



India Assumes Chairmanship for 2026

Dr. Tirumalesh Keesari and SIRD Editorial Team

India assumed the Chairmanship of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Regional Cooperative Agreement (RCA) for 2026, reaffirming its longstanding commitment to strengthening regional cooperation in the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology. The Chairmanship was formally handed over by the outgoing Chair, Fiji, during the 48th Meeting of National Representatives (NRM) of the IAEA-RCA Programme, hosted by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), Government of India, in Navi Mumbai from May 19-22, 2026.

The meeting brought together National Representatives, scientists, technical experts, and officials from all 22 RCA Member States across the Asia-Pacific region. In a first-of-its-kind move, representatives from the African Regional Cooperative Agreement (AFRA) and the Forum for Nuclear Cooperation in Asia (FNCA) also participated, providing an important platform for wider scientific dialogue and enhanced inter-regional collaboration. Discussions focused on current and future RCA initiatives in healthcare, nuclear agriculture and food technology, water resource management, radiation technologies, environmental sustainability, and human resource development.

Addressing the inaugural session, Mr. Vivek Bhasin, Director, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, highlighted India's achievements in applying nuclear science and technology for societal and industrial development, particularly in healthcare, agriculture, radiation processing, water management, and environmental protection. Mr. Rajeev Keswani, Head, Nuclear Controls & Planning Wing, DAE, underscored the importance of regional scientific cooperation in addressing shared developmental challenges and reaffirmed India's

commitment to collaborative progress across the Asia-Pacific.

As the incoming RCA Chair and India's National Representative, Mr. P. K. Sharma outlined priorities for the year ahead, including strengthening the regional cooperation framework, advancing new project proposals, supporting the activities of the RCA Regional Office, and preparing for the 70th IAEA General Conference. Welcoming the delegates, Shri Sampathkumar Raghunathan, National Liaison Officer (NLO), reflected India's tradition of hospitality through the ethos of Atithi Devo Bhava.

A key outcome of the meeting was the consideration of fourteen concept proposals for the 2028-29 RCA programme cycle. Recommendations of the RCA Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) were presented by Dr. K. Tirumalesh, Scientific Officer-H, Isotope and Radiation Application Division, BARC who served as TAP Lead and was commended for guiding the panel towards a shared consensus.

Delegates also visited the Advanced Centre for Treatment, Research and Education in Cancer (ACTREC), where Dr. Ajit Kumar Mohanty, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission and Secretary, DAE, presented commemorative mementoes reflecting India's cultural heritage. The programme included an exhibition on the non-power applications of nuclear technology and a visit to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya in Mumbai.

Guided by the vision of Vishwa Bandhu Bharat and the theme India by Your Side, India's RCA Chairmanship reflects its commitment to fostering regional partnerships and advancing sustainable development through the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology.