels. The following priority recommendations have been distilled to guide India’s next phase of procurement transformation.

Mainstream Value-Based Procurement

Mainstreaming **Value-Based Procurement** requires a deliberate shift away from relying solely on the lowest-cost (L1) criterion and towards evaluation models that blend cost with quality, performance, lifecycle efficiency, and sustainability. This approach emphasizes long-term value creation rather than short-term savings. To achieve this, procurement systems could institutionalize **Merit Point Criteria (MPC)** for technically complex and high-impact procurements, expand the use of **Quality and Cost-Based Selection (QCBS)** for goods, works, and services requiring specialized technical judgment, and mandate **Life-Cycle Costing (LCC)** in key sectors such as infrastructure, energy, and mobility, where operational and maintenance costs significantly influence total project value. Collectively, these measures ensure that procurement decisions deliver **enduring, high-quality outcomes** rather than focusing merely on the lowest upfront price.

Strengthen Sustainable & Responsible Procurement

Sustainability must be embedded as a core procurement principle to advance India’s climate commitments, promote social equity, and support inclusive economic growth. This requires operationalizing a national **Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP)** framework that provides clear direction and consistency across government entities. Procurement processes should integrate **ESG considerations, circular-economy principles, and gender-inclusive criteria** across major categories to drive responsible production and equitable participation. Aligning procurement priorities with national missions such as **Viksit Bharat 2047, Make in India**, and the **Green Growth agenda** will ensure that public spending becomes a strategic lever for environmental stewardship, local enterprise development, and long-term sustainability.

Elevate Procurement as a Strategic Institutional Capability

Elevating procurement as a **strategic institutional capability** is essential for ensuring consistent, high-quality outcomes across projects and programs. This requires positioning procurement as a professionalized and empowered organizational function rather than a transactional or administrative activity. To achieve this, organizations should establish **independent, well-resourced procurement units** with the necessary authority and leadership visibility to influence strategic decisions. Strengthening institutional capability also calls for the adoption of **competency frameworks and structured certification pathways**, leveraging platforms such as the new AIMA–CIPS partnership to standardize skills and professional growth. Equally important is embedding procurement at the **earliest stages of project planning**, enabling better alignment with desired outcomes, proactive risk management, and more efficient execution throughout the project lifecycle.

Modernize Contract & Project Management

Awarding a contract marks the beginning—not the culmination—of value realization. To prevent delays, disputes, and cost overruns, organizations must institutionalize robust contract oversight mechanisms. This involves adopting **standardized contract management toolkits and templates** to ensure consistency and clarity, conducting **periodic financial stability assessments** of contractors to minimize performance risks, and implementing **structured early-warning systems** that proactively identify deviations, schedule slippages, and emerging performance issues. Strengthening contract and project management in this manner is essential to translating procurement decisions into timely, high-quality, and value-driven outcomes.

Accelerate Digital & AI-Enabled Procurement Systems

Digital transformation is fundamental to enhancing transparency, operational efficiency, and predictive decision-making in procurement. This entails scaling **AI-driven analytics** to support automated bid evaluation, anomaly detection, and deeper market intelligence; ensuring **interoperability** across platforms such as GeM, CPPP, and various state e-procurement systems; and deploying **real-time dashboards** that enable continuous monitoring of project milestones, contract performance, and supplier behavior. Together, these digital enablers strengthen accountability, improve evaluation accuracy, and allow procurement teams to act decisively based on timely, data-driven insights.

Develop Next-Generation Procurement Talent

Human capability remains the strongest determinant of procurement excellence, and building a future-ready workforce is essential for operationalizing strategic procurement at scale. This requires equipping professionals with advanced skills in **AI, analytics, digital procurement tools, category strategy, and risk-based sourcing**, while simultaneously strengthening competencies in **ESG due diligence, negotiation, and commercial analysis**. To ensure capability development reaches all levels of government, **regional procurement training centers** should be established to support states and local bodies, enabling consistent upskilling and professionalization across the public procurement ecosystem.

Strengthen Market Participation & Domestic Supply Chain Resilience

A robust procurement ecosystem relies on vibrant supplier markets and resilient domestic production capabilities. Strengthening market participation requires targeted efforts to expand MSME and startup engagement through **improved payment cycles, MSME-friendly contract structures**, and deliberate inclusion of **women-led and SC/ST-led enterprises**. At the same time, building long-term supply chain resilience necessitates support for **local manufacturing of critical components and machinery**, reducing dependency on external sources for high-value or strategic items. Procurement entities should also promote **diversified sourcing models** and adopt structured **supplier risk-mapping frameworks** to mitigate vulnerabilities, ensure business continuity, and enhance the overall reliability of national supply networks.

Position Procurement as a National Strategic Lever

To fully operationalize the Summit's theme, procurement must be recognized and positioned as a core enabler of national development, shaping outcomes across sectors and driving systemic transformation. This requires embedding procurement into broader development and sectoral planning frameworks, supported by **data-driven, transparent,**

and resilient supply chains that strengthen coordination between government and industry. Enhanced **public-private collaboration** is essential to foster innovation, build capabilities, and scale best practices across the ecosystem. Equally important is institutionalizing procurement as a strategic tool for **fiscal discipline, sustainability, competitiveness, and public value creation**, ensuring it contributes meaningfully to India's long-term economic and developmental ambitions.